Abstract

The work which is submitted for the degree of PhD by publication comprises eleven papers published in peer-reviewed journals: six sole-authored papers and five joint-authored. The publications span the years 1995 to the present, and the qualitative research projects from which the data and publications are derived were undertaken over a period of approximately ten years, commencing in 1994/95. The publications are included in full and are examined, both individually and within a more general context, in an overview.

The overarching focus of the research coheres around the construction and maintenance of occupational and leisure identities, and more specifically in the case of the latter, on sporting identities. All the research projects from which the publications derive were qualitative in nature, apart from the earliest work on doctoral students in the social sciences, which was based predominantly on documentary analysis of the relevant literature. Whilst the unifying theme of the research and the PhD submission might be termed 'identity work', three principal strands can be delineated and these are described in some detail in the overview: 1) Occupational identities: contract researchers in the social sciences; 2) Occupational identities: doctoral research students; 3) Sporting identities: distance runners.
Acknowledgements

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1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The work which is submitted for the degree of PhD by publication comprises eleven papers published in peer-reviewed journals: six sole-authored papers and five joint-authored, together with this overview. The publications span the years 1995 to the present, and the research projects from which the data derive were undertaken over a period of ten years, commencing in 1994/95. Details of all the projects, including methodology and methods used, are provided in each of the relevant sections below. The overview itself comprises the following elements. Brief sections provide the biographical contextualisation for the research, and portray some of the theoretical perspectives surrounding ‘self’ and ‘identity’. After setting the general context, the overview turns to an examination of the principal areas of research included in the submission: occupational and sporting identities.

The unifying theme of the research and the PhD submission might be termed ‘identity work’ (Prus, 1996), and questions of identity construction, maintenance and transformation weave through the submission. Three principal strands can however clearly be delineated, and each of these will be considered in separate sections below:

- Occupational identities: contract researchers in the social sciences
- Occupational identities: doctoral research students
- Sporting identities: distance runners

Before proceeding to examine these strands the context will briefly be set; first the analysis turns to the biographical context.
1.2 Biographical context

As a researcher who has in recent work embraced the tenets of the autoethnographic approach (Hayano, 1979), it seems appropriate to render visible at least some 'accountable' knowledge (Stanley, 1990) in order to contextualise the research. My biography has influenced both the topics researched and also the theoretical perspectives employed in the analytic examination of these topics. Indeed, ‘accidents of biography’ have on occasion provided access, physical and psychological, to some of the research settings (Lofland & Lofland, 1995: 11) and stimulated the research questions. With regard to my own occupational life-world, I spent 23 years working as a full-time university administrator before taking up an academic post in 2003 as a short-term contract researcher. Over the last decade I have undertaken qualitative and ethnographic research on occupational and leisure identities, mainly in my ‘leisure’ time. My university working environment has brought me into close proximity with a variety of colleagues and students whose academic and occupational lives have merited sufficient sociological interest to stimulate research projects. The academic groups studied were: contract researchers in the social sciences; and research students in the social sciences and in art and design. Equally as important in terms of ‘identity salience’ (Stryker, 1987) as my occupational identity is my sporting identity as a female middle/long-distance runner, and this latter dimension has provided the spur to autoethnographic research on the identity work of sportspeople, particularly injured athletes. In brief then, this is the biographical context out of which the research and publications have emerged. In order further to situate the PhD submission, the principal theoretical perspectives will now be examined.

1.3 Theoretical underpinnings: self and identity

The overarching focus of the research coheres around the construction and maintenance of occupational and leisure identities, and more specifically in the case of
the latter, on sporting identities; the leisure under discussion constituting 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1982; 2001). The concepts of identity and self have formed the subject of intense debate in both the social sciences and the humanities during the past two decades, spurred on *inter alia* by developments in feminism, poststructuralism, cultural studies, and queer theory (Callero, 2003). Indeed, under the onslaught of postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques, the 'death of the self' has been proclaimed (Foucault, 1988, 1994; Rose, 1996). These claims notwithstanding, it would appear that a great deal remains to explore and unravel regarding the concepts of self and identity; the debate continues to flourish, as will be discussed in the sections below.

The forms of 'self' and 'identity' which appear in most of the research work included here owe their construction primarily to the symbolic interactionist tradition. In some of the papers included, the concepts of self and identity have been posited as co-terminous, congruent with Jenkins' formulation (1996: 29) where self is defined as 'each individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted *vis à vis* of others in terms of similarity and difference'. Although there is not the scope within this overview to do justice to the complexities of current sociological debates on identity and the self, it should be noted that subsequent to the publication of these papers, my current research adopts a somewhat more elaborated concept, still drawing strongly upon the symbolic interactionist tradition, but also encompassing greater elements of the historical, political, and cultural foundations of selfhood. For a good summary of these debates, see for example, Callero (2003), and this point will be revisited in the Summary.

Symbolic interactionist perspectives on identity vary greatly along a continuum between what might be termed more processual and more structural orientations. As Howard (2000: 371) notes, the more structural approaches rely on the concepts of role
identities and social positions, linking social structures to persons, whereas an alternative approach places greater emphasis upon the processes of identity construction in interaction, so that 'subject positions' (Day Sclater, 1998: 86) are actively negotiated, in contrast to the somewhat more passive construction often implied by 'role'. Although in no way wishing to underplay the power of structural constraints, the research papers included here tend to focus more upon the processual and interactional elements of identity, whilst acknowledging that social behaviour is both constrained and constructed, and 'role imposition' and 'role improvisation' (Stryker, 1987: 93) are experienced by social actors.

Symbolic interactionist research into occupational and sporting socialisation is thriving, and in the UK in particular has in recent years benefited from an injection of fresh energy and new perspectives which has inspired much of the work included in the submission; see for example Delamont et al (1994) in relation to the sociology of occupations, and Maguire & Young (2002) in respect of the sociology of sport. Indeed, many of the papers attached represent a response to the call by Delamont et al (1994: 151), for further systematic inquiry into the reproduction of academic collectivities and into the everyday work-worlds of academic staff.

1.4 Occupational and sporting life-worlds

For those engaged in the labour market, paid work has been theorised as one of the key ways in which individuals evaluate themselves and are evaluated by others, thus constituting a core component of social identity and the self, as Everett Hughes (1959) noted. The past decade has witnessed a resurgence of sociological interest within a 'new sociology of occupations and professions' which seeks to address the everyday realities of work (Coffey & Atkinson, 1994: 2) via detailed empirical studies. The sociology of everyday life, developed initially in North America, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s (eg, Goffman, 1959; Truzzi, 1968) takes as its analytical focus the
mundane, taken-for-granted, 'unmarked' (Brekhus, 1998: 36) aspects of everyday life. The recent launch of the web-based *Journal of Mundane Behaviour* testifies to this heightened interest in the everyday. The wish to explore, portray and subject to analysis the mundane, habitual practices and routines of quotidian work worlds characterises much of the research work included here, the purpose of which is to unravel some of the complexities of occupational lives, routines and practices and their impact upon occupational identity. The research emphasizes the 'local, situated character of occupational life and socialization' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1994: 4) and has been concerned to portray in particular the social worlds of somewhat 'marginal' (Bilson, 1988) occupational and sporting groups.

The academic occupational groups studied (contract researchers and doctoral students) had at the time of commencing the research been under-represented within the sociological literature, and it was considered important to begin to address these respective lacunae. Doctoral students have been incorporated within an inclusive definition of 'occupation', and further discussion of this decision is provided below. Analogously, there is a dearth of published research on the sporting 'occupational' identities of amateur, non-elite, older sportspeople, particularly women (Pike & Maguire, 2003: 233), and more specifically on injured sportspeople. The commonality of the research focus lies in the examination of the ways in which occupational and sporting identities are formed, maintained and refined, particularly via interaction, and the means by which occupational and subcultural knowledge and skills are developed and transmitted.

As noted above, whilst the unifying theme of the research and the PhD submission might be termed identity work, three principal strands can be delineated, and each of these will be considered in separate sections below. First, the analysis turns to the research on social science contract researchers and their identity work.
2 Occupational Identities: contract researchers in the social sciences

Despite some interesting research into work-worlds within academic milieux, knowledge about the reproduction of academic occupational culture remains relatively limited, as has been noted (Delamont et al., 1994; Blaxter et al., 1998; Abbas & McLean, 2001), and the majority of the published work has concentrated upon teaching staff (e.g., Delamont, 1996; Edwards, 2000; Hey, 2001). The higher education sector in Britain has of course been strongly affected by changes within the wider economy, where human capital and post-Fordist theories (Harvey, 1989) have been influential in the formulation of, and demand for a ‘flexible’ workforce (Barlow, 1995). The concept of ‘flexibility’ has been problematised, however (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003), for it is clear that flexibility along one dimension may produce rigidity and constraint on another, particularly for employees. Some employers have sought to maximise flexibility and reduce wages by increasing casual, part-time and contract work, and this form of employment has proliferated within the British higher education sector (McInnis, 2000; Parker & Jary, 1995), particularly in relation to contract research.

Despite the fact that contract researchers constitute such an important sector of the academic labour force, both in terms of numbers and contribution to UK research output, very little was known about the realities of their everyday, working life-worlds, and it was therefore considered timely to begin to address this gap. A qualitative research project was subsequently devised, involving in-depth qualitative interviews with 61 contract researchers in the social sciences, based at 11 different UK universities. It was decided to examine in detail these researchers’ occupational lives, initially purely as a sociological project, but consequently also in relation to national policy, embodied for example in the CVCP (1996) Concordat on the career
management of contract research staff, and subsequent reports of the Universities UK Research Careers Initiative (UUK/DTI, 2003).

The originality of the research lay in its attempt to obtain detailed, qualitative data on the quotidian routines and the knowledge and practices of contract research, *en bref* to examine the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977) of contract researchers. One of the themes which emerged strongly from the data was the significance of ‘tacit’ (Polanyi, 1983) knowledge and ‘informal’ practices which researchers developed in order to practise their craft effectively, and to sustain employment in a highly insecure occupational realm, with a distinct absence of ‘security of expectations’ (Katz & Hartnett, 1976). These forms of knowledge and practice are portrayed and analysed in the first paper on this theme (Allen Collinson & Hockey, 1998). Although the more technical or formal practices of contract research such as data collection techniques were clearly of importance, it was ‘tacit’ (Gerholm, 1990) or ‘indeterminate’ knowledge (Jamous & Peloille, 1970) which was found to be crucial to successful performance of the role, despite its lack of susceptibility to ‘codification and representation through explicit recipes’ (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995: 96).

The nature of the knowledge and competencies required for effective performance of an occupational role, together with the means of their acquisition and transmission, form one of the foci of interest within the sociology of occupations, and Paper 2 (Allen Collinson, 2000) in particular seeks to analyse the development of ‘craft’ knowledge and practices, both formal and informal, in a work environment often characterised by high levels of pressure and stress. Researchers’ perceptions of forms of knowledge and skills were found to vary considerably according to their entry routes into the occupation, and the amount and form of academic capital (Bourdieu, 1988) which they possessed. In summary, it emerged that for those with no or relatively little experience of higher education the development of craft knowledge and skills represented a
process of upskilling, which bolstered and enhanced their occupational self-image. An analogous process operated amongst those who came from a 'practitioner' background (eg social work, law, etc) and articulated strong social justice concerns and a desire to promote social change. Conversely, it was found that those with a more 'traditional' academic background in social science and humanities disciplines exhibited more ambivalence towards the development of contract research knowledge and skills, many lamenting a process they viewed as deskilling. In sum, what emerged was the complexity of interviewees' perceptions and the consequent impact upon their occupational identities; many researchers simultaneously experiencing deskilling along some dimensions (eg in relation to disciplinary knowledge), and upskilling along others (eg in relation to craft practices).

Formal 'technical' knowledge and practices constitute only two components within the plethora of skills and forms of knowledge required to perform occupational roles effectively and convincingly. In relation to contract research, the actual undertaking of the technical aspects of research per se was found to represent only one element in the development of a 'career', in the Hughesian sense (Hughes, 1959). Paper 3 (Alien Collinson, 2003b), examines and problematises the concept of 'career' in relation to what might be conceptualised as a marginal occupation. Given such marginality, and the often precarious employment history of, and prospects for contract researchers, it was of sociological interest to investigate how some researchers actually manage to sustain anything approximating a career.

The role of collegiality and peer support was found to be central to contract researchers' ability to stay in the occupational 'game'. The importance of an appropriate presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), both in-house and externally, became clear. Additional factors which emerged as salient in career maintenance and progression included networking, both intra- and extra-institutional, visibility of
performance (cf Pithouse, 1994), cues from more experienced colleagues, and also interviewees' own degree of cue awareness. In brief, the research findings emphasized the dual learning process undertaken by successful contract researchers who managed to combine the assimilation of the technical, 'official' aspects of research with the development of a stock of more informal knowledge. The principal factors influencing occupational longevity were found to be biographical background, employment location(s), and the role of serendipity or happenstance in the availability of employment opportunities (cf Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

The concept of 'identity work' has been well utilised in a variety of disciplines, including the sociological and anthropological literature (eg, McLeod, 1998; Stewart & Strathern, 2000), and especially within the symbolic interactionist tradition (eg Snow & Anderson, 1995; Prus, 1996). Interactionists have emphasized the importance of occupational titles for connoting bearers' characteristics to the wider social audience, and analysed how audience perceptions in turn influence the occupational identity of the role incumbents (Becker, 1977). Contract researchers' conceptions of self-identity were found to be influenced both by their immediate occupational peers, who constitute 'significant others' (Cooley, 1983) and also by the wider audience of the 'generalised other' (Mead, 1934). Researchers' own conceptions of how the institutional generalised other viewed them were reflected in value-laden phrases such as 'casualised labour' and 'academic migrants'.

The interview data clearly indicated that contract researchers were engaged in a variety of forms of occupational identity work, often in the face of threat to a successful occupational self, and Paper 4 (Alien Collinson, 2004) seeks to explore the nature of such work. Elaborating upon evidence presented in a previous paper (Alien Collinson, 2003b), the article reveals the shifting and complex nature of researchers' occupational identity, contingent upon various factors, such as an amalgam of
biographical features (Stanley 1990: 209), including educational or professional socialisation, and previous work experience. The context-dependency of occupational identities was also highlighted by the research, with the data revealing the significant and differential impact upon identity of different work environments. For all the participants, keenly-felt marginality, both in material and symbolic forms, required periodic identity work in order to sustain positive self-images, and the intensity of such work varied according to particular temporal points during the contract. In addition, prolonged engagement with contract research, where the need for specialist disciplinary knowledge is often very limited, often resulted in an erosion of the stock of subject-specific knowledge. Alarmingly, along with this decline in subject knowledge contract researchers were acutely aware that their capacity to keep pace with the rapid expansion in disciplinary knowledge was severely compromised by the routine demands of their job. In brief, the project findings emphasized the importance of identity work in the construction and maintenance of credible occupational selves, crucial for the effective completion of the demanding task of contract research.

This section has provided a brief overview and theoretical contextualisation of the four papers relating to occupational identity and social science contract researchers in higher education. Despite the importance of their contribution to the research output of the UK sector, at the time of initiating the research, very little was known about the quotidian working lives and habitus of the contract researcher. Salient themes which emerged were the importance of tacit and informal knowledge and practices, both to the effective completion of work tasks and also to continued employment in a highly capricious sector of academia. The importance of collegiality, peer support, networking, and an appropriate presentation of occupational self were also crucial to career prospects. The next section focuses upon a different ‘occupational’ group within academia: research students.
3 Occupational identities: doctoral research students

This theme within the submission centres upon the occupational socialisation and occupational identities of doctoral students. Two specific groups in the UK were investigated: a) early work focussed primarily on policy issues in relation to doctoral students in the social sciences; and b) subsequent work drew upon some generic themes outlined in the first project, and sought to examine in greater depth the actual experiences of a particular student body: research students undertaking practice-based doctorates in art and design.

For the purpose of the research on students, an inclusive definition of 'occupation' has been utilised, in common with writers such as Delamont et al (1994: 140) who studied the doctorate as a period of occupational socialization. The liminal and ambiguous status (Davies, 1994) of students, in particular research students, has been noted in the literature, where research students are portrayed as uncomfortably 'suspended' between the social position of a student and that of a fully-fledged university academic (Delamont et al, 1994: 138), and this concept will be revisited in Section 4 below. In relation to the empirical research, it was of some interest to study the means by which students, in this case art and design students, coped with their liminal status, and also the demands of balancing and combining two very different identities, those of artist/designer and researcher. First, however, the research on doctoral students in the social sciences will be examined.

3.1 Doctoral students in the social sciences

In 1985, the UK Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) introduced a new doctoral research policy which reconceptualised the UK social science PhD as a 'training-model' doctorate and also imposed sanctions upon departments with 'poor' thesis submission rates. The requirements for research training were enshrined in the ESRC Postgraduate Training Guidelines, first published in the 1980s, refined during
the 1990s and currently in their third edition (ESRC, 2001). In 1988, the ESRC Training Board commissioned a number of projects on the social science doctorate (Burgess, 1994). This relatively radical doctoral education policy shift provided the context and the stimulus for my own joint research project into the social science doctorate and doctoral students.

Commenced in 1994, an analysis of ESRC doctoral policy was undertaken, followed by an examination of some of the consequences, not only for ESRC-funded students, but social science doctoral students more generally, given that the ESRC policy has resulted in fundamental cultural change (Edmunds & Turner, 2002). Some of the consequences may well have been unintended, as was suggested in Paper 5 (Collinson & Hockey, 1995) which examines student responses to the changing doctoral culture within the social sciences. Such responses include practices such as 'premature' thesis submission, when the student knowingly submits the thesis in a form which s/he knows to be unsatisfactory and liable for referral, in order to meet the 4-year deadline for submission and thereby avoid incurring sanctions for her/his department. At the time of the research, some of these adaptive responses did not appear to have been considered by the ESRC or others, so far as could be determined by careful documentary analysis, and it was therefore felt important to investigate some of the possible consequences of the policy's introduction.

In addition, underlying the new doctoral policy appeared to rest some unchallenged assumptions regarding the degree of homogeneity of the social science research student body, and of students' motives for undertaking a doctorate. The needs, wishes, motives and aspirations of part-time, mature students, for example, appeared to have been largely excluded from the equation, as is discussed in Paper 6 of the submission (Collinson & Hockey, 1997) which analyses the resultant constraint on student choice. The paper concludes with a call for greater flexibility of provision in
order to take into account the motives and needs of a wider range of doctoral students beyond the stereotypical young, single, full-time student.

Further elaboration upon the consequences for students of the doctoral policy changes is provided in Paper 7 (Allen Collinson, 1998). This problematises the concepts of 'competency' and 'training' in relation to doctoral research, as these terms are employed by the ESRC within the Postgraduate Training Guidelines. Whilst not explicit, the definition enshrined in the Guidelines appears to rest on a personal attribute model of competency, where the latter is deemed to be a quality of the performer, who can then be subject to assessment to discover if s/he possesses the requisite level of skills and knowledge. A further model of competence: the 'outcomes model' (Toohey et al, 1995) is considered in the paper; a functionalist model wherein competency is defined in terms of the functions which must be carried out in the economy, and where the key factor in assessment is the actual performance of the work tasks, and the specific functions of occupational role.

The research also highlighted the significant pressures confronting doctoral students in terms of the accomplishment of dual objectives within a time-constrained context: a) participation in formal, generic research training courses at an advanced level; and b) the requirement to make an original and substantial contribution to knowledge. The former element had previously not been required of social science doctoral students and so it was considered important to consider their responses towards the new training-model doctorate. The paper raises questions regarding realistic expectations of students under the new régime and, whilst acknowledging that the training-model doctorate has largely become orthodoxy, it cautions against the dangers of this doctoral form in terms of deleterious consequences for originality and creativity and impact upon student identity. The paper also calls for greater clarity and precision in
defining the level of student competence which is realistically achievable within the time constraints.

The research on policy issues relating to doctoral students in the social sciences generated some interesting questions, which related closely to the contemporaneous project on contract researchers, particularly regarding the need for detailed empirical research into the work life-worlds of both groups. It was subsequently decided to instigate research into the quotidian working practices and experiences of a specific group of British research students: those undertaking the relatively 'pioneering' practice-based doctorates in art and design. It is to this group that the analysis now turns.

3.2 Doctoral students in art and design

The research literature on the experiences of social science research students has burgeoned in recent years, thanks largely to a range of ESRC-funded projects (Burgess, 1994). This degree of research attention has not, however, been replicated with regard to other disciplinary areas. For over a decade, practice-based research degrees in art and design have formed part of the UK research degree education portfolio, but this route to the PhD still constitutes an innovative, and on occasion a disputed form of research study. Students embarking upon the practice-based doctorate find themselves in many ways undertaking pioneering work. At the time of the research, no empirical studies of this particular student group appeared to exist and it was consequently decided to initiate a qualitative project on the occupational worlds of art and design students. A joint research project was commenced in 1995, involving interviews with 50 students and 50 supervisors, based at 25 UK universities and colleges. Forty per cent of the students were studying part-time, with many having considerable experience of working as professional artists/designers. From the interview data a 'mosaic' (Becker, 1977) of student experiences was generated.
The general picture at the time of commencing the research was one of embryonic development, with many of the research sites handling their first cohorts of practice-based students. Consequently, both students and supervisors were encountering a raft of new problems, at both an institutional and an individual level. Paper 8 (Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2000) examines the nature of these problems in some detail, particularly from the supervisory perspective. Some of the problems encountered appear to be endemic across disciplines and the literature portrays a range of supervisory responses (e.g., Burgess et al., 1994). Other difficulties however were found to be more specific to the context of practice-based research degrees, for example in relation to perceived problems of academic credibility.

A key site of struggle for students and consequently their supervisors, was the specific combination of the more traditional analytic and written element of the doctorate with the practice-based component. This created intense problems for students, as highlighted in Paper 8, and examined in greater depth and specificity in Paper 9 (Allen Collinson, 2005). Given the paucity of empirical research on these students, the paper aims to provide new sociological perspectives on their occupational life-worlds, and the challenges to their 'felt identity' (Goffman, 1963:106) as creative people, posed by the doctoral process per se. It explores some of the narratives which students generated during their often faltering and difficult transformational journey of identity change from creator to creator-researcher. The paper analyses some of the perceived tensions and contradictions between the elements of artistry and analysis in the doctoral work and the deployment of techniques such as role distance (Goffman, 1959) as part of students' repertoire of coping strategies. The liminality and dual status of the research student role, and the complexities of 'looking both ways' have been portrayed in the literature (Coffey & Atkinson, 1994). In the case of these practice-based students, the reconciliation of the dual roles of researcher and artist/designer proved a highly
challenging task, which required considerable identity work (Prus, 1996) as students struggled to amalgamate these divergent elements and to construct new conceptions of self.

This section has briefly portrayed the research relating to the occupational socialisation and identities of doctoral students. The research on social science students considered some of the 'unintended consequences' (Merton, 1949) of the introduction of the ESRC's new doctoral policy, and problematised the concepts of 'competency' and 'training' enshrined in that policy, particularly in the relatively constrained time-frame of a four-year registration period. The liminality of the research student role has been noted, and the third strand of the submission focuses upon what might be deemed another liminal group: injured athletes.

4 Sporting identities: distance runners

The final area of the submission pursues the overarching theme of identity construction and maintenance but reflects both a substantive and methodological shift. This strand comprises papers derived from a collaborative autoethnography of injured distance runners, and examines the impact of serious injury upon sporting identity for, as Petrie notes:

Serious injury is one of the most emotionally and psychologically traumatic things that can happen to an athlete ... Because athletes are so dependent upon their physical skills and because their identities are so wrapped up in their sport, injury can be tremendously threatening to them. (1993: 18-19)

Before proceeding to consider the substantive focus of the research, a brief note concerning the methodological approach will aid contextualisation.

In recent decades, autoethnography has gained greater acceptance within the sociological and anthropological communities (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Allen Collinson & Hockey, 2004). Focussing
upon the dialectics of subjectivity and culture, autoethnography generally entails the detailed, analytic examination of the experiences of the researcher qua member of a social group or category, for example as an Olympic rower (Tsang, 2000), or in this particular case, as a distance runner (Allen Collinson & Hockey, 2001; Allen Collinson, 2003a). Word limit constraints preclude a full description of the autoethnographic approach employed, but details can be found in papers 10 and 11.

With regard to the substantive focus of these two papers, responses to sporting injury have been researched from a variety of sociological perspectives, for example in relation to socialisation processes (Curry, 1993), specific sports cultures (Krane et al, 1997, Howe, 2001), the influence of social networks (Nixon, 1992), and the gender dimension (Young & White, 1995). The vast majority of research in this area takes as its subject élite, young (under 30), male athletes and, in relation to injured athletes, those who are unable to regain their former athletic status (eg Sparkes, 1998). The dearth of research on the sporting identities of amateur, non-élite sportspeople, particularly women, has been noted (Pike & Maguire, 2003: 233). Given that amateur sportspeople constitute the vast majority of sports participants, it was considered important to begin to address this lacuna, in particular from a phenomenological perspective. The originality of the research lies in several vectors: a) the use of the autoethnographic approach to examine the experience of sporting injury and rehabilitation; b) the focus upon non-élite, middle-aged athletes, and c) the analysis of a successful transition from the injured sporting body to the rehabilitated state. The two papers will now be considered; these focus upon the role of narrative and of temporality respectively.

Subsequent to the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences in general (Mishler, 1991), recent years have also witnessed the emergence of a literature within the sociology of sport which examines narratives of the sporting body, including the injured sporting
body. The importance of narrative activity in the construction of identity has been emphasized by many writers, including those who argue that narrative and self are inseparable, narrative being born out of experience and simultaneously shaping experience (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Narratives combine the wider social context with the personal (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), as personal stories are closely linked to the cultural and subcultural resources upon which their authors draw, in this case the subculture of distance runners.

In his review of the literature on body narratives, Sparkes (1999) signals a set of issues for future research, including the need to uncover the conditions which shape whether an injured athlete is able to reconstruct a positive identity. This question was of particular salience for the joint autoethnographic study, and Paper 10 examines the impact of (running) career-threatening injury upon the identities of two middle/long-distance runners via an analysis of the narratives generated by the co-researchers/participants. The paper aims to be innovative in its examination of the role played by narrative in enabling athletes to make sense phenomenologically of injured body-selves and to maintain positive running identities in the face of threat to the running self. The roles of narrative exchange, 'co-telling' and intersubjectivity were found to be crucial in the rehabilitative process.

The injured and rehabilitative states bear many of the hallmarks of liminality, a concept originally defined by van Gennep (1960), and subsequently elaborated by Turner (1969), in relation to rites de passage involving a move from a secular to a sacred condition or vice versa. This produces a transitional or liminal situation; an uncomfortable, ambiguous, uncertain state wherein a person is caught in time (and often space) between a previous status and a new status yet to be attained. As Brock & Kleiber (1994) perceptively note, the injured athlete, no longer in her/his accustomed role, is subject to this ambiguous, undefined and sometimes corporeally invisible
condition, described as a 'reverse transition' from a sacred to a profane state. This ‘fall from grace’ gives rise to an array of emotions as athletes struggle to come to terms with the injured state, and to suffer the mortification of their former 'gloried' athletic selves (Adler & Adler, 1989). The ways in which the author and her co-researcher sought to maintain their sporting identities under the onslaught of injury are portrayed in both papers within this theme, and Paper 11 examines one particular dimension of the injury and rehabilitation process: the temporal.

The temporal dimensions of sporting 'injury time' (in its widest sense) are largely absent from the literature, as indeed are analytical problems of space and time in general within the sociology of sport (Métoudi, 1994). At first consideration, this appears a curious lacuna, given the centrality of time within most sports, and what Eichberg has termed 'the hegemonic race-and-stop-watch model' (Bale & Philo, 1998: 153). On further reflection, this absence is perhaps less surprising, for there continues to be a propensity for social time to remain unproblematised, construed as a neutral medium within which events simply take place (Adam, 2000). As a consequence, there is much research to be done on the social construction of time in general (Yakura, 2001), and particularly on the phenomenology of time within sporting activity.

Enforced injury time, in terms of a relatively extended period during which sportspeople, whether professional or amateur, are unable to pursue their chosen activity, can have a highly deleterious impact upon sporting identity and consequently upon identity more generally. For amateur athletes, the threat to sporting identity is particularly intense when the physical activity concerned constitutes 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 2001), and the sporting role holds great 'identity salience' (Stryker, 1987) for the participants. The eleventh paper (Allen Collinson, 2003a) seeks to address the identified gap in the research literature, by developing the phenomenological analysis
of running injury and its impact upon running identity, but placing the emphasis squarely upon the temporal dimensions of experience.

For the purposes of the paper, four categories of time are analysed: linear, cyclical, inner (durée) and biographical, and the theoretical formulations of each of these constructs is examined in relation to the sporting injury experience. For example, during the rehabilitative process perceptions of time were found to span the various dimensions of extending, contracting and normal time (or slowing, speeding and steady time in members’ categorisation). These conceptions of time approximate the theoretical formulation of Flaherty (1999), who uses the terms ‘protracted duration’, ‘temporal compression’ and ‘synchronicity’ respectively, to illustrate the above continuum. In addition to developing the sociological analyses of time, it was envisaged that the findings might also provide useful insights for sports physiotherapists and other health-care practitioners so that they could take into account the importance of the subjective temporal dimension when planning treatment regimes for injured sportspeople.

5 Summary and future directions

As noted, much of the research included in this submission has explored and analysed the mundane practices and routines of quotidian occupational and serious-leisure worlds within previously under-researched areas. The papers exposed and uncovered some of the ‘unmarked’ (Brekhus, 1998: 36) elements of various social life-worlds and their impact upon the identities of participants. Whilst the research literature has undoubtedly expanded in relation to some of the earlier research, particularly on social science doctoral students, research on other occupational groups within academia to-date remains underdeveloped. Future research might profitably therefore examine in further detail and on different dimensions the occupational subcultures and
experiences of these groups, and in this vein a qualitative study of the occupational identities of graduate university administrators is currently in train.

As indicated in section 1.3 above, the forms of 'self' and 'identity' which appear in much of the research work included are inspired mainly by work within the symbolic interactionist tradition. Questions of identity still preoccupy many within the sociological community and work in this area continues to flourish (e.g., Callero, 2003; Munro, 2004). Given word limit, here is not the space within this overview to address the complexities of current debates. It is clear, however, that my earlier research would have profited from the insights of recent work on identity and the self, for example in portraying in a more sophisticated manner some of the structural elements of and constraints upon identity construction (Howard, 2000: 371). Perhaps more appropriately, given my subsequent work on sporting bodies, it would have been useful to extend the analysis of occupational groups to include different kinds of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), including the time-habitus (Métoudi, 1994) and body habitus (Harvey & Sparks, 1991), giving greater acknowledgement to the need to '(admit) the body and embodied social experiences into theory' (Simmonds, 1999: 60). In an analogous vein, Budgeon's (2003) theorisation of identity as an 'embodied event' and McDowell's (1995) analysis of the links between identity and the body in the workplace, provide new perspectives on identity, and particularly on gender performances including those in the workplace. These offer exciting possibilities for future work on identities.

Analogously, phenomenological insights have also provided useful keys to the analysis of the 'lived' body, the 'leib' in Husserl's (1970) terms, particularly the sporting and the injured body. In my current and future research I seek to deploy a combination of feminist and phenomenological approaches to the study of the female sporting body, using data from both autoethnographic and more traditional
ethnographic accounts. As Margaret Somerville (2004: 50) has noted, there is still a need to write in greater detail about the corporeal body and 'to bring the lived body into a discursive relation with contemporary theoretical formulations of the body'. Her exploration of 'methodological and theoretical gestures' (2004: 52) to accomplish this in relation to contemporary feminist theory has provided very recent inspiration to forthcoming work, specifically on phenomenological accounts of women distance-runners. In addition, the analysis of time within the sociology of sport remains a remarkably under-developed and under-theorised area of study, and as Adam (2000) notes, there continues to be a propensity for social time to be unproblematised within sociology in general. As a consequence, there remains a need for further research on the subjective experience of time within sports. Munro's (2004: 293) notion of the 'punctualization' of identity, where each specified identity is 'revealed' in response to the 'demand' of others at specific times, also provides new and thought-provoking angles on self and identity. In combining two personal sociological interests, the sociology of time and of self and identity, his work also provides a stimulus to my future research.
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The Publications

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Capturing Contracts: informal activity among contract researchers

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ABSTRACT Contract researchers constitute an expanding occupational group in UK higher education and contribute significantly to national research output. Despite recent concern and debates over their marginal status and inferior conditions of employment, little is known about the actual complexities of contract researchers' working lives. Drawing upon qualitative interviews, an attempt is made to remedy this lacuna, by portraying certain kinds of occupational knowledge and practices utilised by social science contract researchers. The paper focuses on the understandings and strategies which are developed and refined as researchers attempt to sustain employment in a highly insecure realm. What is portrayed is not the technical expertise required for this kind of research, but rather the knowledge, acumen and action which are more informal, tacit and indeterminate. This paper examines the cognitive and interactional processes which need to be developed and combined with technical expertise, if employment is to be maintained in such a competitive and insecure field.

Introduction

There has been a developing trend over the past two decades for an increasing proportion of those involved in the academic labour of higher education to be employed on non-standard contracts, including those of a fixed-term and part-time nature. In the UK, over a third of routine academic work is now carried out by such staff (Ainley, 1994), and this is proving to be an international phenomenon. As Kogan et al. (1994, p. 53) have noted, this casualisation has been driven by universities releasing themselves of much responsibility for continuity of employment, and making savings in employer contributions such as pensions and insurance. This move towards a more flexible and cheaper workforce is largely a response to governmental resource restrictions and the need to cope with increased student numbers (Kogan et al., 1994).

The growth of temporary and part-time teaching contracts has been documented in the UK (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), 1991; National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), 1993; Cutler et al., 1997), Canada (Baker, 1985; Rajagopal & Farr, 1989, 1992; Lundy & Warne, 1990), the...
US (Pearson, 1988; Leslie et al., 1982) and Australia (Over & Sherwood, 1994). Moreover, as universities have increasingly attempted to generate other income from external grants and contracts (Kogan et al., 1994), there has been a steady increase in the numbers of researchers employed on fixed-term contracts, and it is this group which constitutes the subject of this paper.

Again, there is evidence to suggest that this growth in contract research is an international trend, with increasing numbers of temporary researchers in the western industrialised states (Smith, 1991; Atkinson, 1992; Association of University Teachers (AUT), 1993; Kogan et al., 1994; Barlow, 1995; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In the UK, numbers have been growing since the 1970s (Norris et al., 1992), and currently there are over 35,000 of these researchers across all academic disciplines. In 1995–96, nearly 4000 academic staff in the social sciences were on fixed-term contracts which included a research element, and 2400 of these undertook research only (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 1995–96). Moreover, there are indications that the occupational structure of contract research reflects wider social disparities, with women under-represented at senior research grades and over-represented at more junior levels (Court et al., 1996, p. 25).

This state of affairs has generated debate concerning the inequalities suffered by fixed-term staff when compared to those academics employed on permanent contracts. It is also widely considered to be an inefficient system for training and maintaining a skilled research workforce (Salter, 1983; Rees, 1985; CVCP/AUT, 1990; Hart, 1991; New Scientist, 1991; NATFHE, n.d.; Norris et al., 1992; Ransom, 1992; AUT, 1995; Research Fortnight, 1995). Inferior salaries, lack of security of employment, little if any career development, and inadequate (even total lack of) pension provision make it difficult for most researchers to tolerate their status for a lengthy period. It is also highly wasteful for the higher education system as a whole when skilled and talented researchers relinquish posts or are forced to leave (Pettigrew, 1994). The debate has led the UK CVCP, in conjunction with the UK research councils and others, to formulate a Concordat on Contract Researcher Staff Career Management (CVCP 1996). The purpose of the concordat is to provide a framework of conduct to ensure the more equitable institutional treatment of contract researchers. The degree to which institutional policy will be influenced in practice by the concordat remains to be seen and will be monitored by a group entitled the Research Careers Initiative.

Despite this recent attention, the research literature on contract researchers is not extensive. A certain amount of material touches on the management of contract researchers (Roth, 1966; Platt, 1976; Bell, 1977; Crawshaw, 1985; Wakeford, 1985; Nespor, 1989; Horan, 1990; Etzkowitz, 1992; Porter, 1994; Burgess, 1994). Other material considers more directly contract researchers' occupational lives. The great majority of this latter material is based on surveys, and charts the terms and conditions of contract researchers' labour (Social Science Research Council, 1975; Over, 1984; Varlaam, 1987, 1988; AUT, n.d., 1990; Norris, 1991; Bryson & Tulle-Winton, 1994; Youngman, 1994; NATFHE, 1995; Court et al., 1996). Complementing this quantitative data is a much more limited amount of qualitative data, consisting largely of accounts by individuals depicting their personal experiences (Scott & Porter, 1983, 1984; Porter, 1984; Scott, 1984, 1994; Brown, 1994; Newbury, 1995; Polc, 1995; Pirrie, 1997). In addition, there exists a study of the contract researchers employed on a single project in education (Stronach & Macdonald, 1991). In summary, contract researchers 'represent a highly vulnerable and growing pool of expertise' (Pettigrew, 1994, p. 48), and yet little is known about the complexities of their occupational lives (Brown, 1994).
TABLE 1. Profiles of contract researchers studied, N = 61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of researcher</td>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>31–40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>First degree</td>
<td>Master's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade/Title</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td>Research Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of CR</td>
<td>1–3 years</td>
<td>4–6 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Plus one currently unemployed Research Fellow.

The Research

With the aim of filling this lacuna, research on the experiences of contract research staff was carried out in 1994–95, involving interviews with 61 social science [1] contract researchers, 59 of whom were employed at 11 UK universities, one was currently unemployed, and one, with considerable experience within the UK, was employed at an overseas university. The interviews were in-depth, semi-structured, tape-recorded, and were designed to gather data on various social relationships, such as those with peers, with research managers or directors, and with research sponsors. In addition, data were obtained on contract researchers' motives, aspirations, coping strategies, learning processes, and conceptions of identity. Those interviewed ranged from novice research assistants on their first contract, to senior research fellows with over a decade of experience. The interviews also spanned researchers who were on relatively long-term contracts (3 years) to those who were employed on a day to day, even hourly, rate. The interviewing at 11 different sites covered researchers employed in traditional academic departments (n = 10) and those employed in specialist research centres (n = 10). Information relating to the profiles and contexts of researchers is given in Table I. The research was designed to include researchers working in a range of contexts under a variety of conditions, with the objective of capturing as wide a spectrum of experience as possible. The data contained in this paper emanate from those interviews.

Occupational Knowledge and Practice

There is sociological literature on occupations which embraces the socialization processes particular to forms of work as diverse as hairdressing (Geer, 1972), accountancy (Coffey, 1993), journalism (Parry, 1990), medicine (Atkinson, 1981), the military (Hockey, 1986), prison officers (Carter, 1994) and teaching (Atkinson & Delamont, 1985). In contrast, as Delamont et al. (1994) indicate, little is known about the reproduction of academic occupational culture, and there is a need for further inquiry in this area. Moreover, what research there is on higher education has concentrated upon students and teaching staff, with little attention paid to other occupational cultures present in the sector (Delamont, 1996), including that of contract researchers. The research on occupational socialisation has largely focused upon the social processes involved (with peers, instructors/teachers,
employers), and to a lesser extent upon the acquisition of knowledge (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995, pp. 85–101).

Occupational knowledge and practice are of two principle kinds: formal and informal. The former is normally laid down (often in great detail) in institutional rules, regulations, training programmes, syllabi and the like. In contrast, informal knowledge and practice are usually acquired 'on the job' as individuals gain experience in their work. Some elements are learnt from managers and peers, whilst other aspects remain tacit, private or, as some have termed it, 'indeterminate' (Polanyi, 1983; Gerholm, 1990; Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). 'Indeterminacy' has been defined as the 'elements of occupational competence and practice that are dependent on tacit knowledge. They are not susceptible to codification and representation as explicit rules or recipes' (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995, p. 96). Despite the unofficial nature of such knowledge and practice, they are often crucial for the successful completion of occupational tasks. Such knowledge, the concrete practices of particular kinds of work, together with attitudes towards, and definitions of them, constitute what Bourdieu (1990, pp. 52–58) has called the *habitus*: an assembly of perceptions, dispositions, definitions, habitual understandings and actions, which interrelate, and are specific to particular collectivities such as classes or occupational groups.

