

The Identity of High-Achieving IT Professionals at Work:
A Narrative Analysis

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of another university or other institution of learning”

Adam Peter Roy Taylor.

Publications

This investigation has yielded the following publications;

- Taylor, A. P. R. (2004). "The Construction of 'Alpha-Geek' Identity in the Technology Commercialisation Process" Paper presented at the Pacific-Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS) Doctoral Consortium, Shanghai, China, 8-11 July, 2004.
- Taylor, A. P. R. (2007). "Programming for the Internet and experiential learning: A new approach incorporating a constructed world" *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*. Volume 17, Number 2, May 2007, pp. 217-229
- Taylor, A. P. R. (2007). "The Socially Constructed Identity of a High-Achieving IT Professional" Paper presented at the NZ Discourse Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 6-8 December, 2007.
- Taylor, A. P. R., & Doolin, B. (2009). "Narrative Analysis of High-Achieving IT Professionals: An Identity Capital Model" Paper presented at the NZ Discourse Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 18-20 November, 2009.
- Taylor, A. P. R. (forthcoming). "The Nature of Truth" A chapter in "Truth, Lies and Information Systems".

Acknowledgments

Now, at the end of this thesis, with so much behind me and yet so much still ahead, I shall take an opportunity to verbalise a few thoughts, and to thank a few people.

Half way through researching and writing this thesis, I reached the conclusion that postgraduate research is perhaps one of the most selfish and rewarding things a person can engage in. I have read the work of others, and by seeing something in it they may not have intended I may have used it in a manner they did not envisage and do not approve. I have spoken with people who the post-positivist in me would like to think have taken something from our dialog - yet the depreciating cynic in me scoffs at such beliefs. Writing a thesis seems to confirm that this is a solitary endeavour, fraught with confusion and uncertainty, and the acceptance wallowing in this is selfish. When I hunt or fish, I am at a selfish peace yet I am still gathering food for my whanau, myself, and in some cases removing pests from this land. The surrendering of my prior path as a professional consulting IT&T engineer means I have curtailed my earning potential, and therefore my ability to provide for my family. This has cost me at least one relationship with someone who hindsight suggests may have been more interested in my wallet than my mind, my soul, or my essence. Yet despite these costs, I would not have missed out on this pursuit. The hoary old adage that one lives ones thesis has never been more true, for this quest for understanding, for identity among the skilled, is about me. I have learnt much about who I am, and that I did not really want what I previously wanted, and had achieved. So now it is time to acknowledge in print some of those who have sparked, accommodated, or facilitated my journey of self discovery.

Perhaps this investigation into identity really began when I was approaching my fifteenth birthday and was then eligible to leave school without any qualifications, and my 'father' arranged for me to start work in a factory loading car batteries off the manufacturing line and onto a truck, my outright refusal, and my leaving 'home' yet again. Having the courts compel him to provide for me until my exams, when an anonymous donor payed my exam fees and then, when living in my car, being taken in by a local Minister to join her flock of strays she had gathered around her while I did another year at school, was enough to cement a determination for knowledge and understanding. To Ria, Vanda, Heather, and the anonymous donors and court bureaucrats, I say thankyou.

In hindsight, the person who put me on the postgraduate research path was Associate Professor Dave Watson, formally of the University of Canterbury's Department of Electrical

and Electronic Engineering. He supervised my undergraduate research into the ‘electrical rolling phenomena’, and showed me that there was more to research than read, hypothesise, test, and conclude. Dave exposed me to the wonder of the unknown, and shared with me the joy of curiosity-based inquiry. His infectious enthusiasm, dry humour, and healthy disdain for convention enthralled and impressed me. After graduating with my undergraduate degree we continued to write to each other, bringing various things to each other attention on topics diverse as Trevelyan’s Rockers, machines alleged to be greater than unity efficiency, and exploding batteries. In doing so, Dave watered the seed of atypical postgraduate research in my mind and suggested my return to university to study for my Masters. This became an open investigation into semiconductor physics at superconducting temperatures, supervised by Dr. Simon Round and Dr. Richard Duke. Hindsight shows that thesis was all about things being out of place, and what happens inside these; this was a portent of things to come!

After several years of frustration in conventional employment, I started down the road of an MBA in an attempt to answer some questions about people in work, and to spark some cognitive action. Dr. Barbara Simpson responded to my initial inquiry that evolved into an exploration that ultimately led to this thesis. It was in her research methods paper where, in the words of Plato, I “was liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn [my] neck round and walk towards the light”. Barbara’s teaching enabled me to explore what I felt. She set me free from the straight-jacketed positivist approach and objectivist language that had bedevilled my Masters, and turned me on to post-positivist lines of inquiry. She presented me with the role model of a physicist who had moved beyond modernity, and in doing so helped me understand what I felt and sensed. Barbara, perhaps unknowingly, gave me the confidence to push back, to shuck the shackles of science, and for this I will always thank her.

Acknowledgement around this transition is due to the parents of my then-partner, Louise. Without Lyn and Jim putting a roof over my head during this transition from ‘corporate consulting engineer’ to ‘academic inquiry’, it might never have happened, and I certainly would have had a harder time of it. This was not an easy time for me on many levels, with many strong and mixed emotions during and after this time. The failure, loss, and sadness associated with that relationship lives with me still, but without its demise I would not have been free to meet some wonderful people, and make and keep some beautiful friendships.

A year later Mary became my partner and deserves mention here, along with her parents Lynne and Lindsay. Lynne and Lindsay have not judged me aloud throughout Mary’s and my turbulent relationship, and have opened their home and life to me, and they have been better

parents to me than those who spawned me. Not only has she stood by me and supported this thesis and acted as my proof-reader, but Mary has also given me my two handsome wee-men as this work progressed: Tomas Angus Taylor Fergusson and James Hugh Taylor Fergusson. The existence of this family unit and my involvement in it brings an aspect of completeness that is now so much of my life that I could not live without them.

I encountered Professor Felix Tan in serendipitous circumstances. Squatting in a visitor's office at a satellite campus I nominally worked out of as a tutor, I was flagrantly abusing the printing privileges of Louise who also lectured there at the time. While retrieving my ill-gotten gains, I encountered a draft of Felix's (2000) paper on narrative and IS professionals awaiting him on the printer tray, yet to be spied by my nosey eye. Deep in a state of fascination that there was someone else at the same university looking at related ideas, he walked in the door and caught me unawares. One year and one university later, Felix took me on as a PhD student. Felix's understanding and guidance in initiating this inquiry has been invaluable in this project.

In signing me up, Felix was obligated to find a secondary supervisor, and after a couple of stalled suggestions recommended a new professor in the Business School, Bill Doolin. As this investigation changed course Bill was instrumental in guiding and framing my sometimes-random thoughts, as well as being a critical reader and guider. As Felix and I drifted apart on method and philosophies, Bill and I moved closer together, and we formalised the role he was performing of primary supervisor. I doubt that this thesis would not have seen the light of day without Bill's pragmatism and hand.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Dianne Cark, a 'retired' secretary for whom retirement might have seemed a laughable concept when a shipment of notes or cassettes turned up for her to work on. Since 2002 Dianne has converted my scribbings and highlighted text into electronic form for me, and she also undertook the mammoth job of transcribing all the interviews. I would like to thank her for her patience and perseverance, through the changes our lives have both undertaken since she replied to a note I left pinned to the supermarket notice-board on my way to the airport one day.

Thanks and recognition must also be made to one of my many ancestral people, Ngai Tahu of Te Wai Ponamau, for the financial contributions made annually over the course of this thesis, as well as my Masters. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Nga Pae o te Maramatanga, in particular for funding an eight-day writing retreat in Hopuhopu for PhD students of Maori decent that I attended in 2005. Hopuhopu had me torn between the

fascination of writing this thesis and the yearning to grab my pack, dog, and rifle to disappear into those bush-clad hills beyond the grazing cattle and pecking pukekos that taunted me through the window of my room.

The subject of money is dear to any thesis writer, and mention must be made to Alan Smith and Paul Moroney of AUT, and Joe Beer of UoA for the continued stream of teaching in engineering and software at AUT and of organisational theory at UoA that they sent my way. Thomas Neitzert, the head of the School of Engineering at AUT, deserves special mention here for offering me a full-time, research pathway, tenured position before the completion of my thesis, as well as enabling me to obtain the facilities I needed for my investigation. With the arrival of my wee-men, the consistency and predictability of a liveable income was timely, fortunate, and gratefully received. Without Thomas's help in securing such a fulltime role this thesis probably would have gone on the 'back-burner' as providing for my family took priority.

Due recognition and thanks must also go to the nine anonymous participants in this research, and to Matthew Frank Johnston. I know who they all are, and I enjoyed talking with each of them. They let me into their life and I shared it, feeling as if I lived some of it with them, and in each of them I saw life, humanity and humour. As the author of a thesis on identity, it seems an ironic shame that I while I analyse the identity assets in their narratives and reveal who I believe they are, I shall never reveal the names that others know them by. I hope I have done them justice.

I dedicate this thesis to Nellie. Nellie was with me when I began this journey but died in my arms, panting her last breath on a hill in Southland as we hunted together, as it officially got off the ground, and therefore long before this thesis came to publication. Rest in peace and warmth, my huntress. You made me both laugh and cry, my loyal and willing friend. You taught me more about myself and who I am than any human teacher, my "genetically-challenged-human-on-four-legs". It is an injustice in this world that a gundog's life expectancy is not the same of the hunter. Your legacy lives through www.nelliedog.co.nz and in the good work done by DoC in preserving this nation's ecology. "Go-git-em-girl!"

Abstract

Self-identity has emerged from being a static function of essentialist categories like age, gender, race, and occupation, to being viewed as an interwoven and complex personalised construction based on a person's environment, life experiences and interactions with others. This thesis adopts a perspective on self-identity as socially constructed and performed in encounters with others. In particular, identity is considered to be narrated to ourselves and to others. Self-identity is thus continually maintained and reworked in a search for ontological security as their context and their interaction with others changes.

The value placed on highly skilled, expert labour in the new economy suggests that an examination of IT professionals' identity construction in this context may have important implications. Accordingly, this study investigates the identity of 'high-achieving IT professional', and how these individuals narratively construct their identity in the context of their work. Extended narratives about work and career were collected from nine IT professionals considered to be 'high-achieving' by their peers and colleagues. All participants were interviewed in their place of work. Three of the participants were still operating in the technical realm, two had moved on to managerial roles, and four had moved on to executive or entrepreneurial roles in the IT industry.

The narratives solicited from the participants were analysed using narrative based inquiry (Riessman, 1993). An inductive process produced a range of themes surrounding their identity work in the performance of self in the interview context. Examination of these themes suggests that the participants were drawing on and mobilising a range of individual identity capital 'assets' in order to negotiate a stable and secure sense of self in relation to their work and career. Their individual identity capital assets were derived from a number of generally available 'sources of identification', such as social and technical skills, occupational roles and relations, education, and behavioural repertoires.

The narrative data analysis, in conjunction with consideration of relevant identity theory, particularly Cote's (1996) notion of 'identity capital', led to the development of an analytical model of identity construction that was used to inform the presentation of the analysis. This model conceptualises identity work as the work individuals do in mobilising and drawing upon individual identity assets that comprise their identity capital, in turn derived and accrued from general and essentialist sources of identity, in order to perform their preferred selves in various contexts and interactions. The model is premised on the link between environment

and identity, and therefore subscribes to an interpretation of identity as socially and narratively constructed in context. It demonstrates the socialising influence of institutions and their cultures, and the developments of individual resources or assets for identity construction.

An analysis across all nine participant narratives identified a range of commonalities in how these high-achieving IT professional's identity construction. These commonalities include the use of skills and experience in constructing their sense of self, the importance of education (or its lack) in framing identity, and a keen focus on relationships that appears counter to the prevailing technological stereotype. They continued to use hierarchy and a mechanistic metaphor as a means of placing themselves in relation to their world, to identify with role and not the employer, and to use of aspects of the new economy such as the commodification of knowledge and skills, in constructing an ontologically secure sense of self. Based on these and other common elements in the participants' narrative construction of identity, the potential for an archetypical 'high-achieving IT professional' is discussed.

Section A Foundations

This section of the thesis presents the background information, the epistemological understanding, and the methodological justifications for the thesis. The initial observations which drove this investigation are presented, along with the theoretical building blocks and development of existing theory in constructed identity. The constructed identity literature is then focused on the technology professional, and linked with narrative inquiry. The foundations of narrative inquiry and its symbiotic relationship with identity are built and the rationale and mechanics of soliciting the narratives are explained and justified. This section also contains the analytical model that was developed as part of, and for, the analysis of each participant's narrative that follows in Section B.

1.1 Aim and Scope of Thesis

This investigation seeks to understand the identity constructed by ‘high-achieving IT professionals’ in their work, and uses narrative inquiry to achieve that.

For this thesis, ‘identity’ is considered to be actively constructed by individuals in their engagement with their environment and others around them. Identity is not limited to essentialist identity structures like age, race, sexuality or religion, but is considered to be performed by people as part of their relationship with others. Following authors such as Collinson (2003) and Mason-Schrock (1996), the research proposed here rejects essentialist notions of identity in favour of a discursive, socially constructed and fluid identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity is thus considered to be built and continually reworked by people as they narrate their selves (e.g. Somers & Gibson, 1994; Brown, 2001), as their context and their interaction with others changes. From this perspective, identity is constructed in an individual manner, subject to the threats and challenges associated with life stage changes and as a result of interaction with one’s environment (Marcia, 1993, 2002; Schwartz, 2001; Whitbourne, Sneed, & Skultety, 2002; Whitty, 2002). Given the importance of context in identity construction, the focus of this investigation is on identity at work. As Down and Reveley (2004) point out, a key source of identity resources and site of identity formation is the social and technical context of work.

Narrative inquiry is used because of its relationship to the construction of identity in story and presentation of a participant’s self to others such as the listener. Positivist and objectivist lines of inquiry are not considered appropriate to investigate perceptions and the self, and so these methodologies were forgone in favour of an approach that accepts the interrelationship between an individual’s identity and their presentations of their self. Narratives that people tell incorporate many features of identity that are not recognised in the essentialist identity characteristics seen through the lens of modernity. Postmodernist beliefs are that individuals actively construct their identity and present social and self-identities, resulting in and generating consequential insecurities and recognition. An essence of narrative based identity inquiry is that:

Joining narrative to identity introduces time, space, and analytic rationality - each of which is excluded from the categorical or "essentialist" approach to identity ... These temporally and spatially shifting configurations form the relational coordinates of ontological, public, and cultural narratives. It is within these temporal and multi-layered narratives that identities are formed. (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.65).

The merits of narrative inquiry are based around the subjective experience that is narrative and identity construction. It would therefore seem logical, insofar as a postmodernist interpretivist inquiry is logical, to use narrative inquiry and the establishment of constructs to understand the identity of participants in the research.

The selection of high-achieving IT professionals as the participants for the study is founded on the listener's background in that industry, and the initial desire to explore the 'alpha-geek' – a geek at the top of the geek hierarchy. The limitations and potential pejorative nature of that term resulted in a refocusing of the investigation to 'high-achieving IT professionals', drawing on the similar terminology used by Smits et al. (1993). The participants were not selected on arbitrary measures like income or job-title, but rather on how they were perceived by others. These people were identified by at least one of their peers or colleagues as being perceived to be 'high-achieving IT professionals', and nine people agreed to participate. The detailed narratives of nine participants provided a rich data set for this narrative investigation of the identity of IT professionals at work.

Throughout this thesis the participants are referred to individually by the non-de-plume they have been given or collectively as appropriate for the setting and the points being made. The author is the person who took the participants narratives, and has again sat and listened to them repeatedly, analysed the tapes, and continued to listen to what they have to say. For this reason the author is referred to throughout as the listener. You, the reader, reads, and is referred to as the reader.

It is desirable to understand the identity of high-achieving IT professionals because by understanding their perceptions of the self and their place in today's organisations, we can cooperatively enhance their employment experience to the mutual benefit of the IT professional, the organisation, and the society both parties operate in.

1.2 Importance of this Investigation

The importance of this investigation centres on the dearth of academic inquiry into highly skilled technology professionals' identity using post-modernist lines of inquiry. By

understanding the constructed identity of these professionals, we may work together to mitigate the negatives and enhance the positive contributions that can be made to society, organisations and the individuals concerned.

Information technology, and the professionals associated with this industry, are frequently portrayed as critical participants in the ‘new’ or ‘knowledge’ economy (Kumar, 1995; Webster, 1995). The new economy is one characterised by global competition, communications technology, constant change, and where innovation is more important than mass production. Reed (1996) discusses how expert power in today’s society is grounded in the ability to monopolise scarce knowledge and skills associated with socio-technical problem solving, and concludes that the politics associated with expertise has produced conflict between knowledge-based professionals and their managers, with expert groups taking a key role in the changing nature of work.