The purpose of this paper is to depict a part of the *habitus* of UK contract researchers, illustrating some of the aforementioned elements and the factors which sustain them.

A Realm of Insecurity

Interviews with researchers revealed the dominant theme of their working lives to be that of coming to terms with a condition of insecure and unpredictable employment. This was the most prevalent concern which pervaded their occupational, and on occasion domestic, existence. Overall, this insecurity formed a continuum: at its most extreme end were individual researchers who existed on a part-time hourly rate, often not knowing how many hours they would work from week to week, and on occasion from day to day. At the opposite, and relatively secure end of the spectrum, were those who were funded by research councils or major charities for an extended period such as 3 years.

In between these poles lay different degrees of insecurity, with researchers working part-time and full-time for a variety of contract periods. There were researchers who had experienced a whole series of insecure conditions in a single university, whilst others had an occupational profile which included a succession of moves around the university system. Amongst the interviewees were a handful of researchers who had experienced periods where they held up to three part-time research jobs simultaneously at different institutions. Several researchers were actually working dual part-time contracts at geographically distant institutions. This kind of composite employment often involved research work devoted to separate tasks (interviewing, survey analysis, observation, etc.) on different projects, often on unrelated topics; a graphic indication of the fragmentation and casualisation of research labour. Moreover, having to forego a salary increase, or even to accept a decrease, in order to secure the next post, were not uncommon experiences amongst those interviewed. This insecurity, transience and movement have resulted in contract researchers being variously described as 'academic gypsies' (Rees, 1985) or 'the grape pickers of academia' (Salter, 1983).

It is interesting to note that the amount of anxiety generated by such structural insecurity tended to vary greatly, depending upon *inter alia* the biography and circumstances of individual researchers. Those researchers who were wholly dependent upon contracts for their livelihood not surprisingly articulated the highest level of concern,
while the response of others who had alternative sources of income (usually a partner with a stable salary), was more qualified. In the latter group, the concerns were not primarily economic (although this always remained a consideration), but rather with retaining research-based employment; an area in which they felt they excelled and which they enjoyed.

We also discovered from the interviews that the shorter the contract, necessarily, the greater the focus on acquiring another one, and the sooner the process of securing the occupational future was initiated. Even contracts of a number of years’ duration were no exception to this practice and it was common for researchers to describe their practice as ‘a year to settle in, a year to get the research underway, and a year to find another job’. Frequently, this was expressed by the phrase ‘you are always looking over your shoulder’, undoubtedly towards the spectre of unemployment. As Wolcott (1995, p. 53) aptly puts it: ‘“soft money” researchers nervously anticipate a future in which they may be able neither to please their former patron nor to find a new one’. This pervading realm of insecurity forces contract researchers to make collective and individual ‘situational adjustments’, which constitute ‘the most appropriate and efficient ways of behaving’ (Becker, 1977, p. 282). In order to lessen the insecurity and unpredictability of their occupation, they learn the best ways of finding further employment, of obtaining another contract, of securing, albeit temporarily, their future. It is to this kind of knowledge we now turn.

Staying in the Game

This occupational knowledge has a distinctly entrepreneurial flavour, with its operationalisation being variously described by researchers as ‘drumming up business’, ‘capturing contracts’, ‘academic hustling’, and ‘staying in the game’. This is perhaps not a surprising feature for a marginal group attempting to maintain its precarious position in an academic labour market which is itself becoming increasingly entrepreneurial (Breneman & Young, 1988; Ziman, 1991; Wood, 1992; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). There are a number of ways for individuals to seek opportunities. The most obvious, perhaps, is seeking advertised research posts in the national press. This method, however, does have a number of drawbacks, for posts may be located in any area of the country, and concerned with topics or areas unrelated to previous research experience. Both factors present potential problems of mobility and suitability for the researcher. However, other methods of finding posts are available and require entrepreneurial activity initiated when researchers are in post, and endeavouring to remain within the same centre or department. In this context, being entrepreneurial includes securing funding for further research, or ensuring that one is selected to occupy a post for which funding has already been secured, or might be. This kind of activity, and the knowledge which underpins it, are not, of course, related to technical adequacy in the carrying out of research. Researchers realise that to maintain employment, such adequacy has to be assumed a priori:

The bottom line is you have to be able to do research, go out, get the data and come in on time. Otherwise you have trouble with sponsors and everyone gets worked up ... Well if the report is late, it can get a bit sticky under the armpits! Really contract research is about ‘can do’ people, there is no room for passengers. That’s not to say you don’t hire learners, after all that’s what research assistants are, but the learning has to be fast ... how to run a survey,
how to do the research methods stuff. You are not going to get rehired if you can't do that, and you are not going to get a decent reference either. (Senior Research Fellow, Research Centre)

Rather, it is other factors, additional to technical adequacy, which researchers perceive to make the difference, and which aid them in the process of securing more employment. These kinds of understandings and activities are manifest in two inter-linked contexts: (1) the 'home' department or centre in which the researcher is working, and (2) communication with sponsors of research.

On Home Ground

In any work setting, how one progresses is dependent upon a number of factors. There may be, at least superficially, the purely meritocratic feature of how well one accomplishes the job; in other words, one's technical capacity. However, there is also not just what one knows but who one knows and how one is known. This state of affairs is certainly evident in academia, as Wunsch (1993, p. 353) points out: 'scholarship on successful careers provides evidence that success often depends not only on hard work but on the ability to self-promote'. The interviews indicated that building continuity of employment within a particular department or centre demanded such a combination. There is an imperative to be proactive so as to safeguard the occupational future. This applied just as much to those who saw themselves continuing in contract research, as to those whose long-term aspiration was a more stable academic post. For the latter group, particular indicators of success in contract research (publications, acquisition of research funds, etc.) as well as experience of other academic tasks, such as lecturing, were additionally recognised as the required building blocks for a move towards what one researcher termed 'the academic comfort zone'. This requires sustained effort on the part of researchers; in effect, it is the political work (Collins, 1979; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) necessary to maintain and extend one's position. Researchers initially have to recognise that such work needs to be done, and then to attend to its particularities, as the following accounts suggest:

There's a lot of diplomacy that has to happen that I don't really know about because I've not been here long enough to know how to play it. And generally speaking I feel like I'm quite a straight person and I would just rather say what I think, but you can't be like that because there are all these other things that you don't even know about that's going on ... So, you know, it's really difficult to know how to play things really, I just try to suss out what is going on. (Research Fellow, Department)

From very early on I suppose I was in a sense generating work or thinking about generating work, rather than saying there would be a job for me afterwards ... I don't want to slip back into being a research assistant, I want to be there, I want to be directing the work. That's the stage to get into. You have to look out very much for yourself ... because there are no career structures there are a lot of pitfalls ... I don't see myself as sitting around saying 'has this institution or that institution got a job for me'. I see it as I have to generate work. (Research Associate, Research Centre)

The conditions within which this work occurs fluctuate. A small minority of researchers operated within departments in which they were the sole researcher, and had very little
connection with other members of staff or the business of that department. In such contexts, they are sometimes located in marginal office space, occasionally geographically disconnected from their departmental centre. In effect, a couple of those interviewed possessed no office space, their research tasks being completed at home, in the field or in institutional libraries. In contrast, the great majority of researchers were based in centralised accommodation surrounded by peers, and were very much part of a more developed research culture. However, in both kinds of context, researchers need to be proactive in support of their continued employment. They, in effect, need to ensure their visibility to their immediate research directors, to other staff members who might possibly dispense research opportunities, and to peers with whom they can cooperate in further research. Learning the importance of visibility and learning how to be visible tends to be a variable process, and the interviews indicated that for some researchers, such an awareness develops gradually over time, over the duration of more than a single research contract. In particular, those researchers whose experiences were confined to operating solo in departments appeared to proceed along a more gradual learning curve than their peers in research centres. This awareness develops through personal experience and is aided by the informal transmission of insight from peers, so that researchers arrive at the realisation that the process of internal recruitment is influenced by factors additional to technical competence. The following observation was echoed frequently:

It's to do with the personal relationship between you and the two directors, but it also involves being part of the internal culture here, you know, and it's being part of that ... it's about being on the inside, that's how the recruitment works.

It's very sort of almost like talent spotting. (Research Associate, Research Centre)

Perhaps the most obvious way of maintaining visibility is simply to maintain a presence at home-base, carefully ensuring that one is noticed. For social science contract researchers, this may be somewhat problematic, for their role normally involves gathering data, often for extended periods, and on occasion quite distant from their institution. Periods of absence on fieldwork have the potential to harbour negative consequences in terms of integration into the informal culture of the department or centre, as one Research Fellow reflected:

Yes, I suppose I just see people to say hello, but a lot of the time I've been out on fieldwork and I've done some work from home. So in that sense I don't feel that integrated. In some ways I could have done more myself, I could have got more involved in seminars and stuff that is going on here. For example I don't go to staff meetings because in some ways I don't feel they are relevant to me ...

... (Research Fellow, Department)

However, presence at the institution has inevitably to be balanced against, and negotiated with, the demands of actually doing the job, completing the fieldwork, bringing in the data. Thus awareness develops that being visible brings potential advantages in the long term, but also needs to be considered in the context of the immediate demands of fieldwork. This awareness may take some time to develop to the point where individuals begin actually to change their practices:

With fieldwork there's always some degree of anxiety, no matter how experienced you get ... Well you've got a sponsor and there's always a deadline, and you can't write the report until you get the data, so there's always some degree of pressure. Now I have never liked meetings and would much prefer to be out in the field, but you get a lot of meetings at a centre like this ... to do with
administration, planning meetings, finance meetings, and meetings about IT. So I used to avoid them on purpose until the penny dropped! ... Lots of things happen in meetings and they are public, so they are venues for you to show how competent you are, how committed you are, etc., etc. They are sort of theatres of opportunity and opportunities get offered out and if you are not there you miss out. (Research Fellow, Department)

These opportunities are linked to the context in which researchers are working and, in traditional academic departments, they tend to be more restricted than in large research centres. The kinds of opportunities on offer may include the usual academic activities such as: involvement in teaching, administration of in-house seminars/workshops, attendance at conferences, hosting of visitors, in addition to membership of committees. Volunteering for these activities brings the researcher experience in spheres above and beyond the direct research process. In addition, active volunteering presents to those in positions of power the profile of a committed and enthusiastic colleague, someone whose commitment visibly extends beyond mere contractual obligations, who is prepared to help out and on many occasions to work in their own time:

What does usually happen is that you haven’t finished by the time your project ends and so you’re running over ... I mean, last year I ended up spending the whole summer and not paid any research money and writing a very big report, ha ... Well because the research time ended and then there was no more money available at that time. (Research Fellow, Department)

If something came in which was in our area which we should bid for, which we stood a chance for, it would be ‘alright let’s get a group of people together’ and they will spend a good deal of time over two to three days putting the research proposal together. But I have to say also that ... to do those kind of things comes from my own time. So I do the stuff in the evenings, at the weekends—if there’s a proposal that needs to be done, typically what happens is that you do it whenever you can. I would then spend perhaps in an evening, an hour or more on the telephone with ___ (research director), talking through it, and on the basis of that I would then rewrite or amend the proposal and throw it in and hope for the best. (Research Fellow, Research Centre)

This kind of visibility helps establish, for the individual, a reputation as a committed researcher and hopefully brings the benefit of further offers of employment. This may come in the form of being the ‘named’ researcher on a funding proposal, or being encouraged to apply for a research post (accompanied by the unofficial indication that one is the favoured candidate), or being presented offers of more interim work until a larger project materialises. It may even extend to the relative luxury of bridging funds between contracts, although this was apparently a rare occurrence according to interviewees. Moreover, the more visible and committed the researcher is perceived to be, the better her/his general treatment. As we have indicated, contract research is very much a continuum in terms of conditions and the differing nature of the work itself. Thus, being ‘plugged into’ research projects to undertake small amounts of interviewing or data coding, is a very different proposition from being the researcher hired to work single-handed on a major long-term project; different in terms of material security, status and intellectual stimulation. The more experienced researchers were well aware of this.
Activity Among Contract Researchers

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hierarchy of treatment, and the following comment, from a Research Fellow with almost a decade of experience, was typical:

I get jobs here because I'm known and I finish. I finish the work, I'm reliable blah blah, so I get contract after contract ... I've been treated quite well, I think, for a contract researcher in a sense, but they never try and give me rubbish, they always try and get me the best jobs. But on the other hand my use is seen really very much as a contract researcher. (Research Fellow, Department)

Once the researcher is established in the above sense, the accomplishments of her/his work can lead to relative occupational stability, which in turn breeds confidence that one will probably manage to secure some form of contract in the future. The following quotation is illustrative of this relative confidence:

Well for the B__ project she was the director for that. Just as L__ had done, she approached me one day and said: 'Look,' (the agency actually asked her to run the project) 'they've asked me', she broadly told me what it would be about and, 'would you be interested in working on this?'. I said, 'Yes, I would, very much so', and that's all I did—expressed an interest. 'Are you familiar with the R__ project?' again it was L__ who asked me if I would be interested and I said, 'Yes, I would,' and it happened. (Research Fellow, Department)

Peers and Protection

While it is imperative that researchers maintain high visibility of their competence to managers with the direct power to hire them, they also acquire knowledge about the important role peers play in 'staying in the game'. The availability of this particular peer resource was largely determined by the researcher's location (the number of our researchers in the location at the time of interview is given in parentheses; one researcher was unemployed at the time):

(1) academic departments which only occasionally hired researchers, usually one or two at a time (five departments; 11 researchers);
(2) academic departments which normally had several researchers on a range of contracts of differing degrees of security (five departments; 17 researchers);
(3) research centres which normally had larger numbers of researchers on different kinds of contracts (10 centres; 32 researchers in this category).

In locations of the first type, this kind of peer support and the resultant shared knowledge were absent. Even when researchers were hired, there was often little overlap between their contracts, which precluded the development of peer support. In contrast, within both the other types of context, there were enough researchers to form a critical mass, and individuals learned to recognise the value of peer aid, as they strove to protect themselves from unemployment. While there was occasional evidence of competition between researchers for work, interestingly, there was far more evidence of mutual aid. Indeed, supportive and helpful relations were revealed as the prevailing pattern of behaviour.

On one level, this aid is directed towards the technicalities of doing research: research design, how to gather, collate and analyse data, and, subsequently, how to draft research reports and other publications. Peer aid and support in the technicalities of research constitutes an important resource, especially given that many of those interviewed had received no research methods training during their formal education. This was due to the diverse routes via which individuals entered contract research labour; for example, via
social work or legal work. Other researchers had originally worked as secretaries on
research projects, or been hired initially for their technical capacity in areas such as
computing. For these individuals, research is very much learnt 'on the job' with the help
of more experienced peers.

On another level, and possibly more important, is a realisation that the help of peers
is crucial, not just in doing research but in acquiring further contracts. At locations with
a critical mass of researchers, the interviews revealed that individuals pIed their research
trade via a series of interlocking peer circles. On occasion, projects would be worked on
solo, but often work would be effected in teams, constituted according to factors such as
technical expertise, knowledge of subject, and availability. The following comments were
typical of researchers working in a team context:

Another thing I didn’t say before, the other thing about working here that I
like, is the way that you can collaborate quite a lot on projects ... you can
either share the good news or commiserate together, and I think that another
good thing about being here is that you have got that opportunity to
 collaborate and there’s room for that and people are OK about doing that,
there isn’t any of it’s you only, whatever, or any real competitiveness. (Research
Associate, Research Centre)

I’m sure in other departments it would be completely different, but it’s a very
supportive atmosphere here and we seem to help each other out, you know, if
there’s work opportunities and somebody says: ‘Oh so and so’s got work, or how
about that or how about ringing so and so’. So there’s a feeling that we’re all in
together and we’re all sort of helping each other out. (Research Assistant, Department)

At locations where there is a considerable amount of research activity, with numerous
researchers at various points in their contracts, and on contracts with differing levels of
security, knowledge of research opportunities constitutes a valued resource. This knowl­
dge usually circulates freely between peers, and concerns pieces of work which sponsors
may need imminently or in the future. Mutual aid consists of not only imparting this
information, but also, for example: inviting peers to collaborate on projects one has
devised; agreeing to collaborate on other colleagues’ projects (even if this is not
immediately convenient); or nominating peers to sponsors for research one is unable to
undertake oneself. These kinds of ‘gifts’ (Mauss, 1967) of work are not generally major
projects, but usually smaller projects or perhaps specific activities on a project (data
analysis, interviewing, etc). Via this mutual aid, researchers are able to tide themselves
over until greater contractual opportunities arise. This was particularly so in certain of
the large research centres visited, where part of the contractual obligation was for each
researcher to raise a certain amount of external funding. These personal ‘income targets’
make awareness of such gifts, their giving and their circulatory pattern, even more
important for occupational survival. The following comment is illustrative of gift-giving
practices in a large research centre:

And also here it’s the kind of place ... a lot of consultancies are going on, so
a lot of things have to happen fairly quickly at times, so there’s a need for any
sort of part-time staff or short-term people who can help out on all sorts of
projects. And there were chances coming up ... as I said the kind of place it
is, a lot of the time someone is short of a person who could do two months
work. I was working for the city council which was a month full-time for me,
when they (research sponsor) asked somebody else on the staff here if they
could work on a project, and the person they phoned said ‘I can’t do it but
Activity Among Contract Researchers

there might be a person who can,’ so they turned to me—so it was mainly because people here came to you saying ‘Well, are you willing to work two months on a project?’ (Research Assistant, Research Centre)

A further kind of understanding which researchers develop and which impacts upon the patterns of peer support, concerns knowledge of colleagues’ competence. The interviews revealed that staying in contract research is a pressurised business. We use the word ‘business’ firstly, because many of the those interviewed conceptualised their activities as such, and secondly, as previously indicated, entrepreneurial activity is usually required if employment is to be sustained. The great majority of contract researchers have deadlines imposed by research funders, which makes it a pressurised activity right from inception. In addition, most respondents revealed that it was common practice to be involved in multiple projects simultaneously, often up to three at one time. It needs to be kept in mind that in social science at least, the majority of this contract research activity is not at the ‘luxury end’ of the spectrum, on large projects funded by research councils, but rather on small-scale investigations sponsored, for example, by local authorities, government agencies, charities and the like. The entrepreneurial work of sustaining employment must be pursued on top of the actual research activity, and the interview data certainly depicted a recurrent theme of coping with pressure.

In such a context, it becomes imperative for researchers to acquire knowledge of the peers with whom they are going to collaborate in applying for research funding, and undertaking research itself. For there is little room for error or failure in contract research, whether in the timely completion of research reports, or in the securing of funding and consequent employment. Hence, with whom one is collaborating constitutes an important factor for individual researchers, and it is crucial to be assured of colleagues’ occupational competencies:

Well what you learn is who to do research with and who not to! ... You learn it from hard experience, like working with people who can’t really write, or miss deadlines, or they are not too good with funders in terms of communicating ... I suppose the other way you learn is coffee bar or corridor talk, ‘he’s having trouble’, ‘she’s had to repeat the pilot’, that sort of thing. It’s not always the people you think will have trouble like new research assistants. I’ve seen people with PhDs struggle under the pressure, as most of the time it’s not like academic research, it’s more immediate, narrower, and you need to be able to do that sort of business. If you have any choice you try and avoid people who you feel cannot manage, because the time scale on projects is normally tight and if there are problems you will end up baling the project out. (Research Fellow, Research Centre)

Obviously, such knowledge normally grows with experience in contract research generally, and with time spent in a specific centre or department. On occasion, individuals have no choice about with whom they work on projects, as factors such as availability of colleagues and research directors’ instructions preclude this. However, on occasions where some choice is available, the above kind of knowledge informs collaborative activity. Analysis of the data revealed that individuals who were not selected as likely collaborators were not necessarily excluded from other aspects of the gift-giving process, for example, the provision of information about opportunities for work elsewhere. This process was rationalised with phrases such as: ‘we’ve all got a mortgage’, ‘we all need k’, and ‘we’re all in the same boat’. Moreover, respondents were keen to point out such definitions of competence were not necessarily fixed, as it was readily...
recognised that individuals required time to become skilled at contract research. Therefore, evaluations of competence and decisions to collaborate with peers inevitably did change over time. Understandably, the greatest degree of latitude in this evaluative activity was afforded to novices, while experienced colleagues who were still judged not to be up to par were given less licence, as suggested by this comment from a Senior Research Fellow:

And you know, there’s a lot—it sounds a back biting thing to say, and I don’t think I’m a malicious person—but there are a lot of people who put themselves about, who don’t necessarily have enormous competence in this area, but they make themselves known, they make themselves visible, and they are around when they are needed. (Senior Research Fellow, Department)

In locations with a critical mass of researchers, peer aid constitutes a valuable resource, making various kinds of gifts available to the individual researcher: information, collaboration, nomination. The giving and receiving of such gifts helps to secure the material future, and, thus, reinforces the value and meaning of the practice to researchers (Bourdieu, 1977). Gift exchange has both economic and symbolic dimensions which reinforce each other, helping to establish and sustain solidarity in the face of insecurity.

**Networking Niceties**

Just as indeterminate knowledge informs interaction with peers and research directors within the home institution, this knowledge also influences relationships with funding bodies. These agencies are of course crucial, for they usually directly fund researchers’ salaries. As is the case within their internal institutional environment, researchers learn that ‘invisibility’ pays no dividends in attempting to secure monies from external sources. Research funding is usually acquired via a bidding process which is supposed, theoretically, to be meritocratic. Competition for funding is particularly intense in the UK social science community, as the amount of overall funding, when compared to natural sciences, is minimal (Economic and Social Research Council, 1996). Hence, researchers learn to supplement the formal application procedure with other activities which they describe as ‘networking’. The basis of networking is the projection of a highly visible competence in research activity to likely sources of patronage. Researchers realised that invisibility was highly detrimental and might well result in unemployment. Despite the harsh economic reality underlying networking, for many individuals, it was not an easy or unproblematic process, and the following comment reflects a commonly experienced initial reluctance to engage in this practice:

At first I found that very hard, I didn’t like that at all. I was quite happy to sit in here and wait for someone to ring me up and say ‘would you like to do some work?’, but going out … I had to do quite a lot of soul searching ‘is this really me’ do I want to ring up and say ‘hello this is B____ from ____’ you know, I found that very difficult; it’s got easier, a lot easier. (Research Fellow, Research Centre)

One potentially fertile field for networking is the circuit of national and international conferences pertinent to the area or discipline in which researchers are active. So, researchers present papers not purely for scholarly purposes but also to render visible their competence and activity to other delegates, some of whom will be potential funders. When interviewed, the respondents frequently described such work as ‘selling’; selling their ideas, their theories, their expertise, and their ability to research the area.
Researchers also become well aware that merely attending a conference is not sufficient; their visibility must be high enough to ensure that potential funders register their presence. This was articulated via comments such as ‘make sure you say something’, ‘just making sure they know I’m there’, and ‘making your name and face known’. The nuances of this practice of visibility are usually initially learnt within the researcher’s home institution and subsequently refined and extended to external venues such as conferences, sometimes under the tutelage of more experienced researchers. Other venues for promotional activity may become available depending upon the resources of the researcher’s own institution. Revenue-generating events such as courses and workshops also provide opportunities for displaying expertise:

Yes I think the present things have all come from contacts I’ve made. We put on workshops for people, quite a few things, that people have met us at workshops, talked about what we are doing and when they’ve got some evaluation, given us a ring. People I’ve met on courses I have taught on have got in touch with me about work. Just people you meet at conferences and things like that—you’ve got to put yourself about a bit, be nice to people ha ha—it’s horrible isn’t it—but that does seem to be how it happens, it’s who you know really. (Research Fellow, Department)

Once initial contact is made with funders, there are grounds for building a relationship which researchers fervently hope will positively influence their future applications for funding. Such relationships are usually developed incrementally by increasing the level of interaction, engaging in the discourse of funding possibilities, and forming links with key individuals with specific responsibilities for research funding. The following practices were common amongst more experienced researchers:

Well the other way we get money is through funding bodies ... And we will ring them up and say, ‘I’ve got a good idea, what do you think, what shall we do, when are your committees meeting?’ ... We’re aware of what their interests are, when they might be ready for some more research, we’re out there in the market place thrashing it out, yes ... We’re interested in networks and things. I mean, there’s a lot of ringing people up and saying, ‘What’s happening?’, but again its a reciprocal thing, people ring up and you know in any field, especially when they’re specialised, there are only certain key people and we know them. We know nearly all of them. And so we get to hear about things and then what people are interested in and then you know what policy decisions have been made. It takes a long time to get to that stage, but that’s what it’s been like for the last two or three years, very much going to public meetings, people asking you to speak at conferences and things, just chatting to people ... they’re not traditional researcher skills, no. (Senior Research Fellow, Research Centre)

In a sense, the function of this kind of relationship is intelligence gathering, the accruing of information concerning policy development, research direction, and possibilities for future funding. By such means, researchers keep funding contacts informed of their competence, float potential projects, and gauge possibilities. Acquiring knowledge of the sponsor, and being known by them, potentially increases the success rate of bids. The following comment typifies the practices of the more experienced researchers interviewed:

Yes, I hustle more than write a proposal in a sense. You realise what your
experiences are. I very rarely, very rarely invent a proposal cold and then find the funder, I will go the other way around. I put in for what the funder wants, or I try to, I do the work and make contacts all the time. I will spend a lot of time getting the networking going so the funders are going to know me, rather than feel cold. I really haven't had too much success going in cold, but I've had lots of success with funders who I've made myself known to. (Senior Research Fellow, Research Centre)

Networking practices involve considerable strategic activity on the part of contract researchers: accruing information about funders' intentions, formulating proposals to fit these intentions, signposting future areas for investigation, and maintaining a high profile. In addition, of course, research contracts have to be seen to be effected competently, for without an acknowledgement by funders of such competence, the networking niceties depicted are liable to be of no avail.

Discussion

The knowledge we have portrayed and the practices it underpins are important resources which researchers use in an attempt to sustain employment in a competitive and marginal occupation. This combination of knowledge and practice is deployed in three arenas:

(1) within the general orbit of the home centre or department;
(2) within what may be termed the subculture (Gerholm, 1990);
(3) in the external terrain of relations with research funders.

How quickly and comprehensively researchers learn these aspects of their trade is dependent upon a number of contingent factors. Firstly, the interviews indicated that such learning is more partial and slower where there is no critical mass of peers, and few research-active permanent staff. The absence of a cohort or subculture of peers deprives the novice or inexperienced researcher of a valuable resource of occupational understandings. When there is a similar absence or paucity of permanent staff involved in research, again the possibilities of knowledge transmission decrease. The interviews revealed a trend for new researchers, who worked solo in small academic departments with no real track record of sustained project funding, to complete their contract and leave, having acquired relatively little knowledge of the contract research world. In contrast, there was evidence to illustrate that when experienced researchers found themselves in a similar context, their previous knowledge and skills immediately helped them to develop possibilities for further employment. These experienced researchers were well aware that their occupational interests were best served by employment in major research centres, rather than in small departments without a track record of research funding. Unfortunately, however, the vagaries of the employment market often preclude such choice.

Secondly, there were inevitably biographical differences between researchers, some being much more receptive to the importance of issues such as visibility, collegiality, and networking. Thus, some researchers were more aware of the 'cues', or pointers towards the significance of unofficial activity (Eggleston & Delamont, 1983; Kleinmann, 1983; Miller & Parlett, 1976), which were tendered by peers, managers, and staff of research-funding organisations. As a result, their learning curve was somewhat steeper than that of less 'cue aware' colleagues. It would, of course, be possible to investigate the reasons
Activity Among Contract Researchers

for such differences in perception, by inquiring in much greater detail into our respondents' biographies, albeit with what we suspect might be diminishing sociological returns. Yet, what the interviews did reveal was some correspondence between 'cue awareness' and the researcher's economic situation. Certainly for some of the researchers interviewed, the urgency of securing another contract was greater than for their peers. The most common rationale was that the researcher was the sole economic provider for herself/himself, and on many occasions, for dependants. In contrast, other researchers were in a less pressurised economic position, usually having a partner with a stable income to support their household. Unsurprisingly, economic imperative acted as a great motivator to stimulate the development of cue awareness.

The research revealed an absence of formal learning amongst those interviewed, during their career as contract researchers. None of the departments or centres of which the researchers had experience ran formal training programmes on the craft of research. Any formal knowledge these researchers had acquired consisted primarily of research methods courses at undergraduate level. However, some had not even been exposed to this level of training. For example, there were individuals who entered research via secretarial or technician posts on a project, as well as those whose first degrees contained no research-method training whatsoever. Moreover, learning about how to do research is not the same as doing research; nor is doing research necessarily the same as doing contract research, where researchers are ultimately responsible to a sponsor or client. Interviewees' knowledge of how to do contract research was overwhelmingly of an informal nature and learnt by practice. Almost a quarter of those interviewed possessed a doctorate, and had acquired knowledge of research processes as postgraduate students, but these individuals emphasised that they still had much to learn when taking on the role of contract researcher.

This paper has focused upon the acquisition of knowledge of an informal, 'indeterminate' and, on occasion, private nature (Jamous & Peloille, 1970; Atkinson et al., 1977; Atkinson & Delamont, 1990), usually gleaned via personal experience. Some of this knowledge remains entirely tacit, constituting personal rules of thumb for undertaking the tasks at hand. Other elements of this knowledge are more public and circulate informally between peers. How much knowledge and which elements are transmitted between researchers is dependent upon factors such as the particular combination of individuals present at any particular time, and the location in which they work. As previously depicted, the operational conditions of doing contract research can vary, particularly between large research centres and smaller units. The same kinds of knowledge may remain tacit or private in one context, while in others there will be a more collective awareness of them. This is not to say that such knowledge is formally changed between researchers in any regulated or codified fashion. Rather, it tends to assimilated incrementally and experientially, and consequent action is improvised as day to day routines of contract research work unfold.

Much of the sort of knowledge and derivative activities portrayed here are not free of congruity with other occupations, such as selling (Prus, 1989) or even institution (Heyl, 1979). Those who occupy these occupational roles depend to a large extent on their presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) to convince their clients or audiences of their services; contract research is no exception. As a baseline, in order to be successful, researchers have of course to complete research contracts on time and deliver a product that meets sponsors' expectations, but perhaps less obviously, they also need to orish the kind of additional 'work' depicted in order to gain contracts, renew them and maintain relationships with research funders. Within their own particular centre or
department, researchers also need to project and sustain a competent and highly visible research self to those who are in a position to rehire them. As noted by one of our respondents, such competencies are not centred on traditional research skills, taught on method courses, but are very much learnt on the job, often through hard experience.

What has been portrayed are certain kinds of knowledge which fuel particular kinds of practices, which in turn are used to help improve employability and sustain employment in a competitive and insecure academic occupation. This pragmatic activity then constitutes part of the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) of social science contract researchers. Despite attempts to improve the employment conditions and career prospects of contract researchers with the recent introduction of the *Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management*, signed *inter alia* by all the UK research councils, the Royal Society and the British Academy, there appears to be a real dearth of information concerning the complexities of contract researchers’ occupational lives and work practices. There is a pressing need for such knowledge in order to inform national policy on the ‘careers’ of an occupational group which makes such a significant contribution to the research profile of universities and colleges, but which has traditionally been subject to such high degrees of insecurity of employment that the very idea of a ‘career’ may appear risible.

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**NOTES**

[1] The researchers interviewed were working within the following social science fields: sociology, social legal studies, social work and policy, politics, psychology, planning and education. Their individual intellectual backgrounds were even more diverse, also encompassing disciplines from the humanities and anthropology. Many of the research centres visited operated within a multi-disciplinary framework.

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Activity Among Contract Researchers


NOTES AND ISSUES
Social Science Contract Researchers in Higher Education: Perceptions of Craft Knowledge

Jacquelyn Allen Collinson

The past two decades have witnessed a trend towards the use of fixed-term and part-time contracts in higher education in the UK, where over a third of routine academic work is now carried out by staff on fixed-term contracts (Ainley 1994). As Kogan et al. (1994: 53) have noted, this increased casualisation of academic labour has been driven by the need for universities and colleges to reduce labour costs. The move towards a more ‘flexible’ and cheaper workforce is largely a response to governmental resource restrictions and the need to cope with increased student numbers (Kogan et al. 1994). In order to cope with financial pressures, universities have increasingly sought to diversify their funding and become more entrepreneurial in attracting income from sources other than the government (Wasser 1990; Ziman 1991). External research grants and contracts play an increasingly important role in the finances of many institutions, with a concomitant rise in the number of researchers employed on fixed-term contracts.

In the UK, numbers have been growing since the 1970s (Norris et al. 1992), with currently over 35,000 of these researchers across all academic disciplines. In 1995/96, nearly 4,000 academic staff in the social sciences were on fixed-term contracts, which included a research element, and 2,400 of these were employed exclusively on research (HESA 1995/96). Moreover, there are indications that the occupational structure of contract research reflects wider social disparities, with women under-represented at senior research grades and over-represented at junior levels (Court et al. 1996: 25).

Despite increasing numbers of contract researchers, their importance for the research profile of universities and colleges and the publication of a concordat on their career management (CVCP 1996), relatively little research has been published on the occupational lives of this marginalised group. Knowledge generally centres upon the inequalities suffered by fixed-term staff in comparison to academics employed on ‘permanent’ contracts. Poor salaries, reduced holidays and sickness benefits, lack of security, little if any career development, and inadequate pension provision.

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are some of the factors which make it difficult for most researchers to tolerate their marginalised status for the duration of a 'career' in academia. It is considered an inefficient system for training and maintaining a skilled research workforce (NATFHE n.d; Norris et al. 1992; Ransom 1992; AUT 1995) when so many well-qualified, trained researchers are driven to leave research at a relatively early age due to lack of economic security. Additionally, it is also highly wasteful for the higher education system when the employment of skilled and talented researchers is so fragmented (Pettigrew 1994), and the quality of research output is negatively affected by researchers' worries about job security (NATFHE 1995).

Contract researchers represent a 'growing pool of expertise' (Pettigrew 1994: 48), and yet little is known about the intricacies and complexities of their occupational lives (Brown 1994). As Delamont et al. (1994) have observed, knowledge about the reproduction of academic occupational culture is sparse, and has concentrated upon teaching staff, paying scant attention to other occupational cultures within the higher education sector (Delamont 1996).

The Research

With the aim of beginning to fill this lacuna, a pilot study of the experiences of contract research staff was initiated in 1994–5, involving interviews with 61 social science contract researchers, 59 employed at 11 United Kingdom universities, one currently unemployed, and one, with considerable experience within the UK, employed at an overseas university. The profile of the researchers studied is given in Table 1.

Initially, judgment sampling (Burgess 1984), sometimes termed criteria sampling (Creswell 1998), was employed to select a group of 61 contract researchers who were widely variable in terms of:

(i) age (21 to 53);
(ii) experience (novice research assistants on their first contract to senior research fellows with over a decade of experience); and
(iii) contract type (covering contracts of 3 years or more, to those based on a daily or hourly contract).

Snowball sampling (Creswell 1998) supplemented the initial trawl so that eventually 11 UK university sites were selected. The sample covered traditional academic social science departments (n=10) and specialist research centres (n=10), in the fields of sociology, socio-legal studies, social work and policy, politics, psychology, planning and education. Researchers' intellectual backgrounds also included social anthropology and the humanities. The objective was to capture a wide spectrum of contract research experience within the time and resource constraints of the study.
Table 1  Basic profile of contract researchers studied, N=61

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* plus one currently unemployed Research Fellow.

Interviews were in-depth, semi-structured and tape recorded. Details of names and places have been changed in the following excerpts from transcripts to protect the identity of interviewees. A classic methodological problem with interview-based research is the reliability of self-reporting, in that respondents do not always do or say what they say they do. The analysis was therefore based upon the accounts or narratives (Cortazzi 1993) which contract researchers presented. Due to resource constraints, it was not possible to engage in participant observation in order to compare researchers' accounts with their actions or across contexts (Delaumont et al. 1998: 158). In such circumstances, as Gilbert and Abell (1983: 2–3) point out, 'accounts are all we have to work with and shaky inferences to what is/was really going on should be dispensed with, as a pointless metaphysical exercise'.

The purpose of the pilot project was not to generate statistical generalisations, but to explore the complexities of contract researchers' working practices and their subjective experiences of contract work. In common with much qualitative research, extrapolation from the data relies on 'the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events' (Mitchell 1983: 190) and no attempt has been made to claim representativeness of the sample or generalisability of the findings to the general population of contract researchers. However, the group studied was extensive enough to reveal significant similarities and differences in experiences.

This paper focuses upon the researchers' perceptions and understandings of the knowledge and skills they acquired via contract research.
Firstly, the nature of these occupational competencies and the context within which they are acquired will briefly be portrayed. Second, the differing entry routes and amounts of academic capital (Bourdieu 1988) researchers possessed will be examined. Third, links will be suggested between the possession of academic capital and the meanings researchers attributed to the knowledge and skills they acquired.

**Occupational Competencies Under Pressure**

Amongst the researchers studied, technical knowledge was operationalised in the form of skills such as designing research, data collection, data analysis and the presentation of findings. As none of the departments or centres in the study provided formal research training programmes, the researchers generally acquired technical knowledge informally 'on the job'. Other informal or 'tacit' knowledge (Gerholm 1990; Allen-Collinson and Hockey 1998) was used with the aim of continuing employment in an insecure occupational realm. For example, researchers learned how to 'hustle' for research funds in order to prolong their employment (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 1998).

The application of this combination of formal and informal knowledge constitutes the contract researcher's craft, developed and refined within an environment often characterised by sustained pressure. The nature of most social science contract research forces researchers to work to tight deadlines. The completion of a timely and adequate report is, understandably, a pervasive concern, firstly in order to meet the requirements of the sponsor, and secondly, but no less importantly, with an eye to continuing their employment. Failure to produce competent output may well result in damage to the researcher's own reputation and also to institutional relationships with sponsors.

Interviews revealed that pressure was endemic within the contract research milieu. At the 'luxury' end of the contract research spectrum, were those contracts funded by bodies such as research councils for three years or longer, with provision for salary increments, pension contributions and other benefits. In contrast, the majority of contracts are of shorter duration and less secure. Amongst interviewees, it was not unusual practice to be paid on a part-time hourly rate, without advance knowledge of the number of hours required, in some instances from day to day. Several researchers were employed simultaneously on research projects at different universities. There were numerous instances of researchers being assigned relatively major responsibilities at the novice stage (usually research assistant) of their career. The craft knowledge and skills of contract research are then often developed 'on the job' in a highly pressurised and insecure context.
**Routes to Research and Academic Capital**

Of significance to the process of acquiring research expertise is the specific occupational entry route. The majority of the interviewees possessed degrees in social science disciplines. A substantial proportion had professional qualifications in areas related to applied research, such as education, law and social work. A small number had entered social science research subsequent to a first degree outside social science, whilst a smaller number had entered research via what might be termed 'unorthodox' routes. Thus, 3 (5 per cent) of the researchers (all women) had originally commenced work on a project in a secretarial capacity and then transferred to the role of researcher for a variety of reasons, including staff shortages, combined with a recognition of their research skills. On occasion staff had occupied dual roles (secretary and researcher) for a limited duration. In a similar vein, 2 male researchers (3 per cent) had started as technicians, servicing research projects in computing or quasi-experimental areas of study, and had incrementally taken on more research-specific functions, before achieving full researcher status.

Consonant with the different routes of entry were differing amounts and kinds of academic capital (Bourdieu 1988). Those without higher education qualifications often had little understanding of the research process prior to their practical involvement in research projects. Researchers with qualifications outside of social science did bring with them an armoury of theoretical and conceptual disciplinary knowledge. Consequently, the learning of social science equivalents, whilst demanding, was not a completely unfamiliar cognitive process. What was unfamiliar and demanding was the acquisition of knowledge and skills under pressure. This also applied in part to researchers whose formal education was of a professional or practitioner orientation, where there was little evidence of prior acquisition of research knowledge or skills.

Finally, there were what might be termed traditionally trained researchers with degree(s) in social science, and a spectrum of research experiences, ranging from undergraduate research projects to original doctoral research. These researchers brought to contract work the depth and breadth of knowledge attained through disciplinary socialisation. For this group, contract research involved learning how to undertake a particular kind of research, one which was relatively constrained and pressurised compared to their previous experiences.

**Skill, Upskill and Deskill**

Different entry routes, amounts and kinds of academic capital and the individual's 'career trajectory' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997) influenced the meanings ascribed by researchers to the skills and knowledge they developed via contract research. 'Career trajectory' may however be a
problematic concept, specifically in relation to contract researchers, as it implies a degree of determinism about choices made and a certain predictability concerning the pathways embarked upon (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997). It became apparent from the interviews that the element of predictability in terms of the immediate future, let alone a distant 'career' pathway, is often sadly lacking in contract researchers' occupational lives.

For those who entered the occupation possessing no higher education qualifications and for whom a career or job in academia had not been considered a possibility, taking on the researcher role and developing research craft were viewed as positive steps on the career path:

I got myself a place on a community programme, manpower services scheme. It was funded for long-term unemployed people and we were doing data preparation for the University of . . . We were just running the computers and running statistics, and because I had got this statistics 'A' level there were some areas where I was very useful to the health researchers . . . That (contract research) started as a part-time job (Research Associate, academic department).

The ability to manage the interactional, technical and analytical dimensions of research was perceived very much as a process of becoming skilled, an upgrading of their capacities in a direction not previously envisaged. Moreover, they perceived positively the attainment of competency in an activity normally reserved for individuals with higher education qualifications who then became defined as equals, colleagues and peers. For these 'unorthodox' entrants to contract research, craft acquisition was strongly connected with a bolstered occupational self-image (Becker 1977). This was perceived as a move up the organisational hierarchy usually from 'assistant' or 'support' staff status, despite the insecure and marginal position of contract researchers in that hierarchy. Possessing no prior knowledge of the research process, nor a disciplinary conceptual or theoretical armoury, the learning curve for such researchers was often very steep, whilst the transition to contract researcher was extremely positive in meaning.

Interviewees with professional or occupational experience in areas such as education, social work or law brought a combination of practitioner experience and theoretical knowledge to the new research domain. One of the principal motives for entering and tolerating such a marginal status, with its attendant insecurities, was articulated as the desire to promote social and political change in areas such as schooling, housing, criminal justice, and so on. This was linked to conceptions of occupational self which valorised a concern for social justice. Contract research was perceived as an opportunity – practically and positively – to influence the fields in which these researchers had originally trained, and offered a vehicle for engagement with specific policies and practices identified as in
need of improvement or transformation. One Research Fellow (academic department) emphasised the importance of being able to influence practitioners:

I'm a specialist in helping practitioners, that's how I see myself . . . You really feel here you are making a difference, that people (practitioners) actually do listen to what you say.

These researchers viewed their research as an instrument of change (c.f. Carr and Kemis 1986; Whyte 1991). As a result, the acquisition of the research craft which empowered them to promote such change was regarded as a valuable addition to the array of practitioner, professional knowledge and skills they possessed a priori, and therefore a process of upskilling.

In contrast, the group of researchers from the humanities and social sciences, who constituted the majority of the sample, tended to articulate rather more ambivalence towards the development of contract research craft. A strong influencing factor was the degree to which they adhered to their former intellectual and disciplinary identity. A number of immediate practical problems detrimentally affected disciplinary identification. Interviewees indicated that pressures to meet deadlines were often intense, and that production of a research report for the sponsor held top priority. This pressurised context usually precluded an allowance of time to conceptualise or theorise from the data using disciplinary resources, as one researcher lamented:

What you find is that most research funders will not pay you to do things that they are not directly interested in. So what they do is calculate the time for the job . . . and that's what they pay for . . . As I said, it was a bit of a shock me thinking I was going to be able to use the theories I had just spent four years learning how to use, and then finding there was no time to do that on the project (Research Fellow, research centre).

No time was usually 'budgeted in' for such intellectual activity, because the vast majority of sponsors had no interest in what might be termed more academic or theoretical output. In addition, economic necessity often meant that researchers had to pursue a new contract well before the end of the current project. Where some time could be extracted from a project, there was an overwhelming consensus that this time should be devoted to drafting proposals for funding, in order to secure employment. The understandable fixation with economic survival and the need to sell one's skills were noted by all those interviewed, for example:

In a sense, agencies don't pay me to write chapters in books or articles, they pay for the report. So, in order for me to keep working I've got to get more money from another agency . . . So in some respects my first interest is not data to write academic articles. I almost run as a business basically . . . my first priority is to provide people with what they want (Research Fellow, academic department).
Inevitably this reduced the likelihood of academic research output. A further factor was the extent to which the original project research design permitted the generation of publishable academic material. Initial contractual arrangements with sponsors rarely included an allowance for this kind of output. With the major exception of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grants which encourage dissemination in this way, the obligations and temporal limits of most research contracts generally precluded the production of academic output:

If you manage to get an ESRC grant that's the luxury end of the market. In a way it's as near as you are going to get to academic research, because they are interested in that kind of output, and the people who referee your funding applications are expecting you to situate your research theoretically and conceptually. You know yourself that with the rest of it, the vast majority of sponsors have no interest in that kind of material, so their original project specifications exclude it (Research Fellow, research centre).

Researchers articulated different levels of expectation in relation to using disciplinary knowledge. In general, the less cognate the background was to social science, the less the expectation that disciplinary knowledge would be utilised. Inevitably, perhaps, the lower the expectations, the less the disappointment experienced by researchers who were unable to make direct use of disciplinary knowledge. Of more immediate concern to this group was the development of competence in the complexities of their new craft, and this was perceived positively, as a process of becoming skilled.

A similar perception was held by researchers with social science backgrounds. These individuals were still required to learn new aspects of the research process relevant to the domain of contract research. Differences in perception were discernible within this group and interviews revealed a correspondence between the intensity and duration of disciplinary socialisation (Delamont et al. 1997a; 1997b) and the degree of disappointment articulated, so that those with first degrees exhibited less frustration than those with master's degrees or doctorates. Although all social science interviewees perceived the learning of contract research craft as a process of skilling, those with more advanced disciplinary socialisation also perceived a simultaneous deskilling. On the one hand, researchers were developing and refining the methodological tools of their craft, whilst on the other hand they perceived their stock of disciplinary conceptual and theoretical devices to be subject to gradual erosion over time:

*Interviewer:* So what's happened to psychology?

*Interviewee:* Well it's gone to sleep I think! The reason he (research director) hired me in the first place was because I came from psychology and he wanted somebody who had a psychology approach to talk to people . . . I was very
interested in that, but I dropped that altogether. I’ve even blanked it out, because I can’t remember much about it at all now, although I knew so much, I really was on top of that, and it’s just gone (Research Fellow, academic department).

For individuals with a prolonged disciplinary socialisation and expectations of a career in a particular subject area, the attenuation of theoretical knowledge was a difficult and painful process involving loss of hard won intellectual resources, and also a certain loss of intellectual identity and of self-confidence.

In terms of occupation, right now I’m a contract researcher; intellectually somewhat ambiguous because I’m academically trained to do something completely different . . . Well, now I feel sad about it . . . sometimes you think to yourself, ‘I should have applied for the jobs I see teaching’ . . . which I wouldn’t apply for now because I don’t feel confident enough . . . Intellectually, being in contract research does mess you about (Research Fellow, research centre).

Data revealed that individuals who had so far managed to evade the process of disciplinary deskilling were those whose careers displayed particular characteristics. The majority of those who had been employed at the grade of Research Fellow or Senior Research Fellow for a number of years had managed to develop sufficient expertise and control over their labour process to generate for themselves time for academic writing and publishing.

Another factor which helped researchers achieve academic output was sustained employment in a single centre where the management encouraged academic output and efforts were made to schedule in some opportunities for publishing. It was evident that researchers’ control over their labour process was dependent upon the development of a high degree of craft competence which subsequently enabled them to remain in jobs where academic output was possible. However, as others have noted in the context of careers, happenstance or serendipity were also important factors (Miller 1983; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997).

For the majority interviewed, opportunities for academic output were rare. Perhaps the most oft-repeated response from all researchers, when questioned about their work practices, was their manifest concern at the lack of time available across all research activities. The highly pressurised nature of contract research was emphasised by many, including this Research Fellow (research centre):

Ideally it would all be nicely planned and we’d all be getting ESRC money for nice long-term bits of work . . . but in actual fact what we are doing is constantly reacting to tenders, for pieces of work that are not often what I would call research at all, rather a lot of it is consultancy, and they (sponsors) come in with ridiculous time scales . . . and it’s so competitive . . . And then there’s all the pressures that everybody longs to turn their work into academic publications, which is very difficult when you’re talking repeated short tendering and completion for local authority work.
A further influence upon perceptions of occupational self operated irrespective of entry route to contract research. The conditions of contract research commonly produce a pattern of employment where researchers are obliged to work on a series of unrelated projects in a variety of subject areas. This fragmented employment pattern almost inevitably results in the gradual diminution of any real claim to a specific area of expertise. Experienced researchers were well aware of the pitfalls of this trend, which was viewed with trepidation as a dangerously *deskilling* process, both by those forced into such diversity of work and by those whose career paths thus far had avoided it. The sheer wastefulness and frustration of fragmented employment and resultant deskilling are captured in the comments of a Research Fellow (academic department):

I started to apply for research jobs in other places, although I was already beginning to feel I couldn’t face too much more dislocation . . . It’s destructive in that you build up a certain amount of expertise in your area, then you chuck it and it goes down the tube. It seems really wasteful that you should have to do that. You build up the expertise, you do the reading, you get to know what’s involved in the area, then that turns to dust, and you’re on to the next project . . . whatever that is . . . In effect you’re deskilled every time you move jobs . . . you really feel that every time you start off, you’re sort of demoted again to somebody who is really to do the ground work. And it’s the constant, sort of, being brought down to somebody who knows nothing about what they’re doing; it’s very demoralising.

Despite the negative consequences of such fragmented employment, interviewees also maintained that the diversity of jobs helped generate flexibility, craft competence and a high level of skill across a variety of research contexts. Yet they were keenly aware that the possession of a specialism was a significant factor in obtaining long-term employment within contract research, or more optimistically in transferring to a career in mainstream academia:

My research pedigree is a pig’s ear . . . in that I’ve got too many specialisms, I mean I’ve done too many things so nobody’s going to believe that I’m a specialist in any of those things. I might know as much as any one person about an area, but I’m not going to be seen in that way. I’m going to be seen as somebody doing different things, somebody with multiple skills rather than somebody who is an expert in something particular (Research Fellow, research centre).

**Conclusion**

In conjunction with large numbers of fixed-term and ‘casual’ teaching staff (Cutler *et al.* 1997), contract researchers form part of a marginalised labour force whose work is nevertheless central to the work of higher education institutions. Although contract researchers constitute a relatively homogeneous group in relation to certain structural features (such
as inferior salaries, employment conditions and status), interview data identified significant differences in biographical features such as educational level, disciplinary identification, motives for entering contract research and occupational expectations. Analysis revealed a relationship between these features and researchers' perceptions of the knowledge and skills gained and lost whilst undertaking contract research work.

Many researchers considered themselves to have become deskilled in relation to their subject area, whilst simultaneously being upskilled in terms of the generic craft practices needed to complete contract research in a pressurised environment. Others evidenced frustration and a sense of deskilling at being forced to move between projects, with a resultant loss of subject expertise. In contrast, there were researchers who had entered the occupation with little academic capital or expectations of a career in academia and consequently viewed the accumulation of research craft knowledge and practice very positively as a skilling process.

This paper has portrayed some of the complexities of social science contract researchers' lives, encompassing the relationships between their routes to research, their possession of academic capital and the meanings they attach to the skills and knowledge of their craft. Further analysis of the project data will, it is hoped, chart connections between these factors and levels of work performance in contract research.

The major managerial challenge facing higher education over the next decade and a half has been identified as the need 'to ensure that it can recruit, retain, and motivate staff' (Keep and Sissons 1992: 67–68). There is now a pressing need for research on the complexities of contract researchers' occupational lives and everyday working practices in order to inform policy at both national and institutional level, if the higher education sector is seriously committed to retaining and motivating these staff, and to achieving a real improvement in their employment conditions and marginalised position. Currently there is no evidence to suggest that any meaningful policies have been implemented in order to ameliorate the harsh reality of many contract researchers' working lives (Bryson 1999).

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Note

1. The research team comprised the author and Dr J. Hockey.
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Working at a marginal ‘career’: the case of UK social science contract researchers

Jacquelyn Allen Collinson

Abstract

Contract researchers constitute a significant occupational group within the UK higher education system, and the products of their labour are crucial to the research profile of the institutions in which they work and to the sector as a whole. Given the ‘marginality’ of the contract researcher role, with its attendant insecurities and inferior employment conditions in comparison with ‘permanent’ faculty, it is perhaps not surprising that relatively few individuals manage to sustain any continuity of employment resembling a career path. The fact that some researchers do succeed in achieving this is therefore worthy of investigation. This paper examines and charts some of the ways in which contract researchers manage their everyday work routines and construct a presentation of self in order to maximise opportunities for ‘staying in the game’.

Introduction

Within the wider economy, human capital and post-Fordist theories (Harvey, 1989) concerning the contemporary world of work have been influential inter alia in the formulation of, and demand for a ‘flexible’ workforce (Barlow, 1995). ‘Flexibility’, however, is a problematic concept and, as has been noted (see for example, Rubery and Grimshaw, 2003), flexibility along one dimension may produce rigidity and constraint on another, particularly for employees. Some employers have sought to maximise flexibility and reduce wages by increasing casual, part-time and contract work. This kind of employment constitutes an increasingly important feature of the labour markets of the leading capitalist countries (Lane, 1989; Mayne et al., 1996), and has proliferated within the British higher education sector (Parker and Jary, 1995; McInnis, 2000). Indeed, recent decades have witnessed the increasing use of fixed-term and part-time labour within higher education, to a point where about 50% of academic staff are currently employed on fixed-term contracts (Bryson and Barnes, 2000). In the UK, numbers of fixed-term researchers have been on the increase since the 1970s, and research indicates that in 1998 there were 28,596 staff employed on research grades, a staggering 96% of whom were on hourly-paid or fixed-term contracts (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 194–9). As
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Kogan et al., (1994: 53) have noted, this increased casualisation of academic labour has been driven to some extent by the need for universities and colleges to reduce labour costs. The move towards a more flexible and cheaper workforce is largely a response to governmental resource restrictions and the need to cope with increased student numbers (Kogan et al., 1994).

In 1996 a Concordat on the career management of contract researchers in UK universities was published (CVCP, 1996). Subsequently, concerns over poor career structures and prospects for postdoctoral researchers, specifically in science, engineering and technology, and the consequent problems of recruitment and retention, featured strongly in a recent UK Government review of the employment position of scientists and engineers (Roberts, 2002). Although the review focussed upon contract researchers in science, engineering and technology, many of the problems encountered in these disciplines are duplicated within the social sciences. In recent years academic interest in higher education contract researchers has developed, as evidenced by a range of literature reviews (for example: Patrick, 1998; Bryson and Barnes, 2000; Freedman et al., 2000); the research being principally in the form of surveys charting the inferior pay and conditions characteristic of these researchers (see Bryson and Tulle-Winton, 1994). The surveys demonstrate the inferior status of contract researchers when compared with ‘permanent’ academic staff, indicate that contracts are getting shorter, and that the occupational structure of contract research reflects wider social disparities, with women under-represented at the senior research grades and over-represented at more junior levels (Court et al., 1996; Bryson, 1999).

Despite this recent attention, the non survey-based research literature on contract researchers is not extensive. Some material touches on the management of contract researchers (for example, Roth, 1966; Wakeford, 1985; Burgess, 1994). A limited amount of qualitative material examines contract researchers’ occupational lives (for example, Stronach and Macdonald, 1991; Whiston, n.d.) and is supplemented by a small number of personal accounts of life as a contract researcher (see for example, Scott and Porter, 1983, 1984; Scott, 1985; Pole, 1995; Pirrie, 1997).

In sum, although contract researchers represent a substantial and important sector of the labour force within higher education, very little is known about the actual routines and complexities of their occupational lives (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 1998; Allen-Collinson, 2000). As various commentators (Abbas and McLean, 2001; Blaxter et al., 1998; Delamont et al., 1994) have observed, knowledge about the reproduction of academic occupational culture is sparse, and the limited amount of published work has concentrated almost exclusively upon teaching staff (Delamont, 1996; Edwards, 2000; Hey, 2001).

The research

With the aim of addressing this lacuna, qualitative research was initiated, involving interviews with 61 social science contract researchers. 59 of whom
were employed at 11 United Kingdom universities, one was currently unemployed, and one, with considerable experience within the UK, was employed at an overseas university at the time of interview. The profile of the researchers studied is given in Table 1. Initially judgement sampling (Burgess, 1984), also termed criteria sampling (Creswell, 1998) was used to select the group. Snowball sampling (Creswell, 1998) supplemented the initial trawl resulting in a selection of diverse sites, covering both traditional academic departments (n = 10) and specialist research centres (n = 10), in the fields of sociology, socio-legal studies, social work, social policy, politics, psychology, planning and education. Various of the centres operated with a multidisciplinary framework. The purpose of the study was not to generate statistical generalisations but to explore the complexities of contract researchers’ working practices and subjective experiences of contract work. In common with much qualitative analysis, extrapolation from the data relies on ‘the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events’ (Mitchell, 1983: 190). Interviews were in-depth, semi-structured, tape-recorded, and designed to gather data on researchers’ work lives, their motives, aspirations, coping strategies, learning processes, and conceptions of identity. Those interviewed ranged from novice research assistants on their first contract, to senior research fellows with over a decade of experience; those on relatively long-term contracts (3 years or more) to those employed on a daily, even hourly rate.

Data analysis was carried out via the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1993), with detailed coding permitting the generation of key thematic categories and sub-categories. This process of analysis was repeated until no new categories, in terms of social processes, practices, and conceptions, were emerging from the data (Creswell, 1998).

A career?

Given the ‘marginality’ (Scott, 1985; Billson, 1988) of the contract researcher role, with its insecurities and inferior material conditions in comparison to ‘permanent’ academic posts, it is perhaps not surprising that relatively few individuals manage to sustain any continuity of employment resembling a career path (Bryson and Barnes, 2000). The fact that some researchers do manage to achieve this is therefore worthy of investigation. As can be seen from Table 1, of those interviewed, 20 had 6 years or more of contract research experience. These individuals had evidently learnt how to sustain some employment track, and the primary purpose of this paper is to examine this achievement. Comparison of interview transcripts from both inexperienced and ‘veteran’ researchers has generated a mosaic (Becker, 1977) of their experience.

Evett's (1992) has emphasized the need to examine careers from the perspective of the individual, as a subjective experience. Although in an every-
Table 1 Profile of contract researchers studied (N = 61)

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<td>Experience of CR</td>
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* plus one currently unemployed Research Fellow.

day sense, the idea of a ‘career’ in contract research may appear somewhat risible, this is not so if Hughes’ (1959: 457) classic definition is applied: ‘a career consists in one sense of moving – in time and hence with age – within the institutional system in which the occupation exists’. This does not mean of course that there is any neat correlation between time served in the occupation and the development of the knowledge and skills required for contract research praxis. After all, work occurs in specific contexts, within which demands and opportunities will inevitably vary. In the case of contract researchers, the resources available for the development of craft knowledge and skills will differ, for example between academic departments employing just a solitary researcher, and research centres with large (relative to the social sciences) teams of researchers. Clearly, within the latter, more opportunities arise for the development and transmission of research expertise. Occupational time needs therefore to be linked to specific contexts and sets of experiences in order for the researcher’s capacity fully to develop. Acknowledging these complexities, this paper seeks to portray some of the occupational learning processes during career progression. It should be noted that the focus of the paper centres not upon the technical skills in which researchers became practised, such as research design, data collection and analysis, but rather the amalgam of more ‘tacit’, private, or as some have termed it ‘indeterminate’ (Polanyi, 1983; Gerholme, 1990; Delamont and Atkinson, 1995) knowledge and practices which are developed. ‘Indeterminacy’ has been defined as the ‘elements of occupational competence that are dependent upon tacit knowledge. They are not susceptible to codification and representation through explicit recipes’ (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995: 96). Despite the ‘unofficial’.
informal nature of such knowledge and practices, they nonetheless often prove crucial for the successful completion of occupational tasks.

Structural adaptation

Entering a new occupation usually involves some degree of 'reality shock' (see Dornbusch, 1955) in which novices' expectations of role performance are contrasted, sometimes starkly, with actual occupational demands. Usually, presocialisation (Berger and Luckman, 1976), in terms of formal or informal knowledge about organisational behaviour, is less than adequate to prepare newcomers fully for the reality of their new daily work routines. During their initial contract, researchers struggle to orientate themselves and to cope with the new occupational milieu, and various biographical elements may help or hinder their adaptation.

The 'biographical baggage' of the researchers studied was somewhat diverse with many interviewees having entered contract research direct from a first or higher degree, others from professions such as social work, teaching and law, whilst a small minority (n = 5) had previously worked in secretarial and technician roles within higher education. The research experience of the great majority of these researchers could be conceptualised as 'traditional' in terms of their academic training. Coming to terms with the constraints of contract research, particularly sponsor-imposed agenda and deadlines, required a fundamental readjustment, particularly for those entering the occupation direct from a degree. As one Research Fellow indicated, recalling novice days:

The business of doing contract research demands you quickly develop a very pragmatic, even instrumental relationship to gaining knowledge ... It's all about finding out things to change things, and to meet the sponsor's needs. I struggled with that because my doctorate had allowed me much more freedom. (Research Fellow, Department)

In contrast, the small number of researchers who might be deemed 'non-traditional' had no background of disciplinary knowledge acquisition, and did not appear to encounter this kind of difficulty. In fact they articulated very pragmatic attitudes towards knowledge acquisition even at initial entry.

For many of the novice researchers the role of contract researcher represented their first real engagement with the world of work, and consequently with managers who placed demands and imposed deadlines. These employment relationships were agreed to be qualitatively different from earlier relationships with, for example, tutors or research degree supervisors. Propelling the demands of research directors and managers of course were those of sponsors, for the managers were keenly aware that future funding depended upon the timely completion of projects. Awareness of these new responsibilities was sometimes acute amongst new researchers:
This year has been a bit of a wake-up call! . . . I’ve realised that the projects I have been working on depend on me, because if the fieldwork falls down, the projects will, and I’m the one doing the fieldwork. It’s become much more serious than the previous year when I was doing my MSc, because I’m now responsible to the Prof and he is responsible for getting the projects to the agency on time. (Research Assistant, Department)

For all novice researchers, regardless of background, knowledge of the cyclical work processes, or ‘event-based cycle’ (Clark, 1985), peculiar to contract research, had to be acquired. This cycle can be seen to consist primarily of: gaining research contracts, timely completion, and gaining further contracts. Moreover, the cycle operates within an overall temporal framework within which the passage of work-time is commodified, quantified, and attributed worth (Hassard, 1989; Lee and Liebenau, 1999). Hence, for employers, research time is money (Loft, 1995); a perspective researchers also learn to adopt, as research time ultimately means salary. The cycle involves transition through the routine phases of research work, for example: project design, data collection and analysis, and so on. Researchers must not only develop and deploy research techniques, but also, importantly, learn to assess what the cycle demands of them in terms of cognitive and also emotional effort.

The emotional elements of each contract cycle were particularly interesting to examine. Understandably, upon initial engagement, relief was the overwhelming response of researchers, happy that the occupational future had once more been secured, however temporarily. Researchers often used the term ‘honeymoon’ to describe this initial phase, during which they become cognitively immersed in the new project. Apart from those on the very shortest of contracts, it is during this period that feelings of economic insecurity are most far removed, and positive self-worth and intellectual absorption predominate. The second phase usually begins around the mid-way point of the contract, and was conceptualised by researchers overwhelmingly as ‘pressured’. This period was found usually to extend until the project report was submitted to sponsors, and is characterised by increasing anxiety over the intellectual demands of the work and its timely completion. Simultaneously, worries over obtaining a further contract begin to creep in, with the spectre of economic instability looming large. Within this phase of the researchers’ event-based cycle, time seems to escape at an alarming rate, both in terms of the sponsor’s fast-approaching deadline and the expiry of the researcher’s own personal contract. Maximum effort must be exerted in pursuit of the next contract.

Relief, intellectual absorption, pressure and insecurity are some of the experiences which mark the event-based cycle of contract researchers’ time. If they are fortunate, another contract is secured and so another cycle commences. Researchers acquire a practical understanding of the cycle, its rhythms, speed, length and sequencing of activities (see Lauer, 1981: 28ff) and
also a sensitivity to the practicalities and likely intensities of cognitive and emotional effort demanded at particular points:

This is my first post as a contract researcher, and it's been a bit of a salutary introduction... Well, it seems to me it's a bit like a business because you have to provide a product to those who are paying for it, so there's all that concern about meeting sponsors' deadlines... You cannot ask for an extension if you want any more contracts. It all got very hectic towards the end. (Research-Associate, Centre)

Depending on their own particular biographical 'baggage', novices have to work to a greater or lesser extent to adapt to the structural features of their new employment, including its contractual, pragmatic and commodified nature, which may contrast starkly with their prior experience of academia and the pursuit of knowledge for more 'pure' and scholarly reasons.

**Interactional integration**

Once contract researchers adapt to the pressurized, commodified, and increasingly entrepreneurial nature of their work (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), it quickly becomes apparent that securing the occupational future will require a high degree of initiative on their part, in order to avoid unemployment. Novice researchers must accumulate and operationalise certain kinds of tacit knowledge in order to forestall such a negative possibility.

A factor of primary importance in this learning process is a researcher's relationship with her or his peers, which may hold the key to maintaining employment and building the first steps in a career. As noted above, the resource of peer support is largely dependent upon the location in which the researcher finds her/himself. Of those interviewed, 49 researchers worked in locations with some degree of peer support, although the size of the peer network might vary over time. In contrast, 11 researchers worked in locations lacking any such networks. Here, the employment of researchers was at best sporadic and mainly confined to solitary researchers, for whom isolation was a striking feature of the work experience.

In departments where a considerable amount of research activity is normal, with numerous researchers at various points of their contracts, knowledge of research opportunities constitutes a highly valued resource which circulates surprisingly freely between colleagues who might in some contexts be deemed to be competitors. In these contexts, mutual aid consists not only of imparting information about possibilities of work, but also, for example, inviting peers to collaborate on projects, or even nominating colleagues to sponsors. In the main, these kinds of 'gifts' (Mauss, 1967) of work are smaller projects or discrete activities on a project, such as data analysis or interviewing. Via this mutual aid, researchers are able to 'tide themselves over' until better
contractual opportunities arise. This was particularly so in certain of the large research centres visited, where part of the researcher’s contractual obligations included personal income targets. The giving and receiving of such gifts helped to secure the material future, and thus reinforced the value and meaning of the practice to researchers (see Bourdieu, 1977). Such gift exchange has both economic and symbolic dimensions which reinforce each other, helping to establish and sustain solidarity in the face of insecurity. In work locations bereft of a critical mass of research colleagues, attempts to maintain a career were found to be much more problematic, and so knowledge about the importance of peer networks inevitably influenced the preferred employment options of researchers. The comments of one Research Fellow are illustrative of many:

Where you do not want to end up is in an isolated situation... I try and avoid ordinary departments now, it’s ok if there is a research centre within a department, because you then have colleagues around, and that means all sort of stuff comes to you... I started off doing this kind of research as the sole research assistant in a department and at the end of the contract, I got three months unemployment as a bonus! (Research Fellow, Centre)

Researchers also developed a pragmatic appreciation of the importance of particular forms of interaction with research managers or directors, who had the all-important power to extend work contracts. As Wunsch (1993: 353) notes: ‘scholarship on successful careers provides evidence that success often depends not only on hard work but on the ability to self-promote’. The interviews revealed that successful researchers learnt to exercise this combination early on in their work experience. The practice of self-promotion, and indeed the awareness of the need to self-promote, developed differentially amongst researchers, and it was clear that some researchers were more aware of the significance of this unofficial activity (see Kleinman, 1983), noting the importance of ‘cues’ or pointers provided by other more experienced colleagues, for example:

On my first couple of contracts I learnt a lot about research methods and the pattern of working in this peculiar trade. On my third I learnt I needed to ensure that people noticed me... that was pointed out to me by someone who was much more experienced. He was leaving the Centre and told me that to stay here I needed to keep myself in the Research Director’s mind. (Research Fellow, Centre)

Acting on this awareness constitutes the ‘strategic work’ (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) necessary to sustain and prolong one’s employment. In essence this requires of researchers a degree of ‘performance’ to ensure that they are viewed in a positive light by research directors and other members of staff.
Such presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) of course includes being seen to be proficient in the technical activities of research, but additionally, the research must exhibit commitment to, and involvement in, numerous activities other than purely research-related ones. Thus researchers involve themselves in a range of extra activities: teaching, conference organisation and attendance, the coordination of seminars and workshops, committee membership, the hosting of visitors, to name a few. By engagement in these activities over and above their research duties, researchers 'signpost' to those in positions of power that their commitment (Becker, 1977) extends beyond mere contractual obligations. By being recognized as committed, researchers build a positive reputation, and hope to benefit by way of future employment opportunities. Experienced researchers certainly become sensitised to the need for careful impression-management and self-presentation, as one indicated:

A lot of researchers have passed through this Centre since I began to work here... I suppose I have always been trying to work out how I can stay here. So from early on I never hesitated at working late when the situation demanded... It's also the little things like volunteering to chair the IT group. Really it's a package of things which you hope are all saying that you are a safe pair of hands, and good to have around for yet another contract. (Research Fellow, Centre)

In sum, once the full realisation of the fundamental insecurity of their occupational position dawned, those researchers who sought to continue in research began to assimilate vital informal knowledge and to develop certain strategies which helped sustain employment. This involved co-operation with peers, and attempts to influence those with the power to rehire. Researchers strove to maintain interactional integration at their home-base, by ensuring they were part of informal peer networks of support, and also by being dependable – and visible – components of the more formal organisational culture of their working milieux.

Cultivating the contacts

Clearly, the building blocks of a researcher's career need to be established internally within the institution, but certain kinds of external activity are equally essential for a successful career trajectory. Researchers must also acknowledge the importance of directing substantial efforts towards securing external sources of research funding. As one Research Associate commented: 'It was put to me in the middle of my second contract, by a rather blunt research director, that he was “not an employment agency”, and that I had better start searching for external funding!'. At this point, it is worth recalling that most UK social science contract research is funded via small-scale
contracts from agencies such as charities, local authorities, health-care trusts and the like. As previously indicated, where information about funding possibilities tends to circulate freely, researchers have the opportunity to accumulate experience of undertaking smaller projects and of dealing with funding agency contacts responsible for research. Via this process, researchers start to build a range of external personal contacts within their particular field. Once a series of research contracts has been completed satisfactorily, the researcher’s centre or department develops a track record and is consequently regarded positively by funding agencies. Just as importantly for the individual researcher, s/he also begins to establish a positive reputation, which can subsequently filter through to other agencies, as one Research Fellow indicated:

About two months ago I got rung up by someone responsible for services in _ I didn’t know the person . . . but they knew of me, and I got another six-month project. Last year I and a colleague completed a similar project at the other end of the county which went well. It’s all about contacts and people speaking to other people about you – recommendations I suppose. (Research Fellow, Department)

Again, presentation of self is crucial; reputation being established not just on the basis of technical competence, but also by presenting a particular kind of persona to external agencies; a persona described by researchers as being, *inter alia*, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, amiable, understanding and politic. By ‘understanding’ researchers meant ‘taking on board sponsors’ constraints’, or ‘realising what kind of research they really want’, whilst being politic was defined as ‘becoming sensitive to informal agenda’ and ‘learning when to talk and when not to’. The presentation of an efficient self was important, but interestingly, amiability was deemed equally essential for securing research contracts from agencies. In the words of one highly experienced Senior Research Fellow: ‘Sponsors want someone who is good to work with, someone they can get on with, someone with whom problems can be dealt with as smoothly as possible’. The construction of this persona usually results from trial and error and, for more fortunate researchers, gleaning from more senior colleagues the principles of good and bad practice. This permits the development of a certain degree of researcher confidence, not just in technical and organisational ability to complete contract research satisfactorily, but also in the effectiveness of one’s network system:

Before I had the kind of network that I have now, I used to be really fraught about getting work lined up. You know, two months to go and no work in the pipeline: help! Now I’m more confident, I feel something will turn up, and so far it always has. (Research Fellow, Department)

Researchers fortunate enough to find themselves in flourishing research centres, or departments with track records of gaining major research
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grants, are likely to engage with major players in the research sponsorship business. Within this arena, a set of contacts is established so that by the time individuals have substantial experience and/or reached the grade of Senior Research Fellow, they have usually developed considerable resources for furthering their career. The research 'universe' is never static, particularly so in relation to contract research, so therefore researchers are obliged routinely to devote time and energy to expanding their base of contacts. In research centres or particularly research-active departments, researchers used income-generating events, such as workshops or short courses, as a forum for parading research expertise to potential sponsors. Other somewhat instrumental ploys were utilised at national and international conferences, for example:

When people come up to me and ask for a copy of something which I have written, I never give them a copy at the conference, particularly if they are new to me. . . . I always say I will send it to them, then a couple of weeks later I will send the paper plus a Centre brochure with a nice letter. That way it makes more of a lasting impression. I think it's about people realising you are dependable, you delivered in a small way. I have picked up no end of work this way. (Senior Research Fellow, Centre)

In assembling a range of external contacts, researchers gain access to particular kinds of resources and benefits vital to promoting their careers. In their own terminology, researchers learn to 'cultivate sources', 'use the network', or 'work (my) contacts', in order to remind sponsors of their existence and competence, and to gain insight into the internal workings of funding bodies, their politics, policies, and future research directions. Whilst sponsors may be well aware of the competence of the research unit as a whole, more often contacts tend to be highly personalised, linking together specific individuals. As a result, departures of personnel from a sponsoring organisation can have deleterious consequences for a researcher's access to insider knowledge. Consequently, s/he has to strive to ameliorate the situation by creating new contacts or calling up contacts who were previously of a second order, for example:

I had a really good relationship with B__ for nearly four years. We occasionally used to go to lunch, that sort of thing, but then she saw an opportunity and she moved very quickly. This kind of thing had happened to me years previously, so I suppose I had the experience to always put some energy towards her deputy. . . . That meant that I still had a good contact. . . . (Senior Research Fellow, Centre)

On occasion, as an outcome of networking, research contracts may even be obtained without enduring the formal process of public tendering, so that the work arrives by invitation, rather than via competition. Even when the process
of formal competitive tendering has to be followed, it can be greatly assisted by insider information, for example about the kind of project most liable to secure funding and, just as critically, the most auspicious moment to submit the bid. In a real sense, the function of networking is intelligence-gathering in order to aid researchers in the formulation of bids and the development of a sense of timing (Goodridge, 1999: 45).

**Generating momentum**

Just as researchers follow the ‘event-based cycle’ (Clark, 1985) of each individual research contract, the most successful of their number also inhabit another cyclical process: one geared to securing their occupational future. The interviews revealed some degree of proactivity, by all except the most novice of researchers, towards gaining further contracts. However, it was evident that the interviewees who had attained the most senior grade available (Senior Research Fellow), and/or had a decade of experience, were engaged in efforts which were both *habitual* and *systematic*, and very much embedded within their normal work routines. Additionally, these individuals also tended to possess a much longer-term strategic vision (Crow, 1989) than their colleagues with less research-career longevity:

> When you are inexperienced at this kind of research you just focus on getting another contract . . . Now it's different, I have a lot of experience of bringing in contracts . . . What this means is I now tend to be able to plan further into the future . . . Well, for example, I am negotiating over a project which should run for a year, but I also know that on the back of that project there is likely to be another one in the same area. . . . I know something about their (sponsor's) long-term aims and to accomplish them they would need that kind of work done. That means having an early look at any literature around on the likely direction of a follow up. (Senior Research Fellow, Centre)

This strategic vision encompasses not just future policy directions, but also research trends, topics in vogue with funders, and the likely 'shelf-life' of interest in those areas: 'You learn to get a feel for when an area of research is fashionable with agencies, and you also learn to get a feel for when their interest is starting to dry up' (Research Fellow).

As researchers develop the interactional competencies which allow them successfully to ply their trade, they simultaneously deploy these in order to secure further funded research. In this way, the momentum required to sustain a career is generated: relationships in-house and externally are established, contacts are developed and exploited, contracts secured, reputations established, and as a consequence, further contracts obtained.
Conclusion

Although a relatively small proportion of contract researchers do manage to sustain anything approximating a career, the vast majority find themselves unable to tolerate its economic marginality (Bilson, 1988). If the material and psychological insecurity cannot be tolerated, then no amount of research expertise and acumen will sustain individuals’ commitment (Becker, 1977) to their occupation. The more experienced researchers identified the salient factors which they considered had rendered them able to endure such insecurity. Of considerable significance was a lack of economic dependants for extended periods of time, often when the researchers were relatively young and/or prior to the weighty responsibilities of family, mortgage, and so on. A further salient biographical factor was the support of a significant other (usually a husband, wife, or partner) who enjoyed a more permanent and adequate salary. Without exception, all the interviewees who had managed to sustain a relatively long career, had one or both of these factors present in their biography. This, combined with expertise developed out of considerable experience, permitted their continued work in the contract research milieu.

As has been noted, staying in contract research requires of researchers a dual learning process: first, the assimilation of the technical aspects of research, much of which is done ‘on-the-job’; and second, very importantly, the development of a stock of ‘informal’ knowledge concerning the instrumental, political work necessary to pursue contract research successfully. It is on the basis of this latter knowledge that lines of action are developed, implemented and refined by researchers, as they seek to adapt to the pressurised and sponsor-driven environment within which they work. Such lines of action constitute some of the central craft practices (Mills, 1975) of contract research work. Precisely how successfully individuals managed to devise and implement these practices and thus sustain a ‘career’ (Hughes, 1959), appeared to depend upon three principal factors. First, there were biographical elements which influenced both the degree of craft acumen and the capacity to tolerate economic, subcultural and psychological marginality. Undoubtedly, individuals differ in the degree of receptivity to acquiring different kinds of knowledge (cf Miller and Parlett, 1976). ‘Veteran’ researchers all acknowledged the importance of becoming attuned to the significance of ‘unofficial’ activity early on in their research careers. Second, the locations in which researchers worked were highly influential in securing further employment. Well-established research centres, or departments with a strong research emphasis, clearly provide greater opportunities for establishing networks of contacts, both internal and external, which then furnish greater opportunities for securing contracts and building a positive reputation. A high correspondence was noted between suffering intermittent periods of inter-contract unemployment and working as a lone researcher in a department without a peer network. Clearly, sustaining
employment depends upon learning to avoid, whenever possible, working in isolated contexts.

Third, in analysing the data it became evident that when researchers with relative occupational longevity strove to account for their success in maintaining employment, they consistently spoke of the importance of serendipity or happenstance in providing opportunities (Miller, 1983; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). These opportunities ranged over various factors, from having the right amount of experience in a new, emergent field just as major funding opportunities arose, to the possession of linguistic competence in a foreign language required to clinch a contract, or joining a research centre at the start of a sequence of major research contracts. The occurrence of such opportunities was viewed by researchers as influential in the generation of the momentum required to spur career development.