While the contribution of highly skilled professionals is essential to organisations operating in the new economy, their involvement may have unforeseen and problematic consequences for the organisation. For example, Arthur et al. (1999) have observed that the new economy is imposing challenges to organisational structures, including the tendency for knowledge workers to prioritise self-goals above that of the organisation – such as a loyalty to one’s career and knowledge-base. Such self-interest can be an influence in the identity construction of such skilled individuals, and the knowledge and skills of an individual are definers of this consolidated power (Collinson, 2003). However, our understanding of this form of identity work is currently limited, and indeed Brown & Starkey (2000) argue that the concept of identity is a crucial element in understanding organizations of both yesterday and today.

Identity in this investigation is considered to be in alignment with Humphreys & Brown’s (2002) argument, where identity is both individual and collective, and that the processes of identification is part of a personal and shared narrative used by the participants to make sense of their world and read meaning into their lives. Identity evolves over time, and is found in “dis-identification” and in many seemingly contrasting facets of a person, referred to by Thornborrow & Brown (2005) using the unfortunate term of “multiple identities”¹, which are self-created and based on scripts, and built through narratives. Brown (2001) suggests that self-constructing narratives are identities, suggesting man is ‘homo narrans’, and that there needs to be more investigations into this, and this investigation contributes accordingly.

¹ This term is unfortunate as “multiple identities” is laden with meaning from its use in dealing with certain psychiatric disorders.

By examining the socially constructed identities of high-achieving IT professionals, this research will provide a better understanding of their roles in, and potential implications for, organisations in the new economy. The intention is not to render these individuals more manageable, but to provide a fine-grained analysis of their identity work in the context of work and the new economy. The literature review that follows establishes the notion of high-achieving, skilled professionals as experts or ‘heroes’, introduces notions of power and consolidation in the new economy, and outlines the basis for a socially constructed identity and identity work.

1.3 Academic Contribution

An identity-asset based model that incorporates identity work emerges, in conjunction with the analysis, from the data. This model will suggest that general sources of identity (e.g. age, role, education, gender) are used by the participants to build identity assets, which are then worked on as part of giving their narrative in performing their preferred self to the listener. While previous investigators have suggested that this identity work was the performance and action that occurred as participants moved between social-identities and their performed self-identity, this suggestion is not observed or supported in this investigation. Rather, the identity work appears to be between individually constructed and personal identity assets, which were not limited to social-identities.

Contributions to humankind’s body of knowledge include support for the existing theory of identity capital (Cote, 1996a; 1996b; 1997) and the roles and types that the participants presented in context (Wing, 2002) of work (Kunda, 1992; Schein, 1996a: 1996b, Knights & Willmott, 1999, Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Collinson, 2002). Participants’ use of their knowledge and skills (Schwartz, 2001) and their presentation of multiple selves (Gregg, 1991; Thornborrow & Brown, 2005; Zaretsky, 1994) are supported, along with the extra-narrative artefacts and symbols used in presenting their desired self.

New theoretical contributions include a model for analysis of narrative identity, where general sources of identity are the building blocks from which identity capital (in the form of identity assets) is built by the individual participants as part of developing their workplace selves (Collinson, 2003). These identity capital assets are then mobilised and worked on by the participants in their performance of their selves to the listener, and can be identified from a close analysis of the participants’ narratives.

Further academic contributions are seen in the identification of commonalities that emerge from the narratives of participating high-achieving IT professional's, such as the use of a lack of education to frame their self, a keen focus on relationships by the participants appearing to reject the technology stereotype, and the use of aspects of the new economy in constructing their sense of self. The emergence of an archetypical high-achieving IT professional is also presented.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in three sections. Section A contains Chapters One through to Four, reviewing the literature around identity and locating this thesis in that literature field. This theoretical basis is used to help develop an analytical model of identity construction that emerged from and was used in the analysis of the participants' narratives. The methodology that is employed and the reasons why a non-scientific inquiry was adopted are presented and also justified.

Section B contains Chapters Five through to Thirteen, and each of the nine chapters contains a narrative analysis of each of the (pseudonymed) participants in this research. Included is a detailed discussion of the identity assets that emerged from the narratives of three selected participants, with a summary and discussion of the identity assets of the remaining six participants. The full detailed analysis of these remaining six participants is included in the appendices. A graphical representation of how these identity assets integrate with the model is included at the end of each chapter.

Section C contains Chapter Fourteen, which pulls together how in this thesis the socially constructed identity of these high-achieving IT professionals was accomplished, including common resources and roles as sources of identity, and the potential for an archetype of the high-achieving IT professional. The identity capital built, and the identity work performed by the participants is discussed in terms of the model development in the study. Identity in the new economy is also discussed, as well as the implications of identity on family, friends, and employers, and the inherently dynamic nature of the participants changing identity. The final chapter is a conclusion, which highlights the contributions of this research to theory, method, and practice, and discusses the limitations of the research and possible future directions.

Identity describes the status that is widely ascribed to a person. For example, 'manager' or 'academic' is an identity, as certain cultural understandings are conveyed about the person who is so identified. Associated with these understandings are expectations about how such a person will, and should, behave. Often but not invariably, many of these common understandings are adopted and shared by that person. In such a case there is a degree of consistency between the individual's self-identity and the social identity ascribed to him or her ... it is through our sense of how others view us that we develop and evaluate self-identity. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.32)

2.1 Introduction

An individual's behaviour presents a means by which a person's identity can be seen emerging, how identity is built, and the relationship between identity and insecurity, the relationship with self interest, power and control; and finally the derivation of identity from the roles they fulfil. These aspects present the potential for a person in the IT industry to derive a significant portion of their identity from their work and technical skills and prowess, just as Beyer & Hannah (2002) have shown engineers' identities are derived from their education and occupation, and Chickering & Reisser (1993) have argued youth do with their education. Collinson's (2003) observations support this, by claiming that:

Aspiring individuals come to treat all organizational, social and even personal relations as instrumental to career progress ... intensify[ing] the highly competitive nature of workplace cultures. For those who are promoted, such identities are reinforced by the remuneration, status and perks of more senior positions. (Collinson, 2003, p.537)

This chapter will address each of the aspects of identity creation, the relationship between identity and insecurity, self interest, power and control, and identity from fulfilled roles in turn.

2.2 Identity

The earliest discussions on theories surrounding identity appear to have emerged from Aristotle's philosophical arguments on 'essence' and 'appearance' (Calhoun, 1994). Freud references 'identification' and 'narcissism' in 1914 and 1915 (Zaretsky, 1994). Subsequently,

literature on cognition and awareness of the physical events in the brain, such as “*Is Consciousness a Brain Process*” (Place, 1956) and “*The ‘Mental’ and the ‘Physical’*” (Feigl, 1958) emerged. Whilst these biological actuations were of interest to at the time, subsequent authors such as Erickson (1963; 1968) took an interest in how identity is formed in a person as a function of interaction between self and society, and hence how identity is separate from identification. In recent times the topic of identity has gained increased awareness and has seen an increase in academic attention with the launching of the journals “*Identity*”² and “*Self and Identity*”³ in the new millennium. The subject of individual and even organisational identity has also been canvassed with a special issue of the “*Academy of Management Review*”⁴ that addressed identity in a micro and macro sense.

The two early schools of thoughts on identity were based on an individual’s ‘descriptive’ account and the modernist ‘revisionary’ account, with the latter arguing that humans differ from inanimate objects only by degrees of complexity (Wilkerson, 1974). Wilkerson (1974) compared these two schools and identified flaws with the modernists’ claims to superiority based on scientific method. Despite this early work questioning the merit of the scientific method, the confusion has not abated and there is uncertainty as to what exactly identity is (Marcia, 1993; Strayer, 2002). Commentators often compare and contrast differing approaches. For example Cote & Schwartz (2002) compare psychological and sociological approaches to support an ‘identity capital’ model (Cote, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Cote & Schwartz, 2002; S. J. Schwartz, 2001) that attempts to meld the two (discussed further in Section 3.5.2).

Adams & Marshall (1996) claim the five most commonly documented functions of identity as used by other commentators include, providing the structure for understanding who one is, providing meaning and direction through commitments, values, and goals, providing a sense of personal control and free will, striving for consistency, coherence, and harmony between values, beliefs, and commitments, and finally, enabling the recognition of potential through a sense of future, possibilities, and alternative choices. This need for identity in the individual is unchallenged, but the question arises of where and how a person’s identity arises, with essentialist and constructed identity being suggested. It is to these essentialist and constructed concepts of identity that we now turn.

² ‘Identity’, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

³ ‘Self and Identity’, published by Psychology Press (UK)

⁴ *Academy of Management Review*, Volume 25, Issue No.1, 2000

2.2.1 Essentialist Identity

The essentialist school of thought sees identity as a function of role sourced from essential and unchangeable factors such as race, age, and gender. Such sources of identity are believed to be fixed, measurable, and therefore secure, and assume people of similar social categories have similar life experiences and will act accordingly. These identities may form the nature of the social identities ascribed to people that Knights and Willmott (1999) discussed in the opening quote of this chapter. It follows that these similar social categories and beliefs would result in “singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identities” (Calhoun, 1994, p.13) unless something was ‘wrong’.

Collinson (2003), and Mason-Schrock (1996) are two of many commentators who have challenged essentialist identities, either directly or indirectly, with their respective observations on insecurity and power at work, and the attempts of trans-gendered persons to change their ‘essential’ identity through dress, appearance, and/or surgery. Somers & Gibson (1994) also claim the categorical approaches to identity impose false certainties, and Nkomo & Cox (1996) believe:

We must avoid essentialism in our treatment of identity, recognizing its variability. Identity is socially constructed and not innate. It cannot be measured nominally as an objective property of an individual. (Nkomo & Cox Jr, 1996, p.348)

Recent work has argued that essentialist traditional macro-identity roles such as age and gender are not as finite and absolute as they would appear (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995; Hogg & Terry, 2000b; S. J. Schwartz, 2001) with a trend away from essentialist identity to discursive and constructed identities, being noted by Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003).

2.2.2 Constructed Identity

Calhoun (1994) has argued that:

It is common to speak as though essentialism reigned throughout western history until a new Enlightenment freed us in the post-war era. Sometimes the contrast is narrower - essentialism is seen as modernist and postmodernism has saved us from it. (Calhoun, 1994, p.18)

Stryker (1987) had previously addressed Calhoun’s point above, suggesting that people used the social construction of these essentialist identity structures from which to build identity as the individual perceives it. While some external ascriptions or recognitions of identity may be fixed and timeless, identity construction as a whole is an ongoing project around and under these foundations. The contributing components and foundations of identity involve differing

levels of representation of the self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) with interpretations that are subjective to the individual that are deeply personal (Hogg & Terry, 2000a, 2000b; Stryker, 1987; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000). The personal and social components (Brickson, 2000a, 2000b) of identity are founded on emotions (Strayer, 2002), and are discussed further in Section 2.3. This very subjective view of oneself was touched on by Stryker (1987), more recently by Johnson et al. (2003), and in the previous section with the extract from Nkomo and Cox (1996).

If an essentialist identity provides an incomplete view of a person's identity, then a constructed identity better reflects the social, subjective, and changing nature of identity that is variable and not fixed (Marcia, 1993, 2002; S. J. Schwartz, 2001; Whitbourne, Sneed, & Skultety, 2002; Whitty, 2002). It is constructed in an individual manner, subject to the threats and challenges associated with life stage changes as a result of interaction with one's environment, which promotes reflection and the finding of meaning, identity and narrative. These interrelated actions will now be looked at separately.

Mechanics of Construction

Previous discussions in this section have shown that environment and surrounds contribute to identity of the individual, although the mechanics and direction of influence has been debated. Gregg (1991) discussed a dialogue between 'personages' and 'arguments', and noted that:

Each individual develops a unique set of positions that especially shape all he or she thinks and does ... The structure of the positions, personages, and arguments that make up this dialogue constitutes the system of self-representation. (Gregg, 1991, p.xiv)

More recently, Adams and Marshall (1996) have looked at the person in context and argue that:

The process of socialization and human development appears to be based on the paradoxical association between two seemingly opposing factors; that is, the duality between agency and communion, individuality vs. collectivity, self vs. other. (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p.430)

In doing so, they continue the state of conflict that exists in human identity by advocating this duality between the individual and their environment, whereby each influences the other. Adams and Marshall (1996) argue that the mechanics of identity formation and socialisation are influenced by processes that involve distress that could be associated with life stage changes, incompatibility, inconsistency, incompleteness or confrontation that are associated with interacting with the environment, followed by synthesis and/or resolution.

The traditional view of events that could be correlated to changes in identity were associated with traumatic change, such as when ‘men are turned towards the light’ (Plato) or Kelly’s (1955) farmers reflecting on the events of dust-storms and failed crops. These changes in identity have evolved to where Whitty (2002) and Wong (2002) have each claimed that identity is derived, or ‘constructed’, from a subjective view on one’s self, and that this subjectivity is susceptible to change, and therefore it holds that identity is not fixed. Identity construction is accepted as being an ongoing process (Adams & Marshall, 1996) involving reflection, socialisation, personal growth and development, and environmental influences. If identity is subjective, susceptible to change, and therefore the construction of identity is an ongoing process, then Strayer’s (2002) claim to the impossibility of a ‘neutral’ identity gains validity. Most of these observations have revolved around changes in a person’s life, and so ‘life stage changes’ and identity considered next.

Life Stage Changes

A popular view held that identity developed during adolescence (Waterman, 1985). This approach implies that the static child is a malleable object, which evolves into the adult. Such an approach implies stagnation beyond puberty. Other commentators have suggested that adolescence does indeed impact significantly on identity, but not exclusively so, arguing that the construction of identity occurs with ‘life-stage’ changes which include adolescence, as well as say, retirement (Marcia, 2002), a changing environment in the workplace (Knights & Willmott, 1999; Lopes, 2002), a stressful environment or experiences (Anthis, 2002; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1995), or simply as part of growing older (Knights & Willmott, 1999; Kroger, 2002).

The development and changing nature of lives, aging, and experiences, present challenges to the way people view themselves, and in doing so present challenges to the constructs individuals hold on which their identity is built. Marcia (2002) and Cantor et al. (2002) note that ‘life-stage’ challenges and changes involve subsuming the existing identity. Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje (2002) argue that threat-dependent constructs exist, and can allow the ‘individual self’ to take precedence over other obligations. The individual constructs and identity are always under threat (Calhoun, 1994), and therefore prone to change, no matter how much people attempt to maintain the status quo (Knights & Willmott, 1999), meaning

Identities can and to some extent, indeed, always do change. (Calhoun, 1994, p.27)

Interaction, Environment, and the Perception of (and by) Others

The threats and change to constructs and identity discussed above relate to one's environment, interaction with the environment, and the perception of and by others. Interaction with others is an accepted human activity, and interaction with inanimate objects has also been explored by commentators such as Csikszentmihali (1982; 1990), Latour (2003), and Stacey (2000; 2000; 2001). The foundations for the negotiation of identity are based on these sorts of relationships (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), which involve people interacting with others and their environment (Berzonsky, 1990, 1993). Stryker (1987) was more specific, claiming role-related identities derive from self-created interactions with one's environment (a concept explored on page 2-21), which are drawn from the 'self' or from social settings. Knights & Willmott (1999) have subsequently discussed this interaction and claim it is done actively and consciously, for an individual's identity is derived through their self-consciousness. It is through this bi-directional action around self-consciousness that others identify the individual, where;

Interactions between human beings are mediated by each person's self-image or self-identity. Through processes of interaction, identity is confirmed, challenged, defended or transformed. The shape and direction of interactions are influenced, in more or less intended ways, by each person's efforts to negotiate an outcome that is personally acceptable in terms of their own self-image or identity. Not infrequently, this involves efforts to defend or enhance self-identity in response to situations and communications. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.146)

The social nature of such interaction results in an emotional and subjective slant to understanding identity that has ramifications for a person's behaviour, for how people see themselves is therefore their identity. Consequently:

Any such identity (e.g. 'girl', 'daughter', 'musician') carries with it responsibilities – at the very least to behave in ways that ensure its confirmation. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.56)

Reflection and Differentiation from Others

The social awareness discussed by Knights and Willmott (1999) involves a degree of reflection in the construction of identity, a topic explored by Collinson (2003) who claims:

We human beings have the capacity to reflect upon ourselves and to see ourselves as separate from the natural and social world around us. This sense of separation in turn facilitates our consciousness of time, our awareness of past processes and future possibilities. We thus have a capacity to envisage alternative realities and to re-construct and change our world. This creative potential enables us to reflect upon and exercise some discretion and control over our actions. It also enables us not only to 'see' ourselves, but also to try to view ourselves as others may see us and to compare and contrast ourselves with others. (Collinson, 2003, p.529)

The reflection above prompts the individual into differentiation of themselves from the other, as:

Individuals actively use visible 'markers of difference' -such as age, occupation, tasks performed, or spatial location - as identity materials. (Down & Reveley, 2004, p.237)

The subject of difference is noted by Vignoles, Chrysochoou, & Breakwell (2000) who claim that identity may be found by seeking to distinguish oneself from others in light of the subjective view of oneself with regards to position, difference and separateness with the consequent implications of identity and behaviour. Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) argument supports this, suggesting that an individual's identity is defined by defining others and points of difference. Adams & Marshall's (1996) second identity proposition is that individuals need to build on their sense of self as an individual, autonomous from others.