As has been noted, contract researchers can be deemed 'unfaculty' (Kerr, 1964) in the sense of being essentially temporary, not 'real' members. This marginality is reflected in their inferior remuneration, conditions of service and status. In the face of such disadvantages, they struggle to sustain employment in an increasingly insecure occupational realm, utilising the knowledge and skills depicted in this paper. The fact that a small minority do manage to achieve this objective for extensive periods of time, constitutes both a victory in the face of considerable odds, and an indicator of the sophistication of their craft practice. For the majority of contract researchers, however, the insecurity and marginal conditions prove too negative to tolerate on a long-term basis. Consequently, their hard-won skills and knowledge are lost to the higher education sector, as researchers are forced to quit the occupation. Despite a national Concordat (CVCP, 1996) on improving the career management of contract researchers in the UK, and subsequent follow-up reports of the Research Careers Initiative (OST, 1998, 2000, 2001), although very small numbers of British universities have moved to transfer researchers to permanent contracts, there are no real indications that significant numbers of employers intend fundamentally to change their employment practices (Bryson, 1999; Bryson and Barnes, 2000). The irony is, of course, that whilst the policy of using short-term contracts appears to be motivated by employers' desire to cut costs, the real or hidden costs, in terms of researcher alienation, mistrust, decreased commitment and deleterious consequences for the quality of research output, seem to have been omitted from the equation.

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Occupational Identity on the Edge: Social Science Contract Researchers in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT
Throughout the higher education sector in the UK, recent decades have witnessed the increasing use of fixed-term and part-time labour, to the extent that around 50 percent of academic staff are currently employed on fixed-term contracts and in excess of 90 percent of researchers are employed on fixed-term contracts. Despite the importance of their contribution to the sector as a whole, relatively little research has been undertaken on the lived experience of undertaking contract research. The objective of this article is therefore to explore the reality and complexities of contract researchers' working lives and the occupational identities and self-images that contract researchers construct and maintain.

KEY WORDS
contract researchers / fixed-term contracts / higher education / marginality / occupational identities / social sciences

Introduction
Throughout the higher education sector in the UK, recent decades have witnessed the increasing use of fixed-term and part-time labour, to the extent that around 50 percent of academic staff are currently employed on fixed-term contracts (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 189). One of the principal rationales for this trend has been articulated as the drive toward a more ‘flexible’ and cheaper workforce in order to cope with increasing student numbers (Kogan et al., 1994). Within the wider economy, human capital and post-Fordist theories
(Harvey, 1989) about the contemporary world of work have been heavily influential in the demand for workers to be more 'flexible' (Barlow, 1995). One of the principal means by which employers have engineered such flexibility has been to increase casual, part-time, and contract work, and these forms of employment constitute an increasingly important feature of the labour markets of the leading capitalist countries (Lane, 1989; Mayne et al., 1996). Generally, workers hired on short-term contracts labour under less favourable conditions and with less pay. Within the higher education sectors of such states, the 'flexible' work force has proliferated (McInnis, 2000; Parker and Jary, 1995; Shumar, 1997).

Since 1980 numbers of contract researchers have increased fourfold, whilst simultaneously the number of permanent research posts has decreased from 13 percent to 4 percent of the total (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 199). In 1998, 28,596 staff were employed on research grades, a staggering 96 percent of whom were on hourly-paid or fixed-term contracts (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 194-9). The gender balance within contract research reflects the general structure of academia, with women under-represented at senior research grades and over-represented at more junior levels (Court et al., 1996: 25), and proportionately much more likely to be employed on a fixed-term contract in every category (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 214).

Despite the importance of their contribution to the higher education sector as a whole, it is clear that in comparison to academics employed on 'permanent' contracts, fixed-term staff suffer considerable inequalities. Poor salary structures, inadequate pension provision, reduced holiday entitlement and sickness provision, lack of security, and little if any career development, make it extremely difficult for many to sustain a 'career' in this sector of academia. Very few contract researchers manage to achieve the more senior grades of the salary structure, despite considerable experience.

The inadequacies of the contract labour system as a means of training and maintaining a skilled research workforce have frequently been highlighted (Association of University Teachers, 1995; National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, n.d.). With the annual turnover of contract researchers estimated to be between 35 and 50 percent (Bryson and Barnes, 2000: 204), even if the deleterious consequences for individual researchers are left out of the equation, it remains a highly wasteful process for the higher education system as a whole when the employment of skilled and talented researchers is so fragmented.

In 1996, in recognition of the problematic nature of contract research careers, the bodies representing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the Research Councils, the British Academy and the Royal Society agreed a Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1996) to establish a framework for improving the management and career development of contract researchers. Unfortunately, there is recent compelling evidence that the working conditions
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of contract researchers remain fundamentally unchanged (Bryson, 1999; Bryson and Barnes, 2000).

Academic interest in higher education contract researchers has developed in recent years (Bryson and Barnes, 2000; Freedman et al., 2000; Patrick, 1998) with much of the focus upon surveys charting the inferior pay and conditions, and the lack of career trajectory characteristic of contract research. A more limited range of qualitative material examines the impact of such poor conditions, and there also exists a small number of personal accounts.

Although contract researchers represent a growing pool of expertise, little is known about the work routines and daily practices of their occupational lives (Allen Collinson, 2000; Allen Collinson and Hockey, 1998). Indeed, present knowledge about the reproduction of academic occupational culture remains relatively sparse (Abbas and McLean, 2001; Blaxter et al., 1998; Delamont et al., 1994), and the limited amount of published research has tended to focus upon teaching staff, with scant attention paid to other occupational groups within higher education (Delamont, 1996; Edwards, 2000).

Method

In an attempt to fill this lacuna, research was conducted on the working lives and occupational experiences of contract research staff. Initially, judgement sampling (Burgess, 1984) was used to select the group and snowball sampling (Creswell, 1998) supplemented the initial trawl, so that eventually a range of diverse sites was selected. Interviews were undertaken with 61 social science contract researchers, 59 of whom were employed at 11 English and Welsh universities, one was currently unemployed, and one, with considerable experience within the UK, was employed at an overseas university at the time of the interview.

The research was designed to capture as wide a spectrum of contract research experience as possible. The sample covered traditional academic social science departments (n = 10) and specialist research centres (n = 10), in the fields of sociology, socio-legal studies, social work and policy, politics, psychology, planning and education. The researchers ranged from novice research assistants on their first contract, to senior research fellows with over a decade of experience. The interviews also spanned those employed on relatively long-term contracts (three years or more) to those who were employed on a day-to-day basis. The gender breakdown was 37 women and 24 men. Interviews were in-depth, semi-structured and tape-recorded, and were designed to elicit data on various social relationships, motives, aspirations, coping strategies, learning processes, and conceptions of identity.

The primary purpose of the study was not to generate statistical generalizations but rather to explore the complexities of contract researchers' working practices and their subjective experiences. In common with much qualitative analysis, extrapolation from the data relies on 'the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events' (Mitchell, 1983: 190).
Work and Identity

On the basis of its insecurity, inferior conditions and status, contract research may be deemed a marginal occupation (Bilson, 1988: 188) within higher education. The primary objective of this article is to examine the occupational identities and self-images that contract researchers construct and maintain. Work has been identified as one of the central ways in which individuals evaluate themselves and are evaluated by others, thus constituting a core part of 'social identity' and 'the self', as Everett Hughes (1959) long ago noted. Additionally, Becker (1977: 178–9) underlined the importance of occupational titles for connoting a great deal about the characteristics of their bearers to the wider social audience. The perceptions of that audience in turn influence the occupational identity of the title-bearers. Thus, contract researchers' conceptions of self-identity are influenced both by their occupational peer group, who constitute 'significant others' (Cooley, 1983), and by the wider audience of the 'generalised other' (Mead, 1934). As has been noted, the very nomenclature of 'contract research staff', 'research assistant' and so on can be seen as demeaning and inappropriate to the qualifications and experience of such staff (Research Careers Initiative, 2001: 6).

Researchers' own conceptions of how the institutional 'generalized other' viewed them were reflected in value-laden phrases such as 'casualized labour' and 'academic migrants'. The interviews clearly revealed the shifting and complex nature of occupational identity amongst researchers, contingent upon an amalgam of biographical features (see Stanley, 1990: 209) such as educational or professional socialization and previous work experience. Individuals enter their occupational role carrying biographical baggage, and how they experience and engage with this role is also dependent upon the individual biographical resources brought to the occupational context. This article seeks to provide a depiction of occupational identity as it is constructed, deployed and reconstructed by contract researchers.

Biographical Differences

In common with entry to all occupational groups, individuals entering contract research bring with them a multiplicity of biographical elements. However, the interviews revealed certain distinct patterns of biographical heritage, which exerted a strong influence upon the subsequent development and maintenance of occupational identity. These patterns related to the differing entry routes to the occupation, where three distinct groupings emerged from the data.

The first and smallest group had entered research via what might be termed 'unorthodox' routes. Of this group, three (5%) of the researchers (all women) had originally commenced work on a research project in a secretarial capacity and had subsequently transferred to the role of researcher for a variety of reasons, including staff shortages. On occasion and for a limited duration, these
staff had occupied dual roles as both secretary and researcher. In a similar vein, two of the male researchers (3%) had started as technicians servicing projects in computing or quasi-experimental areas, and had incrementally taken on more research-specific functions before achieving full researcher status. A second group had entered research via more orthodox routes, accompanied by considerable academic capital (Bourdieu, 1988) in the form of social science first and higher degrees. A third group had both degree-level qualifications and professional qualifications.

These differing routes to research resulted in different vocabularies of motive (Mills, 1940: 909). Interviewees with professional or occupational experience in fields such as health, social work and law often articulated the desire to promote social and political change as the principal motive for entering contract research and for tolerating such a marginal status with all its attendant insecurities. This motive was linked to conceptions of occupational self which valorized social justice. Contract research was consequently perceived as an opportunity to influence their fields, both practically and positively. The research was viewed as a potential instrument of change (see Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Whyte, 1991) and the research craft (Ravetz, 1971) as a valuable addendum to the array of practitioner and professional knowledge and skills already possessed. For this group, their self-image(s) were still at least partially located within their earlier occupational experience (see Parry, 1997: 126), which was subsequently bolstered by new research skills and the ability to stimulate practical change, as one described:

I'm very practically orientated ... and I want to see practical results. Mostly my input has been on a micro-level with local agencies, doing bits of research on how they work and trying to stimulate them to change for the better. I'm a specialist in helping practitioners, that's how I see myself ... (Research Fellow, Department)

These 'practitioner researchers' frequently constructed the 'practical' self in opposition to the category of 'academic'; a role with which they manifestly did not identify. Indeed the term 'academic' was often employed pejoratively, as shorthand for research perceived to be non-applied, impractical and far too abstract. Abstraction, in the form of theory generation, was much denigrated in contrast to more esteemed practical abilities used to sustain a rather utilitarian occupational identity (Becker, 1972). Researchers who had entered research via 'unorthodox' routes also held a somewhat similar form of self-concept. Possessing little formal academic capital (Bourdieu, 1988), these individuals had achieved researcher status on the basis of technical skills and competencies. For example, one Research Associate explained:

When you get into research as I have, it's on the back of doing lots of the technical donkey work on lots of projects ... crunching out the data on big data sets, sorting out software problems, all that sort of stuff. I don't have the academic background that the Research Director has, or even most of the researchers, but I am good at sorting out problems! So I suppose I am here as a problem solver, that's okay, because that's how I see myself really.
A different kind of biographical heritage was evident amongst researchers with a formal socialization in the social sciences and humanities but without practitioner training. Their occupational self-images were grounded in a prolonged disciplinary socialization based on a set of academic values. The existence of a specific academic value system has been noted by numerous commentators (Becher, 1989; Evans, 1988; Merton, 1973; Wilson, 1991). Whilst acknowledging differences in the formulations of this value system, it is possible to identify certain common elements, including: the pursuit of truth, academic honesty, acceptance of reasoned criticism, open transmission of knowledge, and a belief in academic quality.

Extensive sediments of subject knowledge existed in addition to this generic academic identity, creating a disciplinary lens through which to perceive the self and the social world (Keiser, 1970: 233; Sarsby, 1984: 130). The greater the intensity and duration of the disciplinary socialization, the greater the identification with the relevant discipline (Delamont et al., 1997a, 1997b). The following quote contrasts academic imperatives with the more pragmatic concerns that dominate most contract research output:

So I found I was second-string on a lot of different projects – projects that I knew nothing about ... things which are deadly boring, and I had no interest in. I thought, 'I'm compromising' .... It was the sort of place where there's no value given to publications or scholarship, you just do the job, get the report out ... (Research Fellow, Centre)

As indicated, individuals arrived in contract research with different constellations of motives. There were researchers who admitted to somewhat less 'committed' motives for engaging in research, confessing to essentially opportunistic motives, such as: being 'glad to get off the dole', 'happy to work like this because it fits in with childcare', and 'fairly satisfied with doing this as I needed a stop-gap between real jobs'. Although the biographies of some of these individuals did include significant amounts of academic capital (Bourdieu, 1988), stimulating social change or furthering academic knowledge was clearly of no significance. Alternative priorities ranged from childcare to developing a small business. Within this group, there emerged a relationship between part-time status in contract research and differing conceptions of identity. Some individuals had experience of full-time research work, but had moved to part-time mode, whilst others had never engaged with contract research on a full-time basis. These part-time researchers all gave precedence to self-identities external to the research work, for example:

To me the importance of what I do here has diminished over each contract. I have always loved boats. After years of being involved with them as a hobby, I now work part-time down the dock .... Well, there is a certain amount of flexibility attached to doing research, and I can fit the boat work in because of that, and because I'm now part-time here. (Research Fellow, Department)

Some full-time researchers acknowledged that the contract researcher role represented a temporary occupational phase, a brief episode before seeking...
more permanent employment outside of academia. These individuals were invariably on their first or second contract, usually of short duration, and had accepted the work out of financial necessity rather than real ambition or interest, primarily due to happenstance or serendipity (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Miller, 1983); for example:

It's a stop-gap really, it's a way of earning money whilst I'm looking for a permanent job. No, I don't want to be an academic and I don't really see myself as a researcher ... I sort of fell into doing this because basically I find statistics easy. I just do that, run the data, which is about housing, but quite frankly it could be about anything. I'm not involved with it like a lot of people around here. (Research Assistant, Centre)

In common with all occupational groups, individuals bring to the domain of contract research different stores of biographical experience, which generate particular vocabularies of motive and sustain particular occupational identities. In effect, the researchers studied possessed a composite occupational identity, some elements of which were shared with others and some more idiosyncratic. Most of those with an academic pedigree had entered contract research in the hope of securing a permanent academic post, and expressed the wish to extend their disciplinary knowledge thereby substantiating their claim to an academic identity. In contrast, for others, their most meaningful identity 'props' were firmly located outside higher education, and their primary motives were functional: a job and remuneration. Despite these differences, all those interviewed emphasized the importance of the 'craft' skills (Ravetz, 1971) which secured continued employment and constituted a significant factor in sustaining their work self-image.

Identity in Context

Clearly, occupational identities are constructed and practised in context. The interview data revealed that the different contexts in which contract researchers plied their trade had a significant and differential impact upon them. This was particularly evident for those whose identities were permeated by academic and social action concerns. The occupational locations at the time of interview can be categorized as follows (one researcher being unemployed at the time):

1 academic departments which only occasionally hired researchers, usually one or two at a time: 5 departments; 11 researchers;
2 academic departments which normally had several researchers on a range of contracts: 5 departments; 17 researchers;
3 research centres which normally had larger numbers of researchers on different kinds of contracts: 10 centres; 32 researchers.

Researchers situated in category (1) departments confronted a number of practical problems that influenced their conceptions of identity, as they often found
themselves the solitary contract researcher. Consequently, the cycles of research work (e.g. design, implementation, report submission) did not coincide with those of other researchers, to the detriment of peer communication, support and cohesion. There was little or no development of collegial support networks of researchers facing the same kind of pressures and economic insecurity so prevalent in contract research (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 1998: 497). As a result, the development of craft expertise and confidence in the occupational self was a difficult and faltering process, particularly for novices. Without the peer transmission of 'tacit knowledge' (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Gerholm, 1990; Polanyi, 1983) central to the effective practice of contract research, confidence in practising the craft was often hard won, predominantly through trial and error and sometimes costly.

Additionally, researchers in these isolated contexts indicated that permanent staff often seemed reluctant to engage intellectually and socially with them, due to their temporary status (see Davis, 1965). This is perhaps not surprising given the increasingly pressurized environment of university life, with its emphasis on the regulation of both academic time and outputs (Parker and Jary, 1995: 328). In conjunction with other indicators of 'inferior' status, both material (salary, pensions, etc.) and symbolic (for example, lack of a staff mail tray or 'pigeon-hole', exclusion from social events), this rendered somewhat problematic the construction of a positive, valued working self. Perhaps the most potent symbolic and material indicator researchers highlighted was the inferior accommodation assigned to them. Indeed, office accommodation ranged from no office at all: 'I was told to go and work in the library for three months'; to work spaces which ostensibly should have been condemned on health and safety grounds. The compound effect of these negative factors was described vividly by a Senior Research Fellow who reflected on a difficult entrée to contract research:

When I started off I had a real hard-time. There I was, a 22-year old Research Assistant, never having done any empirical research, on my own in a leaky portakabin a quarter of a mile from the department. No one cared about me and most members of staff were not even aware of my existence ... The Prof in charge of the project was always away in Europe and just told me to get on with it, so isolation and fear of not being able to complete the fieldwork, let alone write about it, were major aspects of my introduction to being a researcher. (Senior Research Fellow, Centre)

Similar narratives of struggle were articulated by interviewees who had undertaken periods of employment in analogous departmental contexts. With the benefit of hindsight, however, researchers tended to view this period and the successful surmounting of their difficulties, as something approximating a rite de passage (cf. Van Gennep, 1960), which proved influential in the establishment of a more confident occupational identity, endowing researchers with an ability to cope with the vagaries of subsequent employment in contract research.
In contrast to this kind of solitary struggle, researchers in the other two locations generally reported an easier entree into the world of contract research and a smoother transition to the occupational role. The physical conditions tended to be much improved, and more fortunate researchers often 'luxuriated' in purpose-built accommodation. Additionally, there was a critical mass of colleagues on hand to transmit the 'craft' of contract research, including the technicalities of undertaking research specifically in a contract environment; a task often qualitatively different from purely academic research (Allen Collinson, 2000: 162). There was considerable collaborative activity amongst researchers in order to gain further contracts and fend off the perennial spectre of unemployment. Knowledge of research opportunities constituted a highly valued resource, and it was interesting to note how freely such information circulated between peers. Along with such 'gifts' (Mauss, 1967) of information, invitations were proffered to novice colleagues to collaborate with more experienced researchers in bidding for and working on projects. Individuals also gained intelligence about the preferences of putative sponsors through inclusion in this peer network and developed expertise in the art of constructing research bids. These networks, and the opportunities afforded by them, helped build and sustain researchers' confidence in their ability to handle the craft of contract research, and to achieve some degree of occupational stability. Self-images grounded in the minutiae of contract research evolve gradually in an interactive process between peers, sponsors and the world of research. In time, an occupational identity develops, sufficiently experienced and confident to deal with the demands, complexities and vagaries of an often precarious trade:

I went to ____ as a Research Fellow and I was told that my area is education ... then I'm told I'm going to be an expert on secondary education which I knew absolutely nothing about, but I am suddenly the resident expert there. When I started a new area, I used to be terrified that I would not be able to hack it, because it would be something completely different – but that doesn't frighten me any more ... it's just a technique like any other .... Now I think, well, anybody can throw anything at me now and I could do it. (Research Fellow, Department)

Identity Tensions and Solutions

As individuals labour in the contract research trade, they incrementally construct through daily praxis an occupational identity based upon the knowledge and skills necessary for accomplishing their work routines. However, the data revealed various tensions created by inhabiting that very identity. For all of those interviewed, unease about the working self became apparent in a number of ways. Researchers with dependants and/or who were the principal family wage-earners experienced internal conflict between their self-image of a capable researcher and the ever present threat of unemployment. They also expressed unease about that part of themselves that chose to occupy such a precarious and marginalized work role. In the words of one Research Fellow:
You take risks being a contract researcher, that's part of being this kind of researcher, but the problem is if you have a family it's a BIG risk! I've never been really happy at the degree of risk, of the possibility that suddenly I'm 43, on the dole, with a mortgage, wife and kids ... I've never really felt happy with the part of me that has decided to do this kind of work. (Research Fellow, Centre)

Tension persisted between the researcher's maintenance of a confident occupational-self and her/his position of institutional marginality. Frequently reminded of their inferior position within the hierarchy of the institution, contract researchers found the validation of work identity rested primarily on feedback from peers and research directors, and their own self-evaluation of competence. Marginality, both in material and symbolic forms, had the capacity to erode a confident occupational self, and it undoubtedly required periodic 'identity work' (Goffman, 1961; Prus, 1996: 152; Snow and Anderson, 1995: 233) in order to prevent such erosion. The intensity of the identity work and the need to actively maintain a positive self-image varied according to particular temporal points during the contract. For example, at the point of commencing a new contract, little identity work was necessary as the very act of securing the contract provided a powerful validator of personal effectiveness. In stark contrast, the second half of contracts, invariably regarded as highly 'pressurized', required considerable amounts of identity work. As the remaining contract time began to peter out, and a new contract had to be sought with some urgency, researchers felt their identity under a degree of threat.

It was clear from the interviews that researchers who were both inexperienced and working in isolated contexts found the shoring up of a positive occupational identity considerably more difficult than did their counterparts enmeshed in peer networks. However, even those in the latter group who had attained the top of the limited hierarchy of research grades were keenly aware that the negative impact of their institutional position had to be monitored and guarded against. As one Senior Research Fellow admitted:

At the back of my mind, there's always the thought that I am not a full member of this university, and then up jumps the insidious thought 'Why? Why have I not been made permanent, why am I not good enough?' When those kind of thoughts arise I try and think of all the positive things I have achieved in this Centre.

There also existed tensions specific to the 'social justice' orientated group of researchers. As has been noted, contract research is a pressurized business where increased output within shorter timescales is demanded by funders (Pirrie, 1997). It is under these constraints and pressures that the vast majority of this kind of intellectual labour operates. As a result, researchers are habitually short of time, struggling to meet sponsors' deadlines, while simultaneously obliged to devote time and energy to securing another contract. Time is very evidently at a premium and researchers evolve various 'strategies' (Crow, 1989) for dealing with time, one of which tended to pose a strong challenge to their conceptions of identity. In the terminology of the researchers themselves, time for writing and submitting new bids for funding was obtained by 'squeezing' or
more commonly 'stealing' time. In this framework, time was conceptualized as a commodity stolen from the existing project in order to enable the drafting of new project bids. As researchers' practical competency develops, this tactic allows them to complete certain projects in a very efficient fashion, and consequently to 'free up' time:

After a while you become really good at doing these kind of projects, you almost have a sort of template in your head, so you can turn them around very quickly. That means out of the number of days budgeted for the project you can sometimes pinch some time to write proposals for future research ... [my emphasis] (Research Fellow, Centre)

In addition to 'manufacturing' time for submitting bids, researchers also used the technique of building into their original project proposals adequate time for drafting subsequent bids. Their informal stock of knowledge allowed the calculation of how much time was really needed to complete the proposed research. This duration was then supplemented by the incorporation of 'writing time' into the proposal timeframe, carefully concealed under a different heading.

As was clear, for those researchers concerned with social justice objectives, these kinds of strategies engendered a fair degree of disquiet and tension. The occupational self which valorized improving public sector organizations was found to be actually implicated in strategies of 'time-stealing' from those same organizations. This was perceived as particularly lamentable as it ultimately resulted in financial costs for organizations obliged to operate in a climate where 'time is money' (Loft, 1995). As one Research Fellow admitted: 'I used to get guilty about doing this when the research was for some small charity, and what you are doing is effectively stealing time which they have paid for.'

Confronted with such tensions, researchers utilized various 'techniques of neutralization' (Sykes and Matza, 1957: 668) to justify their strategies. Some individuals convinced themselves that stealing time was in effect a measure necessary to achieve the longer-term research objective. As one researcher reasoned: 'If I don't get another contract, research in this particular area will just not get done, so I feel some days pinched from them is not such a crime!' Another technique was to emphasize the potential impact upon the wider social welfare infrastructure should researchers fail to secure another contract. This they contrasted with their own mildly 'illegitimate' behaviour. As one Research Fellow rationalized: 'If I end up a recipient of the dole that will cost the system much more than me lifting a few days from the Department ... to write bids.' A further option was for individuals to stress the greater practical impact upon policy which their earlier research had achieved:

I like to think we (the research group) have made a difference in changing policy on ______ issues, that's happened because bids which were written on 'nicked' time were successful, so a tiny bit of social deviance helps the cause!
For those researchers for whom academic and disciplinary concerns were foremost in terms of identity salience, a further source of tension and identity strain was evident. These individuals encountered difficulties and frustrations in inhabiting an occupational role which, for the most part, offered few opportunities for academic output. It is worth recalling that the great majority of contract research work in the UK is undertaken for, and funded by, local authorities, charities and government departments whose priorities rarely reflect those of academia. Coupled with the increasingly short-term nature of contracts and the near constant search for new posts, this meant that the time, energy and opportunity for scholarly, academic reflection and publication were severely restricted or non-existent. Anger and frustration resulted, accompanied by considerable anxiety that time spent in the occupational role had eroded disciplinary knowledge and academic identity. The following kind of comment was pervasive, particularly from Research Fellows who had completed several years of contract time:

You know I have been gradually losing it as time has passed ... I mean academic knowledge. It's a bit ironic because you can hear some of the regular members of staff moan about not being able to keep up with their area because of their lecturing loads. That's a joke compared to people like me; I have lost it with sociology in its entirety, let alone an area. I don't know what postmodernism is! (Research Fellow, Department)

Prolonged engagement in contract research, where the need for specialist disciplinary knowledge is often very limited, means that discipline expertise begins to recede into the past, as the stock of subject-specific knowledge is eroded. Alarmingly, along with this decline in subject knowledge, researchers are acutely aware that, in contrast, disciplinary knowledge itself is continually growing and their capacity to keep pace with such rapid expansion is severely stretched. Caught between the vanishing disciplinary past and the ever-expanding disciplinary present and future which seem to be accelerating beyond control, researchers find the consequences for intellectual identity are dire:

All that time I put into learning that body of theory and I can't hang on to it ... I've got no time to hold on to what I knew, let alone all the new work which has emerged since I finished my doctorate .... Intellectually I am reduced, stunted I suppose, that's what I feel as I go about my umpteenth report for social service departments. (Research Fellow, Centre)

The longer researchers spend in the contract research mode, the more they tend to lose the basis upon which their academic vocation (see Smith, 1991) and disciplinary identity were initially founded. The active response of many was to engage in various forms of identity work (Goffman, 1961) in a desperate attempt to retain their former 'gloried self' (Adler and Adler, 1989). Such identity work was found to be influenced by elements of the work context. Thus, researchers might find positive support if surrounded by peers whose conceptions of identity were also discipline-based. Whilst a critical mass of researchers
helped individuals to construct and sustain confident occupational self-images, a key factor was undoubtedly the presence of colleagues who shared a similar disciplinary commitment (see Delamont et al., 1997a, 1997b). At several interview sites, researchers benefited from a strong disciplinary ethos and the valorization of both academic and practitioner-orientated output. In other locations however, such 'props' to disciplinary identity were largely absent because practitioner concerns and output took precedence, and researchers were consequently obliged to revert to individual identity work.

One important form of identity work cited was involvement in teaching the discipline. This seemed to hold considerable symbolic potency for researchers, as reflected in comments such as: 'I teach two hours a week in the evening, so the historian in me is not dead, yet!' Some researchers confessed to 'making bargains' with the occupational self so that, for example, putting sustained effort into their official project might be rewarded by permitting oneself the luxury of reading one academic paper each week. Other attempts to sustain intellectual connections included social and leisure activities with disciplinary colleagues within the institution in preference to socialization with fellow contract researchers within their department. As one indicated: 'This is not the kind of Centre where one takes regular lunch-hours, but when I do, I go over to the bar, where S_____ can always be found, the only other anthropologist in this place .... She speaks my language.' Some researchers retained membership of disciplinary and professional associations, even when there was no immediate possibility of being able to undertake research in the subject area. By a range of devices, this particular group of researchers attempted to sustain an academic identity, despite having to devote their efforts primarily to projects offering few opportunities for disciplinary interest or academic output.

Conclusion

This article has examined the construction and maintenance of occupational identities amongst a group of social science contract researchers in the UK higher education sector. For these researchers, conceptions of identity hinged upon a number of factors, including: their biographical resources and academic capital; the nature of the locations in which they worked; and their prior occupational experience of contract research work.

On one level, there was a degree of homogeneity in terms of how the occupational self was viewed. Researchers articulated a set of common, shared understandings of their individual and collective positions of relative marginality within the institution (Bilson, 1988). They emphasized repeatedly their lowly status within the academic hierarchy, and the essentially transient nature of the job, as reflected in self descriptions such as: 'intellectual nomads', 'casual labour', and 'peripheral staff' which peppered their discourse. Further commonalities included a stock of shared knowledge, craft competencies and skills, ranging from methodological expertise to more tacit, informal knowledge such
as how to cultivate and manage sponsors to maximum effect. Such knowledge, skills and competencies constituted a valuable resource upon which researchers drew in order to construct more positive occupational selves in the face of a potentially negative institutional position.

In contrast to this relative homogeneity, a degree of differentiation was also found, grounded in biographical differences and varied work experience. Such differences were predictably evident in relation to factors such as disciplinary and professional backgrounds, but also emerged in relation to the meanings attached to contract research as an occupation, and its identity salience (Stryker, 1987; Wells and Stryker, 1988). Certain inner tensions were evident amongst researchers. The article has attempted to chart these, and to describe the methods employed to resolve or at least to manage the consequences, as researchers strove to sustain self-confidence and self-belief in the occupational self.

The link forged between work and identity has been theorized generally by Hughes (1959), and more specifically by Parker and Jary (1995) in terms of intellectual labour within higher education. A strong connection has been posited between how individuals work and who they perceive themselves to be. Contract researchers are often marginalized within mainstream academia and dogged by inferior status and prospects, and financial insecurity. It is perhaps surprising then that they continue to make such a sustained and highly significant contribution to the research output of UK higher education and thereby bolster the financial well-being of the sector as a whole (Bryson and Barnes, 2000). The importance of their ‘identity work’ should not therefore be underestimated. It is on the basis of this work that credible occupational identities are constructed and sustained and, in turn, the considerable and demanding labour of contract research work continues to be completed effectively.

Note

1 The research team comprised the author and Dr John Hockey, University of Gloucestershire.

References


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Sanctions and savings: some reflections on ESRC doctoral policy

Jacquelyn Collinson and John Hockey

The 1980s saw a continuing debate within educational circles in the United Kingdom about various aspects of the social science PhD. It was launched in 1979 when the Comptroller and Auditor General reported on the poor completion rates of social science PhD students. Subsequently the Chairman of the then Social Science Research Council (SSRC) was called to account for the expenditure of research student funding and appeared before the Public Accounts Committee. Further public criticism of the funding and management of the social science PhD, and unfavourable comparisons with natural science and engineering counterparts, resulted in the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) implementation of a sanctions policy in 1985. This policy, which is still in force, results in the suspension of studentship funding to any department where fewer than 60 per cent of ESRC-funded students submit their theses within four years of registration.

Currently 73 per cent of ESRC-funded doctoral students submit their thesis within the four-year period. This constitutes a remarkable turnaround over the last nine years, as in 1985 just 25 per cent of students achieved submission within this time-frame. The sanctions policy, together with the decision to fund a training based doctorate only illustrates the ESRC's determination actively to manage doctoral research. Moreover, such policy changes can be seen to form part of a general European trend in the direction of greater centralised control of postgraduate education. These changes in ESRC policy were propelled by government demand for research training to be more cost effective, efficient and relevant to the wider economy. This essentially economic concern is exemplified by the following extract from the report of the Winfield Task Force which undertook an in-depth investigation of the social science PhD for the ESRC.

'We do not see how a system of public funding where only 4 per cent of students complete the course of study in the period of funding (and only one in seven within a fourth year) can be seriously defended.'
Sanctions, submission and completion

Here then are major policy changes propelled by a concern with 'getting value for money' in terms of the public funding of research study. The main mechanism for achieving this aim has been the sanctions policy, which the ESRC decided to connect to a particular stage of the PhD process: the point of submission. It is necessary at this juncture to distinguish the stages of submission and completion. The stage of submission refers to the point at which the thesis is 'formally handed in by the student' to the appropriate institutional authorities to be examined. Completion refers to the point at which the student is awarded a PhD, or is judged to have failed, and most institutions define the former as being either the date on which the pass list is issued, or the date upon which the degree is conferred. The two stages are therefore distinct and should not be conflated. Only completion can involve the end product of a finalised and approved thesis. It should be stressed that the ESRC's prime concern to date has been with the stage of submission and it has imposed sanctions based on the submission rate of a department rather than on its completion rate.

The rationale for this has been variously explained, by the Winfield Report:

'We decided to follow the recommendation of the Swinnerton-Dyer Report (1982) and focus on submission rates, not completion rates, so as not to put or encourage pressure on institutions to pass marginal candidates;' 12

and by the Chair of the ESRC's Training Board:

'We judge students on submission rather than on completion because we do not want to put pressure on examiners.' 13

Whilst this linking of sanctions to submission rates may well remove pressure from the completion phase, the pressure on departments, supervisors and students remains focused at the submission stage. It may be argued that the whole point of operating sanctions is to apply some form of pressure. The policy has now been in place for ten years and yet there has been no research on its impact upon departments, and upon supervisory relationships. That there has been an impact is obvious from the improved statistical returns for submission rates published by the ESRC. 14 However, what is less obvious is the impact of such a policy upon students, supervisors and academic departments. The policy is known, the outcomes are known, but what is unknown is what has happened in between and with what consequences.
A recent study of research supervision in general indicates that departments are experiencing increased pressure. During 1990-91 the second author conducted extensive research on the socialisation of first year social science PhD students, interviewing both students and their supervisors at nine university and polytechnic sites. It was apparent that both students and supervisors were experiencing considerable pressure to meet the four year submission deadline; a finding confirmed by another recent study. This experience of pressure is perhaps not surprising given the public nature of the ESRC’s sanctions policy. For example, students are immediately made aware upon receipt of the ESRC Studentship Handbook that their research performance will have an impact upon their institution. The pressure has been compounded by the introduction of a compulsory research methods course work component into ESRC-funded studentships; coursework which constitutes up to 60 per cent of a student’s first year of study. The actual time available to effect doctoral research has thus been reduced in real terms.

Moreover, supervisors’ comments suggest that in response to such pressure a practice of ‘premature’ thesis submission is not uncommon; a practice noted elsewhere. By ‘premature’ it is meant that the student and supervisor knowingly submit a thesis which is likely to be below the standard required of a doctorate, in the full realisation that a ‘referral’ by the examiners is a distinct possibility. This constitutes a deliberate strategy on the part of both student and supervisor to avoid their department’s falling foul of ESRC sanctions, by ensuring that the thesis, in whatever state, is submitted within the four year limit. A number of possible consequences arise from this strategy.

First, referral can be regarded as a learning process, in as much as examiners’ comments constitute pointers, often highly detailed, toward a higher standard of intellectual work than the student has initially achieved. There is therefore the potential for the final PhD to be attained with considerable help from the examiners. The farther away the student is from achieving a passable thesis when he/she submits, the greater the potential intellectual aid derived from the examiners, providing of course that the thesis is not of such a poor standard that it is failed. In this way, examiners may in some senses be acting as additional supervisors, which raises issues concerning the autonomy and originality of the student’s work — criteria usually central to the award of a PhD.

A second possible consequence of premature submission again concerns the position of external examiners. It is evident that the system of external examining is under considerable strain, with academic
departments finding it increasingly difficult to recruit external examiners. If ESRC policy does result in increased numbers of premature submissions, this generates the possibility of increasing numbers of thesis referrals and consequently further work for examiners at the resubmission stage. This process has the capacity to increase the strain on a system already under pressure. The ESRC's focus on submission rates does not appear to reflect its professed intention not to place pressure upon institutions and examiners. On the contrary, it appears that one of the major consequences of the policy is that pressure is being experienced by all concerned: students, supervisors and examiners.

A successful outcome?
The ESRC's focus on the submission point and its publication of submission rates gives no indication of the percentages of students who achieve completion and within what time frame. At this point, the definition of a successful outcome of the PhD process needs to be examined. Successful outcome may of course be defined as submission. However, more usually it is successful completion, that is the award of a doctorate, which is seen to constitute the final product of the PhD process. The thesis then enters the public domain and becomes the tangible outcome of ESRC funding. In this sense, statistics relating to submission rates do not indicate whether good use of public funding has been achieved. Moreover, the focus on submission rates appears to have precluded a consideration of what occurs after submission; for example what percentage of theses are referred, whether the referral rate has increased or decreased since the introduction of the sanctions policy, the relationship between referral rate and completion rate. There seem to be no published data on these issues. The preoccupation with submission rates therefore fails to inform about the eventual outcome of the PhD process, to examine some of the complexities of this process and also to ascertain whether or not public funds are being well spent.

It is useful when considering the latter issue to examine the relationship between submission rates and completion rates over as long a period as possible. It becomes possible to determine whether or not the sanctions policy has been successful in terms of improving value for money. Details of ESRC submission and completion rates are given in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. However, no comparison over time is currently possible as the ESRC has only recently started to compile statistics for completion rates.

As can be seen from Table 1, four-year submission rates have indeed improved from a low of 25 per cent for those students starting in 1980
to 73 per cent for those starting in 1989. However, as can be seen from Table 2, completion rates are of a very different order. While 64 per cent of the 1987 starters submitted within four years, only 35 per cent completed within the same time frame. For the 1988 starters the gap is even wider. Whereas 69 per cent of this cohort submitted within four years, only 30 per cent completed within that period. The most recent figures available indicate that of those starting in 1989 only 37 per cent had completed within four years in contrast to the 73 per cent who had submitted. There is frequently a long delay between submission and completion and it is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this.

Firstly, there may well be purely administrative reasons. For example it may take several months after submission to appoint examiners, arrange a viva and confer the degree, even if the thesis is successful at its initial examination. However, this is unlikely to

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Source for both tables: ESRC letter to the first author dated 14/4/94
account for delays of a year and over. Secondly, it may be that premature submission is actually delaying eventual completion as a student is highly unlikely to undertake further work on the thesis during the period between submission and examination, even though recognising that it is probable the thesis will not pass without further endeavour. Had the thesis not been submitted at this premature juncture, there is at least the possibility that the student would have continued to work on the thesis and passed as a result of that extra work. Thirdly, premature submission and subsequent failure to pass may result in demotivation of students who may then find it difficult to generate the enthusiasm to recommence their research, or may even decide to discontinue altogether. The point is that there are no data publicly available on these sort of processes and it is possible to speculate that the sanctions policy may well have exacerbated referral and even completion rates.\textsuperscript{23}

Conclusion
The introduction of sanctions by the ESRC in 1985 has undoubtedly worked in one sense, as the statistics on four-year submission rates indicate a marked improvement.\textsuperscript{24} However, it is less clear whether or not this policy has achieved the original aim of increasing value for public money which provided both logic and impetus for the sanctions imposed by the ESRC. If PhD completions are taken as a measure of value for money, then little has been achieved, for after a decade of the policy's operation the latest figures indicate that of those students starting in 1989 only 37 per cent had completed within four years. The ESRC has decided to take submission rates as a measure of value for money. However, the question remains, do improved submission rates really reflect increased value for money when a submitted thesis may well end up being referred or even failed? If referred, further time will then be required for additional work, guidance from examiners and possibly a second examination and even then the thesis may be failed. Even if the submission rate is accepted as an appropriate measure, then what is required is a more powerful and appropriate rationale than the ESRC's stated intent of not wishing to put pressure upon institutions and examiners. For there are indications that such pressure is being experienced anyway. It may well be that, in the face of considerable external pressure,\textsuperscript{25} the ESRC opted for connecting sanctions to submission rates rather than completions rates as the better of the two options. This could be seen to increase control over the PhD process but in a less interventionist manner than sanctions based on completion rates.
The impact of the sanctions policy upon the central actors in the PhD process and the nature of the PhD itself is unclear and to-date unresearched. Some of the possible consequences of the policy such as premature submission of theses, and the greater involvement of examiners in the production of students' work have been mentioned. There may well be many other 'unintended consequences'\textsuperscript{26} of the ESRC policy at work; current knowledge about such processes and their consequences is scant. This is despite a recommendation by the Winfield Task Force\textsuperscript{27} that the ESRC maintain a comprehensive data base on its funded students. The policy has now been in place for a decade and research is evidently needed into its consequences, above and beyond the improving statistics relating to submission rates.

\textbf{Acknowledgement}

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The Social Science Training-model Doctorate: student choice?

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ABSTRACT Recent changes to social science doctoral educational policy, instigated by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and endorsed by central government, have begun radically to alter the nature of the UK social science PhD. Perhaps the most fundamental change has been the introduction of the training-model doctorate, with its concomitant taught research methods component. Underlying the move towards this model can be discerned an assumption of the doctoral student body as homogeneous. This article challenges the validity of this assumption and subsequently charts what is known about doctoral students’ responses to the current pro research training climate. The article concludes with a call for greater flexibility of provision to meet the needs of a wider range of research students than are currently catered for.

Introduction
Research degree education in the UK, in line with a general European pattern (Holdaway, 1993), has undergone considerable change during recent years. These changes have included stronger institutional controls over the length of time allowed for PhD submission and over the content of doctoral programmes (Becher et al., 1994). There has been a general move within higher education (HE) away from the traditional UK PhD practice which was aimed primarily at the generation of new knowledge (CVCP, 1988; ABRC, 1992), so that increasingly PhD programmes now emphasize doctoral study as a training for future researchers. This constitutes a radical change in doctoral education, as the UK doctorate had hitherto contained little or no coursework, in contrast to its North American counterpart (Burgess, 1994). Such change is particularly evident in the social sciences, wherein traditional practices had predominated (O’Brien, 1995).

This fundamental change has been propelled by governmental concerns expressed in a 1993 White Paper, that research training should meet the demands of the wider economy, be relevant to business and industry and be ‘cost effective’ (Hughes et al., 1991; HMSO, 1993). Responding to these concerns, research councils have made it a condition of receipt of funded studentships that academic departments provide a taught research methods component for their students in the first year of doctoral study (ESRC, 1993a; SERC, 1993). In the case of the social sciences, this compo-
nent may constitute up to 60% of that initial year (ESRC, 1993a, 1996). Moreover, the ESRC has exhorted institutions to communicate ‘clear expectations that all students will participate in research training not just ESRC research students’ (McIntyre, 1994) (our italics). In addition, the ESRC has also indicated its approval of measures such as compulsory student attendance on research training programmes, and the formal assessment of students’ work on the latter (McIntyre, 1994).

The ESRC, which constitutes the main indigenous provider of research student funding, has thus been influential in creating a climate which promotes the new training-based doctorate. Subsequently, large numbers of HE institutions have responded positively to this initiative (Daniels & Akehurst, 1995; Lowe & Murray, 1995; CEDAR, 1996a). The general move in the direction of formalized training for social science research students (Holdaway, 1996), contrasts highly with the ante quo where research practices and techniques were transmitted on a more informal basis by supervisors. For the most part, previously students were responsible either for learning how to conduct research themselves or for gleaning specific information from members of staff who had expertise in the particular research skills required for the research project. In contrast, formalized research training involves a more directed, planned programme of activities which aims to provide a generic research training across a whole range of research practices, and which is supposed to result in the production of a ‘trained researcher’ (ESRC, nd; McIntyre, 1994).

This approach is very much in line with current government thinking on research training which demands that it be specifically orientated to the needs of potential commercial and industrial employers (HMSO, 1993). The stated logic underpinning this policy is that a shortfall of posts in HE makes it imperative that research training for all disciplines be designed with this objective in mind, despite the fact that this ‘increased employability’ argument does not appear tenable upon closer examination of the labour market position of doctoral students in the social sciences (O’Brien, 1996; Connor, 1994). Indeed, findings of recent research indicate that less than one in 10 social science PhD graduates enters the private sector, with the great majority finding employment within the HE sector (CEDAR, 1996b).

Student Homogeneity?

A core assumption underlying the policy of formalized training is that the PhD student body is homogeneous (Winfield, 1987; Delamont, 1989; ABRC, 1992; Lowe & Murray, 1995), with the typical social science research student assumed to be male, 21 or 22 years of age, studying full-time, geographically mobile and with few or no domestic responsibilities. In reality, however, it is clear that the social science research student population is quite heterogeneous. In terms of funding, for example, the majority of social science PhD students are not funded by the ESRC, but financed from a variety of other sources, which include the students’ own institution, charities, business and private finance (Tight, 1992; Becher et al., 1994; Dunkerley & Weeks, 1994; HEFC, CVCP, SCOP, 1996). Many research students are not young and single, but in contrast are mature in years with a panoply of
responsibilities such as mortgages, childcare, maintenance payments, and so on (Salmon, 1992; Tight, 1992; Dunkerley & Weeks, 1994; Hockey, 1994).

Moreover, data also reveal that very large numbers of students do not pursue their doctorate on a full-time basis. Thus, ESRC (1993b) figures show that in 1992–93 there were approximately 53,000 social science postgraduate students, of whom over half (27,000) were part-time. An examination by Dunkerley and Weeks (1994) of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) data base on research students, spanning some 28 years (1964–92), indicated that during this period 64% of candidates were undertaking their study on a part-time basis. Tight (1992) examined comprehensive national data for 1988–89 and found that of the 138,600 postgraduate students in the HE system, 65,100 (47%) were studying part-time, and 43% of these were research students. It is evident that PhD students are diverse in terms of their circumstances and mode of study. Given this range of student backgrounds and circumstances it is hardly surprising that there is evidence of a similar diversity of student motives.

**Students’ Motives**

Although research on UK social science PhD students is still relatively limited (Welsh, 1979; Young et al., 1987; Rudd, 1985, 1990; Wright & Lodwick, 1989; Hockey, 1991, 1994; Burgess, 1994) what is apparent is the existence of a further significant factor differentiating students, namely the meaning ascribed to the PhD and the consequent motives for undertaking doctoral study. Although the ESRC acknowledges student diversity in terms of ‘prior knowledge, skills and understandings of research and of the social sciences’ (McIntyre, 1994), there appears to be little or no acknowledgement in any recent ESRC (ESRC, n.d., 1993a, 1993b, 1996; McIntyre, 1994; Woodley, 1994) policy documentation of students’ differing motives. Yet motive is of central importance to the PhD process, as highlighted by the Winfield Report (1987) which investigated the social science PhD for the ESRC a decade ago. Motives for obtaining a doctorate may involve intellectual, material, social or psychological factors, and will influence student perception of the PhD, whether this is of the traditional or newer, training-based variety.

Interviews conducted with both full- and part-time social science PhD students \((n = 86)\) in 1990–91 by the second author [1] revealed a diversity of motives for engaging with doctoral education, although three predominant themes were manifest. Firstly, there were students who perceived the possession of a PhD primarily as a ‘ticket’ necessary for acquiring an academic position in an increasingly competitive labour market. A variation on this theme was found amongst many overseas PhD students who already held an academic post and were in pursuit of a doctorate principally to secure a permanent position, or to open the door to promotion.

Secondly, and in contrast, the interviews showed that for many students, both full- and part-time, the main reason for undertaking a doctorate was not primarily employment related, but intellectual. Their central reason for becoming a research student was not located in future occupational plans, but in an all-consuming interest in, enthusiasm and passion for their research topic. When interviewed, such
students often stressed that interest in their research area pre-dated any thought of pursuing a PhD. In effect their topic led them to the PhD, rather than the reverse. For these students the pursuit of knowledge constituted the most important motivating factor. Often there was an intensely personal connection between the individual's research topic and her/his biography.

Thirdly, there were students who articulated their main motive for pursuing research to be one of 'self-development'. For these students the PhD constituted a major endeavour in which they could be creative and intellectually challenged. They engaged with their research very much for its own sake, rather than for pragmatic reasons of career enhancement. Moreover, for many part-time students the research was analogous to a leisure activity which had to be carefully fitted around work and domestic responsibilities. In effect, the doctorate constituted a hobby, albeit a very demanding, and on occasion frustrating one.

These findings are consistent with other research on social science PhD students which highlights the diversity of motivation and meaning surrounding the doctorate (Field & Sidhu, 1992; Salmon, 1992; Tight, 1992; Parsloe, 1993; Becher et al., 1994; Hill et al., 1994; Zuber-Skerritt & Ryan, 1994; CHES, 1996). Certainly, some students do embark upon the doctoral enterprise as a means to an academic career. For a smaller number it constitutes a stepping stone to non-academic employment, although there is evidence to suggest that possession of a doctorate is marginal to obtaining such employment (Rudd, 1990; Bulmer et al., 1994; Connor, 1994). However, there are large numbers of PhD students for whom such career trajectories do not apply (Connor, 1994), and for whom the principal motives are intellectual interest, and self-development.

In sum, it can be seen that students undertake their doctoral study in different modes (full- or part-time), from a range of backgrounds, at different ages, funded by a variety of sources, and with very different motives and needs related to that study. A contradiction therefore emerges in that on the one hand doctoral research training programmes often appear to be predicated on a view of the student body as homogeneous, whilst on the other hand, in reality the student body evidences great diversity of circumstance and motive. Faced with such a disjuncture, it is interesting to consider what is known about student views of research training programmes.

**Student Responses to Research Methods Training**

Unsurprisingly, it appears that students' evaluation of the research methods training they receive is grounded firmly in perceptions of its relevance and usefulness, as Parry et al. (1994) note: 'Again we found that relevance to their own particular practical work was the yardstick which students primarily used to assess the appropriateness of their methods training' (p. 48). Where training was perceived to be both needed and relevant, there was general student support (McKendrick & McCormick, 1993; Hill et al., 1994). On the other hand, where need and relevance were not established, whether because of the perceived irrelevance of such training to the student's thesis, because the level of the training was deemed inappropriate (Parry et al., 1994; Hill et al. 1994), or because there was simply too much
(McKendrick & McCormick, 1993), which actually disrupted thesis progression (Hill et al., 1994), students clearly did not support such training.

Interestingly, these objections are analogous to those voiced by critics of a training-based PhD when this model was first proposed some years ago (Gregson & Mohan, 1983; Floud, 1987; Gray & Flowerdew, 1987; Young et al., 1987; Silk, 1988; Hockey, 1991). Indeed, the ESRC itself has recognized this resistance from the student body, and recently acknowledged: ‘... it has not been easy for outlets to convince some students of the relevance of training which takes “up to 60%” of the time available to them in their first year’ (McIntyre, 1994, p. 8). So much so that the ESRC has even published a list of measures designed to convince students of the benefits of formal research training, and to enhance their engagement in the process (McIntyre, 1994).

A Way Forward?

A possible way forward might be to develop training programmes which have a high degree of flexibility and are thus able to meet the requirements of different groups of students. Research training, as a learning process, needs to be linked directly to the needs of these groups. If this constitutes the central organizing principle of programmes, then the path would seem to be clear for enjoyable, productive and relevant learning to occur. Once this position is accepted it then becomes possible to formulate a model programme. On the one hand such a model needs to meet the requirements of students who aspire to a research career, academic or otherwise. Whilst on the other hand those who have no such occupational aspirations, and who study with less instrumental motives, need to be accommodated. Flexibility is centrally important.

In terms of content, the ESRC-approved model of research training (ESRC, 1996) which combines core training modules (covering, for example, the philosophy of social science, research design, research methods, data collection and analysis) with more subject specialist modules (for example, more advanced training in specific research methods, language expertise, specialist software packages), may well constitute a helpful starting point. However, the imposition on all students of a compulsory, rigid programme including assessed work has resulted in some student resistance. A more flexible alternative would be for students, in consultation with their supervisors, to assemble a customized research training package; a combination of core and specialist modules to meet their own individualized research needs. This package could then constitute an informal or formal (written) agreement between the parties, and would structure a student’s research training.

For those students who aspire to become academics or professional researchers, and who therefore require a broader-based research training, a comprehensive programme along the lines of the ESRC model may be appropriate. An incentive for undertaking such a time-consuming, highly structured and broad-based programme might be the certification of the programme so that participants who have successfully completed a specified range of modules obtain a diploma or other qualification. This option could also of course be made available to less vocationally orientated
students, but such a path would not be compulsory for them, and they would have the choice to pursue a more specialized and individually tailored training.

The more flexible the provisions of the training programme, the more likely that students' individualized needs are going to be met. Obviously there are resource implications in offering a wide range of modules, and institutions might find it more cost effective to permit students to register for relevant existing modules at Master's level as part of a customized research training package. Regional or other inter-institutional collaboration might also provide an opportunity for better utilization of resources. Indeed, collaboration between institutions on joint research degree programmes in the social sciences is already underway (Burgess, 1996).

Conclusions

The ESRC's changes in policy towards its funded research students, and the UK government's endorsement of these changes, can be seen to constitute external pressure to which HE academic departments have in the main conformed (Becher et al., 1994; CEDAR, 1996a). The reforms in the UK form part of a wider European trend of policy changes in the direction of greater centralized control of postgraduate education (Gellert, 1993). They are geared toward the increased vocationalism of postgraduate education, and situated within a discourse which emphasizes labour force targets, cost effectiveness and labour market need (Blume, 1986).

Despite student resistance, it appears that many social science departments are pursuing the training model doctorate for all their students, regardless of the diversity of students' funding sources, needs, motives and purposes. This degree of conformity to the training model PhD means that it is probable that the motives and needs of many non ESRC-funded research students will continue to be discounted. In turn, student resistance to the imposition of research methods training is likely to continue. Large numbers of non ESRC-funded research students who pursue a doctorate, often at great personal expense (Tight, 1992), increasingly find they do not have the option of pursuing that doctorate by submission of a thesis alone. This seems even more constraining when one considers that many of these students undertake doctoral study with no intention of entering commerce or industry, or indeed full-time academic employment. Rather, their concern is primarily with their own intellectual struggle and the development of a thesis. Yet increasingly the sole model of doctorate with which they must engage is structured so as to occupy a good part of their precious time in learning about research methods not relevant to their own thesis (ESRC, 1993; McIntyre, 1994) and which they are unlikely ever to use.

The policy changes have resulted in the establishment of a climate in which the research training doctorate appears to have rapidly become orthodoxy within university social science departments, and simultaneously has resulted in a lack of student choice. Further, the indications are that if departments also conform to ESRC exhortations for compulsory attendance and coursework assessment, student choice and discretion as to whether they engage with formal training components will eventually be eroded, if not extinguished (Burgess et al., 1994; Parry et al., 1994; CHES, 1996). This state of affairs sits very uneasily within a context of a developing
student consumer culture (Woodley, 1994) with its attendant student charters and codes of practice (National Postgraduate Committee, 1992).

Government and the ESRC have expressed concerns that doctorates should become more vocational and have as their central aim the cost effective production of a generic 'trained researcher', ready for employment in the wider economy. However, evidence suggests that there are many PhD students who neither receive money from the public purse, nor hold such vocational motives and objectives. There is then an urgent need for those with responsibility for the development of doctoral social science research programmes seriously to take into account the diversity of the student body and to ensure that students have a much greater choice in how their doctoral education is structured.

Note
[1] ESRC Grant T007401011. The interviews were conducted at nine HE institutions, and involved students in Business Studies, Economics, and Sociology. The research team comprised the second author, Professor R.G. Burgess and Dr C. Pole, based at the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not those of the ESRC.

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Professionally trained researchers? Expectations of competence in social science doctoral research training

Jacquelyn Allen Collinson

In recent years a fundamental change has occurred in UK research degree education, with a move towards the reconceptualisation of the doctorate as a period of training for future researchers. This has involved a radical departure from traditional practice, usually aimed primarily at the generation of new knowledge, and a shift towards a model cognate to that of North America, with a greater emphasis on coursework. Nowadays, formalized research training, particularly in the social sciences, involves research students in a directed, planned, and largely taught programme of activities at the start of their doctorate. Formalized methods training now co-exists, sometimes uneasily, alongside the more informal training practices which previously predominated, where students themselves were largely responsible for defining their own training needs.

This UK reform constitutes part of a wider international trend of greater centralised control of postgraduate education. The changes are geared toward increased vocationalism and are situated within a discourse which emphasizes such factors as labour force targets, labour market needs and ‘cost effectiveness’. Recent UK government thinking on postgraduate research training promotes the idea that it be closely related to the needs of potential commercial and industrial employers, relevant to business, and ‘cost effective’.

Although the government vision of doctoral research training has not met with unqualified support, certain of the UK research councils have concurred with the new perspective, making it a condition of studentship funding that academic departments provide a taught research methods component for students in their first year of doctoral study. In the case of social science students without ‘foundation training’ such as a Research Master’s degree, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) requires that formal training should constitute 60 per cent of the first year of the doctorate. The ESRC has also indicated its
approval of measures such as compulsory student attendance on research training programmes and the formal assessment of students’ work.9

The research training doctorate appears rapidly to have become orthodoxy10 within university social science departments.11 The aim is to provide a ‘generic’ training programme for students, and the intended outcome is the production of ‘professionally trained researchers’12 who are trained in a spectrum of investigatory approaches, which may or may not be relevant to the student’s own particular doctoral thesis.13 It is envisaged that these researchers will be able to help meet the labour market needs not just of academia but also of commerce and industry.14 The overall policy objective is thus to create a pool of ‘trained researchers’,15 whose employment will benefit the wider economy.16 Given the radical nature of this change, what exactly is meant by training and what constitutes a ‘professionally trained researcher’ at this level of higher education?

Research training
Defining research training is not, however, unproblematic. Blume17 has noted in his international study of research training that the problem of ‘what precisely “good quality research training” is and how it should be assessed has become a vexed one’ and furthermore, ‘there is a lack of operational criteria for assessing the quality of a particular programme of training’. Due to these problems of defining ‘quality’ there has been a move to describe the knowledge and skills which students should acquire.18

Thus for example, the Universities Staff Development Unit (USDU) cites thirteen categories needed for the adequate training of the ‘well rounded’ research student.19 For social science students, the ESRC20 requires training to be delivered in eight general areas (research design/strategy, oral presentation, computation, teaching, languages, management, ethics, intellectual property), in addition to training which is discipline specific. Subject-specific training encompasses between two to six further areas, dependent upon the disciplinary base of the student. Elements common to all disciplines include the philosophy of the social sciences, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, as well as theoretical construction and writing skills.

This is essentially a personal attribute model of competency, where competency is deemed to be a quality of the performer, who can then be assessed to discover if s/he possesses the required level of skills and knowledge.21 When one examines the research training programmes

offered by various institutions, one can see the operationalisation of this particular model of training.\textsuperscript{22}

Such programmes embrace skills of a generic nature (management, communication, presentation, etc) designed to facilitate the research process. In addition, the student is trained in what may be termed the more 'core' elements of that process, including research design, data collection/analysis, and the application of research instruments or techniques. Some of these activities will be directly relevant to the student's own thesis, whilst others will not. Having satisfactorily completed the training programme, the student can be deemed to be a professionally trained researcher, able to display a level of competency in the spectrum of activities in which s/he has been trained, ready and able to undertake any research project in their general discipline area.

**Competency?**

Is this outcome actually possible, particularly within the time-frame in which research degrees now have to be undertaken?

Following government criticism of the social science PhD which focussed on 'poor' submission rates,\textsuperscript{23} in 1985 the ESRC introduced a new sanctions policy. Social science departments with 'low' submission rates were – and still are\textsuperscript{24} – penalised by the withdrawal of ESRC recognition.

The imposition of stricter deadlines for the submission of research degree theses is now widespread and reflects a more general concern with institutional quality assurance practices at this level of education.\textsuperscript{25} Full-time research students in particular are subject to greater pressure to submit their theses within the time-frame than hitherto was the case.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, this pressure of time is set within a context of relatively high expectations of those studying social sciences, as compared to their counterparts in engineering and science.\textsuperscript{27} Temporal constraints have of course been further compounded by the introduction of taught training programmes, which effectively reduce the time available for students to undertake actual research for the thesis. Unsurprisingly, students have on occasion articulated their opposition to the training policy.\textsuperscript{28}

If being 'trained' is defined as being competent, it is worth questioning whether it is possible for students at this level to be fully trained within the time scale, and across a range of skills of considerable complexity. Research is essentially a craft,\textsuperscript{29} and although it is undoubtedly theoretically informed, it is essentially a practical
endeavour. The way to become competent in the craft is to practise it. The craft is learnt through reflective practice and experience, and competence can only truly be demonstrated through practice.30

Training programmes for research students, which have so far been established in the UK, encompass both generic elements and subject specific components. However, the expectation that students be able to assimilate the necessary knowledge and develop their practice of various research methods to the point of competency, as well as completing a doctoral thesis is demanding, if not completely unrealistic. If one considers the core component alone, with its focus upon research design and a whole spectrum of techniques of data collection and analysis, the amount of time available would seem to preclude the possibility of developing any real competence in more than a couple of research methods. Clearly, it would be possible to introduce students to various techniques of data collection, but to assert that they will become competent to practise a variety of methods, after just one year of a training programme, is hardly credible. Indeed, a scan of the content of training programmes reveals the limited amount of time which can be devoted to the various elements of training.31

In contrast to the relatively isolated and individualised experience of social science research students, within the natural sciences there is a tradition of research student socialisation within a research group.32 This often involves the transmission of craft skills via the tutelage of post-doctoral researchers, usually throughout the duration of the PhD programme. In comparison, once past the formalised first year training programme, it is usual for social science research students to concentrate exclusively on their own individualised research project.33 Given the restricted time and resources available to most students, this necessarily means utilising a limited number of research techniques. There is little opportunity for the practice, let alone the refinement, of the panoply of skills appropriate to a fully trained researcher, who, according to the ideals of the training policy, should be competent across a wide range of core and subsidiary activities, and ready to enter employment in the wider economy. In the terminology of the 1993 government White Paper *Realising our Potential*: "The training should prepare the student for the budgetary, time-limited, interdisciplinary and team-based manner in which research and development is conducted and constrained within firms."34 It is difficult to envisage how research training programmes within social science departments might reasonably be expected to provide such preparation, even if this particular aim were accepted as legitimate.35
The outcomes model
There is another model of competency against which such programmes might be evaluated, namely an outcomes model.\textsuperscript{36} In this functionalist model, competency is defined in terms of 'the functions which must be met in the economy and against which the competence of individuals can be assessed'.\textsuperscript{37} The key factor in assessment is the actual 'performance'\textsuperscript{38} of work tasks, and the specific functions of occupational role.\textsuperscript{39} Once again however, temporal restrictions and the diversity of skills included in the training programmes present problems. Add to these the doctoral requisites of originality and a contribution to knowledge,\textsuperscript{40} and there seems little likelihood of the production of generic researchers, who, at the point of their first post-doctoral employment, whether academic or industrial, are able competently to practise the panoply of skills described.

It is interesting to consider other kinds of training programmes, the output of which is the development of individuals who are sufficiently competent across a range of skills to accomplish specific and immediate tasks at hand. An extreme example is Army infantry basic training, designed to ensure that recruits become highly skilled, via repeated and intensive \textit{practice}, in a range of tactical and weapon-handling techniques. Once accorded the status of a 'trained soldier', immediate service in a conflict zone is an ever present possibility.\textsuperscript{41} Dentistry training provides another example of competency-based training. As Nettleton has pointed out, in order to be deemed competent to practise, a dental surgeon 'has been trained meticulously in the minutiae of the craft.'\textsuperscript{42}

Conclusion
Radical policy changes to the UK social science PhD have resulted in new pressures upon students, who are faced simultaneously with the challenges of gaining a doctorate which requires a high degree of originality, and of achieving a level of competence in a spectrum of research activities, beyond those necessary for the production of their thesis. For full-time students, this is to be achieved within a four year period, during which the time available for actual research has effectively been reduced by the imposition of first year formal training programmes. The policy demands of students the accomplishment of dual objectives: generic research training at the highest level, and the traditional element of an original contribution to knowledge.\textsuperscript{43} The danger here is that in a time-constrained context, students will be unable to accomplish either effectively. The problem is particularly
acute for social science (and indeed arts and humanities) students, for as various commentators have pointed out, in natural sciences research creativity normally develops at the postdoctoral level; the PhD is perceived essentially as a period of basic training in research. Yet the evidence indicates that, despite the new demands, creative and original output continues to be expected of social science doctoral students. There is a danger that, under such temporal pressures, students' capacity to generate original thought will be severely compromised. In addition, there is the requirement for students to attain competency in a broad spectrum of activities in which they are supposed to be fully trained. It is apparent that in such a time-limited context students cannot achieve a high level of competence across such a diverse range of skills and activities. The policy objective of producing professionally trained researchers who can, upon entry to the labour market, function immediately and effectively in a variety of academic, industrial and commercial contexts, seems unlikely to be fulfilled.

The imposition of the training model doctorate by government and research councils, and the subsequent conformity of academic institutions and departments to this model, now appears to be a fait accompli in the United Kingdom, and one can discern such a trend internationally. With the policy firmly established, and expectations that students will conform to its dictates, it is surely timely to consider more analytically the purposes of doctoral research training and to generate criteria for assessing the effectiveness of research training programmes. One urgent question is whether it is realistic to expect research students truly to be competent in a whole range of research techniques, irrespective of their relevance to the doctoral thesis. At the very least, greater clarity and precision in defining the level of competence realistically achievable, are required of those charged with the tasks of designing and implementing social science research training programmes.

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31 See for example: Lowe and Murray, 1995, op cit.
33 Ibid.
39 Toohey et al 1995, op cit, p 89.
43 Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, 1988, op cit.
Abstract

Literature on the supervision of practice-based research degrees in art and design is at present relatively underdeveloped, particularly in relation to empirical studies. This paper, which is based on qualitative interviews with 50 supervisors engaged in the supervision of practice-based doctorates in a range of UK universities and colleges, aims to begin to remedy this lacuna. It examines specific problems encountered by supervisors of practice-based research degrees, and portrays some of the strategies developed and employed by supervisors as they attempt to guide student endeavour towards the successful combining of creative and analytical work.
Introduction
The 1990s saw a considerable growth in research degree student numbers in the United Kingdom. Concomitant with this increase, concern has been generated over issues such as thesis submission and completion rates, as well as a general drive to develop and enhance quality assurance procedures at both a national and institutional level. UK research has indicated the central importance of supervision for the successful completion of research degrees, and in recent times the practice of supervision has itself come under greater scrutiny as regards quality assurance. This scrutiny has focused on, inter alia, the practices and procedures for the monitoring of students' progress, training programmes for supervisors, and the organisation and practice of supervision.

Research into the field of doctoral education still has much to achieve, and various commentators have noted that empirical research on the practicalities of supervision remains relatively limited. Despite the embryonic nature of this field of inquiry, studies of research degree supervision have now been carried out on both the social sciences and natural sciences and there also exists some humanities-based literature. In contrast what is known about supervision in art and design is almost negligible, particularly in the case of practice-based research as distinct from art history research. The relationship between creative-practical work and research protocols still remains a contentious issue.

The existing literature on the supervision of practice-based research degrees at present appears confined to recently developed resources predominantly aimed at aiding supervisors to manage students. The general research literature on supervision reveals a number of commonalities in terms of generic problems arising during doctoral supervision, including difficulties with: balancing pastoral and intellectual support; co-ordinating supervisory teams; and the selection and formulation of overall supervisory strategies. The aim of the research was not to re-examine these general problems, but to identify social processes specific to the supervision of practice-based research degrees. The following account is based upon the interview data and recounts some of the problems encountered by supervisors, together with the solutions they generated. These solutions constitute 'strategies', in effect actions that are conscious, coherent and comprehensive, aimed at achieving the goal of successful submission of the MPhil/PhD.

Problems of structure
Whilst a small number of practice-based research degrees was validated under the CNAAN regime in the former polytechnic sector, their recent prolifer-
In the wake of the creation of the 'new' (post-1992) universities, a widespread background of institutional expertise in dealing with this specific form of advanced study has yet to be developed. The number of practice-based research degrees awarded by the CNAA was very small, and the number of institutions which developed this creative opportunity was similarly limited. The overall picture at the time of the research interviews was one of relatively embryonic development, and some of the sites visited were handling their first cohorts of practice-based students. Inevitably perhaps therefore, the interviews revealed supervisors to be encountering certain problems with institutional structures.

These problems centred around student research proposals or plans, which had to be submitted on a standard form to a validating committee, such as a Research Degrees Committee, or similar. These committees were usually internal to the institution, but if the 'home' institution did not possess its own research degree awarding powers, another university had to validate the research degrees on offer. Research proposals were usually written by the student with supervisory help and then presented to the appropriate committee(s), whose approval was needed before the research project could be formally registered and permitted to proceed. Supervisors might be members of these committees, or if not, might be permitted to attend in order to speak for the proposal under their tutelage. The interviews identified certain problems specific to practice-driven work which supervisors encountered in trying to steer such projects through committees. Committee composition invariably included a majority of members who were not of the art and design community, and who were often unfamiliar with, and unskilled in what supervisors described as 'visual language'. As a result, problems were experienced in gaining validation for students' research, for example:

Our research degree committee had a bit of a practice-led thing and it's taken a long time and a lot of effort to get them to even think in 'our' way. It's extremely difficult because there are simply so few models, few precedents, you know, artists doing research - that's unthinkable!

In general it's not that easy to get proposals through, particularly at the level of the PhD, where there is a demand for originality... I think it is to do with things like methodology, and to some extent having a notion of some kind of hypothesis which is formulated initially and is something which is testable in some way. The proposals can't be framed in that way from the point of view of a lot of art and design, in a sense a lot of our stuff is much more exploratory, and so the methodology and the outcomes are necessarily more ambiguous... I think it's more to do with whether it's visual or not [...] and people on committees are very uncomfortable with that kind of ambiguity.

In response to this kind of difficulty, supervisors often felt obliged to engage in an educational mission outside of the committee venue as they sought to inform, persuade and convince colleagues from other disciplines that practice-driven research constituted a credible academic endeavour. Interviewees variously described such activity as 'lobbying', 'networking' or 'drumming up support' prior to proposals reaching the committee stage. In a few institutions, this political work was part of an informal departmental policy, as one supervisor explained:

And that's a problem in terms of this institution, for instance, our head of school has told us we all have to go and do work in this area... How to make sure other areas of the university are aware of what you might be wanting students to do, what they might produce, how that could be validated, how research into visual practice is a legitimate area of research. Spread the gospel so to speak!

In addition to this political work, problematic committee encounters generated a certain
amount of pragmatism on the part of supervisors, who came to the realisation that many of the committee's demands were essentially ritualistic and formulaic, in terms of requiring a set format for describing research methodology, processes and outcomes. Supervisors on occasion ironically described this ritual presentational form as 'show time' and had learnt, usually via rejection of their students' initial proposals, the necessity of tailoring the research proposal to an existing model such as that employed by subject areas such as engineering or music where works were actually created in the form of objects or musical scores, as demonstrated by the following comments:

Now in an area where research is traditional it's easy to say 'look here's a good model. How can I adapt that for myself?'. With our area, those models are not really around at the moment, so I'm busy nicking proposals from people in other areas, and then trying to use my imagination, and saying to the student 'look you can adapt this'.

We are lucky, here there is a music department and there is some precedent for submitting musical scores, so when you are arguing for a student's proposal and when you help them construct that proposal, you can use that as a precedent, a template. Once we get a few completions at PhD level we won't need to point to similarities with music, but initially I've made use of what they have done.

Lack of both institutional experience and experience at the level of the individual supervisor on occasion forced some supervisors in the direction of adapting other disciplinary models, in an attempt to propel proposals through committees and to generate momentum for the student's research. Where this functional strategy had been successfully adopted, some reservations were perhaps inevitable, but the strategy remained justifiable to supervisors, given the context in which they were obliged to operate:

I think 'A' (student) would be the first to criticise his research if he were now to do it again. I think we would be more adventurous, more risky, but at the time we didn't have that kind of confidence ... we felt: 'yes, we can adopt this approach, we can adopt this methodology, because it's been tried and tested elsewhere'.

Where supervisors did not persuade students to adapt readily available models for their research proposals, more innovative projects tended to develop, but required students and supervisors to learn and employ the specific language forms that committees demanded of proposals, for example the rigorous qualification of statements of intent, precision of phrasing, and the linear interconnection of ideas. Given their roles in academia, supervisors were of course generally conversant with academic discourse, but this particular written variant, rooted in the methodological backgrounds of disciplines other than art and design, required a learning process for the majority of those interviewed. From the supervisor's position there were considerable difficulties in converting a proposal, agreed between supervisor and student, into the written form required by research degree committees, as demonstrated by the following comments:

Basically he (student) - the way he thinks is through the process of his hands with wood and clay, and that's how he works through his ideas, gets them clear. It's very different from using words, and that's how he tests his ideas by 'doing', and so the difficulty was in finding a way in which we could sustain that while being able to propose in writing a framework to set bench marks and to establish what his research was actually about, and then to present it in a way that was acceptable to the committee.

This learning process involved not only developing expertise in the specific written form, but also learning how to portray important conceptual ideas in this form, so that committee members
could grasp the essence of the student proposal and accept its validity:

You have to phrase the proposals in such a way that they appear to have a dimension which the people on the committee can get a hold of in terms of their own discipline, and it's a matter of clever salesmanship (sic) ... It is the conceptual blocks where they would fail to simply understand from reading the proposal what it was all about. If it's outside their area they cannot see the substance, what they do see is the proposal through their own way of seeing and that's not an art or design way of seeing.

Supervisors repeatedly articulated their difficulties in persuading committees to think visually, and provided numerous suggestions for encouraging this facility by bringing 'visual' elements (such as projected images of student intentions) to the committee. No examples were found of this actually occurring at the initial research proposal stage, but this tactic was evident later in the research degree process when the great majority of students underwent committee scrutiny of an application to transfer from MPhil to PhD status. At this juncture, a small minority of supervisors indicated that they had introduced to the committee elements of the student practice, so as to stimulate a visual understanding which would engender an appreciation of the research endeavour and its possibilities. One supervisor recalled:

I took the written work saying what direction she was going to take, and three beautiful wooden boxes and I laid them on the table, and I opened up the boxes and in the boxes were tabulated samples of glass ... and they were all related to the text and how they were done and that sort of thing, and it was great because everyone got up from the table for the first time, and said 'that's really interesting', and passed the boxes around and people actually felt what she had produced, and actually felt 'this is a move forward', they could see where it was going, where she could develop her work. It's a question of getting them to see, and by bringing her work in that allowed them to see its possibilities.

Further along in the research degree process, other problems were generated by committees, usually concerning the appointment of external examiners, where committee members would question the competency of the individuals proposed as external examiners. There were instances in the data where committees had demanded that more 'experienced' individuals be sought for the external examiner role. This judgement seemed to be based upon what was perceived as the 'novice' status of proposed examiners, many of whom did not possess the depth of experience found in other disciplines, perhaps inevitably given the relatively short history of practice-based research degrees. Relating to this general lack of a pool of experienced examiners, committees sometimes objected to the fact that nominated examiners did not have expertise specific to the research project to be examined. Moreover, there was also questioning of the appropriateness of proposed examiners whose background, although within the framework of art and design, was not specifically academic, but located within a particular field of practice. Consequently, supervisors often found themselves involved in frustrating attempts to seek out examiners who would meet the criteria established by committees. The evidence from the interviews indicated that the more experienced supervisors learnt the importance of engaging in educational work of a political nature, before, during, and after committee sessions in order to ensure a positive outcome, as the following illustrates:

Most of the committee seems to assume that research degree business should be the same in art and design as it is in their areas. They seem to think you can find experienced examiners without too much difficulty ... Well it's not like that because we are in the early stages of development, and it was the same for them no doubt when they started having PhDs in psychology, or engineering. You
have to appreciate the context in which we are operating, and they don’t do that! ... You have to work at explaining to them what the state of play is, that their expectations are unreasonable, and in fact unrealistic, in terms of examiner experience generally speaking.

Problems with writing and making

Whilst there are certainly generic problems in supervising students at this level of education, the interviews revealed further concerns specific to practice-based endeavour. The innovation of practice-based research degrees resides in their combination of the creative with the analytic. Ideally, one should reflect the other and the resulting work should portray the inter-connectedness of the two dimensions. For supervisors, however, a central concern was to ensure that this combination was kept in balance. For the great majority of students, the analytic dimension constituted the most problematic component, as the vehicle for the analysis was essentially the academic written form, of which most students had little experience at this level. [18] Imbalances arose when students were either reluctant to engage with the written analytic, which resulted in an overcompensation in practice, or in contrast, when, in their anxiety they focused upon the theory to the detriment of the quality of practice. In the case of the latter, supervisors became aware of the dangers of what some described as ‘overtheorisation’ or ‘pseudo-sophistication’, and had to face what they perceived to be a lack of real creativity and equilibrium. Consequently, supervisors strove to direct students back to a central position where a more balanced pattern of work could be achieved, as one indicated:

One of the problems is they think to get a PhD they have to be ‘clever’, and so some of them get preoccupied with trying to be that. I have seen it result in their theoretical reading propelling their studio work, but the work they produce is not capable of sustaining the theoretical ideas they are writing about. In a way their concern for intellectual ideas stifles the work. From the supervisory point of view you have to help them avoid that so the work can ‘breathe’, you’re trying to create conditions where it doesn’t get conceptually top heavy. A lot of it is anxiety on their part about what is intellectually sophisticated, so you’re trying to diminish anxiety and to create some kind of equilibrium between the two parts.

Anxiety about the need to incorporate theory into the project sometimes disrupted students’ practice fundamentally, so that the student lost confidence in the practice and became theory-directed. Supervisors would then attempt to reorient the students’ work:

The problem was that every time he came upon a new text it was taken on as truth, and in a strange kind of way it had a very unbalancing influence on him ... well it would disrupt his practice, and you would start to see his work being jostled from here to there, and then back again with a new text. It was like, ‘I am doing research, so I have to take on board theory’, so off he goes being led by the theory rather than the reverse. We all have our influences, but this is different ... I just tried to point out how much he was being whirled around, to bring him back to some sort of equilibrium. Anxiety is what caused it all, anxiety about encountering theory, and then losing sight of the direction of the practice.

Fear, unease and anxiety about engaging with written analytical work can cause students to regard their practice as a refuge from the unfamiliar and threatening intellectual demands. In response, supervisory effort is often directed towards developing student confidence in the analytic mode, and re-establishing a more balanced profile of work. The interviews revealed that at the heart of many student problems was a disconnection between the student’s practice and her/his written analysis of that practice. To make that connection more meaningful for students, those interviewed revealed a number of
supervisory ploys. For example, supervisors tried to establish connections between the student's own biography and personal development and the enhancing of their analytic capability, hoping to make the activity of analysis a more positive experience for their supervisees, as one explained:

One of the things which is difficult to get them over is their writing... Well there's the standard problems, you know, grammar, etc. But more fundamentally is that they tend to get hung up on writing to justify what they have done, that's what's been impressed upon them. It's their new status, not just artist or designer, but researcher. So research has to be justified. They can then get lost because the writing ends up being turgid, it doesn't really connect with the practice either; it's as if they have disconnected themselves so as to be analytical. I try and get them to see it in a different light; I tell them it's a voyage of self discovery, they're here to try and understand themselves better: how you arrived at this, why you changed your mind at this point, where you decided to go next. That way hopefully it connects directly to them, and to their practice. I try and personalise it all.

Another supervisory ploy was to chart connections between creative practice and analytical practice, by pointing out to students certain fundamental similarities. The aim was to bolster confidence by emphasizing that experience of problems and their resolution within the realm of practice might profitably be transferred to the analytical domain, as a supervisor indicated:

They get blockages in their practice, and they learn to get over them. That's their experience, so I point out the similarities with writing. I point out there is a parallel process, and if they can do it in one area, they can do it in another. It's a question of making the links for them, and once they can see that themselves it cultivates a bit of confidence, which helps them get over the problem with the writing.

A theme which emerged from the data concerned those students who were not actually averse to writing (sometimes prolifically), but whose style of writing was difficult to reconcile with the academic language forms required of a research degree. In such instances, supervisors found themselves constraining and modifying student output, particularly where the use of visual metaphors was heavy. Many recalled how they had attempted to instil in students a more precise and analytical mode of communication:

The problem is not that she can't or won't write, but rather how she is writing... She's trying to get the writing to match what she creates, so it's creative writing in a kind of fictional way. The problem with that is that she's not making the story explicit enough. It lacks the accessibility and the detailed description of the creative journey she is on... I have to keep on pulling her back from that kind of writing. I tell her, 'you can't expect people to go on a journey with you without giving them a map'. I always put it in visual terms to her: it's a map she needs, the trick is to translate that into accessible writing.