Brewer & Gardner's (1996) argument that identity is dyadic in nature with polar constructs is in accordance with the concept of identity through differentiation, and their dyadic argument correlates with the foundations of Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory, whose views around differentiation and polar constructs is unconsciously supported by Vignoles et al. when they note "I cannot have a sense of who I am without a sense of who I am not" (2000, p.340). Vignoles et al. go further in their discussion on distinctiveness, claiming a distinction on both the individual level, and the group level, and this separation of social-identity and self-identity is discussed in Section 2.3.

Finding Meaning, Identity and Narrative

The need for differentiation discussed above is based on finding meaning, using symbols, to generate a shared reality as discussed by commentators as early as Mead (1934). The sense-making experience that is performed as part of finding meaning and identity is discussed by Somers and Gibson (1994) who claim identity, narrative and settings are interlinked. Somers and Gibson (1994) claim that the individual constructs multiple, and changing, identities by being located within a collection of stories which imbibe experience. The experience of change forms and modifies identity through the narrative; the individual modifies their identity on exposure to multiple narratives. They go on to claim that these:

Narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable 'place' in culturally constructed stories comprised of (breakable) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life. (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.67)

The multiplicity of narratives and identity (M. M. Gergen & Gergen, 1984) is eloquently discussed by Gregg who claims the:

Voices of the self speak passionately about the endless quest for love and the struggle for power. They debate and dispute among themselves the moral basis of the hierarchical social order in which they find themselves positioned - as if thrown by fate - in a nexus of unequal relationships. However intimate the subject matter, these voices appear in life narratives as speaking from - taking the perspective of - a discrete set of positions in the social order. In this manner, each individual develops a unique set of positions that especially shape all he or she thinks and does, and represents them in the form of cultural stereotypes: personages in whose gaze one is always seen and to whose opinions one always listens. The structure of the positions, personages, and arguments that make up this dialogue constitutes the system of self-representation. (Gregg, 1991, p.xiv)

Being and Aspiring

Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) investigation of British paratrooper identity is built on Aristotle's 'causa finalis' and 'enteleceheia' and Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) work on identity production and manufacture. In their paper, Thornborrow & Brown (2005) suggest that both prospective and existing British paratroopers aspire to be British paratroopers. Much was made of when paratroopers identified they were really paratroopers, with some saying it was when they received various cultural artifacts (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Arthur et al., 1999; Schein, 1996a), others saying their first jump, and others identifying with 'paratrooper' only once they had been under hostile fire. Particular note was made of authenticity of being a paratrooper, with concern over 'letting standards slip', 'frauds', and 'wannabes'. The pushing and creating of the social-identity that is a paratrooper, and the self-identification with 'paratrooper' was built on narrative. These paratroopers considered themselves paratroopers, yet they were both afraid of not being considered worthy of such a moniker, all the while aspiring to be considered a real paratrooper. They were paratroopers, and aspired to be paratroopers.

2.2.3 Identity in this Investigation

In order to locate this research within prior work on identity, it is firstly important to say what this research is not. This study is not an exercise in mathematical logic around 'me' and 'I', nor between the mental and the physical as pursued by some identity scholars (see Chisholm, 1973; Garrett, 1991, 1998; Lewis, 1971; Lowe, 1989; Noonan, 1991; Thomason, 1982; Van Inwagen, 1988; Williams, 1992; Williamson, 1986). Nor is it a physicalist discussion on descriptive identities based around realist physical composition and disassembly through time of the components of physical objects (e.g. Hirsch, 1982), or a quest to manage identities for remote database accessing (e.g. Buell & Sandhu, 2003). This study is not founded on the

essentialist categorisations discussed above, but rather is ensconced in the arena of constructed identity, where a person's identity is constructed by themselves, and therefore is a matter of their own perception. The rationale and justification for this belief is expounded in Chapter 4. Accordingly, the placement and definition of 'identity' used in this investigation into the existing literature is akin to that used by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) and Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), being that put forward by Giddens (1991), who notes:

[Identity] is the self as reflexively understood by the person ... self-identity is continuity (across time and space) as interpreted reflexively by the agent. (Giddens, 1991, p.53)

Further clarification can be had from Calhoun (1994), who claims:

Identity turns on the interrelated problems of self-recognition and recognition by others. Recognition is vital to any reflexivity, for example, any capacity to look at oneself, to choose one's actions and see their consequences, and to hope to make oneself something more or better than one is. (Calhoun, 1994, p.20)

2.3 Social-Identity, Self-Identity, and Narrative Identity

The failure of essentialist identity schemes to provide definitive and absolute identities does not negate the value that these categories have in the construction of an individual's identity, for they may influence the individual's identity construction. People may use these essentialist categories as reference points from which to start the construction of identity (Stryker, 1987). Further, the self-identity that the individual sees and constructs of themselves may differ from that others see, as Knights and Willmott have suggested (1999). The individual is not bound by the social categories of identity (Calhoun, 1994; Somers & Gibson, 1994). This leads to identity construction being individually based on social platforms that may or may not be able to be changed, such as kin, caste and class, religion, occupation, nationality or social group affiliation. Popular literature and folk stories are told of people who abandon one family and join another, traverse social classes, reject or adopt a religion, take citizenship and often the stereotypes of that nation, or become a 'typical accountant', and some 'discover their Maori-ness'⁵. Within and between these social-identities, differentiation occurs from one individual to another, for not all accountants or Maori are the same. Calhoun (1994) notes that the tension between identity and identities at both the individual and collective level is inescapable and attempts to impose sharp

⁵ Maori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa-New Zealand and are of Polynesian extraction. Urbanisation and intermarriage with later European arrivals has resulted in a section of diverse people who know little of their shared ethnic roots. Some reject or ignore their Maori-ness, others acknowledge and accept the richness it brings to their lives, some search it out, and others revel in it by adopting the vernacular and adornments.

delineation between the two is invalid. The collective or social-identity, and the constructed self-identity that may inform and be informed from that, will now be discussed.

2.3.1 Social-Identity

Traditional values and mores around what were considered the immutable constants of family, church, state, and kin have been destroyed as a function of modernity, and this 'freedom' under modern structures means individuals have to construct their identity on personal and social-identity components (Brickson, 2000b). Karreman and Alvesson (2004) have suggested that the use of social categorizations in the establishment of identity:

Social identity is similar to the concept of role, as it indicates affiliation to a particular social group. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.153).

The effect of roles and identity is discussed further in Section 2.5, but it is worthwhile to mention that a role aspect to one's identity is considered vital by some commentators (Hogg & Terry, 2000b; Wong, 2002). Karreman and Alvesson (2004) are quite clear in their beliefs on social-identity, roles, and identity, claiming:

Social identity points at an affiliation with a social group. It confirms the affiliation, and also charges the affiliation with emotional significance and personal meaning. Social identity is acquired through processes of identification. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.154)

They go on to suggest that it may be a target for organisational control and exploitation by management and those that seek to control and create identity structures that others can adopt.

Security and Self Esteem from Social-Identity

The adoption, use, and deployment of social-identities provides a source of security for the individual (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Karreman & Alvesson (2004). Hogg & Terry (2000b) discuss the security and self-esteem that can come from the adoption of roles and social-identities through:

Intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or to establish ingroup-favoring evaluative distinctiveness between ingroup and outgroup, motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem. (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p.122)

This activity yields a positive inter-group distinctiveness and self esteem, and will result in individuals actively searching out what Hogg & Terry call consensual 'prototypes' that provide moral support and validation, and therefore reduce uncertainty.

That humans can belong to multiple social groups, and therefore derive multiple (social) identities discussed later in this section, is a point made clear by Karreman & Alvesson (2004) who claim that:

In the modern world individuals have several social identities. We are parents, children, students, teachers, workers, managers, professionals, and so on, depending on occasion and context. Social identities make expectations and interactions more manageable and less dependent on ongoing negotiation. They provide instruction and direction, and counteract uncertainty and fragmentation. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.153)

In doing so, the individual is able to make sense of their surrounds.

Evolution and Variation on Social-Identity

An important aspect of social-identity is that, unlike essentialist identities, social-identity does not attempt to measure or normalize identity or any aspect of it, with commentators on diversity research embracing social-identity as the individuals assign their own, and differing, relative importance to any particular role or component (Nkomo & Cox Jr, 1996). This point is supported by Karreman & Alvesson (2004) when they say “in contrast to the concept of role, social-identities must have personal meaning for the individual.” (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.153).

Further to the individual adaptation of the components of social-identity, the interaction between environment and the individual identity means that the social-identity one associates with may be used by society to constrain the individual and influence one’s identity based on the social expectations of a particular social-identity (Nkomo & Cox Jr, 1996). Partially as a reaction to social expectation based on social-identity:

We as human beings use socially available distinctions-categories-to define our identities, and that our self-definitions vary depending on the categorizations available. It suggests that we, peculiar as it might seem, distinguish ourselves and connect to other people through sharing the same categories for self-identification and, thus, simultaneously express distinctiveness and sameness. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.154)

It is this reaction to, and interaction with, social-identity which leads to self-identity.

2.3.2 Self-Identity

Self-identity is actively, but perhaps subconsciously, constructed from an individual’s own assignments of social-identity and in response to external stimuli (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Calhoun, 1994; Cantor et al., 2002; Giddens, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Phillips, 2002; Pierce, Dirks, & Kostova, 2001; Somers & Gibson, 1994;

Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). This may be performed as part of life stage changes, as a quest for self-esteem and status, or as a quest for meaning, but is done so as part of interacting with one's environment and in a quest for belonging and differentiation as discussed previously. Existing in a modern and objectivist world is no barrier to such post modernist constructing (Gregg, 1991).

One interesting evolution of the concept of self-constructed identity is the relationship between identity and meritocracy: that an individual's status is solely a function of their choices, achievements, and merits verbalized with expressions such as 'land of the free' and 'the American dream'. Collinson says that:

This broad-sweeping shift from ascription to achievement has resulted in identities that are much more 'open', no longer fixed at birth by, for example, religion, class and/or gender. (Collinson, 2003, p.530)

This says, in essence, that rather than being ascribed by birth, selves are now achieved through practice. Choice is simply a matter of 'character', a theme explored further later. For example:

The 'success ethic' reinforces the significance of paid employment as a potential source of valued identity ... the disciplinary ideology of 'achieved selves', which insists that salespeople 'are only as good as their last sale', can have a corrosive impact on employees' sense of identity and well-being. (Collinson, 2003, p.531).

2.3.3 Multiplicities of Self

The discussion of multiple identities is usually associated with psychiatric disorders, and has been thrust into mainstream awareness with popular images of schizophrenics and sufferers of bipolar disorder. Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) use of the term "multiple identities" may compound this perception, and in this investigation the term Davies and Harre's (1990) term "multiplicities of self" is preferred, and used to support the idea of competing discourses and the positioning of an aspect of self in ways that may appear conflicting with other aspects of self.

The academic literature on multiplicities of self has centred on the construction of identity as discussed earlier and shown to be in a constant state of flux that may incorporate essentialist meta-categories such as race, sexual orientation, religion or gender. Additionally, Gergen and Gergen (1984) noted that multiple perspectives can and were adopted in identity narratives, and subsequently the argument for the existence of multiplicities of self has been put forward by various commentators in differing forms (Calhoun, 1994; Gregg, 1991; Wong, 2002).

In moving beyond the differentiation of essentialist categories, Zaretsky (1994) has noted the presence of a split between and public and private identities held by the individual, with Calhoun (1994) suggesting that acting on some of these identities frustrates other identities, and produces conflict within the individual. This supports Davies & Harre's (1990) observations on competing discourses as products of multiple, perhaps conflicting, selves. The sense of conflict is expressed well by Gregg's (1991) claim that;

The "normal" self, capable of dramatic shifts in identity and allegiance and or orchestrating itself alternatively as principled democrat, as mild-mannered functionary in a system of institutionalised and genteel exploitation, or as two-fisted ideologue in an authoritarian movement ... far from being pathological or even idiosyncratic, multiple identities - anchored in underlying symbolic unities - organize personality in accordance with the contradictions of daily social life. (Gregg, 1991, p.xv)

More recently, the trend away from essentialist identity to discursive and constructed identities has led to claims that identity is drawn from multiple domains (S. J. Schwartz, 2001), and that individuals create several, possibly contradictory, identities (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), which may be built on the competing discourses that Davies & Harre (1990) observed.

This acceptance of the foundations for multiple identities within the individual and the construction of identity discussed earlier results in the potential for the individual to 'shift' between selves as a means of constructing meaning within identity in order to differentiate oneself (Vignoles et al., 2000). Many commentators have accepted that individuals have differing aspects to their identity. For example, Collinson (2003) discusses 'workplace selves', 'civilised selves', 'achieved selves', and 'crafted selves'. These fragmented and subjective identities are suggested as being a reason for the limitations of essentialist identities (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). Indeed, Nkomo & Cox (1996) have noted:

Individuals have multiple identities and not a single identity contributes to the complexity of identity in organisations. Individuals are not just African, European, Korean, white, black, women, men, marketing managers, or operations managers. Identities intersect to create an amalgamated identity. The ways in which identities interact or become salient are important in an organisational context. (Nkomo & Cox Jr, 1996, p.348)

Of particular interest is Watson's (2008) support for Sveningsson & Alvesson's (2003) observation that multiple managerial identities can co-exist beside a non-managerial identity, because this indicates the potential for conflicting roles and actions of an individual within the organisation. The environmental context is related to the construction of identities and narratives (Somers & Gibson, 1994), and means that the identity of the individual contains

component of both personal and social-identity (Brickson, 2000b). Doolin's (2003) observations of the conflicting roles, identity and expectation on medical professionals as clinicians and managers provides support for this belief, as does Thornborrow and Brown's (2005) investigation into the identity of British paratroopers and Benwell & Stokoe's (2006) observations. The identity concepts of the individual can then be the foundations from which organisational identity is derived and related to (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000), and the context of identity formation is of particular interest.

2.3.4 The Context of Identity

The formation of identity does not happen in a vacuum, but rather occurs through exposure to a diverse collection of internal and external stimuli and contexts. Collinson (2003) notes that one's physical body, ethnicity, religion, possessions, family status, gender, age, class, occupation, nationality, sexuality, language, political beliefs, and clothing, amongst others, contribute to the differentiation and belonging involved in identity construction. The interaction and sources of these identities that derive from one's body, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, possessions, family status, gender, age, occupation, nationality, class, language, political beliefs, clothing, may be mutually reinforcing, others may be in conflict, and therefore result in insecurity (Collinson, 2003). The insecurity around identity and its manifestations is discussed in Section 2.4. Sekaran (1989) has noted that the individual, the family, and the career are interrelated, and Alvesson & Willmott claim identity is influenced by defining the context, as through:

The conditions in which an organization operates (e.g. the market situation) or the zeitgeist (the age of informational technology), identity is shaped or reinterpreted. (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.632)

An interesting observation around this point is made by Gregg (1991), in claiming that society, as such, is not easily shown in role schemes (such as those discussed in Section 2.5) when explored with objectivist situational factors and individual difference variables, but rather when narrative inquiry is deployed, society and the adopted roles are prevalent in the individual's identity.

Environment and Workplace

As discussed above identity is a function of interacting with one's environment, with many commentators placing identity-deriving actions in a context. Several commentators have explored the effect of one's workplace environment on the development of an individual's identity, with Collinson's (2003) discussion of 'workplace selves' arguing that identity

construction has been heavily influenced by the rise of a meritocracy. Collinson goes on to support the notion that environment and workplace are contexts of identity construction by arguing that:

Organizations not only produce products and services, but, in important symbolic and material ways, also produce people. Corporations provide economic remuneration and they also confer identities and meanings. (Collinson, 2003, p.541).