As in the above case, in helping students to develop an analytical capacity, visual devices and comparisons were often utilised, for example at the research design stage. Again, supervisors sought to establish connections between students' creative practice and the new research endeavour. These connections were often presented in the form of concrete ways in which research projects could be constructed, charted and the interrelationships between the parts portrayed analytically, as one supervisor described:

With writing generally I try and get them to devise some kind of visual means to map out what they are going to do. That's a means that they can usually relate to. I had one student who mapped it all out on the floor of his studio space, with others they have done it with computerised graphics, so they can move the different elements around.
Another supervisor used the following analogy:

If you’re designing something, you come up with a whole load of ideas, right? And then you go through the ideas and discard some and you use bits and pieces. Then you start putting the design together. I thought, well, perhaps that’s the best way of doing it, to actually try and get them to do that with their research ideas. So they come with a whole lot of written ideas and we go through them … It’s almost like a cut and paste job, so you’re actually trying to get them to sort their research out in the same way they go about designing. I talk to them about collages of the mind! I know that they think this way is easier for them to think things through.

Problems with evidence
A further problem confronting supervisors again related to the need for students to develop their analysis. Research degrees require a systematic marshalling of evidence detailing how students arrived at their particular creative outcomes. The assembling of evidence demands a systematic recording of decisions made within the creative process. Whilst traditionally artists and designers have of course made records of their work and processes, the greater degree of explicitness, formality, and the cumulative detailing of daily work routines, proved to be problematic for many students. [19] For students whose work fitted more easily into the framework of the ‘design’ end of the creative spectrum, there was some congruence between their work practices and models of research which approximated natural science in terms of the documentation of evidence, as one supervisor noted:

With a process-based practice like print-making, there is a kind of distance there because the process itself is a kind of interruption to that self-reflectivity. So for some students developing that standing back facility, that ability to be a bit distanced and interrogate your choices, it’s easier than for others.

The interviews revealed that in the main those ‘others’ were engaged in projects at the ‘fine art’ end of the creative spectrum. For many of these students, the first ‘revealing’ of their practice in unprecedented detail to a critical academic audience constituted a daunting challenge, and was usually approached with great reluctance. At such junctures, the supervisor’s task involved facilitating the analytical process and persuading students of the necessity of undertaking systematic recording for the purpose of the research degree:

I think it’s a problem more in the direction of fine art than in design. I feel designers are more familiar with detailing their method than artists … with the latter it’s nearly always about expressing their own individuality in an intense and personal fashion. They are often quite prepared to discuss their work in an abstract way, but discuss the real substance of it in systematic fashion is quite exposing … She (student) doesn’t want to engage with that kind of analysis. I mean, partly she feels exposed, but she also feels the magic would go … I try and emphasise that she is going to need this kind of documentation if she is going to get a PhD, but there is a limit to what I can persuade her to do. I know for her it’s more to do with magic, with something undefinable for her, and she has to feel confident with the amount of disclosure.

Helping to build enough confidence for students to take what for them constituted a significant risk to their creative identity was an ongoing supervisory concern. Supervisors sought to convince students that their practice contributed something valuable to its field, and that only by the full articulation and demonstration of how that practice worked could its significance be fully appreciated by an academic audience. However, supervisors recognised limits to their powers to persuade students to engage in such a high level of disclosure, as one noted: ‘You cannot put in from the outside, what has to grow on the inside’. Ultimately, supervisors hoped that student anxieties about disclosure would diminish, as their
analytic understanding of how their own practice developed to increase, together with confidence in the academic worth of their project. This, supervisors hoped, would make acceptable the challenge to the student’s creative identity.

Conclusion
Research into research degree supervision has revealed some cross-disciplinary problems confronting supervisors as they attempt to propel students to thesis completion. This literature has also revealed a range of supervisory responses to such problems. Many of these general issues also emerged from the data for this project where issues such as balancing criticism and support or alleviating student isolation were highlighted by supervisors. The present paper, by contrast, has sought to portray problems and solutions more specific to art and design supervision, in the context of a developing profile of practice-based research degrees within UK higher education. The paper has identified problems both at the level of institutional structure and at the micro level of supervisor-student interaction. At the institutional level, supervisors had to learn how to convince colleagues from other disciplines that research into art and design practice was a credible endeavour. The data revealed that such work is comparable, in a sociological sense, to selling; in this case selling the concept of the discipline as being ready to engage in the practice of academic research, an activity in which it had not traditionally been involved. At the micro level of interaction with students, supervisors were concerned with a number of problems, particularly those centred around achieving a balance between student engagement with the creative and analytical spheres of their research degree work. Students certainly encountered difficulties with the relationship between writing and making, as well as the production of evidence which supported and justified the formulation of creative processes and artefacts.

The aforementioned supervisory strategies form part of the craft of supervision, which art and design supervisors are in the process of evolving. This craft is learnt practically through reflective experience, which, whilst theoretically informed, is essentially a practical endeavour. As with analogous activities, the only real way in which to develop the craft is to practise it. However, this developmental process can be enhanced via the transmission of supervisory knowledge by accomplished practitioners. At present, the pool of experienced practitioners able to provide such mentorship, or to engage in joint supervision with less experienced colleagues, is still limited. In the interim, one way forward would seem to be the use of workshops, seminars and publications to disseminate good practice and to discuss and debate the supervisory experience as it relates to practice-based research degrees, particularly via the medium of ‘case studies’. It is encouraging to note that such workshops and seminars have recently generated a good deal of interest, and in 1997 the UK Council for Graduate Education held a national workshop focussed upon practice-based doctorates in the creative and performing arts and design which highlighted some of the key issues for training and supervision within this relatively new field of enquiry.

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John Hockey & Jacquelyn Allon-Collinson


7. Ibid; and Clegg & Green, op. cit


20. Burgess, Pole & Hockey, op. cit; Delamont, Atkinson & Parry, op. cit


27. UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) [1997] Practice-based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design Workshop. UKCGE
To Whom It May Concern:

The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE) has accepted for publication the manuscript, "Artistry and analysis: Student experiences of UK practice-based doctorates in art and design," authored by Jacquelyn Allen Collison. The manuscript was reviewed by the QSE's Regional Editor for Great Britain, external peer reviewers, and the journal's editors. After revisions, it was accepted for publication in September, 2003. It is currently in our publication queue and is tentatively scheduled to be published around volume 18-6 (November/December, 2005). Our current acceptance rate is 15%.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or require any further information.

Sincerely,

Bill Black
Managing Editor
ARTISTRY AND ANALYSIS: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF UK PRACTICE-BASED DOCTORATES IN ART AND DESIGN

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ARTISTRY AND ANALYSIS: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF UK PRACTICE-BASED DOCTORATES IN ART AND DESIGN

Abstract
During the last decade, doctoral education has been the focus of much international academic attention. This period has also witnessed the rapid growth of practice-based research degrees in art and design in the UK. To-date, however, there has been no extensive empirical research on the subjective experiences of students undertaking this form of doctorate in art and design. This paper, based upon qualitative interviews with 50 UK students at 25 different institutions, seeks to examine from a sociological perspective the occupational life-worlds of these students, and the risks they take in choosing to study for a doctorate. It explores some of the narratives which students generated during their often faltering and difficult transformational journey from 'creator' to 'creator-researcher' during the process of the research degree, focusing in particular upon the perceived tensions and contradictions between their artistry and analysis.
Biographical Note

Jacquelyn Allen Collinson is a Research Fellow within the Leisure & Sport Research Unit, and a Research Associate with the Faculty of Education & Social Sciences at the University of Gloucestershire. Her principal research interests include: occupational and sporting identities, socialization processes, and research degree education. Projects currently underway include a qualitative study of the life-worlds of practice-based research students and their supervisors in art and design.

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ARTISTRY AND ANALYSIS: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF UK PRACTICE-BASED DOCTORATES IN ART AND DESIGN

Introduction

During the last decade in particular, research degree education has been the focus of much international academic attention (cf. Royal Society of Canada, 1991; De Wied, 1991; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Zuber-Skerritt & Ryan, 1994), and a UK-specific literature has also proliferated (Burgess, 1996). This period has also witnessed the rapid growth of practice-based research degrees in art and design in the UK (Painter, 1996; Candlin, 2000). Although there has undoubtedly been an advance in knowledge about doctoral students in the disciplines falling within the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities (Burgess, 1994; Delamont et al., 1997; Graves & Varma, 1997), this does not hold for empirical studies of students undertaking practice-based research degrees in art and design. This route to the PhD still constitutes an innovative, and on occasion a disputed form of UK research study (cf. Macleod, 2000), which emerged primarily out of the old Council for National Academic Awards' framework (CNAA, 1989) which regulated the former polytechnics until 1992. The requirements which distinguish this research degree from the more ‘traditional’, purely written forms can be summarised as follows:

- the final submission must be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative work(s);
- the creative work must be set in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical or visual context;
- the length of the accompanying written thesis must normally be between 30,000 and 40,000 words;
- the written thesis and the creative work must be of equal or near equal importance (UKCGE, 1997: 15)

Normally, the student's work must also conform to the more traditional aspects of UK research degree regulation, in terms of originality, independence, and the undergoing of a viva voce
examination. This kind of doctoral study presents students with an interesting challenge in combining elements of their creative work (painting, design, photography, ceramics, printmaking and so on) with a written analysis of that work in text, CD or other form. Presently, there is little empirical knowledge of how students handle and achieve this combination (cf. Macleod, 1998), and how they seek to resolve some of the tensions and contradictions between the artistic and analytic dimensions of their work. This paper therefore aims to address this lacuna by setting out the findings of some exploratory, qualitative sociological research.

The research

The research was based upon single, qualitative interviews with 50 research students (27 male; 23 female), located at 25 UK universities and colleges and undertaken by a team of two researchers, both with disciplinary backgrounds in sociology. It had originally been planned to undertake follow-up interviews to chart the progress of the students, but unfortunately financial constraints precluded this. It should also be noted that the research was not designed to generate detailed individual student case studies. The limitations of the 'single research technology' (Berg, 1989: 4), the 'snapshot', single-interview approach should therefore be borne in mind. In defence of the interview method, however, it has been emphasized that: 'Accounts are all we have to work with' (Gilbert & Abell, 1983: 2-3), and the students' accounts constitute the focus of the research.

Interviews were in-depth, semi structured, and tape-recorded, of between 60 and 90 minutes' duration. Interviewees spanned the spectrum of art and design subjects, including painting, ceramics, installation, photography, printmaking, sculpture, glassmaking and design. Students also fell on a continuum ranging from individuals in their first year of study to those near the point of submission. Twenty of the students were studying part-time, many of whom had considerable experience of earning a living via their creative endeavour.
The primary purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of students' lived experience. The interview agenda covered topics such as relationships with research supervisors, relationships between practice (making) and theory, practice and artistic community, practice and the self, practice and writing, and students' conceptions of identity. Students were also encouraged to talk about any other issues of significance to them. Given the relative paucity of research on these practice-based students, the aim of the project was not to provide statistical generalizations, but to seek to uncover something of the complexity of students' academic lives at various points on the pathway to doctoral status. In common with much qualitative research, therefore, extrapolation from the data relies on 'the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events' (Mitchell, 1983). Data analysis was carried out via a process somewhat akin to the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1993), in that data collection and analysis were synchronous and ongoing, but in a less formalized fashion. Subsequently, detailed manual coding allowed the generation of key thematic categories and subcategories of the students' experience. This process of analysis continued until no new categories, in terms of social processes, practices and conceptions, were emerging from the data (Creswell, 1998).

As Jenkins (1996: 29) notes, the concepts of 'self' and 'identity' can be argued to be co-terminous, with self as 'each individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted vis à vis of others in terms of similarity and difference'. This internal understanding of a fully reflexive self is a product of the social interaction out of which it emerges (Mead, 1934). In particular, the paper focusses upon the self which students construct, maintain, and modify whilst in the role of creator/maker, and eventually, researcher. The paper aims to portray some of the processes of identity construction and modification via an analysis of the various student stories or narratives which were articulated during the interviews.

The importance of narrative activity has been emphasized by many, including those who contend that narrative and identity are in fact inseparable in that narrative is born out of experience and simultaneously gives shape to experience (Ochs & Capps, 1996). The method
of narrative analysis focuses on the ways in which people organize and assign meaning to their experience, and seeks to explore how particular identities are constructed via that experience; as Anderson and Williams (2001: 4) succinctly phrase it: ‘Narratives are the bricks with which we construct our identities...’ Narratives also combine the social with the personal (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), for, as Sparkes (1999) has noted, personal stories are intimately linked to the cultural and subcultural resources upon which actors can draw.

The analysis of the interview data reveals a complex interweaving of narrative resources as students portrayed their progress from the status of research novices to the point of thesis submission. As students gradually acquired research experience and expertise, they described how their identity evolved, and comparison of the interview transcripts generated a rich mosaic (Becker, 1977) of their experience. As noted above, it was unfortunately not possible to undertake longitudinal research, and therefore to chart individual and group change over a certain time span. Elements of the data from all stages of the student experience, however, have been utilised to create a composite picture portraying the changes which students described in some detail as occurring during their doctoral study. In order to convey the processual nature of identity transformation, the data have been presented in chronological fashion. In this way the emergence of the narrative(s) parallels the temporal framework of the process of identity change. However, the limitations of this essentially linear presentation of the data should be noted. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 220) have emphasized, this form of portrayal implicitly suggests ‘a more or less smooth set of transitions from one stage to another’.

The reality of student experience is, of course, more complex and fragmentary. For example, in the text are presented narratives of trouble and struggle, which are subsequently supplanted by narratives which describe new kinds of learning and skill. Whilst troubles may indeed be surmounted, this is never in a ‘once and for all’ sense, but requires repeated efforts as problems and tensions inevitably recur. It should consequently be kept in mind that student identity change is both a practical and continuous accomplishment (Benson & Hughes, 1983), with elements of circularity in addition to the linearity which structures this particular paper.
The creative self and its tensions

Upon commencing their doctoral study, students already possess a set of practical dispositions (action), perceptions and motivations, grounded in their particular creative activity, which they use as a resource to solve creative problems. This form of essentially embodied resource has been conceptualised by Bourdieu (1990: 55) as *habitus*; in this instance situated within the general field of art and design. Problem-solving entails what Bourdieu has termed: 'a feel for the game', which allows the individual to adopt the right strategies and make the correct decisions in the act of making. When they commence the doctoral programme, however, students must also develop a feel for the game of research, which is situated within the field of higher education (Bourdieu, 1988). It is the construction of this synthesized form of *habitus*, of both creator and researcher, which generates certain tensions and contradictions which will constitute the focus of discussion later in the paper.

The interviews clearly revealed that when commencing their research study, all students held primarily to a sense of the creative self which was of paramount importance to them. This was articulated via self-categorizations such as: artist, photographer, ceramicist, designer and so on. When probed as to the essence of this, 'creativity' and being a 'creative person' were deemed central to their sense of identity, or in Stryker's (1987) terminology, to have 'identity salience'. The interviews subsequently sought to uncover some of the specific components of that self-defined creativity, and various themes depicting particular qualities and characteristics emerged from the data. These elements were found to be present regardless of medium used (print, paint, glass, metal, film, and so on). They are not presented in any order of priority but rather as the elements comprising a rich amalgam which underpins creative endeavour.

Of marked importance to the students interviewed was the high value placed upon a strong emotional presence within their making. Their capacity to respond emotionally to materials was felt to be vital to the creative processes and to the construction of objects of originality. The deployment of a repository of feelings (cf. Denzin 1984: 1-3) was viewed as crucial for their
creativity, as these feelings were expressed both within and through their work. Intimately connected to this emotional wellspring was the element of intuition. Students perceived themselves as intuitive individuals whose creativity was heavily dependent upon a capacity "to feel when things are right", as one phrased it. The use of intuition applied to processes as diverse as, for example, the mixing of colours, the application of temperatures to materials, or the juxtaposition of objects. Intuition was also linked to notions of spontaneity and responsiveness to impulses emanating from the creative imagination. A further quality interviewees perceived in themselves was that of openness, in terms of receptivity to new ideas, and willingness to explore in innovative directions. Ultimately, all these qualities and characteristics were perceived to be highly influential in facilitating their creative work.

Holding these conceptions of identity, students then encounter with some shock the new domain of research, where supervisors, research training courses, and methodology texts, for example, place great emphasis on somewhat different values. In essence, research was presented to students as a highly rational process, which involved the erection of abstract categories so as to formulate theory. 'Objectivity' in the form of analysis, the precise formulation of argument, the logical progression of ideas and the systematic collection of evidence, was also heralded as a necessary component of effective doctoral research. New parameters of correct conduct and procedure provided powerful messages to students. In addition, students' research projects are subject to a framework of institutional regulations which impose additional demands upon doctoral candidates, for example in terms of time-scales and prescribed formal structures. Projects must be approved by committees responsible for 'quality assurance'. This combination of research-related and bureaucratic demands, was usually at considerable variance with the way in which students had previously conducted their creative making, and also, importantly, with their conceptions of the creative self. This is not to say, of course, that students were not already familiar with the discipline and rigour of the creative process, but rather than the new requirements of doctoral research placed different, academic demands. Tensions were
consequently evident at the level of identity, and some of the means by which students resolved these will now be examined.

**Narratives of confusion and constraint**

Initially, when encountering these contrasting and countervailing imperatives, students felt confused. Generally, their prior experience of art and design education had contained little to forewarn and prepare them for the specific strictures of doing doctoral research, nor the regulatory framework within which they were required to operate. This is usually in some contrast to the natural and social sciences where exposure to the discipline-specific protocols of research normally occurs at a relatively early stage of undergraduate study. In comparison, of the cohort interviewed, only a handful indicated any knowledge of formal research methods and canons, and this had been via art history courses, or design ergonomics. Although a majority of interviewees had actually studied at Master's level, these degrees were predominantly based solely on the submission of individual creative output, without any formal research component. Whilst all students had some prior experience of academic forms of writing, the volume and sophistication demanded at research degree level were perceived as unsettling and intimidating. The process of drafting a research proposal, specifying temporal plans, the particular linguistic forms in which such plans have to be codified, and all the associated bureaucratic process (applications forms, vetting committees, approval processes), all had highly negative connotations for students. Distress and confusion were consistent narrative themes at this point in their research careers. For example, one lamented:

"How can I do what they (supervisors) want me to do, and do my art? I don't understand how I can do it all! It has really unsettled me and I can't see how I can go forward with it all...I suppose I've always felt myself to be an expressive person, and the ways of doing research seems the opposite. I don't want to feel like that, so where do I go from here?"
This kind of narrative was reinforced by others, as students initially perceived the combination of bureaucracy and research protocols as fundamentally detrimental to their creative activity and consequently to their creative selves. As Bourdieu (1984: 3) and others (Berg, 1983: 165-6; Griff, 1960: 223) have noted, people in the creative arts place great emphasis on their autonomy and control over the making. From the students' perspective, these heavy constraints impinged upon their creative selves, and consequently narratives of constraint were salient. The intuitive, emotional, spontaneous and 'open' self was confronted by institutional processes, and academic demands, which seemed intent on limiting, managing and packaging creativity into tight timescales and pre-defined forms. These constraints produce boundaries which in a sense are the antithesis of the creative freedom previously experienced. For those interviewed there was a particular irony evident in this situation, for they were embarking on potentially the most exciting and extensive exploration of their creative impulses, whilst simultaneously those very impulses were subject to restriction by forces not previously imagined.

"As soon as I start putting down structures, I can't write freely, so it becomes disjointed and difficult. Writing academically is not free; it's very structured, with very tight boundaries for a thesis. It generally leaves me angry which is probably why it's difficult to write...It's just the institution that makes the rules that tie people, and in contrast art practice is about enabling people to freely express themselves and subvert boundaries. So here I am struggling with those academic boundaries that I find quite restrictive, so I've had terrible conflicts about that."

The interviews indicated that ambivalence towards these constraints was felt by students for long periods of time during the research degree process, and any shift in perception manifested itself only when certain changes at the level of identity had occurred. These changes will be depicted later in the paper.
Narratives of sacrifice and risk

The vocabulary of motives (Mills, 1940), which had propelled students into research, valorized the need to develop and extend their creative practice to new levels. For some the acquisition of an advanced qualification was also valued as a potential route to an academic post, which would then provide institutional funding for their own practice (cf. Finney, 1997: 78-79). In trying to come to terms with the new reality and the unfamiliar constraints, students perhaps inevitably began to question their motives. What they could gain or achieve was contrasted with what they might risk losing or sacrificing. On the economic level, students bemoaned the monetary sacrifices involved in remaining full-time students or paying their own fees as part-time students. This was often accompanied by statements stressing that generally very few artists and designers receive reasonable long-term financial reward for their creative output (cf. Mishler, 1999: 130). It was therefore questionable whether the time and energy expended on the uncertain path towards the doctorate was worth the sacrifice. On another level, all those interviewed initially viewed as a compromise the accommodations they were obliged to make to the structuring of their research in response to bureaucratic and research demands. They felt strongly that this had the potential to reduce the power of their aesthetic output, and this could have negative consequences for their future reputation within the community of creative peers, both inside and outside academia. This potential sacrifice was viewed with considerable alarm; in the words of one:

"I do not want to end up with a title before my name and people at my doctoral show ruminating over the fact that it took me years to produce such mediocre work!"

In addition, the time and energy devoted to the research component of their work, such as comprehensive literature reviews, systematic documentation, historical positioning, formal analysis of practice, theorising and so on, was also viewed with a jaundiced eye. The more time and energy devoted to this component, the less was available for their actual practice. There was consequently a tension between these activities, for no matter how intimately
connected to the making, the research components were no substitute for the making *per se*. Hence, time spent away from their practice was construed as a sacrifice demanded by the doctoral process, and one which might produce no positive return in the long term. The enforced decrease in effort for the making would, they feared, result in reduced creative output and less momentum in producing original works.

"The physical act of analysing and writing like that and the kind of thought that goes with it, it takes time and it's a different kind of time and a different kind of being than when you are making... Part of you is feeling that you should be in another place, in the studio making something, which feels more real, so you miss it. And you feel uneasy because being away from it you feel it is suffering... I mean the quality of it, how much progress you are making."

From the student standpoint these sacrifices were of considerable significance, given the feared negative consequences for both their creative making and artistic reputation.

Rooted in scenarios which involved the taking of such chances, students also articulated narratives of risk. These narratives were somewhat more specific than those relating to sacrifice, being directly connected to particular problems which had already arisen or they feared would arise. A highly problematic requirement for students was the need to portray analytically the process of their making, and to situate it within broader academic contexts of history, theory, biography etc. This required the systematic accumulation, and eventual presentation, of evidence and explanation, placing their own creative processes and subjectivity under the microscope of dispassionate analysis. For students, such analytical documentation involved a high degree of self-disclosure. Regardless of whether their research was geared to audience impact (eg fine art) or aimed at uncovering the process of making (ceramics, glass etc), a good deal of anxiety was manifest amongst students at the threat posed by this dénouement. The risk was articulated in a number of ways. Great unease was expressed at
the thought of routines of creativity being laid bare. Although students were familiar with audience judgment of their finished creative work, public scrutiny of the creative process per se was unfamiliar and threatening. It was feared that the processes of production would be judged not as innovative but as merely mundane and routine, and that this judgment would have deleterious consequences for the way in which the final creative product was perceived. These concerns related not just to the judgment of an academic audience, but also of the wider creative community. As one student indicated:

"I find it quite disturbing that I'm supposed to reveal all the inner workings of what I make... Well, one likes to think one has individual ways of doing things, of putting things together, of choosing things, that sort of stuff. Up to this point all that has been a private affair, and I suppose I have felt them to be special... Well, in the sense that they are mine, and they have some quality to them. The problem with this revealing is that in a way I feel they might then no longer be mine, and they might be viewed as having no quality at all!"

Students also emphasized the risk of more personal disclosure. In seeking an 'objective' and detailed understanding of how their practice worked, they feared that such knowledge would impinge upon their emotional capacity to create and innovate. Gains in terms of the development of analytical thinking were perceived to threaten their very creativity; the prized qualities of intuition, openness, and spontaneity might be constrained, distorted, desiccated, by this new found power. Students feared that the more time expended on the analysis, the greater the risk to creativity. Transition between the modes of creativity and analysis required of them not just different ways of thinking (described as 'subjective'/"objective") but, more fundamentally, differences in feelings, actions, and being:

"To do the analysis you have to be apart from it and to do it (the making), well it's part of you. The problem is that moving away from myself (analysis) is still alien. When I go back (to making) it's very difficult to be just with the clay because the distance keeps on
coming in again... What I mean is all the questioning about why I am doing it and how I
am doing it, so it means I have to struggle to be with the material, and before I just did it
automatically".

At the level of identity, this shifting between different modes of thinking, feeling and ultimately
doing, was perceived to create ambiguity and tension. In the domain of analysis, students are
inevitably inexpert at this stage of their academic development, and consequently not confident
in their ability. Worse still, their attempts at analysis have the capacity to disrupt their creative
energies and expertise, making credible conceptions of identity difficult to sustain in both
domains. Upon encountering the new terrain of doctoral study, students initially attempted to
make sense of their experience via narratives of confusion, constraint, sacrifice and risk. These
narratives were redolent with unease, uncertainty and anxiety as students struggled to
understand and make progress in their studies. The following sections will attempt to illustrate
how this was achieved via a further set of narratives.

Narratives of discovery

Students enter doctoral study with considerable expertise in making, in whatever medium.
When questioned about this expertise, two salient points emerged. First, there was a haptic
facility (Rose, 1999) which allowed them to manipulate materials and construct objects; a
capacity based on an appreciation of the qualities and limits of the materials with which they
worked. This facility was both symbolically and physically located in their hands; in the words of
one student: "My hands are everything to me". Second, and intimately connected to this manual
dexterity and sensitivity, was a particular way of seeing (Goodwin, 1994, 1995), developed to a
high degree of sophistication, and attuned to features such as the synthesis of colours, the
relationship between objects, the configuration of different shapes, the complexities of light etc.
Whilst this expertise is brought into the research arena, it alone cannot guarantee successful
completion of a PhD. To achieve the latter, students need to acquire expertise in the craft
practices (Mills, 1975) of research. However, as previously depicted, there exists a tension
between conceptions of their emotionally-charged creative identity, and the more rationalist and objectivist canons and procedural framework integral to research craft, at least in terms of how this is presented to students.

As the research journey progresses, students struggle with developing this new academic craft. On one level this requires an understanding and acceptance of research as a particular paradigm, with its philosophical foundations, requirements (usually of validity, reliability etc) and processes (data accumulation, analysis etc). Students must also engage with theoretical and conceptual thinking and its application to their making. On a less abstract level, they have to acquire the practical competencies involved for instance in doing interviews, constructing studio/workshop analytic notes on practice, searching archives, and so on. Given the salience of their creative self and the knowledge that has been imparted to them about research, the interviews revealed that their conceptions and fears of research centred upon the fact that it was perceived to be an essentially technical and/or mechanical process, with the potential to constrain and even endanger their creativity. Their struggle then was not just with the leaning of new skills and competencies, but crucially also with the development of a self-conception which would allow the accommodation of this very different set of activities. What transpired was the modification of identity in relation, and in response, to their research.

Students who managed this transformation successfully, learned to develop an affinity between their practice and their research on that practice. These students came to realise that their new research craft was itself creative, in ways which they had not previously understood or envisaged. More crucially, they reached a stage where they felt they were creative in the actual analysis of their practice. This constituted a process of discovery and was depicted in various narrative forms, including the development of a perspective on the research process as a creative act. This was achieved very gradually as students came to recognize similarities between what they made, and the research process itself. So, they acknowledged that their making followed a developmental cycle, from initial ideas, through selection of materials,
design, construction, revision, to final production. An analogous process could be detected in
the research program. Students also came to realize that this process was not in fact a purely
mechanical one, but one which required considerable innovation, change and adaptation:

"When I work, I use lots of different materials and I build one shape or a series of them
and what I enjoy is the challenge of getting the different materials to fit and getting the
relationship between each shape and its neighbour to fit. In trying to make sense of the
work and document it, I have been playing around with different theories and concepts,
like synchronicity and serendipity, and I have realised it's sort of similar in terms of
process. By doing that I have begun to grasp how my work actually 'works', and I can
see the overall pattern of its development, so in that sense it's also a creative process... I
play around with the physical materials and I play around with different kinds of, I
suppose mental materials, so I can construct explanation."

Along with the acknowledgement of research as a creative process, another narrative of
discovery was generated concerning the analytical writing. With few exceptions, those
interviewed could not be considered skilled in analytical writing. Their previous education (at
undergraduate and Master's levels) had placed great emphasis on communication via making,
with little requirement for written communication. Students were well aware of their lack of
facility in this medium and were initially very uncomfortable with written analysis, and unsure of
its role as a medium of expression. As one put it: "I'm not self conscious about the drawing but
I'm self-conscious about the writing because it's not my language."

Incrementally, via much struggle and hard work, students develop a facility in analysis in the
written text in one form or another. This constitutes a vital developmental step, for without
analysis, all the other activities of research cannot be fully communicated. Interestingly,
students often characterized this new skill of writing in terms of a positive change in the use
of their hands. Previously, the focus of their hands had been with the making, now their hands
were capable of working at a sophisticated level in another dimension. Whilst individuals did not deny a cognitive aspect to their analysis, there was repeated expression of the importance of their hands in constructing the analysis. Whilst not following Barthes (1977) entirely in entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible, and in almost automatic fashion before the head is aware of the thought, students certainly described a sense of flow in the physicality of their writing:

"Gradually it's got better and I can tell it's not just because I have got chapters written which have been approved by ____ (supervisor). It's also because my hands no longer feel clumsy when I write, I can get a flow going, it's not disjointed like it used to be. I have a sense now of how writing in an academic fashion can be creative, whereas before I instinctively felt it was 'dead' and not my thing at all."

Perhaps surprisingly in an age of technological advancement, few of those interviewed created text initially on computer screen. Instead, the vast majority chose to use more traditional means (notebooks, logs, diaries, etc), and then transfer the handwritten draft to computer.

Students often compared the process of developing proficiency at analytic writing with previous experiences of being novices in art and design, or perhaps when they had changed one creative medium for another (drawing to design, etc). They recalled their struggle to become skilled at the new activity, and experiencing reduced powers of expression. Once again they recognized an affinity between their making and the processes of research. This then changed their previous conceptions of research as a 'deadening' activity which limited or threatened their creative selves. They began to develop a particular construction of research, they engaged in analytic, academic writing and thereby discovered that research was not beyond their abilities, and more importantly not antithetical to their practice, and its essence, their creativity. From this discovery flowed other kinds of narrative, which helped them further to identify with the role of researcher and to incorporate this into their conception of self. As Richardson (1994: 516) has
noted in relation to the power of writing: "Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of
discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and
our relationship to it."

**Narratives of empowerment and transformation**

The gradual development of competence in the research craft begins to generate confidence in
that craft. The result is that students found themselves intellectually and aesthetically boosted
by their newly acquired and hard won research expertise, and this was expressed via various
narratives of empowerment, for example, around their confidence in general research
proficiency. Empowerment was also experienced in relation to the skilled use of the tools of
research (theory, concepts, techniques and so) which could actually aid creative output in a
number of ways. One of these narratives of empowerment centred upon the development of
insight into the individual’s own making, which in turn produced new ideas for innovative work:

“I have been working as an artist for ten years and I’ve found actually that this (PhD) has
benefited the way I work. It’s impacted upon how I go about the process of making work
which is a valuable thing. I know I am more sort of vigorous in terms of understanding
why I choose particular images of subjects, and how I interpret them in relationship to
myself. I’ve found that kind of understanding has helped me move the work in certain
profitable directions.”

These kinds of narratives focus upon the advantages in aesthetic terms of developing a capacity
to analyze individual creative method, as opposed to fearing the analytic mode. A second
empowering narrative stressed the benefit of gaining a deeper appreciation of the wider creative
context in which individual making was situated. An in-depth understanding of the histories of
culture, theory, and of particular major innovators in an individual’s area, were all felt to be
valuable resources gleaned via doctoral study. Such resources allowed students fully to situate
themselves and to contextualise their work within their intellectual and aesthetic pedigrees. By
coming to comprehend, in great detail, how their work was constructed, its intellectual locus, why it was being propelled in certain directions, and so on, the relationship to that work changes. Students understand the totality of their work, and this comprehension generates another narrative of empowerment, relating to the capacity to articulate, to voice their work, both to themselves and to their public. So, analytic confidence, rooted in a thorough understanding of their work in terms of decisions and choices made, its precise amalgamation of elements, and its contextual or historical place, produces and sustains a more developed capacity to articulate and justify the making:

"A few years ago at shows of my work or when giving a talk about it, I was sort of a 'straw woman' ... I would talk about my work but there was always a gap in my understanding of it, and of my place in it. I was always uneasy with that state of affairs, a fear of getting caught out. Now I know my work much better, and I understand my place in it, how I am with it, where I am going with it and why. When I give talks now it is a much easier process because I understand all that, and therefore I can justify all that in public."

In turn, this insight was felt to have enhanced students' understanding of their creative self. Students generated narratives which charted the process of developing insight into the very motives which helped propel their creativity. This particular narrative emphasized not only their satisfaction at developing new analytic tools, but also their surprise upon realising that a partial transformation of self had occurred:

"Well, when I started (the PhD) I saw myself as someone who was trying to push the boundaries of the work, and it was very much just jumping into it, that was my style. I'm still jumping in, but I now use a set of tools I didn't have before, and I like using them because I'm more focused, systematic, even precise and I feel my work has got more weight now.... I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have previously described myself as being like that, so I know I've changed in a way I had not expected."
These narratives of transformation describe the incorporation of the researcher component into the self-images students held. A process of biographical change had occurred whereby the activity of research, in all its dimensions, had been accepted as meaningful in itself. This, interviewees felt, worked to enhance their creativity. In effect, students embarked on a narrative journey which can be charted as follows (recalling that the apparent linearity is for analytic purposes only). The original narratives of confusion and constraint resulted in the production of narratives of sacrifice and risk, as creative capacity seemed to be under threat. However, whilst grappling with these threats, students uncovered a creative dimension to the research process which they portrayed via narratives of discovery. Narratives of empowerment emerged, as newly-developed analytic powers were found to enhance their making. The deeper appreciation of the totality of their work in turn produced a greater understanding of the creative self, resulting in narratives of change and identity transformation.

Conclusion

The students' transformational journey is of course social, for as Mead (1934) long ago pointed out, audience response and validation is vital for the construction, maintenance and change of individual identity. The interviews revealed that, perhaps not surprisingly, such validation was primarily sought from, and provided by fellow students, together with PhD supervisors, as students constructed, ‘performed’, and communicated their partially transformed selves. The students subsequently engaged in interactional practices with their audiences which helped substantiate the new self. This resulted in a ‘dialectic of identification’ (Jenkins, 1996: 20) with their new-found role of creator–researcher.

Upon commencing their doctoral study, students already possess a set of practical dispositions (action), perceptions and motivations. This form of essentially embodied resource, the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990: 55) is situated within the general field of art and design. Problem-solving entails what Bourdieu has termed: ‘a feel for the game’, which allows the individual to adopt the right strategies and make the correct decisions in the act of making. As portrayed, during the process of doctoral study, students also begin to get a feel for
the game of research, which is situated within the field of higher education (Bourdieu, 1988), and in turn to solve their research problems. Students therefore construct and inhabit a form of synthesized habitus.

On the one hand, this synthesis involves formally transmitted technical expertise, such as knowledge about the temperatures at which materials (glass, metal, clay etc) transform, or how to run software packages. On the other hand, it involves the assimilation of what Polanyi (1983) has termed 'tacit knowledge', for example, familiarity with the kind of shapes in to which certain materials can be sculpted; knowing when to ask a particular kind of interview question. The newly-formed habitus then provides the bedrock of practice from which students construct the identity of creator-researcher. In terms of identity salience (Stryker, 1987); it is this ordering of the role with which they identify, rather than that of researcher-creator. This is perhaps not surprising, given the relative weight of biographical time and energy devoted to the making and to the research respectively.

This paper has attempted to describe and examine the sense-making activities of students as they struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar terrain of research, and to integrate it with their creative practice. The various student narratives depicted above cohere to form the overarching narrative of personal change, which recounts the partial transformation of identity both to the self as audience and to other, external audiences. As Sparkes (1996) has noted, narratives are not evenly distributed within contemporary industrial society, different individuals and groups having differential access. In the case of the students interviewed, those narratives of disturbance (confusion, constraint), or enhancement (discovery) of their making, were accessible due to their membership of the occupational/educational community of artists/designers. In contrast, some of the other narratives employed, such as those of sacrifice, risk, and empowerment (Miller, 1998; Green, 1997; Seymour, 1998) proliferate within the wider culture.

In terms of identity, as Kickbusch (1988) has pointed out, taking certain risks may be essential to the construction of particular social identities. For the students studied, the risk of doing research was perceived to lie in the potential damage to their practice, and consequently to the creative self. Given the centrality of creativity to their conception of identity, this risk was a considerable one. For the majority of students, resolution of this threat was achieved by the development of new perspectives and insight into the
creative possibilities within the research process itself, so that artistry and analysis were successfully combined. At this watershed in their educational career, a highly significant change in student identity occurred, as they began, slowly and often falteringly, to incorporate the role of researcher into their repertoire. This may well have ramifications for the design of research training programmes for practice-based doctoral students in art and design, and also for the training of their supervisors. Some of the problems specific to the supervision of art and design research degrees have been charted elsewhere (Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2000). It may, for example, be beneficial for supervisors to encourage students to conceptualise research as a creative activity per se, from a very early stage in their research degree careers. The particular needs of art and design doctoral students with regard to different forms of academic writing (Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2000), and the possibility of cooperation and collaboration (Barthes, 1987) in the writing process, might also be worthy of consideration, always within the mandatory requirement for the doctoral thesis to be independently crafted and written, of course.
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Runners' tales: Autoethnography, injury and narrative

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This paper examines the importance of narrative activity in the construction of the injured and rehabilitated sporting body and the successful reconstruction of positive athletic identity. It is based on autoethnographic research undertaken by the authors, both of whom are middle/long-distance runners, during a two-year period of injury and gradual rehabilitation. The paper delineates certain narratives which were generated during the process of injury and recovery, commencing with narratives of suffering and sacrifice, through those of pilgrimage and blame to the more positive narratives of compensation and subsequent empowerment and progress. We examine the role played by these narratives in enabling us to make sense phenomenologically of our injured bodies, to achieve momentum and to maintain positive running identities in the face of threat to the running selves. Via narrative exchanges, as 'co-tellers' we achieved a high degree of intersubjectivity which was crucial to our eventual return to full running fitness and athletic identity.

Introduction

As a recent review has indicated (Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998), there currently exists a developing body of psychological and sociological literature on sport injury. In the field of psychology, for example, various models have been developed, cognitive processes tested, and notional responses gauged. From a sociological perspective, researchers have examined various factors influencing response to injury including inter alia socialisation processes (Curry, 1993), the particular kinds of culture surrounding specific sports (Frey, 1991; Shaffer, 1996; Greenleaf & Snow, 1997), the influence of social norms (Nixon, 1992), and gender (Young & White, 1995; Young, White & McTeer, 1994; Messner, 1992). More recently, the emergence of a literature within sociology of sport and health which examines narratives of the injured sporting body.

The importance of narrative activity has been emphasised by many, including those who contend that narrative self is in fact inseparable in that narrative is born out of experience and simultaneously gives shape to experience (Coffey & Capps, 1996). The narrative method of analysis on how people organise and assign meanings to experience and the analysis of narrative allows an exploration of how particular identities are constructed. Narratives or stories also attempt to combine the social with the personal (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In this regard, Sparkes (1999) has noted, personal stories are intimately linked to the cultural and subcultural resources which actors possess. In his recent review of the literature on body narratives, Sparkes raises a series of issues for future research, including the need, in relation to injured sporting bodies, to ascertain "the conditions that shape whether an athlete reconstructs a positive identity or sinks into depression".