Karreman & Alvesson (2004) found this occurred with professionals at 'Big' consulting, as:

The 'we-feeling' of social identity in belonging to Big has two sides: one provide the comfort and security of belonging to an elite corporation with members that are just like you, and another potentially provokes coworkers. As a consequence, the Big belief system demands that individuals are capable of relaxing and rejoicing in their Big identity and simultaneously capable of effortlessly hiding it from the external world. One prominent feature in social identities and processes of identification is their capacity to provide comfort and security. Social identity connects the individual to an imaginary collective. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.161)

In their investigation of entrepreneurial identity and shipping ports, Down & Reveley (2004) argue that younger employees use visible differentiators for themselves within the organisation from the older employees based on their age, occupation, tasks performed, and spatial location, which defines their interaction with their older colleagues. In essence, their identity is formed not just by these social and biological factors, but by their very interaction with their colleagues as well, yielding a narrative that is a product of the individual's environment (Calhoun, 1994). Hogg & Terry (2000b) are also quite clear on this, saying:

People derive part of their identity and sense of self from the organizations or work-groups to which they belong. Indeed, for many people their professional and/or organizational identity may be more pervasive and important than ascribed identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality. (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p.121)

The Dynamic Interrelationship Between Identity and Environment

Barret (2001) has observed similar environmental influences to those above with US naval aviators, who define themselves in terms of their role as pilots and warriors. To be accepted into this tight knit cabal, acceptance and adoption of masculinity, risking-taking, perseverance and endurance, rationality, logic, toughness, and stoicism are all requisites, with definition through outperforming, and the negating of others. In essence, to become a US naval aviator, one adopts these patterns of behaviour and demonstrates such expressions of identity. This is inter-relationship of personal identity and context/environment influencing each other was also observed by Beyer & Hannah's (2002) investigation of engineers entering new work settings. Adams & Marshall (1996) also refer to it stating that the:

Individual's personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual, but the individual's identity can shape and change the nature of these living systems. (Adams & Marshall, 1996, p.432)

The Context of Time

The interrelationship of environment and identity discussed above implies that the elapsing of time should be considered in the evolution of individual's narratives and their identity. Beyer & Hannah (2002) have acknowledged this by performing a longitudinal approach to their study in their understanding of narrative self of technically skilled individuals integrating into the context of a new workplace. Less explicitly, Doolin's (2002; 2003) understanding of identity and change explored the dynamic environment of clinicians evolving into managers, and the resulting shifts in identity as a result of that environment, over time. Explicitly, Somers & Gibson noted that:

Joining narrative to identity introduces time, space, and analytic rationality - each of which is excluded from the categorical or "essentialist" approach to identity. (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.65).

It is the subsequent confusion and frustration observed in this interdependence that promotes and reinforces insecurities (Collinson, 2003), discussed later.

2.3.5 Narrated Identity

The context of identity previously mentioned introduces the way in which we act and engage with our environment, and tell ourselves and each other of it. In contrast to the notion of essentialist identity, "people do not exhibit personal characteristics, they perform them." (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1996, p158). We tell stories and narrate the context to others. Indeed, Brown (2001) advocates man as 'homo narrans', as we present the storied nature of our selves (Benwell & Stokoe 2006) and narrate emplotted stories (Somers & Gibson, 1994) that join time and space into our perceptions of our selves and our identities. The joining of stories and places is said by Czarniawska-Joerges (1996) to be autobiographical, constructed and reconstructed in action and reaction, and always prone to change as the environment changes. Identity changes as the listeners changes, and this is supported by Brown (2001) and M. M. Gergen & Gergen, (1984). Because of the storied nature of our selves (Benwell & Stokoe 2006), and use of stories to make sense of our selves (Somers & Gibson, 1994), the use of narrative inquiry (Section 4.3) is suggested to understand the identity at work of participants in this research.

2.4 Identity at Work

The construction of identity in an environmental context such as work (Collinson, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2000b; Karreman & Alvesson, 2004) suggests that the ontological security that has been derived can be undermined when insecurity at work exists. Insecurity at work may arise when self-interest at work is impacted, when a person's power and control at work are perceived to be threatened, or when a person's political position at work is considered to be under threat.

2.4.1 Insecurity at Work

King (2003) has observed that job insecurity in professionals can result in a belief that the individual's career ought take precedence over the goals of any employer. Such insecurity is a direct challenge to the identity of the individual (Knights & Willmott, 1999), as the social aspects of the workplace influence identity. The social nature of identity depends on the evaluations and judgments of others, with the inability to control these being a major source of anxiety and insecurity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Knights & Willmott, 1999). Knights & Willmott go on to claim that people seek to secure their position at work, and this anxiety is a point supported by Collinson (2003), in noting that:

Insecurity in organizations can take many different, sometimes overlapping forms. It may, for example, be existential, social, economic and/or psychological. These multiple insecurities can intersect and operate simultaneously, thus reinforcing their impact on the construction of workplace selves and the reproduction of organizational power relations. Attempts to overcome these insecurities can also have unintended and contradictory outcomes. (Collinson, 2003, pp.529-530).

Individuals can therefore be seen to operate out of self-interest driven by insecurity, in search of recognition, power and control; all in the political environment of work.

2.4.2 Self-interest at Work

Self-interest in the workplace has been well documented since Taylor's (1903) seminal publications on 'scientific' management, and is accepted as a function of organisational culture (Arthur et al., 1999; Brickson, 2000b; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Orlikowski, 1989; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Arthur et al. (1999) suggest that the nature of work in today's society has resulted in a need for an individual to go beyond the simple work-reward monetary relationship, and for the individual to take charge of their career and work-life in a self-interested manner in order to ensure he or she has a marketable skill with which to earn a living. Along with Schwartz (1986), Arthur et al. (1999) argue that the subsequent 'self-interest' is quite natural and is actually 'self-fulfilling', presenting individuals with

opportunities to enhance their sense of self-worth, even if this need for evolution was thrust upon them as a result of organisational restructuring. However, Schwartz has gone further, arguing that such behaviour is dependent upon the individual's social, economic, cultural and political environment, a point carried through and focused by Knights & Willmott (1999) with their assertion that self-interest is a function of organisational culture. These observations have resulted in Wajcman & Martin (2002) noting the existence of an environment where the pursuit of self-goals is a priority, producing a loyalty to colleagues at work and careers over that of the organisation. If self-interest is normal and expected in society and the work environment, then the exercising of that self-interest through power and control becomes an important field of academic and practitioner inquiry.

2.4.3 Power and Control at Work

The development of the modern corporation resulted in reduction of power in the artisans and the guilds (Arthur et al., 1999), and for many professionals and skilled employees there is a perception that power has been usurped by cost-accountants (Armstrong, 1984) and managers, with a consequential increase in insecurity and loss of identity. As mastery over a field of knowledge is no longer closely related to power (Blackler & McDonald, 2000; Quinn, Anderson, & Finkelstein, 1996; Reed, 1996), protection in the workplace is sought from the changes that can be wrought at managerial whim.

In an attempt to preserve their position, professionals and skilled employees can attempt to recover an advantage by controlling information flow (Armstrong, 1984; Reed, 1996; Sveiby, 2000). For example, Reed (1996) discusses the emergence of expert power, saying:

The power of the expert has been a recurring theme in human history ... They must be able to carve out and control -- ideally monopolize - an area of scarce knowledge and skill that contributes to socio-technical problem solving in such a way that it cannot be easily stolen or imitated by other groups. (Reed, 1996, p.575)

As expert knowledge gives power (Walker, 1999), the exertion of this power has been used to secure and exploit for individual protection and gain, and results in a state of competition with line managers (Armstrong, 1984; Harrison & Laberge, 2002; Quinn et al., 1996), resulting in a changing relationship between expert power and organizational control (Reed, 1996). It is therefore logical that professionals do not subordinate themselves nor share their knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001; Walker, 1999) without it being on agreeable terms and an exchange taking place. Indeed, Reed concludes that the politics associated with expertise has produced conflict between professionals and their managers, with expert groups self-identifying and taking a key role in the changing nature of work:

Possessing and controlling esoteric knowledge and skill relevant to the organization and management of everyday activity and institutional behaviour, expert groups put themselves in a potentially powerful position within the corporate, occupational and class structures of advanced capitalist political economies. (Reed, 1996, p.576)

The relationship between power and knowledge flows both ways, and Salaman & Storey's (2002) investigation showed a belief that knowledge gives power, as well as power giving knowledge, and being inherent in it. The loss of such power and control, and individual may seek to 'escape' by mentally and emotionally distancing themselves to protect their dignity, and therefore identity, associated with the commodification of their contribution (Knights & Willmott, 1999). The precarious nature of identity (Knights & Willmott, 1999) and the relationship between power and identity (Calhoun, 1994; Wong, 2002) makes this withdrawal a necessity, for the perceived interpersonal rejection or denial can challenge the individual's perceptions of their own identity. Therefore, what one does, as well as does not do, influences identity.

Management, particularly in knowledge intensive organisations, targets behaviour and social-identities through norms and values that complement the existing bureaucratic controls (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004). The ramifications between power, control, and position have been noted in consulting firms by Karreman & Alvesson, who state:

Identity is strongly related to success ... It is rather constructed by actively choosing organization members already motivated by and used to relative success, acknowledging their elite potential and then putting them in at the minimum level in terms of status, prestige, and acknowledged success ... Identity is, then, tightly related to social position. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.167)

2.4.4 Politics, and Unintended Consequences to Identity

The correlation between identity and politics has been explored by essentialist identity writers (eg Zaretsky, 1994) in discourse on gender, race and sexual orientation resulting in an association with liberal-left agendas, supplanting Marxism, and the term 'identity politics' is closely related to struggle, conflict and rejection of the status quo. Calhoun (1994) observes that:

Identity politics movements are political because they involve refusing, diminishing or displacing identities others wish to recognize in individuals. (Calhoun, 1994, p.21)

Going beyond the collective to the personal level, Calhoun (1994) notes that a division between the two is invalid and that power and political struggle also exist with family, lovers, and all aspects of one's life, both public and private.

Attempts to enforce identity on an individual may provoke reactions, and give the identity performer a construct from which to develop an 'anti-identity' (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). The denial is in itself a source of constructed identity (Mason-Schrock, 1996). Such a reaction and the subsequent difference is supported by Zaresky (1994) noting that politics and identity revolves around an emphasis on difference rather than commonality, irrespective of whether it be on the collective or personal level, and suggests the existence of a particular community of identity, and therefore community of anti-identity, through which recognition can be found. Examples of negative reaction and unintended consequences of the exercising of managerial power have been identified by Collinson (2003) who noted how:

Oil rig workers ... resisted the prescriptions of the safety culture and its monitoring system by withholding information about accidents, injuries and near misses as a defensive survival strategy in the face of the platform blame culture. (Collinson, 2003, p.538)

This is consistent with Fleming & Spicer's (2003) argument that culture and power are inseparable, and the imposition of a managerialist defined organisational culture with which the individual is expected to identify has the potential to result in cynicism and dis-identification with the cultural mores of the organisation. What is of interest in Fleming & Spicer's argument that these cynical employees are aware of the managerial techniques and do not accept them at face value.

The individuals will practice the corporate rituals as part of their 'day jobs', but believe that they are 'free' of the managerially imposed identity. Fleming & Spicer go on to note that;

Cynicism becomes an ideological force, ironically, because we are under the illusion that we are not victims of ideological obfuscation. Expressions such as, 'I'm not a sucker, I have not bought into this rubbish' pervade contemporary social relations of work and seem to sit comfortably alongside obedient practices of arduous labour. (Fleming & Spicer, 2003, p.164)

Unintended consequences of power and politics have been suggested by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) in their investigation of managerial attempts to influence the identity of the employee.

They suggest that:

It is naive to assume that identity can be pushed in any direction without inertia, pain, resistance and unintended consequences, as the case of the angry worker demonstrates. (Alvesson & Willmott 2002, p.637)

Identity at work is therefore seen to be fluid, collective and individual, assertively and reactively constructed, and formed in the context of a politicised workplace.

2.5 Identity and Recognition

The distinction of an individual's public role, such as at work, and the derivation of identity from it, raises the subject of identity and recognition, a relationship explored by Calhoun (1994):

Identity turns on the interrelated problems of self-recognition and recognition by others. Recognition is vital to any reflexivity, for example, any capacity to look at oneself, to choose one's actions and see their consequences, and to hope to make oneself something more or better than one is. (Calhoun, 1994, p.20)

Wong (2002) argues that the formation of identity comes from recognition by one's peers. This concept is supported by Duncan's (2002) claim that computer programmers are as creative and passionate about their work as musicians or artists, and that recognition flows from this. Both Wong and Duncan imply it is the role that provides the recognition.

2.5.1 Identity from Fulfilled Roles

In going beyond the traditional essentialist identity categories such as race, age, and gender, Stryker (1987) has argued that a person's identity is also based on more specific role-related identities that derive from self-created interactions with one's environment. Subsequently, Hogg & Terry (2000a; 2000b) have argued that for some people the organisation or work group may be more important to the formation of their identity than these essentialist categorisations, and recognition is achieved based on their association with such a role. The role of occupation itself as it related to identity has been explored in the literature (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Arthur et al., 1999; Orlikowski, 1989; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984; Watson, Bunzel, Lockyer, & Scholarios, 2000; Winroth, 2002a) although:

It is not necessarily the activity of work itself that is important for identity. Equally important are the familiar routines and social relations through which individuals sustain a sense of structure and meaning in their (working) lives. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.39)

Kroger (2002) observed that identity and satisfaction is derived from work. Marcia (2002) provided an example of the effects on identity that can be associated with the loss of work and other changes in one's life for a person in a professional occupation. Beyer & Hannah's (2002) engineers associated their role and work related identity with general identities, meaning:

How they see themselves at work is how they see themselves in general. (Beyer & Hannah, 2002, p.638)

This observation provides evidence for Raskin's (2002) point that the association of identity through work is especially so with the educated. Raskin concludes that this was due to the expression of self-concept, while family was what mattered for their less educated research participants.

Chickering & Reisser's (1993) "*Education and Identity*" work is worthy of mention here for its discussion of people building a strong ego and gaining a high self esteem from their education, with periodic reconstruction occurring throughout adulthood. They argue that the inner feeling of subject mastery gives rise to an ownership which firms in the student to provide a framework for purpose and integrity. This gives rise to a stronger sense of self worth which is not based not on comparisons with other students, but on internal, personal standards. Their identity is beginning to be built on their knowledge.

The potential for identity to be derived through knowledge, or the possession of that knowledge, has been noted by Schwartz (2001) drawing on Grotevant's (1987) work on identity through 'abilities' and Beronsky's (1990; 1993) identity styles. Later and more specifically, the idea that identity may be sourced through workplace-specific knowledge has been accepted and commented on by multiple commentators (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Harrison & Laberge, 2002; Orr, 1990; Weinberg, 1971; Wrzesniewski, 2001). Cote (1996a; 1996b; 1997) has introduced the concept of using skills, beliefs and attitudes as forming the basis of an individual's identity or how they see themselves in the world, and a role aspect to one's identity is considered vital by some commentators (Hogg & Terry, 2000b; Wong, 2002).

The interplay between roles and identity has been discussed by Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), allowing the presence of multiple roles as a part of multiple identities. The role enacted by the individual in the use of these skills, beliefs, and attitudes can be associated with a 'type', or 'kind' of behaviour and therefore source of identity. The success of such endeavours, particularly in paid employment, can be a valuable source of identity (Collinson, 2003).

2.5.2 'Types' and 'Kinds'

Calhoun (1994) observed that criticising essentialist identity categories in preference for constructed identities may be valid, but that it is important not to lose sight of the validity of people's claims to "strong, basic and shared identity" (Calhoun, 1994, p.17). The potential for self-selecting such identity structures has emerged earlier in this chapter in the discussion

on identity construction, self-identity and identity and insecurity. These ‘types’ and ‘kinds’ may not have been recognised by some commentators, but have been explored by Wong (2002) in a discussion of how identity is derived from context. An analogous discussion was sparked by Kunda (1992) in introducing the ‘engineering culture’, and was expanded on and popularised by Schein (1996a; 1996b) in presenting the engineering, operator and executive cultures. Cantor subsequently claimed:

‘Finding oneself’ is actually closely linked with ‘finding a place’ in a social group.
(Cantor, 2002, p.178)

It holds that having roles foisted upon the actor will produce frustrations when these clash with the role as perceived by the actor (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Riesman (1950) argued for the existence of three character types, which bear similarities to roles, in an observation of post-war American culture; tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed. Riesman’s tradition-directed character type was associated with conventional norms, rigidity, and etiquette, whereas the inner-directed are motivated to succeed within the bounds of norms and a pattern of behaviour set early in their lives. Riesman’s other-directed persons were associated with sensitivity to their environment and other persons, and whose goals are fluid.

In a related vein, Hogg & Terry (2000b) have observed that people seek to belong to a ‘prototype’ from which they can derive identity, such as Latour’s (2003) computer culture identity group. Mennel (1994) notes the ability for people to ‘play roles’, possess mutual identification around objects or concepts, and ‘we-images’. These ideas around finding places in social/work groups and role-playing raise the potential for people to engage in ‘identity work’, which may result in visible presentation of a desired identity (Mason-Schrock, 1996). This ‘identity work’ is, according to Watson (2008), an exercise in manoeuvring and reconciling between and with the different social-identities that we ascribe to.