This constitutes one of the central themes of this paper, in which we examine some personal narratives which were (and to a lesser extent still are) generated during a period when both of the authors suffered from running injuries. By doing so, we hope to portray in some of their complexity our particular narrative constructions of injury and rehabilitation. Our aim is to contribute new perspectives to the developing literature on narratives of sporting injury, in three principal ways. Firstly, much of the cited research has used elite athletes as subjects (Sparkes, 1996; Young & White, 1995; Brock & Kleiber, 1994). In contrast, all we can claim is 'club runner' standard, and we are perhaps more typical of the mass of individuals who commit themselves to the pursuit of distance running and,
Runners’ tales: Autoethnography, injury and narrative

consequently, on occasion have to contend with resultant injury. Secondly, in contrast to much of the research, which has focussed upon athletes who are unable to attain their pre-injured sporting status, (Sparkes, 1996, 1998; Brock & Kleiber, 1994; Young & White, 1995), our research charts the successful transition from the injured sporting body to the rehabilitated state. Finally, the recent literature on narratives usually involves researchers in the interviewing the rehabilitated state. Our approach in this paper is autoethnographic (Hayano, 1997; Ellis, 1997; Hayano, 1982; Young, 1991; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Okley & Callaway, 1992; Van Maanen, 1995; Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2000). As the literature indicates, auto-ethnography may have very different usages for those who employ it as a research method. For example, some researchers’ primary concern is the autobiographical (Brandes, 1982; Deck, 1990), involving the portrayal of an individual life. In contrast, for other autoethnographers the emphasis is essentially ethnographic (Pratt, 1994; Strathern, 1987; Dorst, 1989). The stories of autoethnographers are of particular ethnographic interest as they inevitably reveal information about the writer’s membership of social groups and categories and immersion in particular social processes. For us, the ethnographic process involves combining fieldnotes with “headnotes” (Sanjek, 1990). The self and the ethnographic field are for us symbiotic, and in effect this combination constitutes the pivot of our analysis (Coffey, 1999). Our individual and collective selves are integral parts of the ethnographic field, and the link between the two is forged by the writing. This writing is personal, highly reflexive and aimed at giving analytical purchase to the autobiographical so as adequately to portray the ethnographic field.

In order to contextualise the events to be described, it is first of all necessary to make visible some “accountable” knowledge in terms of our athletic biographies (Stanley, 1990). Collectively, we have a background of distance running which ranges over 5-mile races to marathons. This has required a commitment to training 6 or 7 days a week, for at least an hour a day, in the evening after work. In November 1997, during the same wind-swept week, we both suffered knee injuries, occasioned by having to train in the winter dark. It was apparent at the onset of these injuries that they did not constitute the usual small niggles which plague the habitual runner. Consequently, we rapidly arrived at a collective decision systematically to document our response to these injuries, our principal motive being to achieve something positive out of a negative experience.

Data Collection, Analysis and Portrayal

The decision to document our engagement with knee injuries presented no particular difficulty in terms of actual documentation, for the keeping of training logs is a common practice amongst athletes. Usually these logs document the kind of training taking place at any particular juncture, and include details of timings, distances, terrain type, weather conditions, and brief notes on the subjective experience. So the discipline of recording daily training was already in situ. In place of training logs we constructed “injury-rehabilitation logs” to record our individual and collective engagement with the injured state, and our attempts to regain sufficient fitness to run again.

We each constructed a personal log, and a third collective log synthesised the salient common themes which were emerging, together with any differences in our individual adaptation to and management of the injured state. The recording of our experiences was done via micro-tape recorders which we carried around during the day, and which also accompanied us during daily attempts at rehabilitation. We each transcribed these recordings as soon as practicable (usually in lunch hours and at weekends), and then constructed the logs detailed above. Creating our joint log, within which analytical themes and concepts were generated, was effected via a form of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, if one of us had documented a particular narrative theme, we would search the other’s log for a similar theme. We would then interrogate each other as to the precise composition of that theme, its boundaries and its connections to other themes already generated. Thematic or conceptual differences between our accounts were identified and, wherever possible, reconciled, in terms of definition. Where no analytical reconciliation proved achievable, we accepted the difference and recorded it as an atypical case. Subsequently, we explored the reasons for the difference and the impact, if any, upon the process of handling our injuries. Individually we have acted as (and continue to do so) the “primary recipient” (Ochs & Capps, 1996) of the other’s data, providing regular feedback and critique. This paper is a product of this particular method; the data, collected over a 2-year period from 1997–99, are extracted from our joint fieldnotes.

In the paper we present certain narratives centred upon our injured running bodies, and illustrate how these
gently rehabilitated selves. Sparkes (1999) has explored a number of ways of using narratives in relation to physical activity. These include: paradigmatic, structural, episodic, and self-narratives. Here, we present a number of these approaches, using the central narrative of one of our research participants to illustrate them. The narrative reflects the feelings and subjective experiences of a well-known runner who helped us to construct our injured and recovering selves. These are presented within a chronological sequence of events which constitutes the “career” of our personal and collective journeys from injury to rehabilitation. We attempt to portray the temporal sequence of events using an overarching narrative in a style intended to evoke the atmosphere and emotional tone which pervaded at the time. Where quotes from fieldnotes are provided, these are verbatim.

**Afflictions of Suffering**

Running has come with a vengeance and into the dark, wet old nights we have been running, fluorescent jacketed figures, encased in woollen hats, gloves and thermal stocks, hugging the lit edges of parks, traffic-quiet roads, as we up the nightly miles, looking forward to the time when we can again run in the light. Along we run, uncurtained windows displaying couches full of uncaring viewers resplendent in their comfort; past the pub drinkers, convincing ourselves of our difference; of our small madness, our obsession, our lined commitment to the activity which perplexes us. Out here, “they” are in there, convincing us of our small madness, our obsession, our lined commitment to the activity which perplexes us, family, and the bystanders who sometimes gaze at or hurl minor abuse.

Wind from the West has been blowing hard all day, hammering the trees on the parks, cascading downwards, making the footfall hazardous and Harry difficult to sustain with any great rhythm. It is problematic on the often dimly-lit and badly lit routes we chart night after winter night. Then there was an “awful week” when we were both stopped literally in our tracks. On Tuesday a runner, who smokes and is overweight, dropped off the back on the stairs by a non-runner, who smokes and is overweight. That really made my day.

Jacquelyn: (nods) Well, I was on my way to the committee and she came alongside me and really made my day.

John: You know B...?
Jacquelyn: (nods) Well, I was on my way to the committee and she came alongside me and when we started to climb the stairs she just left me! The only way I could go up was by keeping the bad knee straight and using the other knee to power up. I thought ‘brilliant, dropped off the back on the stairs by a non-runner, who smokes and is overweight’. That really made my day.

In addition to the small, daily examples of such mortification, the remembered golden past also presented a further stark contrast with the denigrated present, as the following extract from John’s log reveals:

“...we stop, extending their malign influence incrementally from running into walking, sitting and even sleeping. We take to bed cushions to place between our afflicted knees in order to help, yet at the same time plagued by a similar pain. The pain is not, however, limited to the physical dimension, for we also begin to suffer the “mortification” (Goffman, 1976) of our “gloried” athletic selves (Adler & Adler, 1989; Kleiber & Brock, 1992) as gradually even the most people, are rendered problematic:

Jacquelyn: You know B...?
John: The women who works with the... committee?
Jacquelyn: (nods) Well, I was on my way to the... committee and she came alongside me and when we started to climb the stairs she just left me! The only way I could go up was by keeping the bad knee straight and using the other knee to power up. I thought ‘brilliant, dropped off the back on the stairs by a non-runner, who smokes and is overweight’. That really made my day.

In addition to the small, daily examples of such mortification, the remembered golden past also presented a further stark contrast with the denigrated present, as the following extract from John’s log reveals:

This decision to treat these knee injuries as a sociological project got me looking back at all the old training diaries I have.
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haven't dug out for years. I came across an entry for a Sunday at Lancaster in early October 1978 which read: “Out on the fells this morning for over 3 hours, up to Clougha on the road, then up to its summit, over to Wardstones and on to Caton Moor, down to Halton and back to campus on the canal. Weather dipped out after an hour, rained heavily, wind came up, not enough gear on, didn't notice it much as I was really flying and it seemed easy”. That is hard to read at the moment, it's like it's about somebody else. I don’t expect that ease of running in my fifties but I suppose despite slowing down over the years there has been continuity, each time I have run it has kept the thread with the past. This knee fascio means I contrast now with the past and it’s painful to have sunk to this level of being a “crock”, but also strangely as I am not running it is as if I have been disconnected with the past, it feels as if I never ran like that somehow. I know I did but it’s hard given the present state to believe I did and that’s painful losing that surety.

In acknowledging the demise (temporary, we hoped) of the running identity, of the “gloried self”, we had to some extent “fallen from grace”, and now were not even narratives of suffering we communicated to each other the physical and emotional pain we were experiencing, and within these narratives the injured knee became reified, transformed in our discourse to “It”. It plagued us, It was the cause of all our troubles and because of this, became at once divorced from us (cf. Sparkes, 1996), and also physical pain forced us to acknowledge, It was simultaneously objectified by us. So whilst It was part of our bodies, as the neurotically not part of us; but rather It was down there, in some ill-defined space, leering at us, resisting all our efforts to remedy It and to run. The problem with dealing with It was further compounded by the fact that the knee injuries constituted part of a wider, more encompassing, but power over us and our running. The fateful IT was uncontrollable, malicious and capricious; in our minds IT had wished upon us the injury by propelling malign forces into our lives and producing a confluence of factors (the dark, cold, wet, windy night combined with post-work fatigue) which resulted in our stumbling and falling into a physical and emotionally painful state. Moreover, both the knees and the wider IT had betrayed us, and we were extremely angry at both IT and IT, as testified by the violent expletives which peppered our discourse. We relied against the knees and their stubborn refusal to function effectively so that we could once again rise above the status of “ordinary” folk; we were grounded metaphorically and physically.

Narratives of Sacrifice

The angry feelings of betrayal were intimately linked to narratives of sacrifice which began to flood our conversations and logs. Previously, our days had been structured by the necessary routines. The alarm rings at 6.30 am and we haul ourselves into each working day, rapidly shovelling down breakfast cereal, gulping hot tea, grabbing our sandwiches and driving to work in somnolent state. At the end of the hard working day, we speed home to prepare the evening meal, slam it in the fridge, and then rapidly haul on the running gear, scanning the sky in vain attempt to forecast the weather conditions. Should we opt for vest or tee shirt, shorts or tights, sun-protection cream or rain-top? We mutter to ourselves “maintain momentum”, for the clock is running and any small delay, such as stopping for a cup of tea, or even answering the door bell, will result in reduced mileage that evening, so we must MOVE. Hurting out of the door into warm summer evening or chill winter night, we head out to do the running business. Post running, we must focus on rehydrating the body, stretching weary muscles, and then consuming a carbohydrate-rich evening meal, whilst re-discovering the outside world via the evening news on television. No chance to digest our dinner at leisure as we sprint off to wash dishes, manufacture tomorrow’s packed lunch and take a speedy shower. With luck, there is enough time to unwind a little before we fall into bed.

Such is the discipline of our working-running life, and its combined demands require the sacrifice of the majority of our social and leisure time, for apart from at weekends there is little space for socialising or leisure activity. Even at weekends the training or racing continues and so circumscribes opportunities for other more pleasurable pursuits. A further consequence is that there remains very little time for the normal domestic activities which preoccupy our more house-proud friends, relatives and neighbours. Domesticity assumes the lowest priority of all, and in consequence our home environment remains chaotic: mounds of training gear litter the house and the kitchen is a repository for multiple pairs of training shoes in various states.

This is the routine, the discipline of training and its impact upon the time we have available after work. Just as time is regulated and disciplined, so are our bodies, which have been transformed over decades of self-imposed repetitive practices into those typical of distance runners, with a low body-fat ratio, and gaunt features. Our bodies have gradually learnt to adjust to the fatigue levels engendered by regular training, and our running minds have simultaneously grown stoic in relation to the habitual physical rigours. Moreover, in order to train and to race effectively, we have long learnt to “fuel” our bodies as recommended by the physiological research literature: chomping rabbit-like through mounds of vegetables, and consuming goodly portions of fruit and complex carbohydrates such as cereals. We glance wistfully at the cornucopia of cakes and puddings on display in the cafés we sometimes visit on Sunday afternoons, and then settle resolutely for the relative virtues of teacakes or scones. We suspect we are, in the eyes of our nearest and dearest, “sad”, but convince ourselves that this way is better for us, for our health and for the running.

All these practices of course require great discipline and regular sacrifice in the face of culinary, alcoholic, social and cultural temptations and the moans of bemused friends.
to the quest for professional medical help and answered questions. Up to this juncture we had consulted literature on self-help for sports injuries and no plausible diagnosis of our individual injuries was suggested. We did embark upon a kind of secular pilgrimage towards this kind of medical encounter. We were paying our hard-earned money, living in hope. But confidence began to wane, and the belief that we were sustaining in the face of a number of factors. Firstly, the injuries were evidently not getting better, pain was still a constant companion, and an attempted jog down to the end of the road provided a stark reminder of our fall from grace. Secondly, as sociologists, we had by this time come to observe and understand the social rhythms of the clinic we were visiting. The treatment of patients resembled a production line, with therapists simultaneously treating different patients, rushing from one treatment room to another. Sometimes our therapist would exit before the scheduled end of session or would arrive late, a state of affairs which eventually left us wondering about due care and attention. Thirdly and alarmingly, during one of the latter treatments, in an attempt to gauge progress, the professional was somewhat cheerfully to consult fellow runners and other patients who had visited our local sports injuries clinic. The relief of finding a physiotherapist and our hopes of a productive outcome engendered collective optimism, following our first session with her:

John: What do you feel about that then?
Jacquelyn: I feel better that at least I know what it is now, it has been 'labelled', and she seemed to know her business. It seems straightforward the way she put things, she seemed very familiar with it. I guess it's a common problem for runners, she must have seen a lot of it. What about you?
John: Yeh, it's just a relief to know what it is, I suppose it's about 'naming' it, once she did it, I saw it differently, if I look at it right now and at least I've got a label, it makes it easier.

Our initial response to the 'labelling' of the injuries was to interrogate the sports medicine journals in our library and to obtain any relevant documentation on the specific conditions. There now appeared to be some degree of certainty as to our problems and perhaps, we dared hope, we were on the way back! Over the next couple of months we both faithfully attended the sports injuries clinic for a total of 10 sessions, but unfortunately the way back proved more than rocky. The knees failed to improve despite the use of various physiotherapy modalities (diathermy, ultrasound, etc), remedial exercises, and the application of support taping to the knees. During this period we worked hard at maintaining our collective and individual confidence in the therapist. Recovery was going to take time, we assured ourselves. We were prepared to be patient, to follow the advice of the professional; she was nice, enthusiastic and as far as we could tell, well informed. We were paying our hard-earned money, living in hope.

However, towards the end of the series of sessions confidence began to wane, and the belief that we were trusting the 'right' person became increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of a number of factors. Firstly, the injuries were evidently not getting better, pain was still a constant companion, and an attempted jog down to the end of the road provided a stark reminder of our fall from grace. Secondly, as sociologists, we had by this time come to observe and understand the social rhythms of the clinic we were visiting. The treatment of patients resembled a production line, with therapists simultaneously treating different patients, rushing from one treatment room to another. Sometimes our therapist would exit before the scheduled end of session or would arrive late, a state of affairs which eventually left us wondering about due care and attention. Thirdly and alarmingly, during one of the latter treatments, in an attempt to gauge progress, the
therapist instructed the performance of a certain form of squat. This produced a rapid setback and caused increased levels of pain to the sufferer for several weeks, doing nothing to instil confidence. Moreover, towards the end of the course of treatment the physiotherapist also started communicating to us the possibility that our conditions were beyond her expertise and skills, eventually recommending a "centre of excellence" which specialised in knee problems.

At this point it seemed to us that we had no other option but to "keep the faith". We consequently tried hard to convince ourselves that this was indeed the right move, we would seek out the "real" experts. Our decision to follow this route was based on the belief that expertise was likely to reside in a centre of excellence, and also on information which indicated that various elite sports people had successfully been rehabilitated at the specific centre. If this is where the top athletes attended, we reasoned, this is where the best chance of success was bound lie. We had to work particularly hard to justify continuing at this point of the "pilgrimage", given the exorbitant fees for private consultation and treatment, in the absence of private health insurance. One of the factors which convinced us to proceed was the availability at the specialist centre of a magnetic resonance imaging scanner, designed to provide images not merely of the skeleton but also of the soft tissues. We fervently believed at that point that the omnipotent MRI scanner would provide the answers to our problems, in identifying our injuries and permitting the consultant accurately to diagnose and treat us.

A week or so later we arrive at the Centre to be greeted by the orthopaedic consultant, who proceeds to give a cursory physical examination of the afflicted limbs. The previous diagnoses of the sports physiotherapists are immediately discounted and within 10 minutes an exploratory operation is forcibly proposed. The unexpectedly swift suggestion engenders a high degree of unease in both of us as we were expecting a more considered examination with the scan as first line of diagnosis. After some discussion, we both firmly opt for the MRI scan as a final, exploratory operation. During the wait in the inner sanctum which houses the scanner we substantiate the narrative of pilgrimage: this is the magic machine which will define all our ills, and so we are eager to proceed, eager to obtain a result, eager to know and subsequently to have a course of treatment. As John commented at the MRI centre:

I am feeling weird, sitting here with the knee enclosed by the machine, it's humming away and I have been instructed to keep the knee still at all costs. I will be in this thing for an hour. This is the 'ju ju' machine, you can tell it's special as it's inside its own purpose-built facility, in a separate building with a locked door. A technician sits on a console which I cannot see, monitoring the machine, he tells me nothing, intimating that is the consultant's province and not his. He is looking at screens, he is looking at pictures of the inside of my knee. Soon the truth will be revealed, it must be. I am excited and anxious simultaneously.

A few hours later we return to the consultant's office where he studies the plethora of images produced by the scanner, whilst we watch him closely and with hope. Then, to our utter disbelief, he tells us, one after the other, that he is unable to make any diagnosis from the images. All he can do, on the basis of the evidence, is tentatively suggest some possible diagnoses. If we want a more definitive outcome, he advises, we must undergo exploratory operations on the knees. For several moments we sit there, dumbfounded, shocked, all our hopes destroyed, silently questioning ourselves as to what had just happened: "But what about the magic machine?" "What the hell was all that about?" We press him for something more substantive, a piece of information, something we can work on, but receive nothing but vague comments. We look at each other, desperation turning to anger, our eyes beginning to smoulder. We reject outright his suggestion of an expensive exploratory operation, knowing that for us it would constitute a last resort. We retreat into shocked disbelief, hardly alleviated when we have to settle the bill in the opulently furbished reception area.

Narratives of Blame

In the car on the long journey home a vitriolic tirade erupts, increases in intensity and is regularly reprised over the next two weeks; a sustained narrative of blame. During this period we feel utterly disillusioned, totally deflated, but resolutely furious. Firstly, our anger is directed at the medical profession for their ineptitude. Despite handing over a large amount of hard-earned money for physiotherapy and the private clinic, we have found the service sadly wanting. It seems that no medical professional can identify the knee problems and all treatment has to-date proved totally ineffective. Frustratingly, we find ourselves no further forward on the road to recovery and, to add insult to injury, we have had to pay for the dubious privilege. Secondly, a great deal of fury is self-directed. We regularly berate ourselves for our misguided trust in the medical profession: how could we have been so stupid and naive? We recall a long series of woefully inadequate encounters with the medical profession, both in relation to sports injuries and to health matters in general. Our own anecdotal evidence is supplemented by research findings and press accounts of medical incompetence and negligence. Despite all the evidence, of which we should have been all too aware, to our chagrin and rage we still put misguided faith in the medical establishment. Therefore, not only can we no longer use our legs as we should, but our mental capacity for analysis has been found sadly wanting. We are simultaneously "crocked" and stupid, a long way indeed from the gloried athletic selves.

There was a third source of blame around which we constructed accusatory narratives. Whilst the role of the fates (the IT) was keenly acknowledged, something less nebulous, a more concrete causative agent was also needed. What emerged was the spectre of work. We had long known that our full-time employment was not conducive to
Since running, and this had been empirically experienced for decades by both of us. Three weeks’ vacation was the longest continuous period of holiday we had enjoyed in commencing work in academia. Without fail, at the conclusion of the holiday our training performances would suffer. Conversely, a great deal of training and racing was held as soon as running shoes were put on. We habitually scoff when reading or hearing about the difficulties and ardour of their training regimes: “Try it on for a full time-job”, we ritually chant, for full-time, highly demanding work constitutes the dominant item in our lives: it drains the energy from our bodies and minds, leaving us too fatigued to train with any intensity, and making a mockery of carefully devised training schedules. Running in such a fatigued state steadily heightens the chances of becoming injured.

To our problems, in the winter months we are forced into the darkness because of the inflexibility of one of our work patterns, thereby increasing the chances of an injury. The great majority of our work lives are long, hours spent sitting at desks, a position known to be highly detrimental to general health, especially to injured knees. The pain is noticeably worse on the weekends when we are able to move around freely. Although there is considerable investment in our athletic identities, the enforced sedentary life, energy and health to our working roles has clearly deleteriously affected our athletic selves.

ides of Empowerment and Progress

At rock bottom emotionally, so to speak, at a loss as to what we were going to get back to running, we had lost the discipline of training and we had certainly lost confidence. In effect, anger drove us out of our normal, if modified disciplined practices played a fundamental part in beginning to re-build positive self images. As Jacquelyn noted in her log:

I noticed today that it’s 4 months since we have run. What’s interesting is that neither of us has put on any extra weight, so whilst at the moment we can’t run or even jog, we still look like distance runners. That helps because I can still see myself in the mirror and not someone else. I feel that would be even more difficult if I couldn’t see my proper self. I know I can’t run at the moment, I know I’m totally unfit for running, but it looks as if I am still running. That’s comforting because objectively I know when I start running again the experience will not be as hard as if I were carrying surplus poundage. More importantly, I feel I am still here. I can see my running self. So because I still look like I can run, the possibility is I will eventually.

There is an old adage in athletic circles that “runners would rather eat gravel than walk”, but walk we did — through the gruelling winter and into the spring which turned to summer. Eventually, on weekends we managed to test out the knees on local hills, at first with trepidation and then later with developing optimism. In the high summer, after a month of procrastination, putting off the fateful moment, we began a very cautious programme of rehabilitating the knees to the point where they would tolerate running.

This began with the incorporation into our nightly walk of a number of 10-metre jogs, with large intervals of time in between. After a few months we progressed to repeated shuttle runs, and eventually started to build up sustained running starting at a duration of one minute, and increasing the duration incredibly gradually to over an hour. The whole process of rehabilitation took over 2 years. Our progress was determined by a rule of thumb, namely if the knee was worse on one day we would revert to the previous level of intensity and duration. During this long period we sustained ourselves with narratives of empowerment and progress. We told ourselves that we had seized control and what we were doing was making a difference. The past was a yardstick against which the present was measured, for whenever progress faltered or halted, we reminded each other of the dreadful times when we could hardly climb the stairs, or when a 100-metre jog was deemed a huge success. By this means we maintained the momentum of our recovery and whenever we achieved a movement forward in terms of running duration or speed, we instantly hugged, clapped and cheered each other.
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Success was ritualistically marked, for whenever we reached a significant benchmark, such as a 10-minute run, the next weekend we would visit a favourite café, and consume some local delicacy such as bread pudding. Thus arose the celebratory “bread pudding” narrative, proof of our progress was there in its eating!

Narratives of Compensation

In running terms, the two-year quest to return to fitness constituted a relatively extended period of trial and error as we sought to adapt our programme to the daily state of our knees. During this period various narratives of compensation emerged. Thus, we constructed from our daily lives stories to convince us that this fallow period was not entirely unproductive, either in terms of running, or in terms of personal and joint development. These stories were used to justify our continued involvement in running, and also to sustain us psychologically during this period. Whilst taking different forms, all these stories tended to centre upon the beneficial accumulation of new insight into our individual and collective states of being.

One of the most significant of these narratives was that of the “natural”. Once the evenings had lengthened and our walks took us around local parks, we began better to see and appreciate the natural environment. Normally, when training, there had been little spare energy for awareness or enjoyment of the surrounding environment (not surprising when one is focussed upon the arduous business of running). Gradually, during the evening walks we began to appreciate more and more the changing nature of the trees, the flowers, and the sky, and our relationship to the natural world. This was something we had not had time to consider, or more importantly, to feel for decades. This generated a realisation that, despite the difficulties, something valuable might be gained from not being able to run, something which was furnishing us with important insight:

I suppose running is primarily about movement and here we are this evening, not moving, but standing stock still. We were walking around the park doing our circuits as usual when we came through the trees and there was this brilliant sky, with all sorts of wonderful cloud formations and colours. So we just stood there and watched it change, saying, “look at that bit” or “do you see that orange”, and when we finished looking and plodded on again we felt we gained from it. It made us feel small but good at the same time. (Jacquelyn)

A further compensatory narrative centred upon our individual and collective relationships to our running bodies. Throughout the two years we gradually learnt to adopt a more compassionate attitude towards our bodily selves. Whereas previously (as in the first month of the injury) we would have trained on indomitably, regardless of pain or other maladies such as heavy colds, we gradually developed a less rigid attitude to these matters. We learnt to be more flexible toward ourselves and to listen more acutely to what our bodies were signalling. From this emerged a narrative which was termed, sometimes sarcastically, “doing the best we can”, which entailed accepting our limitations in whatever circumstances we found ourselves. For example, whilst on holiday abroad we regretfully abandoned our running programme entirely because the only terrain available for running was too angled and rough to chance risking our vulnerable, recovering knees. Reluctantly, we agreed to return to walking for the holiday period, just doing the best we could at that particular juncture. This more flexible approach to our physical selves had resulted in a return to the state of being a runner: we had not given up, we were back. It had somewhat resembled running a marathon: one always endures bad patches, but the secret is to persevere, and we had done so by learning to listen to our running bodies; we had become wiser runners.

Lastly, there was in operation another compensatory narrative, one which stressed what we both had learned about our social relationship during the two-year journey to recovery. Whilst we had refused to give up on our running selves, we had also not given up on each other. Inevitably, during the two years of gradual rehabilitation there had been bad days and good days and these did not necessarily neatly coincide, for the knees of either one of us could not always match the daily performance of the other. Consequently, in order to achieve some democratic balance, we evolved another rule of thumb: what one could manage on any particular evening, the other (even if feeling capable of more) would always follow. This agreement sustained a joint rehabilitative momentum whilst simultaneously creating an emotional cohesion in the face of adversity. Over this protracted period a narrative was constructed which stressed that the injuries had brought us closer together; we had not fragmented but cohered in the face of all the malevolent forces (knees, medics, work, IT) assailing us. Neither of us had abandoned the struggle when the going was particularly rough for the other, as a log note testifies:

Yesterday evening we had a bad patch. We decided to incorporate a small pitch (not a hill — in fact it’s so small that normally when not injured we would not even have noticed it) in the running for the first time (after 11 months of our programme) and with some trepidation we did so. We negotiated the pitch both up and down, everything seemed ok, until about 50 yards on my knee began to STAB me very sharply. By now I know what that means; it means going back weeks in terms of the programme, if not a month. I know the different kinds of pain now, and their consequences. I pull up quickly taking the weight on my good leg, full of dread. I sit on the ground and explode with frustrated, furious expletives darken the air repeatedly. J comes over quickly to give me support. I berate my knee, I berate our decision to add in the pitch to the programme (“idiot, idiot, it was all too soon, I knew we shouldn’t have done it”). My frustration bubbles over as I glance at the micro tape recorder in her hand: “Don’t you dare turn that f***ing thing on!” She moves around me smoothing me down with her words, it takes her an age. I limp home awkwardly, she gives me a cuddle on the way. (John)

The above narratives of compensation developed
and had become firmly embedded by the point we considered we had returned to being runners. As narratives of empowerment and progress were so were the narratives of compensation. Having a point where we asserted control over the process was and recovery, our individual and collective determinations no longer centred on the negative. The fog of confinement in a bad position. Although this had been lifted, positive feelings and thoughts of possible and compensatory narratives began to dominate. Firstly, valuing the natural, followed by an insistence that collectively there had been positive in the face of adversity.

**Limitations of Chronology**

To convey the developmental process of injury and rehabilitation, we have presented the data in a chronology. In this way the emergence of the narratives is the temporal framework of the process. On one this correlates with the lived reality of our track. For example, we did construct narratives at points in our journey, and these narratives did our lives for particular periods of time. For narratives of blame dominated our interaction for bits solid. Very angry and frustrated, we literally these stories to each other at every spare moment.

However, problems with the linear presentation of data. As Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) have this kind of portrayal implicitly suggests "a more or less set of transitions from one stage to another". Moreover, this form of representation also gives impression that the main narratives within each stage of the chronology are confined to those that the reality of our experience is however considerably more complex. Although specific stages were indeed by particular narratives, these were not discrete, off from other narratives, rather the boundaries were ambiguous. As a result, at any particular juncture several narratives might emerge. For example, whilst we strove for control of our rehabilitation, that control was never unfaltering. Inevitably, over the two-year period were numerous occasions when our belief in the "it will work" approach wavered, and the narrative of control to medical professionals surfaced once more. Instances always corresponded with a deterioration of self so that the remedial programme had to be undertaken retroactively, and we began to doubt our strategy.

It had to work hard to overlay the pilgrimage with one stressing autonomy and control. In the face of such negativity, narratives of blame were liable to emerge. At one point, for instance, on the journey home from a conference paper, we became trapped on a crowded small train which remained stationary for hours due to technical problems. To our intense chagrin, the knee problems flared up painfully as a result of confinement in a bad position. Although this generated an excoriating tirade against the railway companies, the narrative of blame which emerged much more powerfully was focused upon IT. The fates once again had determined that we were running on that particular train, which was too crowded to allow the mobilisation and thus protection of our knees. Narratives of suffering erupted, followed closely by narratives of sacrifice. The time spent (wasted?) undertaking our rehabilitation programme became the focus of our discontent: "all that time and we have been put back months". We then struggled to reconstruct a positive narrative of control.

Psychologically, these emotionally-charged instances were always very difficult for us; frustration, fear, pain and anger all became interwoven. However, objectively we knew that our carefully devised remedial practices had proved effective. If subsequently we had to reduce our running time or revert from constant to intermittent running, or even return to fast walking pace, at least we were aware of the positive action to take. This confidence helped us resurrect the narratives of empowerment and progress. We had achieved forward momentum before and we could achieve it again. At these points in the journey there arose "do you remember when" stories when we deliberately strove to recall less advanced stages of the recovery process. So, forced to reduce our running time, we would revisit, for example, the time when we could only walk, or run for 5 minutes. Going back in the programme was not so bad, we reasoned, for we had been through more difficult stages before and survived. All that was necessary was to listen to our own running bodies and we would eventually make progress.

Whilst there was some degree of linearity to the rehabilitation process and the accompanying narratives, there also existed a certain circularity. At times our knees would suddenly deteriorate, and we would find ourselves propelled down what we termed our "time-tube" experience once again a deluge of difficult emotions and their corresponding narratives. Over two years, being flung "back in the time-tube" and lodged in this circular loop of experience became familiar phenomena. In stark contrast to the smooth transition between states of body and stages of experience, as sometimes portrayed in the sports injury literature, the rehabilitative progress was faltering, jolting, and fragmented. Setbacks were encountered regularly, and we strove to make sense of, and accord them meaning using the narrative resources described above.

**Narrative and Positive Momentum**

It took us two years to return to the point where we were again running at levels of frequency, intensity and duration similar to those achieved prior to sustaining the knee injuries. During this time, we made sense phenomenologically of our injuries (despite receiving no clear medical diagnoses) and constructed our own rehabilitative programme. We could of course have followed a completely different course of action, opting to give up entirely our running and racing "careers" and we both feel certain that...
specific factors helped sustain us and influence the reconstruction of a positive identity in opposition to a slide into depression (Sparkes, 1999).

Our recovery hinged on maintaining positive running identities, both individual and collective. We had spent decades constructing specific running identities. To undertake middle- and long-distance running and racing demands habitual, disciplined training. The resultant combination of discipline and sacrifice has been described above. Neither of us has ever won an open race (the best being 4th and 8th places respectively), yet in addition to thousands of running miles and the time and energy expended, we had over the years sacrificed a great deal to this demanding activity, from social relationships to (we strongly suspect) career advancement.

Determined not to abandon our running selves without a considerable struggle, we were aided in that struggle by a number of biographical resources. Firstly, we were relatively mature runners, in contrast to the young, elite performers who predominantly form the focus of the research literature (cf. Brock & Kleiber, 1994). Our life experiences up to the point of sustaining the knee injuries had included inter alia events such as surgical operations, bereavement, divorce, bombings and serious road traffic accidents. Having survived these episodes, they remained fixed in memory as instances of endurance in the face of difficulty. In addition, they constituted a narrative resource which could be drawn upon during periods of personal difficulty, for example during setbacks in the remedial programme. Thus we recounted to each other “do you remember when” stories, contrasting the current situation with previous difficult periods in our lives, in order to relativise the knee problems. Summounting the current situation was possible, we asserted, because we had successfully come through much more difficult times.

Secondly, the very act of distance running is intimately connected with endurance. Tolerating fatigue and pain constitute an integral part of the everyday routine of distance running. Commensurate with the bodily conditioning required by the activity, there occurs a conditioning of the mind, as it learns to endure. As Crossley (1995) has noted, the mind being inseparable from the body, they remain “reversible aspects of the same fabric” (p. 47). Hence the mind learns to cope with distance running, and a particular kind of stoicism develops as one comes to accept physical discomfort so acute that it required all our physical and mental endurance to continue and finish the race:

The weather has been foul, and combined with the dark, there’s not much incentive to get out of the door. We are walking around the park, but that seems little consolation. We know it’s the only way back, but it’s not running, and it’s difficult to keep warm! We are getting very jaded off with IT all and each other. I told a story last night about finishing a “bad” marathon in Rotherham where he was exhausted at 25 miles, and going so slowly that a woman pushing a pram overtook him around a roundabout! The point of the story was of course all about finishing. The time didn’t matter, where he came in the field didn’t matter; what mattered was that he kept going and finished. We have a laugh over the story, and plod on. (Jacquelyn)

In addition to the singularly biographical resources which we utilised in sustaining our rehabilitation programme, there were also narrative resources grounded in the specific subculture of distance running. If one “drops out” of races in distance running one becomes suspect both in relation to peers and, more importantly, to oneself. A scintilla of doubt begins to creep into the mind. There may well be a sound physiological rationale for abandoning a race, but in our experience of the subculture, such logic is anathema to runners’ perceptions of the qualities which characterise real distance runners, the prime one being the capacity to endure.

These biographical and subcultural narrative resources provided the bedrock for creating and sustaining the social psychology necessary for our individual and collective recovery. By enduring, we were not just completing our rehabilitation programme and moving towards a point where we could run freely once more, but also, and more fundamentally we were sustaining our running selves, our athletic identities. As indicated above, our somatic forms remained the same during the rehabilitative process owing to the particular kind of diet and exercise regime which we imposed on ourselves. Simultaneously, the self images we held, which included the tried and tested fortitude to endure, were sustained by our continued involvement in, and commitment to, the programme. We looked like runners to ourselves as audience, and we acted like runners by persevering and sustaining momentum, despite the regular bad patches, on the road to recovery.

Overlaying this subcultural narrative bedrock were the other forms of narrative described above (those of suffering, sacrifice, pilgrimage, blame, empowerment, compensation), which emerged periodically during the process of injury and recovery and which helped sustain progress in our recovery. The narrative journey can be charted as follows: the articulation of narratives of suffering and of sacrifice, to ourselves and to each other, obliged us to take stock and acknowledge that our attempts to run at that point were proving unproductive. This stark realisation initiated the subsequent pilgrimage to medical professionals in order to seek expert treatment. When this strategy failed, culminating in an extremely expensive (both financially and psychologically) fiasco, we constructed narratives of blame. These raged on until they
Jly provoked further positive movement resulting in development of our own remedial programme via strategies of empowerment. Throughout the years of the programme, we sustained ourselves, particularly during the time when we could do no running at all, with narratives of empowerment. Adler (1981) in some detail its constituent parts. These form a feedback system constituted of the following components: motivation to acquire a goal; a state of arousal which generates energy, leading to states of effort; and finally, elevated performance which raises the quality and/or quantity of achievement. Adler argues that a dynamic, internally circular process once these components are in place. In this paper, we analysed the interactional momentum of our experience from sporting injury; a process which entailed all elements which Adler conceptualised. These elements were evident within the particular narrative which have been portrayed.

Analysis of our autoethnographic data reveals a intertwining of narrative resources as we moved from point incurring the injuries to the stage where we again sustain an hour’s running. Some of these resources are idiosyncratic in terms of our body, whilst others are grounded in the subculture of runners. In contrast, some of the narratives to which we had recourse, such as those of suffering (Crossley, 1995), sacrifice (Miller, 1998), pilgrimage (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), blame (Green, 1997), compensation (Brandes, 1982), and empowerment (Seymour, 1998), exist within the wider surrounding culture. Presently, some of these narratives will be available to injured athletes, whilst others will not, for, as authors have noted, narratives are not equally shared within modern society (Shottet, 1993; Sparkes, 1998). The narratives we used allowed us to make sense of our experience and eventually to generate the momentum of our injury and recovery. What this allowed was a fully social intersubjectivity in relation to each other’s feelings about injury and recovery. What this allowed was a fully social intersubjectivity in relation to each other’s feelings about injury and recovery. Without the active, receptive presence of the other as audience, we suspect that our rehabilitation may have been significantly slower and more problematic. Having decided to sever our relationships with health care professionals whose advice and treatment had proved so inadequate, we in effect each assumed the role of sports therapist and counsellor, providing both emotional support and critical advice. We enlisted, empathised, sympathised, critiqued, berated, cajoled and motivated each other towards recovery. Our experience confirms the accuracy of the call by various researchers (Brock & Kleiber, 1994; Sparkes, 1998) for health care professionals to seek to gain an in-depth understanding of the illness narratives of injured athletes, in order to produce more effective strategies of remedial intervention.

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References


Running Into Injury Time: Distance Running and Temporality

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Despite a growing body of research on the sociology of time and, analogously, on the sociology of sport, to date there has been relatively little sports literature that takes time as the focus of the analysis. Given the centrality of time as a feature of most sports, this would seem a curious lacuna. The primary aims of this article are to contribute new perspectives on the subjective experience of sporting injury and to analyze some of the temporal dimensions of sporting “injury time” and subsequent rehabilitation. The article is based on data derived from a 2-year autoethnographic research project on 2 middle/long-distance runners, and concludes with some indicative comments regarding the need for sports physiotherapists and other health-care practitioners to take into account the subjective temporal dimension of injury and rehabilitative processes.

As indicated by a recent review of the research literature (Wiese-Bjornstal, Smith, Shaffer, & Morrey, 1998), there is a developing body of psychological and sociological literature on sport injury. From sociological and anthropological perspectives, researchers have examined various factors influencing response to injury including inter alia socialization processes (Curry, 1993; Curry & Strauss, 1994; Walk, 1997), the cultures surrounding specific sports (Frey, 1991; Howe, 2001; Krane, Greenleaf, & Snow, 1997; Shaffer, 1996), the influence of social networks (Nixon, 1992), gender (Messner, 1992; Young & White, 1995; Young, White, & McTeer, 1994) and identity (Sparkes, 1996). Strangely, however, relatively little of this material devotes much analytic attention directly to the phenomenon of time as a feature of the sporting injury process. One can find some mention in the psychological literature, in terms of mood measurement of athletes during injury time (Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998, p. 52), whereas other research charts...
individual athletes’ particular history of injury (Curry, 1993; Sparkes, 1998). In the sociological and anthropological literature on sports and physical activity, there are some interesting references to time in, for example, Sands’ (1995) ethnography of sprinters, Smith’s (2002) work on the temporal characteristics of the social world of running, Wulff’s (1998) anthropological work on ballet dancers, the notion that time in sport is not contiguous with “normal” time (Segrave, 2000), and the nature and role of time and space in sport in general (Eichberg, 1998; Shore, 1994). For the most part, however, as has been noted, “In a nutshell, analytical problems of space and time are more pretexts to sociological studies than really their object” (Métoudi, 1994, p. 370).