2.6 Summary

An overview of identity theory shows that individuals actively construct their identity from interacting with their surroundings, as well as their perceptions of how others see them. Key components to the construction of identity are insecurity, self-interest, power, and control, as well as the potential for derivation of identity from the roles within an organisation that the

individual performs. Identity is not inherited or given, but is vulnerable and subject to challenge and enhancement (Knights & Willmott, 1999; Whitty, 2002; Wong, 2002). Its construction is an ongoing (Adams & Marshall, 1996) and socially negotiated (M. M. Gergen & Gergen, 1984) process. Identity construction proceeds according to the abilities and orientations of the individual (Grotevant, 1987), is based on relationships with others (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) and is a function of an individual's social setting (Knights & Willmott, 1999) and environment (Berzonsky, 1990, 1993), which may include group participation (Cantor et al., 2002). While identity may be active or passive (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Vignoles et al., 2000), or differentiated (Serafini & Adams, 2002), the idea of a neutral identity is impossible (Strayer, 2002), and there is a tendency to visibly express the desired/constructed identity (Mason-Schrock, 1996).

Self-identity is actively, but perhaps subconsciously, constructed from an individual's own assignments of social-identity and in response to external stimuli (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Calhoun, 1994; Cantor et al., 2002; Giddens, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Somers & Gibson, 1994; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). This may be performed as part of life stage changes, as a quest for self esteem and status, or as a quest for meaning, but is done so as part of interacting with one's environment and in a quest for belonging and differentiation as discussed previously. Existing in a modern and objectivist world is no barrier to such post modernist constructing (Gregg, 1991).

Identity at work has been shown to be influenced by self interest, the power and ability to control that is associated with position, role or skill, and is an insecure and sometimes conflicting construction. Accordingly, the placement and definition of 'identity' used in this investigation into the existing literature is that used by Alvesson & Willmott (2002), Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), Giddens (1991) and Calhoun (1994), where identity is reflexive, continuous, interpreted, and enacted. The reflexive nature of identity as discussed by Giddens (1991), the use and need for recognition discussed by Calhoun (1994), and the discussions around identity work of Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) and Watson (2008) lead to the area of identity work and the information technology professional. It is to this that we now turn.

I am no one ... I have worked for the Evil Empire, I have helped build the Internet and I have even written code for Linux. At heart, though, I am just a geek. Hardcore, to the bone, geek. I am the kind of guy who when people are saying ... "How many [computers] do you have?" I get to answer them as only we geeks can: "I have 15 that are running now, and 10 more that are in various states of cannibalism, two switches, four routers, oh, and my wife's laptop." ... If you are a true geek, you know of what I speak ... We are the final evolution in the black arts. As far as the world is concerned, we are the last magicians. What we do is M.F.M. to everyone but ourselves ... I have seen technology come and go. I have used the very ancient technologies of SIPS and 286 PCs and even more antiquated transistor systems. I remember when the Internet wasn't ... I am the only one who really gives two sh*tts that I have a dual-proc workstation with a gig of RAM and the greatest video card of the next 15 minutes so I can play Diablo II ... We are the fringe; we are the vampiric guys in the office with the lights off in the back corner, where no one ventures unless something is really broken. We are the guys that send false termination letters to buddies from their own e-mail systems to prove a point ... I am proud to be a geek. I will be the highest paid person at my next high-school reunion and I am not even in management yet. (Anon, 2000)

3.1 Introduction

This section introduces the IT professional, and how IT professionals could be considered a 'type' or 'kind' associated with particular persons and occupations. The social construction of the IT professional as a 'geek' is explored along with self-identification of the geek by persons as a function of their identity construction. Subsequently, power and consolidation within the IT industry will be discussed, and how the focus on productivity and competition in the new economy creates an environment and raises the potential for the emergence of the high-achieving IT professional to use their skill for their own betterment. In using the skills that they possess, high-achieving IT professionals may act to reinforce their identity, the situational basis of which may that depend on their role or function within the organisation. The importance of the high-achieving IT professional and this study is discussed, based around the issues of control and management, power legitimacy within the organisations, productivity and freedom and the need to understand the individual, along with investigation of the identity worker. Specific research questions in the post-positivist variety are spelled out around the literature, participants and context, for:

Far too much is written about processes and methods for developing software: far too little about the care and feeding of the minds that actually write the software ... the central issue is the human processor – the hero who steps up and solves the problems that lie between a need expressed and a need fulfilled ... someone who takes initiative to solve ambiguous problems. ... [who] aren't satisfied to perform only small and uncomplicated projects. (Bach, 1995, p.96)

In exploring the potential for such a hero, and what it is that such a heroic high-achieving IT professional identifies with, Bach's (1995) lament can be addressed.

3.2 The IT Professional

The existence of a professional culture has been explored by several commentators (e.g. Carayannis & Sagi, 2001; Raelin, 1991), and amongst the professionals those working in technology based environments, i.e. technology professionals, have been shown to be endowed with certain attributes and professional skills (Carayannis & Sagi, 2001; Schein, 1996a; Smits, McLean, & Tanner, 1993; Weinberg, 1971; Wynkoop & Walz, 1998). Indeed, some observers have found these distinctions so profound that some have gone so far as to suggest a list of traits for those entering the industry (Weinberg, 1971), and others presenting structural models of interactions (Turner, 2004a, 2004b).

IT professionals have been shown to have different motivators to the general population (Boehm, 1981), and this has resulted in work on IT professionals turnover intentions (Ainspan, 1999; Thatcher, Stepina, & Boyle, 2003). Latour (2003) has presented a historical development of the technology professional and computer culture, as being white, male, middle class, educated, and with large amounts of disposable income. Smits et al. (1993) found IS professionals to be achievement focused, and posed more similarities than differences across gender, race, and ethnic culture. The IS professionals in Smits et al. investigation showed they saw themselves as:

Punctual, industrious, organized, and capable of providing leadership resulting in goal attainment [as well as] intelligent, educated, insightful, and independent.
(Smits et al., 1993, p.114)

Reinforcement of this point has been provided for by Wynkoop & Walz (1998) who measured IS professionals' responses on a range of standardised testing scales. IS professionals scored higher than the general populace on the Ideal Self, Military Leadership, Personal Adjustment, Self-Confidence, and Low Origence-High Intelligence scales, with lower scores on the Abasement and Succorance scales. Wynkoop & Walz (1998) found these

IS professionals to be more conservative, logical, analytical, diligent, ambitious, creative and ambitious, with higher self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-image than the general population.

Bach (1995) implies a problem based view of the world exists among IT professionals. In their study of IS professionals, Tan & Hunter (2003) used narrative inquiry to uncover biographical personal accounts and personal experiences of the IS professional's interpretations of their career path. These IS professionals were found to be motivated by problem solving and personal challenge, as opposed to scaling the managerial ladder; a concept supported by Boehm (1981) and McConnell (1996) and identified as aspects of the 'new career' by Arthur et al. (1999). Tan & Hunter also found that this personal challenge finding was supported by Igbaria, Parasuraman, & Badawy (1994) and yet contradicted Igbaria et al.'s finding of a strong bond to the organisation. When these IS professionals believed they could no longer help, they would move into new areas or organisations where they felt they could be useful, and they possessed a need to maintain a current skill-base. While Tan & Hunter have not explicitly stated that personal identity constructs of these IS professionals such as 'problem solver' could be influencing these actions, it is a thread that emerges from their analysis when read in light of the previous research. Such a demonstrated focus on the self combined with an exposure to technology has been associated with an individual's social inclusion or exclusion (Warschauer, 2003), and it is to such a concept of a personal focus on technology that that we now turn.

Some organisations have attempted to cater to the desires of high-demand expert individuals: those whose skills are deemed necessary and in short supply, and therefore can place desire-driven demands on the employer, such as yoga, new-age spirituality and meditation (Casey, 2004). That these demands can be made, and even met, may reinforce the sense of individuality and uniqueness within the expert, therefore differentiate them from the norm, and in doing so present a foundation of identity to the observer. The desire for expression of group/collective through dress, language or presentation has been seen in the professional (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004) and this is often sought and reinforced by management. The individual's perceptions of gender may be considered secondary to success, to the point of gender suppression (Jorgenson, 2002) as witnessed by the female adaptation of power suits. Junior professionals often seek to blend in by adopting the values and artefacts of the senior professional, which in some professional circles may be 'anti-management' (Armstrong, 1984, 1985; Schein, 1996b). The expression of identity through individuality may manifest itself in a non-affiliation with the place and colleagues of work, which may result in

reduced, fewer, and therefore more intense, sources of identification (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004). By rejecting and withdrawing from managerial approved norms of professionalism and social interaction, whilst pursuing skill-based success, the professional may be perceived as a 'back-roomer', a 'propeller-head', or a 'geek'.

3.2.1 The Geek

The social construction of the 'geek' has transcended the carnival showman who bites of the heads of bugs and small animals to someone who is socially limited yet technically strong (www.dictionary.com). Such a socially constructed categorisation of the geek as a 'type' places the geek in the role of something to be either desired or avoided in the technology industry. Indeed, a close relationship with blurred boundaries exists in the eyes of many between a geek and someone working in a technical capacity. It is important to note that not all IT professionals are geeks: geeks are a subset of IT (and other) professionals, for as Somers & Gibson (1994) say:

Why should we assume that an individual or a collectivity has a particular set of interests simply because one aspect of their identity fits into one social category?
(Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.66)

Geeks have been defined in popular times as being a combination of lab nerd and thesaurus who date according to a checklist spec-sheet (Gunn, 2000), correlated with Asperger's Syndrome (Silberman, 2001), with geek sub-types such as 'Geekus Unixus' (Chmielewski & Wellman, 1999) and 'geektivists' (McCullagh, 2002) who see themselves as the last bastion of freedom. Warschauer (2003) goes further and suggests that an individual's social inclusion or exclusion may be a function of exposure to IT and technology, while Wood (2002) has observed that 'geek' was the only word that accurately described such communities. While the geek may be a 'kind' or 'type', with identification taken from the roles associated with the current expectations of geek, Wong (2002) notes that such kinds may have always existed as they sought to be part of a collective they identify with, yet simply may not be recognised by others as a 'kind'.

The idea of high achievers has attracted attention in managerial literature since Taylor (1903) published his ideals of hiring the best person for the role, and recently the discourse has been amended to the search for 'top' people being necessary for organisational success (Boehm, 1981; Buckman, 1998; Gladwell, 2002; Quinn et al., 1996; Walker, 1999). What causes 'top' people to stay or leave an organisation has perplexed HR practitioners since Mayo, and more recently Ainspan's (1999) promisingly titled PhD thesis "*The geek shall inherit" or leave the money and run? Role identities and turnover decisions among software programmers and*

other high technology employees” purported to investigate turnover decisions amongst IS professionals and role identity. Unfortunately Ainspan’s thesis only yielded an objectivist numerical analysis of predefined categorisations, with little attempt made to solicit or understand identity as seen by the professionals so easily labelled by others as geeks.

A socially constructed ‘norm’ or ‘type’ promotes patterns of behaviour in the individual that are associated with such a norm or type (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). It follows that society may impose certain expectations of behaviour on the geek. Green (1989) found such expectations were made on system analysts, who were expected to exhibit technical skills in situations where the system analysts believed behavioural skills were required. Perhaps related to these expectation of behaviour is the perception amongst geeks that they are not taken seriously by the rest of the populace (Wood, 2002), and that such technically skilled persons ought to lack communications skills (Petersen, 2001). The differentiation seen between the norm and the geek may be a projection of distinctiveness (Vignoles et al., 2000), meaning that:

Differentiation which results in extreme uniqueness of an individual is likely to be met with a lack of acceptance by, and communion with, others. Low interpersonal integration of an individual can lead to marginalization, or a drifting to the periphery of a life system. (Adams & Marshall, 1996, p431-432)

This marginalisation may reinforce the building of such a socially constructed identity around ‘geekiness’. The definition of an individual in terms of socially constructed identity, such as a geek, by others influences an individuals self-identity (Nkomo & Cox, 1996).

The potential for the existence of a particular community of identity, such as the geek, has been identified (Zaretsky, 1994), with Mennel (1994) noting the ability for people to ‘play roles’, possess mutual identification around objects or concepts, and form group ‘we-images’. The ‘self-knowledge’ that is created is a social construction that is inseparable from claims to be known by others in specific ways (Calhoun, 1994). Examples of this include the anonymous letter to www.geek.com that opened this chapter, along with the establishment of the ‘geek.nz’ internet domain (Wood, 2002), suggesting that the self-identification of geeks is alive and well. Chmielewski & Wellman’s (1999) investigation into self-identifying ‘Geekus-Unixus’ showed them to be young, single, white, educated males, who spend much of their time on the internet, and spurn popularist software such as that developed by Microsoft which is perceived to be of poor quality. In essence, and in concordance and addition to self-identity construction, one can elect to become/be geek and seek identity through this ‘type’ by social setting and exhibiting behaviours expected for the setting (e.g. Adams & Marshall, 1996; Barret, 2001), and experiences to date (Beyer & Hannah, 2002).

The 'elite identity' that appears to contribute to the geek identity has been explored in part by Alvesson and Robertson (2006). Their investigation into elite identities at consulting firms found that consultants who had an elite social-identity were self-disciplined with sustained high standards of performance, and they created an image that their clients were prepared to engage with. They argue this provides for a secure sense of self, allowing them to operate outside the bounds of conventional management structures.

3.2.2 Power and Consolidation of Position in the IT Industry

A thread that emerged within the IS literature and has recently been observed in the general management literature is that the knowledge economy poses challenges to organisational structures (Arthur et al., 1999; Pettigrew, 1973) including the emergence of self-goals above that of the organisation. These self-goals include a loyalty to mentors, colleagues, careers as well as one's knowledge-base (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Armstrong, 1984; Arthur et al., 1999; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), and lend weight to Pettigrew's (1973) prophecy that there would be tension, conflict, and misunderstanding as technologists are 'managed'. The potential for self-interest to be an influence in the identity construction of an individual was discussed in Section 2.4.2, and the knowledge and skills of an individual are definers of this consolidated power. McConnell (1996) found that software developers view a technical supervision role as an achievement, a view that is in alignment with the quest for recognition, power, and control as:

Actors draw validation from multiple employment situations, sustain wide inter-company networks, and develop multi-employer arenas of choice for the implementation of their careers. (Arthur et al., 1999, p.11)

The consolidation of expert knowledge, skills, and attributes stands to benefit the geek, as technical knowledge is a foundation of power within the organisation (Hardy & Clegg, 1996):

Entrepreneurial professions or 'knowledge workers' depend on a highly esoteric and intangible knowledge base for mobilizing claims to expertise and the control over areas of work which the latter make available. They are less concerned with formal occupational or organizational credentialism and more focused on the extensively specialized cognitive and technical skills that will give them the political advantage ... They rely on a sophisticated combination of theoretical knowledge, analytical tools and tacit or judgmental skills ... They pursue a power strategy ... they maximize the political and economic advantages to be gained from the extensive deregulation and commodification of specialized services. (Reed, 1996, p.585)

Such a quest for recognition, power, and identity can be satiated by the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which have become a commodity (Buckman, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Eliasson, Folster, Lindberg, & Pousette, 1990; Nelson & Romer, 1996), with attempts being made to measure the value of such knowledge (Bontis, 1999; Edvinsson &

Malone, 1997; Sveiby, 2000). While such knowledge may be held in different forms, be they the conventional distinction between tacit and explicit, or less clear cut as explored by (Hardy & Clegg, 1996), the possessor of such knowledge can ‘rent’ the knowledge out to various bidders, employers, or clients (Gibbons et al., 1994; Walker, 1999). These observations around knowledge as a possession with fiscal and identity rewards may contribute to a noted reluctance to share (Bell & Mason, 1998; Buckman, 1998; Quinn et al., 1996), unless the skill-trader can derive value in the form of reciprocity, reputation, altruism or trust (Davenport & Prusak, 1998); in short, a payoff.

As a consequence of the use of knowledge for power discussed above, and observed by the likes of Pettigrew (1973), Karreman and Alvesson (2004), Knights and Willmott (1999) or Davenport and Prusak (1998), the issue of power, its possession, and the legitimacy of that power (Hardy & Clegg, 1996), comes to the fore. It is the awareness of such power that enables its use.

Traditional career models have encouraged the specialisation of work skills by the individual, and has paid a premium to the individual (Arthur et al., 1999), for in a free market;

Emphasis on the ‘free self-determination’ of each seller of labour is strongly promoted by markets where, in principle, each individual is obliged to develop ways of outwitting or undercutting competitors. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.82)

In such an environment, success often depends on “who shouts the loudest” (Weinberg, 1971, p.19), and has little to do with organisational charts and formal reporting lines. Technology professionals have been shown to indulge in manipulation of the workplace (Smits et al., 1993), exercise power and control, and be status-sensitive with regards to skills, knowledge, and intellectual horsepower (Petersen, 2001)

Technology workers do not work in isolation of other human beings (Weinberg, 1971), and are as creative and passionate about their work as musicians or artists (Duncan, 2002). For a technology professional, it hurts to have one’s work criticised (Weinberg, 1971), so “work that is meaningful can become so absorbing or consuming as to displace or destroy other sources of meaning and pleasure, such as family, marriage, leisure etc” (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.38). Associated with this rejection of social necessities is an awareness of a world fraught with politics, perceived inept management, and marketing imperatives that are seen to be unrealistic (Duncan, 2002; Weinberg, 1971). The insecurity that stems from such an environment ensures that their employability can take precedence over the organisations requirements (King, 2003), resulting in books such as Duncan’s (2002): “*The career*

programmer: Guerrilla tactics for an imperfect world". The individual 'sculpts' their career by building a strong occupational identity (Arthur et al., 1999) resulting in high earning, strong career growth, and protection against the decline of a specific employer. Integrating this with the identity of the individual is Adams and Marshall's (1996) second theoretical proposition of the existence of an "individual dynamic (need) is to enhance one's sense of self as a unique and individuated person" (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p.431), which may be achieved through the differentiation from others on the grounds of technical prowess and cognitive abilities. This power of the expert means they can:

Carve out and control -- ideally monopolize - an area of scarce knowledge and skill that contributes to socio-technical problem solving in such a way that it cannot be easily stolen or imitated by other groups. (Reed, 1996, p.575)

The power can then be deployed in pursuit of prioritized 'self-goals' (Wajcman & Martin, 2002). The incorporation of the identity of the geek with the commodification of knowledge, as well as the social pressures and changing work practices in the new economy, presents an environment where a person who derives a sense of identity from the skills and attributes they possess could use those skills to their advantage, thereby reinforcing their identity through their work. This results in 'new economy' motivated geeks who may intensify the competitive nature of the workplace, reinforcing identities through salary and perks (Collinson, 2003).

3.3 Importance of Studying Identity and the IT Professional

Alvesson & Willmott (2002) have suggested that identity regulation, identity work, and self-identity are interrelated, and Nkomo & Cox (1996) have noted the potential for detrimental outcomes for groups as a function of social-identification. Further to this, Wajcman & Martin (2002) observed the existence of an environment where the pursuit of self-goals is a priority, producing a loyalty to colleagues and careers over that of the organisation. These issues are perhaps all the more pertinent where an organisational dependence on the skill of the professional exists (Dukerich et al., 2002) to the extent that a collection of 'how-to' books (McConnell, 1996) for speed to market in IS exist. It is for these reasons that today's managers should be interested in this study as understanding of participation in cooperative behaviours may be obtained by the study of identity (Dukerich et al., 2002), especially in light of Knights and Willmott's (1999) observation that:

Important aspects of human existence, though not officially part of management theory and practice, nonetheless condition what managers and other employees do and how their work is conducted. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.16)

This section will detail the importance of studying the high-achieving IT professional in terms of issues around control and management, power within the organisation, power and ‘freedom’, understanding the individual, and the ‘identity worker’.

3.3.1 Control and Management

Control of the means, environment, and actors of production is perceived as important to management and has been discussed by classical management theorists such as Taylor (1903; 1911), Weber (1978 [1922]), and Fayol (1949 [1916]), with views from commentators as diverse as Marx, Peters, and Iococa. An entire school of academic thought and the associated practitioners have grown around resource-based view of the firm, and a desire for ‘highly involved’ individuals committed to the firm, irrespective of the effect on the individual (Igbaria et al., 1994). The fear of the consequences of uncontrolled professionals drives many managers to seek control over the aforementioned means, environment and actors of production.

Challenges to such managerial control comes from many sources, as commitment to one’s profession is not synonymous with commitment to one’s employer (Smits et al., 1993), and a natural tension exists “between professionals’ desire for autonomy versus managers’ need for control” (Simpson et al., 2001, para.2). This refusal to subordinate to managerial wishes is a thread that has run through the literature since before Taylor separated out Schmitt from the herd (Taylor, 1903, 1911), through Pettigrew’s (1973) IS professional usurpation, Quinn et al.’s (1996) observation that professionals look to their peers and that professional firms act as partnerships and not hierarchies, and Reed’s (1996) previously discussed observations around expert groups. Support for these concepts in the realm of high-achieving IT professionals comes from Smits et al.’s (1993) findings that high achievers express:

A desire for creative and challenging work that provides a sense of accomplishment, by task variety, autonomy, and completion, and by work that provides opportunities for advancement within their chosen careers. (Smits et al., 1993, p.114)

Smits et al. (1993) also found that the desire for challenging and creative work exists with focus on the employer a secondary consideration for many such people. For those who do focus on their employer, King’s (2003) investigation into white-collar workers showed that those who felt insecure in their jobs were less supportive of the organisation and less willing to act on its behalf, and as a consequence produced adequate as opposed to quality work

outputs. A telling observation was that the “most observable aspect of organizational support, time at work, was the only aspect that did not diminish in the face of higher job insecurity” (King, 2003, p.87). Indeed, King found that the lack of job security encouraged a focussing on career and other non-employer orientated activities by white-collar workers, and a failure of the collective environment.

Such a failure of cooperation in the collective environment characteristic of professionals should be of concern to management. Jassawalla & Sashittal’s (2001) observation that in new-product environments ‘at-stakeness’, ‘transparency’, ‘mindfulness’, and ‘synergy’ are key to success is in stark contrast to the desires of the IT professionals discussed earlier. A function of cooperative work is socialisation, and:

Getting high-achieving, entry-level I/S professionals socialized into the organization and work group may be a real challenge for I/S managers. (Smits et al., 1993, p. 115)

Smits et al. finds this is because high-achieving IT professionals are associated with being insensitive to the needs of others and possess a preference for working alone. Such shortcomings inhibit their potential as managers, despite an identity related desire for technical supervision.

The need for managerial understanding of the social context of ‘key players’ has been called for (Orlikowski, 1989), and the adaptation to new managerial environments has been shown to influence the identity constructions of professionals (Doolin, 2002). The interactive nature of identity construction means that managers can influence the identity of the individuals. For the individual, the quest for identity can enable managerial control, a point explored by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) in their work on “*Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual*” and the observation of insidious attempts at identity manipulation by management. This manipulation of identity is illustrated by Collinson (2003), who writes of the efforts to shape Indian call centre workers to the Western Culture of their callers:

We can already see how 'virtual selves' are being artificially constructed to suit corporate purposes. In India, call centre workers employed by transnational corporations are required to deny their sense of self and take on a whole new identity defined by the corporation. (Collinson, 2003, p.542)

3.3.2 Power in the Organisation

Power and identity in an organisation have been addressed previously, and the issue around legitimacy of power was introduced. Given that technical knowledge is a source of power, as

argued by the likes of Pettigrew (1973) and Hardy & Clegg (1996), the use and quest of power by IT professionals through their technical skills and prowess warrants investigation.

In their discussion on the legitimization of managerial power, Hardy & Clegg (1996) suggest that where power in the hands of management is seen as legitimate by functionalists, in the hands minorities, workers, or anybody other than management it is seen as illegitimate. Power usurpation by IT professionals' would therefore be seen to be illegitimate, but given the need for their skills and contribution to an organisation, it is conceivable that IT professionals power may be a requisite for organisation success, or conversely a portent of doom. This raises interesting issues around obedience to organisation mores and expectations of functionalist managers, as:

The central paradox of power [is the] the power of an agency is increased in principle by that agency delegating authority; the delegation of authority can only proceed by rules; rules necessarily entail discretion; and discretion potentially empowers delegates. (Hardy & Clegg, 1996, p.634)

3.3.3 Productivity and 'Freedom'

The potential for significant productivity and capital gains to be had by the deployment of labour, skills, and attributes is a foundation stone of management theory, with volumes written and an academic discipline dedicated to increasing the productivity, as defined by the manager, of 'human resources'. The standardised methodologies, conformity and homogeneity that flow from efficiency drives has made the individual insignificant (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004), with a growing emphasis on cooperation and teamwork resulting in:

Dullness, group-think, low creativity, and low innovation capacity. Sometimes people in the company refer to themselves ironically as 'mormons', referring to their dark suits and homogeneous appearance. (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004, p.162)

The bureaucratic norms and control of modernity results in the loss of identity and individuality, and encourages the individual to seek meaning (Knights & Willmott, 1999). This meaning may be found inside the workplace, or outside, by taking responsibility and searching for liberation.

An increase in productivity by 'granting' an increase in (perceived) responsibility is still a focus of emerging managerial theories (Casey, 2004). A question arises based around what happens when this responsibility is taken by the technically skilled, rather than merely accepted. Should this responsibility and freedom not be forthcoming, the effects on the individuals' outputs, and more interestingly their identity and quest for differentiation, means they may:

Seek to distance themselves either physically, through, for example, absenteeism and resignation, or psychologically, by 'splitting self'. Ascribing primary significance to life outside work, employees can begin to divide their identity between the 'instrumental and indifferent me at work' and the 'real me' outside. They try to build a psychological wall between 'public' and 'private' selves, privileging the latter and (trying to) de-emphasize the former. Yet, the precarious nature of this splitting process can be literally 'brought home' when markets deteriorate and companies announce lay-offs. Such processes underline the inextricable links between 'public' and 'private' selves, between paid work and family ... this pursuit of material and symbolic security through conformity may itself have counterproductive outcomes. (Collinson, 2003, p.537)

3.3.4 Understanding of the Individual

It has been argued previously that an individual's identity is a construction of self and social-identities. By investigating the constructs of identity of high-achieving IT professionals in their work, it will enable what Hogg & Terry refer to as the:

Acknowledging [of] the importance of work-related identities to people's sense of self, [for] a social identity perspective adds to our understanding of organizational attitudes and behavior by drawing on the important link between such identities and the person's sense of self. Such a perspective should improve explanation and understanding of intergroup relations. (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p.135).

To understand the individual, one must understand their identity. This point around understanding the individual outside the constrictions of conventional scientific method is supported by Alvesson & Deetz (1996), who argue:

Much can be gained by allowing organisational participants to 'say something' that is not immediately domesticated by theories locating the material in an all too predictable 'bureaucracy', 'patriarchy', 'capitalism', 'managerialism', pejorative discourse, and all-embracing Foucaultian power concept, or a pacification and fragmentation of subjects as mere appendices of discourses. (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996, p.212)

Casey (2004) has observed that many organisations, including large corporates, have funded on or off site participation in various activities which are not strictly associated or directed at production (such as yoga, retreats, and meditation). These activities are focused at the middle class professionals who traditionally would be expected to spurn such an "idiosyncratic cobbling together of fragments of traditions as well as magic, and counter-rational belief practices" (Casey, 2004, p.66). That such a demand obviously exists indicates that not all people present and identify with values that one would expect with the social-identification category of middle class professional, and it is the understanding of the individual and acceptance of that which is sought.

3.3.5 The 'Identity Worker'

One could expect the 'expert class' to 'win' from modernity and rationality, yet Casey (2004) observes that even the expert class seeks to make sense, express themselves, and derive meaning in such an environment. Alvesson & Willmott (2002) present the situation of the 'identity worker', who is enjoined by management to self-position into a managerially defined framework that they commit to and take identification from, and do so willingly. It is of interest to note that the omnipotence of management is rejected in this presentation, and the argument exists that the individual must adopt the discourse willingly. Given that, they also state:

Knowledge-intensive work, especially in the professional service sector, spawns conflicting loyalties between professional affiliation and organizational responsibility that compound difficulties in retaining bureaucratic means of control. (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.623)

Therefore, the effects of a highly skilled individual seeking identity through their role in the organisation and the skills they possess poses interesting questions around the effect of managerial attempts to mould the identity of its employees.

In thinking of careers as journeys with beginnings and ends, and with a purpose connecting them, the employee has a reassuring image (Nicholson & West, 1989) to perform the sort of identity work that Alvesson & Willmott (2002) speculate on. The nature of this 'identity work' is discussed in greater depth in Section 3.5.3.

3.4 Literature Gap

Two main gaps in the literature were identified as forming the basis for this investigation. The primary literature gap is in the relative lack of investigation into the identity of high-achieving IT professionals, while the secondary literature gap is in the use of narrative analysis in identity work. The overwhelming majority of the work in identity through work discussed previously has been performed using positivist and objectivist paradigms with a quantitative analysis that oversimplifies identity investigations (Phillips, 2002). Cerulo (1997) notes that the historical development of identity has resulted in models of agency action based on ethnicity, and gender and building blocks for identity. Reviews of models based around symbolic boundaries, cultural repertoires, 'indexicality', depersonalisation and reification which have been built on with multi-tiered approaches have been presented in Cerulo's (1997) review of identity construction. These models are associated with objective

truth: Chapter 4 discusses why a post-modernist approach rejects such models, and why such models are not a focus of this inquiry. A need has been noted for variations on method from the objectivist, researcher-defined absolute discrete variables so often found in identity research (S. J. Schwartz, 2001; Whitty, 2002) and for multi-disciplinary approaches (Raskin, 2002). Indeed:

Most identity researchers have simply taken their methodology for granted and have examined the data without reference to methodological concerns. (S. J. Schwartz, 2001, p.19)

The use of constructs and perceptions has not been considered by many researchers (Hogg & Terry, 2000b). The construction of identity using researcher-defined categorisations has been performed (e.g. Deaux et al., 1995), but such methodologies suppress the voice of the 'subject'. As Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) note, existing work on identity tends to generalise to essentialist populations and categorisations such as gender, occupation, race or age as opposed to isolated groups that are not defined as such (S. J. Schwartz, 2001). Many of the identity models identified by Schwartz (2001) appear to be evolutionary in nature and focus on the change period associated with adolescence and to be based on Ericksonian principles. The literature on identity and the role an individual occupies in the organisation appears to be speculative and sequential, implying that one influences the other. There does not seem to be any research on how the identity develops in conjunction with one's role in the organisation, a point observed and called for by Johnson, Buboltz Jr., & Seemann (2003). As Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) say:

The understanding of specific process and situations of identity construction in and around work and organizations is thus somewhat poor. (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p.1164)

The differentiation of some people based around occupational groups from the general populace is one that has stirred debate. For examples, Schein (1996a; 1996b) has built on Kunda's (1992) ethnographic investigation of culture, while delving into control and the self, to broadly identify a difference between 'operators', 'engineers' and 'executives'. Reed (1996) provides an overview and evaluation of contemporary expert power within late modernity, focusing on the changing relationship between expert power, organizational control and class formation. Reed suggests expertise has become more intensely contested, producing conflict between the professions and managers, but this does not look at the identity of such people, and does not have the individual as the unit of analysis.

In terms of the IT industry, empirical evidence exists from Wynekoop & Walz (1998), who provide a good summary of how IS personnel differ from the rest of the population and their

management. The possibility of differences between business and IT professionals has also been raised (Tan, 1999) with Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory proposed to investigate this, but it is debatable whether such commentators accept the premise of socially constructed identity and the existence of 'types' and 'kinds' or would sample along a more normative or positivist approach. A longitudinal study of high-achieving technology professionals (Smits et al., 1993) has revealed a manipulative component that does not appear to have been explored any further.

Identification processes in organisations are not well understood (Brickson, 2000b). Hogg & Terry (2000b) note a need for identity research, in suggesting that:

Identity-related constructs and processes have the potential to inform our understanding of organizational behaviour. (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p.135)

Similarly, Vignoles et al. (2000) claim:

The relation between the social value of distinctiveness and its force as a principle underlying identity processes remains to be demonstrated. (Vignoles et al., 2000, p.339)

No specific work in identity or identity construction has been uncovered to date that deals with a person who can be differentiated from the norm by using their technical prowess as a tool, who derives a measure of self-worth from their skills and the power they provide in the environment of the commercialisation process, indeed:

The hypothesis that distinctiveness is important for identity because of its social value has not been addressed directly. (Vignoles et al., 2000, p.341).

Related to this is a call to look at identity of the 'identity worker' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) and into atypical identity groups (Cantor et al., 2002). Wong's (2002) observation that these groups may have always existed despite their lack of recognition adds urgency to this call. Indeed Brown (2001) notes a need to understand how, and to what extent, people to construct their identities in terms of the social categories to which they subscribe, which has only been partially addressed (e.g. Watson, 2008).

No work appears to have been done on the constructed identity of high-achieving IT professionals at work. This study supposes that the concept of identity outside of context is meaningless, a concept that is supported by Brickson (2000a) and Brewer & Gardner (1996). Consequently, the proposed investigation is placed in the context of work.

3.4.1 Research Questions

The aim of this research is to investigate the identity of high-achieving IT professionals at work, thus addressing the primary literature gap arising from the dearth of investigation into this topic. The secondary literature gap, involving the dominance of objectivist and quantitative studies of identity will be addressed through the narrative analysis methodology employed in this investigation.

Specific questions therefore arise in;

How do high-achieving IT professionals narratively construct their identity at work?

From what resources do high-achieving IT professionals build their identity at work?

In analysing the narratives of high-achieving IT professionals, what support exists for the existing identity literature?