At first consideration, this appears somewhat curious given the centrality of, indeed often the fixation with, time in most sports, and what Eichberg (1998, p. 153) has termed “the hegemonic race-and-stop-watch model.” Phrases such as time out, extra time, injury time, sin-bin time, and so on, testify to the importance of certain conceptions of time within sport. Additionally, injury time, in its broader sense of the period during which sportswomen and sportsmen are unable to pursue their activity due to injury (or are unable to participate fully), has a significant negative impact on the individual, on a range of levels, including the economic, social, and psychological. This is in addition to any potential long-term health consequences resulting from the physical injury. Yet on reflection, this relative absence of research on sport time or, more specifically, on injury time, is perhaps less surprising for, as Adam (2000) has noted, there is still a propensity for social time to be unproblematised and treated by many researchers as a neutral medium within which events simply take place. As a consequence, there is much research still to be done on the subjective experience of time within sports and its social construction in general (Yakura, 2001).

As various writers have emphasized, the social construction of time and its management varies between individuals, groups, and organizations (Bluedorn & Denhart, 1988), being differentiated into a “multiplicity of ‘loci’ of sociotemporal orders” (Zerubavel, 1979, p. 106). There are some interesting empirical accounts of the social construction of work time in various occupational milieus and groups, ranging from Roy’s (1959–60) classic ethnographic study of factory work, over graduate accountants (Coffey, 1994), to information technology consultancy (Yakura, 2001) to name but a few. Given such variety, the experience, construction, and management of injury time by professional athletes is likely to differ markedly from that of occasional or recreational participants in sport. Further, whilst time obviously plays an important role in team sports such as soccer, its importance in events such as running, where the race-and-stop watch model (Eichberg, 1998) prevails, is absolutely crucial: time, individual performance, and identity are fundamentally linked in this context. As Smith (2002) has noted, “Runners learn to attend to time as finely tuned markers of running achievement, as careers with stages and turning points, and as cyclical calendars” (p. 343).

The aim of this article is to examine the sociotemporal dimension of sporting injury, focusing on the injury and rehabilitation experiences of 2 distance runners. For the purposes of this article, four categories of time will be portrayed and examined: linear, cyclical, inner, and biographical. It should be noted, however, that these categories are not, of course, exhaustive and do not actually constitute discrete categories, but for analytic purposes it is useful to portray them separately.
In addition to examining the role of time, the article seeks to contribute new perspectives to the developing literature on sporting injury, in three principal ways. First, much of the cited research on sports injury has used elite athletes as subjects or participants (Brock & Kleiber, 1994; Sparkes, 1996; Young & White, 1995). In contrast, the participants in this study, the female author and her male training partner, are of amateur “club” standard and therefore perhaps more typical of the mass of individuals who commit themselves to the pursuit of distance running and, consequently, have to contend with resultant injury time. Second, in contrast to much of the research, which focuses on athletes who are unable to attain their preinjured sporting status (Brock & Kleiber; Sparkes, 1996, 1998; Young & White, 1995), this study charts the successful temporal transition from the injured sporting body to the fully rehabilitated state. Third, a good deal of recent literature is based on the interviewing of injured athletes (Brock & Kleiber, 1994; Sparkes, 1998) or the recounting of the researchers’ own experiences of being injured at sport (Sparkes, 1996, 1999; Sparkes & Silvennoinen, 1999). Both of these latter approaches rely largely on the recollection of events after their occurrence. In contrast, this research is based on data collected in “real time”—that is, during the actual process of rehabilitation.

Biographical Baggage

In order to contextualize the events to be described, it is necessary to render visible some accountable knowledge (Stanley, 1992) in terms of the athletic biographies of the author and her training partner. Collectively, the participants have a background of distance running that ranges from 5-mile races to marathons, requiring considerable self-instigated and self-imposed discipline (Foucault, 1979) and a time commitment of training 6 or 7 days a week, on occasion twice daily, for 17 years and 36 years, respectively. Moreover, we have been training together on a regular basis for the past 16 years. Now categorized as “veteran” runners, our involvement in the activity mirrors Stebbins’ (1982) concept of serious leisure, which requires considerable personal effort, knowledge, and training, but also produces benefits in terms of physiology and social psychology, as we identify with being distance runners, and interact with others who display a similar level of commitment to the activity (Robbins & Joseph, 1980).

At the time of the specific, traumatic injuries central to this account, both participants were training 6 days a week, for at least an hour a day, in the evening after work. On different days during the same windswept November week, we both suffered knee injuries, occasioned primarily by having to train in the winter dark on a local park strewn with branches and other assorted debris following several days of high winds. On the Tuesday, I stumbled into a branch, twisting my right knee forcibly, and stubbornly half ran, half limped through the remaining mileage. On the Friday, my partner slipped badly on a mud patch, wrenching his left knee, and was forced to shuffle his way tentatively home, swearing profusely. On that evening, we both sat in a state of shock, contemplating our injured knees, packed with ice, telling ourselves more in hope than prescience: “It will be all right”. We instructed each other firmly to “do the right thing,” “be sensible”; so we lowered the intensity of the training, consumed carefully selected anti-inflammatory tablets, and for the next month staggered and winced our way through the usual training mileage. For us that reduction in training constituted
being “sensible.” We still needed to “put in the miles” in order to feel better after the stresses of the working day, to sustain the fitness levels and above all else because this is what we did as athletes.

A few days following the onset of the injuries, it became apparent that they did not constitute the usual minor niggles that plague the habitual runner. At that point we arrived at a collective decision systematically to document our responses to these injuries, our principal motive being to achieve something positive from a highly negative experience. In this sense, it was one of those unhappy “accidents of current biography” that provided access, both physical and psychological, to the research setting (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 11) and stimulated the joint study. Had only one of us encountered traumatic injury at that point, it is debatable whether we would have decided to undertake the research.

The gender dimensions of the injury experience have been documented in relation to various sporting activities, mainly at elite level (see, e.g., Charlesworth & Young, 2003; Young & White, 1995; Young et al., 1994). Although there were undoubtedly differences in our experiences of, and responses to, the occurrence of the knee injuries and the subsequent rehabilitation process, careful analysis of the data did not suggest that gender was a significant variable in this case. The reasons for this are interesting to unravel. It has been suggested that female athletes adopt a so-called masculinist model of sports participation which valorizes a “no pain, no gain” approach similar to those of their male counterparts (Charlesworth & Young, 2003). Although running is not usually constructed as a high-injury or physically dangerous sport, pain and injury are nevertheless routine, endemic, and normalized features within the distance-running subculture. As Young and White (1995, p. 51) found in their research on elite female athletes, if there is a difference between the way in which female and male athletes appear to understand pain and injury, it is only a matter of degree.

For both women and men, the very act of distance running is intimately connected with endurance. Tolerating fatigue and pain constitute an integral part of the everyday routine of distance running. Training can indeed be onerous “work” (Smith, 2002, p. 358); commensurate with the bodily conditioning required by the activity, there occurs a conditioning of the mind, as it learns to endure. As Crossley (1995, p. 47) has noted, the mind being inseparable from the body, they remain “reversible aspects of the same fabric”; hence, a particular kind of stoicism develops as one comes to accept physical suffering and injury. Our running selves (in terms of body and mind) were therefore habituated to enduring and persevering, and our self-images, including gendered self-images, reflected this. In this context, in common with Granskog (2003, p. 48), my definition of self has three critical components, in my own case: being a woman, a distance runner, and a feminist sociologist. For my part, combining the former two components has to-date proved empowering rather than problematic, and stoicism and endurance are certainly not constructed by most female runners of my acquaintance as “masculinist” qualities.

**Documenting the Data**

The approach adopted in this article is autoethnographic (Okley & Callaway, 1992; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Sparkes, 2000). As the literature indicates, however, the term *autoethnography* has very different usages for those who employ it. Whilst some researchers' primary concern is the autobiographical (Deck, 1990),
involving the portrayal of an individual life, in contrast, for other autoethnographers the emphasis is essentially ethnographic (Strathern, 1987). The narratives of autoethnographers are of particular ethnographic interest, being revelatory about the writer's membership of social groups and categories, and immersion in particular social processes. In relation to this particular project, the ethnographic process involved combining field notes with "head notes" (Sanjek, 1990). The self and the ethnographic field were symbiotic and, in effect, this combination constitutes the pivot of the analysis (Coffey, 1999). The individual and collective subjectivities of the researchers are integral parts of the ethnographic field, and the link between the two is forged by the writing. The use of the present tense, first person, and first person plural is therefore designed to convey an immediacy, together with the personal nature of the account (Sparkes, 2000). As Greenhalgh (2001, p. 55) has noted, there is a degree of risk involved in this genre of "vulnerable writing," particularly when it focuses on the emotion and pain experienced by the writer. Writing in such a personal and emotional style leaves the writer vulnerable to charges of being "irrational, particularistic, private, and subjective, rather than reasonable, universal, public, and objective" (Greenhalgh, p. 55). However, as Denison and Rinehart (2000) have recently advocated, there is a need to develop innovative and more evocative ways of writing sociological accounts that depict sporting experience. A primary aim of the present research project was to construct an account that was personal, evocative, and highly reflexive but also aimed at giving analytical purchase to the autobiographical so as adequately and evocatively to portray the ethnographic field.

The decision to record our engagement with the knee injuries presented no particular difficulty in terms of actual documentation, because keeping training logs is a common practice among athletes. Usually these logs document the kind of training in place at any particular time, and include details of distances, timings, terrain type, weather conditions, and so on. The discipline of recording daily training was therefore already well established, but instead of training logs we constructed injury-rehabilitation logs to record individual and collective engagement with the injured state, and the subsequent attempts to regain sufficient fitness to run again.

Each participant constructed a personal log, and a third collective log synthesized the salient, emergent themes, together with any differences in our individual adaptation to, and management of, the injured state. The recording of our experiences was done via notebooks and micro-tape recorders, which accompanied us during the working day and also during all attempts at rehabilitation. Tape recordings were transcribed as soon as practicable afterwards (usually in lunch hours and at weekends). Creating the joint log, within which analytical themes and concepts were generated, was undertaken via a process somewhat akin to the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), although to a less formalized degree. So, for example, if one participant had documented a particular narrative theme, we would search the other's log for a similar theme. We would then interrogate each other as to the precise composition of that theme, and its boundaries and connections to other themes previously generated. Thematic or conceptual differences between the accounts were identified and, wherever possible and desirable, reconciled in terms of definition. Where no analytical reconciliation proved achievable, the difference was accepted and recorded as such. Subsequently, we explored
the reasons for the divergence and the impact, if any, on the process of injury management. Both participants sought to act as the “primary recipient” (Ochs & Capps, 1996) of the other’s data, providing regular feedback and critique. The current article is a product of this particular method, and the data collected over a 2-year period are extracted from our individual and joint field notes. In both the field notes and certain sections of the text, attempts have been made to write in a personal style intended to evoke the climate of emotion that pervaded at the time. Quotations from field notes are given verbatim, in order better to convey the immediacy of the feelings and mood. In the following account, as noted, four temporal dimensions of the injury and rehabilitation process are portrayed separately for analytical purposes although, in practice, they overlap and interrelate. The first of these temporal forms, linear time, will now be considered.

**Linear Time**

The years 1997–1999 brought bad times indeed: out of running, out of racing, struggling to return to previous fitness levels. The problem was that time did not of course stop; it ran on, ran inexorably away . . . minutes, days, months, years, sometimes measured down to every parasecond. Time seemed ingrained in us: the relentless tick of clock, calendar, or linear time, time based on standardized, invariable units (Adam, 1990, p. 117), measuring our loss, in that particular way which has become pervasive, near hegemonic, in industrialized societies since the industrial revolution (Thompson, 1967; Thrift, 1990; Yakura, 2001; Zerubavel, 1981). Time marked us, and we marked ourselves with its passage. It had etched itself on us, year after year, as our faces became progressively more gaunt, and our bodies lean as a result of the habitual body discipline practices (Foucault, 1979) demanded by middle- and long-distance running. We gauged our progress by time and optimistically, uncritically, had arranged our future by it, assuming that training in a certain manner for a certain period of time would result in a certain level of performance for 10K, for 10 miles, for the marathon. In that manner familiar to runners, we were our times (the times achieved in races over various distances), we located and identified ourselves and others by such times (Sands, 1995; Smith, 2002), and those times indicated, for example, our level of fitness, they were inscribed on our biographies, recited to ourselves and to other runners who invariably ask of each other: “What have you done for . . . ?”—that is, what is your best performance over a particular distance.

Unfortunately, during the injury period, we were forced to endure the kind of “time out” we never envisaged; we were deep into injury time and wanted desperately to return to normal running time. Running time had always been hard won for both of us, determinedly ring-fenced against competing occupational, familial, and domestic demands and responsibilities. Sixty minutes had become the daily minimum training time, constrained primarily by the demands of full-time work; more than 60 min was a bonus, less was often a source of intense frustration and discontent. During the injury time, we were intent on reclaiming that precious 60-min allocation, and a decision reached early on in the process was that normal training time would be transformed into rehabilitation time. Over a 2-year period, therefore, the nature of “training” graduated from slow walking, via jogging, and then running short sections interspersed with walking, eventually to running at normal pace, continuously, for lengthier time spans.
Linear time became the main marker of progress toward athletic fitness but, unfortunately, it also became the marker of periodic failure as the knees rebelled against the progressive increase of effort, and rehabilitative efforts consequently had to be scaled down. Linear time and biography were then inextricably linked. When rehabilitative progress was achieved, many of the temporal markers used to chart that progress were intimately connected to our running pasts. Thus, when we managed 1 full minute of constant jogging, that time period had significant resonance for my partner because track quarters had been covered in that time decades before. Likewise, 7 min of continuous running was a somewhat poignant reminder of an early-career 10K road race, run at 7 min per mile. The celebrated landmark of 60 min of running not only announced our return from injury, but also held significance because we had always used that amount of time as a marker of aerobic capacity: The “Big 60” represented a base of distance running training, off which different kinds of racing could be undertaken. Subjectively, the return to a 60-min running session indicated a resurrection of the status of “real runner.” Each of these positive temporal markers connected intimately with our biographies, not surprisingly perhaps, given the identity salience (Stryker, 1987) of distance running in our lives. Counterposed against these positive indicators, however, were the inevitable setbacks in the rehabilitative program, when the links between the time(s) we had failed to achieve and the running past were particularly negative. For example,

We are on the park trying to jog 30-second intervals, with a minute’s walk between each one, for a total of five minutes. . . . It’s cold and wet and we hold each other’s coat as each of us does a session. We are on the flattest bit of the park, so we minimize holes and divots; we want the ground as smooth as possible to reduce stress on the knees. We trot up and down the white lines marked out for the primary (elementary) school sports day, egg and spoon races etc. What we are doing is farcically slow, but despite this our knees become painful and we quit the session at 5. Coats back on, with the clouds as low as our mood. I look at the markings and comment that I ran better times on this kind of course when I was 8 or 9 than I have today. (Individual Log 1)

Linear time consequently marked the passage of injury time generally and was used to measure and make sense of our progress, and also periodic failure. These cycles of progress and regression generated another kind of time: cyclical time.

### Cyclical Time

This particular conceptual approach developed out of the groundbreaking and influential work on social time of Sorokin and Merton (1937), which theorizes the relationship between the meaning of an event and its temporal setting, noting that “systems of time reckoning reflect the social activities of the group” (p. 620). In industrial societies in particular, it is posited that there exists a plurality of social times linked to particular groups and social classes (Gurvitch, 1964). From this perspective, time is experienced within social events, themselves subject to definition by social and organizational actors, hence their qualitative nature. As a consequence, time does not exist outside events (Clark, 1985). There is much imprecision
to these qualitative temporal units; they resist quantification and tend to be highly local. So it becomes possible to speak of a plurality of times that are relative to particular members, located within particular groups, doing particular activities. The cyclical form of these events lies in their periodic recurrence, which may range over minute-long cycles—for example, in engineering shops or on production lines (Cavendish, 1982; Roy, 1959–60), the perimonthly cycle of menstruation, to the longer term- or semester-based cycles manifest within higher education institutions (Lawrence, 1994). Just as the wider society pulsates to its own general cultural rhythm, it is argued (see, e.g., Durkheim, 1976; Mauss, 1966), organizations, occupational groups, sporting and leisure groups, and so on, move to the rhythm of their particular, recurrent event times (Clark, 1985). The fundamentally cyclical structure of the temporal organization of the running world has been described by Smith (2002, p. 347). Two principal features of this temporal structure, which he highlights, are the cyclical racing pattern, and also the planned and scheduled character of training, whether athletes are training for competition or for general fitness.

In terms of the cyclical dimension of our rehabilitative journey, with hindsight, it is interesting to note the phrases and metaphors used to portray this journey. The field notes are replete with phrases such as the road back, the track back, the way back, and so on. These were employed in a manner seemingly presupposing a straightforward, progressive journey: we would simply set out on the path, seek and receive the appropriate medical treatment, follow the remedial program faithfully ... and at the end of the rehabilitation program would be fully recovered from the knee problems. Right from the journey’s start, however, there was to be no smooth, linear progression. Although help was indeed sought from various UK health-care providers, including a general practitioner specializing in sports injuries, physiotherapists at a local sports injury clinic, an independent sports physiotherapist, an osteopath, and a consultant surgeon at a national center of excellence for knee injuries, we were obliged to abandon the medical pathway on the grounds of its inadequacy and prohibitive expense. The medical practitioners had all profffered different diagnoses, ranging from chondromalacia patellae, prepatellar bursitis, plica, osteoarthritis, to injuries of the tibial tubercle, the menisci, or the medial ligament, respectively. We each received a 10-week course of physiotherapy treatment, employing a range of modalities—in my case, mainly ultrasound and diathermy, intensive remedial exercises designed to strengthen primarily the vastus medialis, and the application of support taping. On completion of the course of treatment, however, there was no discernible improvement in the pain level or degree of mobility for either of us. Subsequently, we underwent expensive magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanning at a national center of excellence but were informed that the scans were “inconclusive” and that investigative knee operations would be required. (For further details, see Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2001.) Unable and unwilling to submit to expensive operations, in an act of individual and collective empowerment (Seymour, 1998), we consequently decided to take charge of our own athletic destinies.

After extensive reviews of the sports injury and self-help literature, both published (e.g., Grisogono, 1988, 1989) and Web-based, informal advice from other athletes, and collective experience of dealing with a range of previous running injuries over the years, we carefully devised our own remedial programs. These were based on progressive loading of the knee joint and very gradual increases in intensity and length of running duration, combined with daily strength-
ening exercises. The reality of rehabilitation, however, rarely conforms to the neat, chronological progression characteristic of some of the sports literature, as the joint log testifies:

We are into it, struggling with it, every time we tried to drive forward it caught us, lassoed us, snared us, hooked us back into its injurious, painful jaws, and every time we failed to see it coming. The ritual process of dressing up warmly, even when the weather is mild: three layers over our knees, walking down to the park, and then trying to push those training flats a bit further out of the injury zone. Two weeks on: 5 minutes jogging, so let's try 8 now. Chancing it, risking it. A week on 8 and we are collectively smiling, humming, and then—it's ambush time! J's left knee swells up suddenly and returns to that old familiar throbbing rhythm. Great surges of vitriolic swear words cascade downwards to the knee, fuelled by disappointment, rage, impotency. (Joint Log)

The rehabilitative process involved a familiar sequence of allowing the injuries to heal to a point where they could tolerate a certain level and duration of physical activity, then maintaining this for a set period before the threshold was raised to the next level. However, perhaps predictably, this linear pattern was frequently disrupted during the 2 years by regular failures of the knee, which resulted in regression, sometimes substantial regression. This cyclical pattern is akin to what Clark (1985) has termed "event time". In contrast to clock-based time, conceptualized as linear and quantifiable, event time is essentially qualitative and cyclical in nature.

The field notes graphically illustrated the presence of an event-based cycle within the rehabilitative process. Although not as regular or predictable as, for instance, those within certain occupational milieux, the cycle occurred with sometimes dispiriting frequency, was rarely anticipated, at least initially, and had a highly capricious nature; the precise causal pattern of physical breakdown could rarely be accurately ascertained. Over the 2 years of rehabilitation, we found ourselves caught repeatedly in this cycle, although fortunately the time intervals between advance and retreat progressively became longer as the injuries slowly healed.

The period of rehabilitation was structured by the two forms of time portrayed above. These were intimately connected and interrelated: linear time provided the overall temporal framework but, within that overarching framework, event-based time operated, structuring the cycle of rehabilitation, which consisted of walking, jogging, running, and specific remedial exercises. As is indicated by the field notes, a third kind of temporality emerged as salient: inner time, or durée, "the present moment of the lived experience" (Schutz, 1932, pp. 45–52).

**Inner Time**

Melucci (1996, p. 18) has noted how inner time is linked to the individual's emotions, sensations, and perceptions. For, as Crossley (2001) has observed, when adopting a non-Cartesian position: "Human beings are neither mindful minds nor, strictly speaking, bodies, in this view, but rather mindful and embodied social agents" (p. 3). Interrogation of the data revealed that, as rehabilitative activity progressed, embodied time was experienced in two analytically distinct ways relating to the speed at which time appeared to pass and to a corporeal sense of timing.
Slowing, Speeding, and Steady Time

First, perceptions of time and the consequences of these will be examined for, as Bergson (1910, pp. 36–37) long ago noted, the experience of time cannot be divorced from its effects. The field notes made clear that different experiences and perceptions of time emerged over the 2-year period of injury and rehabilitation. For instance, during the acute phase of injury, it became apparent that time seemed to elongate, to extend:

My left knee is screaming for attention, as if it’s all of me. Cradling it in my hands as I sit on the ground, the vicious pain radiates upwards causing the quad muscles to go into spasm. All I can think of is a sort of mantra, which I recite repeatedly: “Hell, what have I done, what have I done?” over and over. I seem to be there for an eternity, on the ground holding my knee up away from the slippery mud patch that has caused such havoc. (Individual Log 1)

At the initial point of injury, each of us came to a juddering halt, in a state of shock, the pain stabbing the knee, jangling through the body, standing then sitting in fear, drenched with anxiety, asking the same question over and over: “Will I be able to run again?” Reading the accounts, the slowing of time at this phase emerges as a salient feature; we felt trapped in the negative event for an inordinate length of time. After the initial onset of injury, this temporal expansion recurred at various points in the recovery process when we seemed in danger of regression. Indeed, a degree of anxiety was always experienced whenever the training intensity was increased, however gradually and carefully.

In making rehabilitative progress, we managed to reestablish some kind of order in our athletic lives. For long periods, however, that order was extremely fragile. As Kleinman (1988) has noted: “Change, caprice and chaos, experienced in the body, challenge what order we are led to believe—need to believe—exists” (p. 55). This brittle order was particularly problematic because periodically, and apparently randomly, the knees would refuse to tolerate the increased duration of training. Acute pain would ensue, and we would find ourselves flung back down what we termed the “time tube,” overwhelmed again by trepidation and fear that the reactivated pain was not after all mere temporary soreness but constituted a major breakdown of mechanical function, threatening recovery in toto. The time-tube phenomenon therefore rekindled the same emotional deluge and oscillations (Rosenblum, 1990) as originally experienced at the point of injury. During these periods, time slowed and extended, and the moments of crisis seemed to drag on endlessly. The following example of temporal extension occurred in the second month of the injury process, at a point when we were still receiving woefully inadequate medical treatment:

Went into the physio’s feeling positive and cheerful. Unfortunately, she, in her wisdom, decided to “test” my progress by making me do a squat. Heaven only knows, why did I listen to her?? I know better than to do that. Should have followed my own feelings. . . . Didn’t even attain the full squat position when I felt the knee suddenly give way, snap, break, grind—whatever. Horrible, shooting, stabbing, crunching, gritty pain. Shocked in to silence. I look around for something with which to pull myself up and out of the pain. I’m stuck for what seems forever. An age passes before J comes across the room to help me up. (Individual Log 2)
In between these points of minor crisis, time normalized in the sense that its passage was not perceived to be excessively swift or slow and therefore roughly synchronized with linear or clock time. At this point in the recovery process, however, we felt angry, frustrated, and unfit, with the condition of our knees ranging over a spectrum of sensations from sore or aching, through stiff and grating, to intense pain on occasion. As we advanced, very slowly the worst of the symptoms diminished. Inevitably, during the 2-year period, there were setback points when the knees rebelled, suddenly returning to a state of instability, effusion, and stabbing pain. At these junctures, the time-warp phenomenon recurred, until the pain and the emotion subsided. Subsequently, the increasingly familiar cyclical process occurred as we managed to surmount the fear and disappointment of enforced regression in the remedial program, and time once again normalized.

In the final quarter of the 2-year recovery period, as the specter of breakdown receded, although fear was always lurking, it gradually became more distant with the passage of time, and particularly in the absence of any major episode of enforced time-tube travel. During the last couple of months, aerobic fitness developed to a state correlated in memory with serious running and ultimately potential racing. During this period, there were rare, but happy, instances when some sections of the normal rehabilitative run would recede from the forefront of consciousness. This happened both individually and, on one occasion, collectively. In these instances, time seemed somehow to close in on itself. This temporal constriction (Leder, 1990) was intimately connected with enjoying a training run of great ease, in the case of the extract below, during a much-needed week’s holiday:

This morning started on the sea front, ran briefly down the Avenue de la Mer, and took a left into the pinewoods. It was cool and we were going out and back for 45 minutes. The going was great, flat, soft and with masses of fallen pine-needle cushioning. Very quiet with nobody around, just the sound of your own breathing. Could tell we were going well straight off. Most interesting thing about the session was I had no conscious recollection of a couple of long sections of the sentier [footpath] either during or after the event! One section has a surface which is particularly smooth and we’d previously marked it as a place ideal for speed-work. The other section that ‘went missing’ was where a single house is directly adjacent to the route and we always remarked on its typically French bright blue window shutters. No recollection of passing through either of those sections. (Individual Training Log 1)

Following such runs we experienced intense pleasure, primarily because decades of distance running experience indicated that, only when the running was going really well, when we were “on top of things,” did such temporal shifts occur. These running sessions were supremely effortless and just seemed to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

During the recovery process, our experiences and perceptions of time spanned the various dimensions of extending, contracting, and normal time (or slowing, speeding, and steady time). These conceptions of time appear to approximate the theoretical formulation of Flaherty (1999), who has used the terms protracted duration, temporal compression, and synchronicity, respectively, to illustrate the above
continuum of temporal perception. Synchronicity applies to perceptions of time that equate roughly with the standard temporal units underpinning much of routine social interaction. Usefully, Flaherty (pp. 43-83) also outlines a number of factors that, according to his theory, are capable of producing protracted duration. The two most apposite to our account of injury and rehabilitation would be: “suffering and intense emotions” and, to a modest extent, “violence and danger.” Whilst in no way wishing to exaggerate the degree of suffering or danger in relation to the knee injuries, the experience was initially intensely painful, with recurrences of a similar level of pain on subsequent occasions. The risk of being unable to run again was certainly experienced as dangerous, in relation to both physical and psychological well-being.

In the throes of these negative experiences, we became totally absorbed with the knees and the threat to their functioning; we were, in Goffman’s (1972, p. 50 et seq.) terms, “flooded out” with intense emotions: alarm, anxiety, fear, dread, panic, to name but a few. In conjunction with focused concentration, the storm of emotions served perceptually to elongate time. In contrast, mirroring Flaherty’s concept of temporal compression, time occasionally moved at high velocity. During the last few months of remedial work, the running incrementally became smoother, easier, and even enjoyable to the extent that, on occasion, we would forget ourselves and just flow. In our own terminology, we would “go on automatic”. This state of being has been noted amongst groups as diverse as rock climbers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, pp. 43, 86) and commercial cooks (Fine, 1990, p. 109) in relation to tasks that, whilst challenging, are well within the required levels of skill or ability. Once our levels of running skill (aerobic fitness, endurance, muscular power, coordination, etc.) had reached the point where we could run with relative ease, occasionally the running time flew.

Timing the Running Body

Another way in which the embodied experience of time affected the injury and recovery process centered on the loss and subsequent regaining of a particular kind of timing. This Goodridge (1999) defines as “the act of determining or regulating the order of occurrence of an action or event, to achieve desired results” (p. 44). As she also notes (Goodridge, p. 45), timing is essential for skilled performance in social life generally but is particularly crucial to sporting success (cf. Lowe, 1977, p. 177). Running demands a particular kind of embodied timing, as a component of the runner’s time habitus (Métopué, 1994, p. 371), and the performance of distance running and racing requires a specific variant of this. Our acute sense of timing had been fractured by protracted injury time. For 10 months, we had been unable even to jog at a slow pace and, in that time, the grounded, embodied understanding of how to run had been lost.

For nonrunners, this loss or amnesia regarding how to run may seem a bizarre conceptualization, for running is socially constructed as a natural activity for most “able-bodied” people. However, in common with many such activities, running actually requires a complex series of actions, accomplished via a continuous rhythmical cycle. In a general sense, this rhythm constitutes the pattern of action, while simultaneously it also structures and creates its particular shape or order of movement. Timing involves the coordinated placing of various body parts in a certain direction, at a particular tempo, for a particular duration. The principal
movers are clearly the legs, operating at a particular pace or cadence which, coor-
dinated with the respiratory system, *inter alia*, produce forward movement. This
simultaneously requires continual adjustment of footfall, as the demands of ter-
rain are negotiated, and this is facilitated by a particular, learned way of *seeing* the
terrain (see Goodwin, 1995). This in turn permits the precise bodily adjustments
necessary for the chosen footfall and cadence. Such intricacies of timing had,
however, been rendered highly problematic for us, as revealed in the following
extract:

We have started to run, which, whilst anxiety provoking is also energizing
because we are on the way back. Initially tried some tiny 10-metre trots with
rests in between, but to our consternation are like babies! Like drunks we
stagger all over the place. No coordination, legs out of kilter with arms,
unused to the effort so breathing is ragged, legs do not seem to fit with the
torso, and head feels wobbly and heavy. Even these baby trots tire us, com-
pounding the problem. So much for our veteran runner status, this is a real-
ity-shock because we now truly know we are absolute beginners once again.
(Individual Log 1)

In the ensuing 14 months, we falteringly and haltingly relearned how to
distance run. This required teaching ourselves how to coordinate the body again,
how to fuse cognitive and physiological processes in order to construct some-
thing approximating a running rhythm. As fitness and confidence in the strength
of the knees slowly increased, the sense of athletic timing gradually returned.
Before the onset of injuries, the sense of timing had been highly developed and
attuned. Both of us could, with a fair degree of accuracy, ascertain the actual pace
of our running via a range of bodily indicators, such as respiratory rate, but also
more nebulous corporeal sensations. Indeed, previously, this timing had been
routinely articulated during training runs. Such timing constituted part of our
*body habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990), habitual, embodied practices. Body habitus,
Harvey and Sparks (1991) concisely summarize as “a system of implicit schemes
(dispositions, appreciations) that govern one’s relation to one’s own body” (p. 173).
One of these schema, our sense of timing, had been developed and refined by
thousands of miles of running practice, of *bodily labor* (Wacquant, 1995, p. 67).
As a result of prolonged injury time, this embodied timing had been forgotten.
We had lost what Bourdieu (1998, p. 80) might have termed our “feel for the
game” that previously had allowed us to run freely and to adopt the correct strat-
egies when training and racing. Happily, eventually this sense of corporeal timing
began to return towards the end of the 2 years of rehabilitation, as we relearned
to associate and categorize various levels of bodily effort according to linear
time:

Going well today, and for the first time I acted like a real runner again. I
suddenly said to J: “This feels like 7s” [7 min per mile], and he nodded
agreement. A little further on in the session I realized what I had done and
the import in terms of our return to the kind of runners we had been. We had
not done that kind of automatic evaluation of pace for a very long time.
Once finished, I checked on the watch and it was indeed approx the pace I
had felt intuitively. That’s a big marker for us—on the way back! (Indi-
vidual Log 2)
Leder (1990, pp. 30-32) has perceptively depicted the phenomenological processes that make up the learning of corporeal skills, the combination of specific movement and cognition, which are termed incorporation. Via the rehabilitative program, we achieved the reincorporation of our running skills. As Leder notes, "Incorporation thus has a temporal significance. The body masters a novel skill by incorporating its own corporeal history of hours and days spent in practice" (p. 32). In our case, it was not a novel skill, but an existing one that had been lost, temporarily at least.

Biographical Time

The linear, cyclical, and inner temporal forms so far examined were intimately connected to another temporal dimension, that of biographical time. Our individual and collective biographies were inscribed with running time, not only in terms of the significant portions of our lives devoted to training and racing but also because past biographical time was employed as a basis on which to construct the present and from which we aspired to move to a healthy running future.

This was partially accomplished via the formulation of narrative which, Richardson (1995) contends, "provides powerful access to this uniquely human experience of time" (p. 208). We selected and retrieved stories from the running past and articulated these to ourselves reflexively and also to each other, for these narratives constituted interactional achievements, with each person acting as coteller for the other (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 31). As indicated above, many of these stories related to previous running successes and accomplishments. In reliving these moments during difficult times, they provided positive affirmation when morale was low. So, for example, we recalled marathons raced in the torpid heat of the summer; rain-drenched training runs on the storm-blasted, bleak beauty of the northern English fells and moors; the bitter, lactic-acid aftermath of exhausting hill repetitions. These tales of our "gloried" athletic selves (Adler & Adler, 1989), tales of fortitude, commitment, and above all endurance, constituted the narrative work used to bolster fragile identities in the nadir of non-running time. Those very qualities, we assured ourselves, would propel us into a healthy running future.

Narratives of the more immediate, injured past also provided indicators of progress when, for example, contrasting the state of the injuries 3 months earlier at a point when climbing stairs was nigh on impossible, with the happier circumstances of being able to walk along a ridge of small hills. Narratives of the past were, however, sometimes problematic and rather poignant, particularly when juxtaposed with current faltering attempts to rehabilitate the knees. Failure to make even small advances often made woeful comparisons with earlier and more positive running and racing endeavors. More positively, however, we began to construct narratives which stressed that, when in rehabilitative mode, "small is big," in the sense that each tiny incremental step forward was of relative significance and should be viewed as a positive step on the path to eventual recovery. "Small is big" consequently became a routine, ritual utterance, a stock reminder at the beginning of each remedial session, and constituted a device that helped us concentrate on the "now," the immediate lived present.
Further reinforcement of the need to focus on the remedial present arose from the periodic failures to progress, when training levels consequently had to be reduced. In the early days of rehabilitation, often we would optimistically map out the future: 2 weeks at 5 min of trotting, and then 10 min for 3 weeks—functional progression. By the summer, we estimated, we would be pulling on the racing shorts and handling 10K without problem. Regrettably, the future periodically failed us; it failed to materialize in the way we had projected, only serving to intensify feelings of disappointment and rage. Subsequently, suitably chastened, we decided to narrow our horizons to something less adventurous. We refused to adopt the long-term perspective or even the medium-term. The future consequently became compressed to a week’s timeframe; we “zeroed in” on the week’s end—that was the far horizon. The objective was to get to Saturday intact, with the knees able to tolerate the target training time. Decisions in terms of training load were made in the here and now of each session, with the objective of arriving safely at day’s end; and then maybe . . . the week’s end.

The way in which future time was conceptualized also underwent a marked shift in perspective that was fundamental to our relationship with the running present and past. Biographically we were inscribed with our previous competitive times, our running identities were anchored in them, and they were markers of considerable significance. As the 2 years came to a close, the meaning of those times began to diminish in importance to us. The knee injuries had seriously threatened our capacity to run in toto. Consequently, it was no longer a question of racing well or badly, of fast or slow training pace—it was a question of being able to run at all. The period of injury had resulted in a drastic reconfiguration of the meaning of running for both of us, as demonstrated by a field note:

A conversation that has cropped up a lot this week is about what running means for us now. I suspect we are having this kind of talk because we have just got back to where we were in running time [1 hr]. We both agree the most important thing about running now is just daily doing it, not whether we are doing it well or badly, not for preparing to race, not the racing, not the improved performances, but just doing it. Getting out there, putting the time in. All the rest is secondary now. If those things happen, they happen. Being without it for such a long time, when you get it back, the absence has sort of impressed the running essence on you. (Individual Log 1)

This shift in meaning subsequently changed perceptions of future running time. In a directly experiential way, we were well aware that serious injury really might finally put an end to running time. Being veteran runners, the 2 years’ absence made us acutely aware that the amount of running time left to us was inexorably diminishing. The combination of these factors resulted in serious attempts to safeguard future running time by adopting various strategies aimed at injury avoidance. Revised training routines were drafted and are still operational today, geared to minimizing road and pavement running in favor of softer surfaces, in order to reduce impact and stress on the knee structures. In general, anything that places undue stress on the knees is avoided as far as practicable, including hill work and a whole gamut of strengthening exercises involving squats. Training schedules have had to be altered permanently. We invest in ludicrously expensive waterproof running gear to keep the knees as dry as possible in the rain. Via these practices,
we fervently hope to be in for the "long run"—not in terms of miles, nor of speed, but in terms of years and, hopefully, decades.

**Conclusion**

As Schutz and Luckmann (1973) indicate:

The structure of life-worldly time is built up where the subjective time of the stream of consciousness (of inner duration) intersects with the rhythm of the body as "biological time" in general, and with the seasons as world time in general, or as calendar or "social time." (p. 47)

This article has sought to portray something of the temporal complexities experienced by 2 injured distance runners over a 2-year period of injury and rehabilitation. First, linear or clock time provided the overarching temporal framework and the means by which failure or progress were gauged in terms of recovery to running fitness. Second, and simultaneously, cyclical or "event time" ordered the transitional period from injury toward recovery, which took the form of an oft-repeated cycle of progress and regression. Another form of temporality, embodied inner time, structured our perceptions and subjective experience of time. In addition, biographical time inexorably ticked away throughout the whole injury and remedial process, but also influenced the experiencing of it, as our athletic pasts and projected futures were constructed and contrasted with the emergent present (Luhmann, 1982; Mead, 1959). These forms of time are not of course comprehensive and, in portraying the various dimensions described above, one crucial temporal facet is perhaps missing: biological (Adam, 1990, p. 70), "knee time". For the knees had their own healing time, linked inevitably to the other forms of time analyzed above. Despite best efforts, we never fully understood the knees' own temporal timeframe and peculiar, capricious rhythms of healing and breakdown.

The different temporal dimensions did not, of course, operate in isolation but were interrelated (Adam, 1990, p. 45), interlocking, and mutually influencing. Clock time, for example, pervaded cyclical time, as it was used to measure remedial success or failure. Clock time also permeated biographical time, as the times of past performances (whether in training or racing) were used to construct the present and the projected future of rehabilitation and running. In a cognate fashion, the relearning of embodied timing within inner time was inextricably linked to both clock time and biographical time.

It is hoped that the above account gives some indication of the temporal complexity of athletic "injury time". Given the relatively limited literature, and the apparent underuse of anthropological and sociological research literature on time in relation to sport, there would appear to be fertile grounds for charting and analyzing the temporal dimensions of sporting activity in general and, more specifically, their impact on athletic identity construction and maintenance. In addition, as was clear from the autoethnographic research undertaken, our experience of the various temporal forms heavily influenced our responses to injury time and our motivation and morale during the rehabilitative process. The importance of the temporal, in the form of a phased, rehabilitative program, is acknowledged by many physiotherapists and other health practitioners and is well documented (see, e.g., Anderson & Hall, 1995; Crust, 2003; Heil, 1993; Taylor & Taylor, 1997), but
further in-depth research is undoubtedly required in order to unveil in greater detail the impact and consequences of the subjective temporal dimension of sports, and also sports injury and the recovery process. The role and importance of the subjective experience of time should not be overlooked by physiotherapists, sports psychologists, counselors, and other health-care professionals involved in the rehabilitation of injured athletes and sportspeople in general.

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