Is it possible to suggest common elements in the identity construction of high-achieving IT professionals?

3.5 A Lens for Understanding Identity Construction in IT Professionals

In moving towards a lens for the understanding of high-achieving IT professionals' identity at work, several bodies of work inform the development of an analytical model of identity construction. These are Adams & Marshall's (1996) summary of identity theory into a series of propositions (Section 3.5.1), Stryker's (1987) engagement with essentialist identity structures (discussed earlier), Cote's (1996a; 1996b; 1997) work on identity capital (Section 3.5.2), Collinson's (2003) 'workplace selves' (discussed earlier), and an assortment of publications on 'identity work' (Section 3.5.3).

3.5.1 Identity Propositions

Adams & Marshall (1996) have collated and condensed a series of fifteen identity propositions from various aspects of identity literature, and present them in four categories: (1) individuality and relatedness, which deals with how an individual's identity is constructed from a selection of possible faces and voices; (2) the nature of selfhood, which deals with how identity is a construct; (3) the process of growth and development, which deals with dynamics

and ongoing nature of identity work; and (4) the person in context, which deals with how identity is context dependent. These propositions and their foundations are included in Appendix V. While a full deconstruction of the foundations of these propositions is outside the scope of this thesis, they are briefly summarised below.

The essence of Adams & Marshall's (1996) propositions is that the individual is relational, and needs both a sense of uniqueness and a sense of belonging. They suggest the underlying process behind enhancing one's sense of self as a unique and individuated person is the differentiation of various aspects of the self. The socialisation that facilitates differentiation results in a sense of feeling significant, or of being important, to the self as an autonomous individual, and the individual will have varying, differentiated and valued self-features. They then suggest that if the differentiation is of a high degree, an extreme uniqueness results, and that there is likely to be a lack of acceptance by others. This can lead to a degree of marginalisation of the person, unless the uniqueness is adopted by others.

The second categorisation is the nature of the self, in which Adams & Marshall (1996) built on the likes of Marcia (1993), Erikson (1963; 1968), Berzonsky (1990; 1993), and Waterman (1985) to argue that identity is actively self-constructed through imitation and identification, and self-regulated. The purpose is said to be for understanding who one is, to provide meaning and direction, to provide a sense of personal control and free will, and for consistency, coherence, and harmony between values and beliefs.

The third category that Adams and Marshall suggest is for a process of growth and development, in which (Western) identity is selected from a variety of sources. They argue it is developed from imitation, conflict resolution, and idealisation. Self-awareness is presented as a key contributor is a desire to change, as in distress, incompatibility, inconsistency and a sense of incompleteness. All of these may take place in a dialectic process, and are followed by a desire to change. They note that social settings are a source of influence, and that society may provide institutionalised situations that can facilitate imitation, inspirational, and aspirational models for people to use in the process of growth and development.

The final collection of identity propositions is related to the context of identity, and is founded on similar observations to those discussed in Section 2.3.4. Their propositions are based on accepting the premise that all knowledge is created and shared in a relational context, and that all social experiences have relationships and context.

3.5.2 Identity Capital

Cote (1996a; 1996b; 1997) has built on Riesman's (1950) argument for character types, as well as Becker's (1964) 'human capital' and Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) 'cultural capital' to present the concept of 'identity capital' that claims to draw from both the sociology and psychology literature discussed so far, as other commentators such as Adams & Marshall (1996) have done. Cote suggests the sociological basis is individuals negotiating their life courses on their own terms as a result of the global, economic, and political changes faced in recent times; the psychological basis being internal resources enable mastery of external structures thereby enabling movement and negotiation with various social structures. This notion of identity capital is premised on the link between culture and identity, and therefore subscribes to the construction of identity in context. Cote defines identity capital as "what individuals "invest" in "who they are" " (Cote, 1996b, p.425), and goes on to say:

These investments potentially reap future dividends in the "identity markets" of latemodern communities. To be a player in these markets, one must first establish a stable sense of self which is bolstered by the following: social and technical skills in a variety of areas; effective behavioural repertoires; psychosocial development to more advanced levels; and associations in key social and occupational networks. At the very least, given the apparent chaos of late-modern society, key resources for bargaining and exchanging with others in the late-modern communities are apt to involve skills in negotiating life-passages with others, such as securing validation in communities of strangers, and attaining membership in the circles and groups to which one aspires. The most successful investors in the identity markets presumably have portfolios comprising two types of assets, one more sociological and the other more psychological. (Cote, 1996b, pp 425-426)

Cote's work provides a source of interest in that it suggests the socializing influence of institutions, and their cultures encourage certain characteristics in the individual, and thereby encourage the development of certain character 'types' and 'kinds'. These characteristics feed into the identity of the individual and create a resource for identity construction (Cote, 1996b). Cote argues that in building 'capital', resources are used and developed which:

Vary in [their] degree of tangibility: more tangible resources tend to be manifest in the behaviours and possessions of individuals, whereas more intangible resources tend to constitute personality attributes. Tangible attributes can include financial resources, educational credentials, fraternity/sorority and club/association memberships, and parental social status. Intangible resources can conceivably include capacities such as ego strength, an internal locus of control, self-monitoring, self-esteem, a sense of purpose in life, social perspective taking, critical thinking abilities, and moral reasoning abilities (Cote, 1997). The common feature of these attributes is that they can afford the person cognitive and behavioural capacities with which to understand and negotiate the various obstacles and opportunities commonly encountered throughout late-modern adult life. (Cote & Schwartz, 2002, p.575)

Subsequently and interestingly, Cote & Schwartz (2002) have suggested that these resources feed into high levels of ego strength, and thereby help the person undertake more challenging tasks, which in turn can encourage the belief in the potential for personal and professional success and provide the perception of personal and economic benefits in the future. Empirical testing of the identity capital concept with statistical modelling (Cote, 1997) has been performed, but Cote's work seems open to other, more qualitative, applications:

It must be stressed that this is generally an abstract, over-arching concept intended to guide empirical research, rather than to be directly operationalized as one discrete construct. Thus, its value can be assessed in terms of how well it generates research questions regarding its various empirical manifestations (discussed below) and how much it helps interpret results (including meta-analyses), rather than being the object of singular, direct measurement. (Cote, 1996b, p425)

3.5.3 Identity Work

Much of the recent work on the construction of identity within and as a function of the workplace stems from Giddens' (1991) reflexive narrative-based work discussed earlier in this chapter. Examples include links between identity and occupation, as explored separately by Dukerich et al. (2002) and Doolin (2002) with respect to medical clinicians using surveys and narrative respectively, and Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) paratroopers. Recent developments in this area may simply be a function of more options for identity existing within the in post-industrial organisations (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000), and as a way of reducing uncertainty (Collinson, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2000b) and to increase a sense of belonging (Beyer & Hannah, 2002) in the sort of environment discussed earlier and by Arthur et al. (1999). The work that is performed in building and acting out one's identity is also suggested by Stryker (1987) as people working with essentialist identity structures to build their identity, by Czarniawska-Joerges (1996) in the discussion on people building their autobiographies, and in Watson's (2008) claim that identity work is performed by people seeking to reconcile differing social-identities.

The relationship between self and work has been investigated by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) in their study into how employees are encouraged to develop managerially defined self-work relationships. This is related to Brown's (2001) observations about the organisation's pressures on people's identity. Alvesson & Willmott's (2002) work resulted in a call to investigate the 'identity worker', which was partially answered subsequently by Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), who defined 'identity work' in saying:

The concept identity work refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness. Identity work may either, in complex and

fragmented contexts, be more or less continuously on-going or, in contexts high on stability, be a theme of engagement during crises or transitions. More generally, specific events, encounters, transitions and surprises, as well as more constant strains, serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity and compel more concentrated identity work. Conscious identity work is thus grounded in at least a minimal amount of self-doubt and self-openness, typically contingent upon a mix of psychological-existential worry and the scepticism or inconsistencies faced in encounters with others or with our images of them. (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p.1165)

Some work has been done in this arena of doubt and identity construction, such as Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) paratroopers, discussed earlier. This investigation carries on this call in conjunction with the definition above, and is stated explicitly in Section 3.4.1.

Watson's (2008) recent work on managerial discourse and identity seeks to define identity work as a person working between and with 'social-identities' to build self-identity:

Identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives. (Watson, 2008, p.129)

A three-step model is created and presented by Watson (2008) (Appendix VI), comprising a multiplicity of social discourses contributing to a multiplicity of social-identities. The two-way relationship between these social-identities and the self-identity of an individual is 'identity work'.

3.5.4 Towards an Analytical Model of Identity Construction

The literature in this and the previous chapter, in conjunction with the analysis of the participant narratives in this study, suggests a model for the analysis of identity at work. This model was refined and validated as the narrative analysis was performed. The model, shown in Figure 3-1, was not arbitrarily created and then the narratives crow-barred into it, nor was it a case of the model being thrust upon the narratives, but rather a hermeneutic process of theoretical awareness, narrative analysis, and model development was followed. That is, the model emerged from the interplay of theory and data as the analysis proceeded.

The analytical model shown in Figure 3-1 takes Cote's idea of identity capital, but treats it with a post-modern and constructed liberal interpretation that Cote has not followed. However, as noted earlier, Cote (1996b) emphasises the high-level nature of the concepts of identity capital and it is possible use in other ways to help guide and interpret empirical research.

Underlying the model is an understanding of identity as socially constructed, actively worked on, and presented to others in a symbiotic engagement between participants. People work on their identity, building personal identity capital from general sources of identification, which may be shared with others. The identity assets that constitute an individual’s identity capital may be multiple and contradictory, as others such as Somers & Gibson (1994), Humphreys & Brown (2002), Benwell & Stokoe (2006), Davies & Harre (1990) and Thornborrow & Brown (2005) suggest, or they may be complementary.

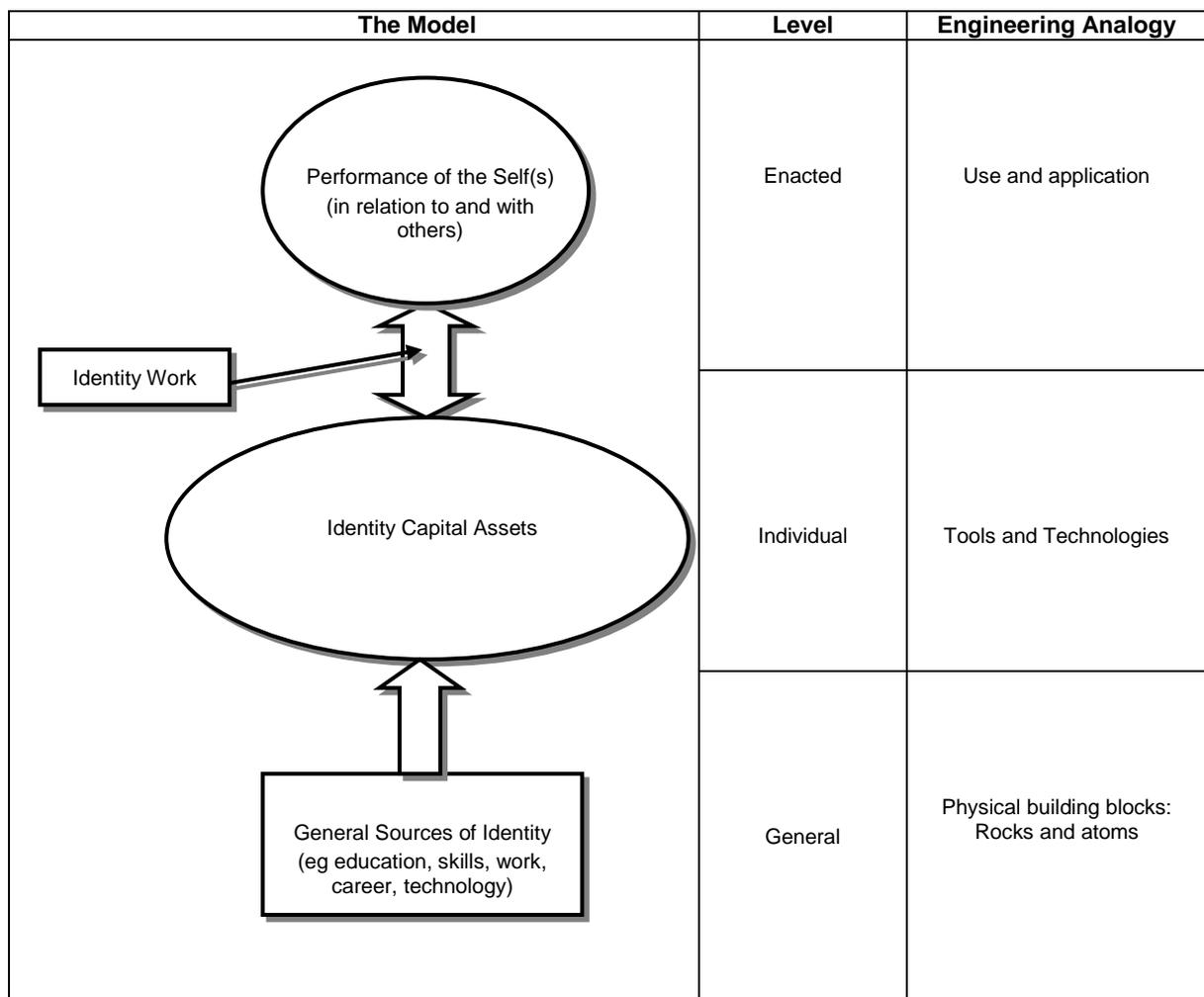


Figure 3-1 The Analytical Model of Identity Construction

In the model, general sources of identity, such as education and skills, are the building blocks from which identity capital, in the form of identity assets, is built by the individual participants as part of developing their workplace selves (Collinson, 2003). These identity capital assets are drawn on by the participants and incorporated into their performance of their selves to the listener, in a process of identity work. The identity capital assets are equivalent to Cote’s (1996b, 1997) identity capital resources and were identified from a close analysis of

the participants' narratives. The assumption is that the identity assets and identity work involved in individuals performance of self in a particular conversational setting (such as an extended interview) may be accessed by narrative analysis in a process (discussed in Section 4.5) similar to that described by Davis & Harre (1990) in discussing positioning and the multiplicity of the self.

Positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of a conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up and in what story, and how they are then positioned. In telling a fragment of his or her autobiography a person assigns parts and characters in the episodes described, both to themselves and to other people, including those taking part in the conversation (Davies & Harre, 1990, p.48). The development and mobilisation of identity assets may vary in differing contexts, as suggested by Eckert's (2008) discussion of fields of potential meanings. These assets may partially overlap one another, both within a participant's narrative or across the narratives of differing participants, or stand in their own right.

The identity work that occurs in mobilising identity assets and in the performance of self is akin to Watson's (2008) identity work between social-identities and self-identity. The performance of the self is done in context, as part of an interaction with others and the environment. This model could therefore be seen as an integration of Cote's (1996b) identity capital model, Watson's (2008) model of managerial discourse and self-identity, and the analysis of the narratives obtained in this investigation.

An analogy can be made using an engineering metaphor: tools and technologies are made from materials from the physical world, but it is the application of how these tools and technologies are used and deployed by the individual that is of prime interest. While primitive man may have used a rock to kill his food, it is the skilled man who refines that rock into a tool to be carried and used again and again.

3.6 Summary

Prior research suggests the potential for a person who derives a significant portion of their identity from their professional competence, skills or attributes to exist. This chapter has looked at IT professional and the social construction that is the 'geek'. The context that such a geek operates in and the power dynamics and consolidation such an industry have been

explored and discussed with respect to the effects such an environment can have on an individual's identity construction. It is suggested that a consequence of the geek in such a dynamic and evolving environment is the emergence of an 'alpha-geek' – a geek who seeks to use the skills and attributes in their possession to consolidate their position within the organisation and derives a significant part of their identity at work from doing so. The commodification of knowledge and the changing work practices of the new economy enhance this potential. Indeed, the need for identity (Giddens, 1991) is so strong that a call exists to look at identity of the 'identity worker' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), and it is suggested that this subject is worthy of investigation due to the issues around control and management of the highly skilled professionals who derive their identity from their knowledge, skills, and expertise. This area also warrants investigation due to the power balances in the organisation, and issues around productivity and freedom for such persons, as well as a better understanding of them.

Constructivism constitutes a 'methodology'. (Mir & Watson, 2000, p.944)

4.1 Introduction

This section introduces the foundations and rationale for the methodology deployed in this investigation. In doing so, this section makes clear that hypotheco-deductive methods are inappropriate for the investigation of the self-constructed identity of individuals in a given context. Instead, a methodology and analysis based on the constructivist world view alluded to in the above quote from Mir & Watson (2000) is proposed. This chapter will outline the epistemological stance of this investigation and show how a post-positivist line of inquiry and search for meaning is valid by discussing the foundation, the scope, and the validity of knowledge. The hermeneutic basis of this investigation will be explained and supported, along with the use of narrative analysis.

4.1.1 Positivism and Interpretivism

Positivism is linked with modernism and argues for a logical truth behind a proposition put forward in accordance with the scientific method. This proposition is derived from a physical and material world, and therefore all logical argument must stem from directly observable, empirical, fact. In the study of identity this is strongly related to the essentialist identities introduced in Section 2.2, where researcher defined categories are used and assigned. The language of positivist-essentialist inquiry is that of data points, facts, percentages, predictions and correlations. For one to accept positivism, one must accept commonality of meaning, indisputable fact, and ignore what cannot be observed. Section 4.2 presents the epistemological stance of this thesis, and argues that the foundation, scope and validity of subjective knowledge cannot be confined to the positivist framework of the scientific method.

Interpretivist lines of inquiry arose in reaction to the constrictions of positivist approaches, and variously address the shortcomings of positivism, most noticeably that human beings are reflexive entities who engage with their environment. Interpretivism is founded on a critical viewing of positivism, with writers such as Latour (1987) and Feyerabend (1995) claiming that even objective science is a subjective and interpreted encounter to the scientist. The constructed nature of identity discussed in Section 2.2 and the subjective nature of human

thought, experiences and aspirations mean that the strict structures of positivism lose validity and meaning as discussed in Section 4.2, resulting in an abandonment of positivist methodologies in this thesis and an acceptance of interpretivism as a valid means of inquiry.

4.1.2 A Hermeneutic Investigation

This investigation is built upon a hermeneutic foundation that incorporates narrative inquiry to reveal further insights into a participant's socially constructed world. A hermeneutic investigation has the researcher iteratively cycling between the literature, the field, and analysis, and allows a reflexive approach which incorporates a refocusing and changes in the direction of research as new developments and insights come to light. This avoids the hindering of the investigation in an attempt to meet inappropriate measures of validity. A hermeneutic approach is one where:

We come to understand a complex whole from preconceptions about the meanings of its parts and their interrelationships. (Klein & Myers, 1999, p.71)

With such an approach, contextualisation, interaction, abstraction, generalisation, reasoning, multiple interpretations and suspicion are foundation stones, allowing the exploration of interdisciplinary approaches (Arthur et al., 1989). Indeed, a hermeneutic approach was undertaken in the development of the model of analysis presented in Section 3.5.4. As a consequence, reading, research and analysis were performed throughout the course of the research as new understandings came to light:

The fieldworker, on the other hand, is continuously engaged in something very like hypothesis testing, but that effectively checks perception and understanding against the whole range of possible sources of error. He or she draws tentative conclusions from his or her current understanding of the situation as a whole, and acts upon them. (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p.24)

In the more specific field of identity inquiry, Kerpelman (2001) also notes that existing ideas should be understood and acknowledged by those researching in the field of identity, but that the existing theory should not constrain new thinking as it does in the positivist paradigm. Perhaps another way of expressing this approach is to note that the data is not derived from a method based on a detailed question: the detailed questions come from the data.

4.2 Epistemological Stance of this Investigation

The 'way of knowing' of this investigation is founded on the belief that human behaviour is based on finding meaning, using symbols, to find a shared reality (Mead, 1934). As we all

have our own reality, what is real to one person may not be real to another. This investigation rejects the notion of ‘man as an island’ who is either totally independent of the environment, or is a slavish devotee of it. Rather, human beings are conscious actors who engage with their surrounds (Mir & Watson, 2000) and their perceptions of those, to construct meaning and make a sense of the world in which they find themselves (Giddens, 1991; Smircich, 1985). Consequently, this investigation is not a modernist ‘scientific’ study with tested hypotheses, but rather a postmodernist one that rejects the concept of the autonomous individual. In rejecting the autonomous individual and accepting the interactive and constructed world, there is an imposition of a responsibility on the researcher that does not, but perhaps ought to, exist in modernity to do justice to the participants. Gregg (1991) says:

There is an additional obligation ... one oddly incumbent on those who employ life-historical and interpretive methods, but not on those who favor quantification: an ethical and political obligation to nonreductionistically "do justice" to [participants] this obligation is not at all antithetical to the conduct of good science, and that the question of how to "do justice" to a life is in fact a scientific one, which will forever reside at the core of personality psychology. (Gregg, 1991, p.xvii)

Justice to research participants is a function of the researcher, and in this investigation flows from a common background, education, and experiences between the researcher and participant. Knowledge, understanding, and our conception of these things are based on what foundations we employ, the scope of knowledge, and the validity of knowledge. These will be discussed now. The ontological basis for this investigation is subjective, and makes no pretences to be objective in the foundations of what we know (Section 4.2.1), the scope of what we know (Section 4.2.2), and the validity of what we know (Section 4.2.3).

4.2.1 The Foundation of Knowledge

Ancient cultures built knowledge on tradition and ancestral teachings that were handed down from generation to generation, and their validity was in their survivability and the facilitation of the given culture to continue propagating. Knowledge was deduced argued based on the mores of the day, be it Grecian philosophers, Roman gods, or tribal mythologies and was collectivist in its nature. The period known as ‘The Enlightenment’ presented the individual with knowledge acquired through scientific methods and rational deduction based on observations, with a rise of reason over authority and traditional values that set free the individual from their context (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). From the modernist values, knowledge is founded on the scientific method, the discrete manipulation of data sets, the assumption that all other things remain the same, and the mathematical modelling of ‘fact’ from which knowledge can be deduced and rationalised. As Gregg (1991) says:

The world known by modern science no longer stood in need of interpretation, but of measurement and experiment. The modern universe was no longer ordered by the laws of rhetoric, but of logic. And there was incontrovertible proof: the calculus in the hands of Leibniz and Newton accomplished what poetry in the hands of Milton and Dante could never approximate. The Church could silence Galileo for only so long. Yet in spite of the diligence of the Enlightenment and its twentieth-century descendants, the world has not been thoroughly scientized. For at the very heart of modernity dwells an entity constructed on the principles and after the fashion of medieval metaphysics: human personality. (Gregg, 1991, p.xiii)

Latour (1987) makes the shift beyond the modernist, and argues such a modernist rendering ignores the placement of the human in context, the interaction that the human has with his or her environment, and the subjective nature in which humans experience their world. Accordingly, the observations of social scientists are based on (context dependent) observation (McCracken, 1988) and therefore contain ‘constructed truth’ where meaning and knowledge is negotiated (Calhoun, 1994). Human behaviour is based on finding meaning, using symbols, to construct a shared reality (Knights & Willmott, 1999), and so the foundation of knowledge has shifted beyond that of modernism, and some may argue ‘back’, to that of constructed truths and identity in context.

4.2.2 The Scope of Knowledge

Having returned to the idea of the person in context and the constructed truth in the human world, the scope of human knowledge presents itself for consideration. Whereas the positivists knew what it was that they were testing in order to build their hypothesis (Kirk & Miller, 1986) and therefore could not seek new knowledge but merely sought to confirm bias and suspicion, the post-modernist approach emphasises:

The centrality of discourse - textuality - where the constitutive powers of language are emphasised ... Fragmented identities, emphasising subjectivity as a process and the death of the individual ... The power/knowledge connection where the impossibilities in separating power from knowledge are assumed and knowledge loses a sense of innocence and neutrality. (Alvesson, & Deetz, 1996). p.205)

Accordingly, the post-modernist investigator rejects the notion that researchers are ‘discoverers’ of ‘natural’ phenomena, and that adherence to systematic protocol and technique will eliminate all biases from the research process, as objectivity is a myth (Feyerabend, 1995; Latour, 1987), and the separation of people from their context is invalid (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

In the post-modernist investigation, the ‘unit of analysis’ is between that of the personal and the social as the individual interacts with their environment (Down & Reveley, 2004), as even the creation of facts is a collective process undertaken by humans working co-operatively

(Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). It is therefore so that postmodernist investigations provide unique and important ways to understand people and their context that modernist investigations do not (Latour, 1987).

4.2.3 Validity in this Investigation

This investigation is qualitative in nature and seeks to explore the constructed identities of high-achieving IT professionals at work. Language such as ‘validity’ is often reserved for quantitative investigations, where a reliance exists on statistical or methodological rigour with which to convey validity, and where validity is decided on by adhering to a defined process such as hypothesis testing or the statistical manipulation of discrete data points. The paradigm of positivist objectivism assumes an objective truth, which a socially constructivist paradigm does not accept. Validity of knowledge is not a function of procedure or rules, but of relevance. A hypothetico-deductive approach does not facilitate the understanding of the political and subjective nature of organisational life (K. J. Gergen, 1999a; Hassard, 1991) and quantitative analysis oversimplifies identity investigations (Phillips, 2002). As noted by Gioia et al. (2000):

Physicists would never employ phenomenology to understand the behavior of atoms. Why, then, do organization theorists so easily employ the frameworks of physics to understand social behavior? (Gioia et al., 2000, p.145)

Indeed, as Kirk and Millar (1986) note in *‘Reliability and validity in qualitative research’*, the validity of such quantitative investigations hinges on instrumentation, which is circular as only another instrument can tell the researcher if their instrument is ‘accurate’ or not. Therefore, the invalidity of essentialist identity as discussed in Chapter 2 prohibits the use of surveys, questionnaires or other such forms of data gathering and analysis.

Because of the qualitative and constructivist underpinning of this investigation, validity will not be shown by method and statistical rigour as in positivist or objectivist investigations. The very nature of a qualitative investigation is one that does not rely on data points and numerical abstraction which could be extracted from the participant’s front-stage narrative (Section 4.5.3). Indeed, Mir and Watson (2000) argue that it is nonsensical to suggest that it is possible to separate the researcher and the researched, or the theory from the practice. They also argue that ‘researcher objectivity’ or ‘value-neutral research’ is a myth.

The myth of researcher objectivity is especially worthy of consideration in the study of identity, as Nkomo & Cox (1996) say:

The study of identity is especially difficult because identity does not lend itself to discrete measurement. Quantitative survey methods may fail to capture the complex meaning and construction of identity. Scales can only measure quantity (or strength) of identity... They cannot measure the question of quality: in what way is identity manifested? To understand the cultural meaning and the variability in the meaning of identity among social groups within organisations, researchers need to expand their methodologies. (Nkomo & Cox Jr, 1996, p.350)

The problems that are presented in such an investigation are not addressed by positivist lines of inquiry, and it can be argued they are hindered by the imposition of irrelevant measures of validity:

Qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms. (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p.9)

Therefore, validity must be found through meaning, the sense one can convey and extract, and the authenticity of the investigation. As Riessman (1993) notes, validity is:

The process through which we make claims for the trust-worthiness of our interpretations, is the critical issue. "Trustworthiness" not "truth" is a key semantic difference: The latter assumes an objective reality, whereas the former moves the process into the social world. There are at least four ways of approaching validation in narrative work. Each has possibilities but also problems. (Riessman, 1993, p.65)

The four ways that Riessman (1993) suggest are persuasiveness and plausibility, if an investigator could take the result back to those studied, coherence, and the extent that a particular study becomes the basis for others' future work. Therefore, this thesis must be considered valid if:

- The reader finds this thesis plausible, persuasive, relevant, and coherent,
- The reader considers "justice" (Gregg, 1991) has been done to the participants,
- The researcher felt that the result could be taken back to the participants (which is the case, but has not occurred),
- Another builds on this work (which can not occur as yet, but hopefully may be the case in the future, discussed in Section 15.6).

In part, the validity of this investigation will therefore come from the reader themselves. To this end, an extended extract of each participant's narrative is provided in the appendices, and the reader is invited to engage with that extract. As the extended extract is read, it is expected that the reader will see the identity assets proposed by the researcher for themselves emerge from the text, before these are in turn addressed later in the chapter on each participant in more detail and using other examples from the narratives to support the researcher's interpretation.

4.3 Narrative Inquiry

Weick and Roberts (1993), in their seminal investigation of identity and ‘hero’ pilots, used the analysis of narrative which they thought brought a richness to their enquiry of identity in that context. This point is supported by Gergen (1999b; 1999c) and Whitty (2002) who note that it is a richness that reductionist based forms of enquiries do not offer, and which is founded in the social nature of human beings (M. M. Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Indeed, some commentators go so far as to claim ‘enchantment’ (Nell, 1988a, 1988b) with the story that is told.

Narratives are a useful tool for analysis of identity because of the storied nature of our selves (Benwell & Stokoe 2006):

Stories that social actors use to make sense of - indeed, in order to act in - their lives [and] are used to define who we are; this in turn is a pre-condition for knowing what to do. This ‘doing’ will in turn produce new narratives and hence new actions; the relationship between narrative and ontology is processual and mutually constitutive. Both are conditions of the other; neither are a priori. Narrative location endows social actors with identities - however multiple, ambiguous, ephemeral, or conflicting they may be... narratives are social and interpersonal. (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.61)

The interdependent nature of narrative and identity make the former the best way of investigating the latter, a point made by Riessman (1993):

[Narrative based inquiry] is well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity. (Riessman, 1993, p.5)

4.3.1 Background on Narrative Inquiry

The use of narrative inquiry requires the researcher to listen to what the participants have to say, and not attempt to brow-beat their contributions into a researcher-defined matrix of viewpoint that either confirms or reject the researcher’s bias. Rather, narrative inquiry requires the researcher to start with an open mind, to listen, to pick through what the participants say, and to engage with them as people in context.

Whereas the modernist scientist who adheres to the dogma of science will try and make the data fit the hypothesis, the postmodernist narrativist will see what theory emerged from the data. In some regards, the postmodernist narrativist does what the original naturalist did: observe and deduce, as opposed to the modern modernist who formulates and tests. As Somers and Gibson (1994) note, modern science is simply an encoded history that builds on

the stories of other scientists, and which, to paraphrase Latour (1987), are passed off as an objective truth.

To listen to people talk, the researcher:

Make[s] real [the] phenomena in the stream of consciousness. (Riessman, 1993, p.22)

This outpouring of the participants' perceptions, stories, and metaphors form the foundation for how they view themselves, the world they live in, and their place in that world. They do not represent what is 'out there'. Rather, the narrative is seated in relationships, culture, and the context of institution (Somers & Gibson, 1994). The narrative represents what the participant assumes, interprets, and believes. The job of the listener is to listen attentively and interpret this outpouring.

4.3.2 The Context of Narrative

The links between context and identity have been discussed in Section 2.3, and those between identity and narrative in Section 1.2. In essence, identity, narrative and context are interlinked, and incorporate social forces, social interactions, and engaging with the environment. As Somers & Gibson state:

Joining narrative to identity introduces time, space, and analytic rationality - each of which is excluded from the categorical or "essentialist" approach to identity. While a social identity or categorical approach presumes internally stable concepts such that under normal conditions entities within that category will act predictably, the narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space and thus precludes categorical stability in action. These temporally and spatially shifting configurations form the relational coordinates of ontological, public, and cultural narratives. It is within these temporal and multi-layered narratives that identities are formed; hence narrative identity is processual and relational. (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.65)

Beyer & Hannah (2002) support this view, and observe that context is inseparable from the construction, that past experience affects assimilation into a new working environment in differing ways, and that personal identity and context/environment influence each other. An important aspect of their work as it applies to this investigation is their focus on the technology professional, namely an engineer, and his or her choice to be identified as such based on education and work experiences. In doing so, identity is built in the context of employment.

4.3.3 Methodological Merits of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative has been used for conveying social knowledge, values and identity (Linde, 2001), sharing tacit knowledge (Goldstein, 1993), and for the rediscovery of the old (Kolb, 2002). It has been used as a means of understanding (K. J. Gergen, 1999a, 1999c; M. M. Gergen & Gergen, 1984), organisational learning (Goldstein, 1993), and in gaining an initial understanding of insight of a participant's social world (M. M. Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Narrative has been used in identity challenging environments (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). in the understanding the identity of clinician-managers in hospitals at a time of change (Doolin, 2002), and the construction of identity based on subjective perception (Knowles, 1999; Whitty, 2002). Importantly, Tan & Hunter (2003) have positively evaluated narrative for use with IS professionals.

In using narrative analysis to investigate the constructed identity of high-achieving IT professionals, it is worth noting that the giver of the narrative is creating a self of how they want to be known (Riessman, 1993). Adams and Marshall (1996) subsequently cite Marcia (1993) to support this, and note that identity cannot be studied or understood from simplistic assertions or discreet responses to predefined questions as identity is constructed in an ongoing and evolving manner. Further, the listener forms part of this construction of identity. As noted above, Riessman (1993) makes explicit linkages between narrative and identity, noting that narrative is well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity. Further, Nicholson and West (1989) argue strongly for the consideration of the 'careers as journey' to be studied as constructs by means of interpretive approaches such as narrative analysis.

In justifying the merits of narrative inquiry in investigating the identity of high-achieving IT professionals, the words of Beyer & Hannah (2002) should be considered:

The personal identities that were expressed by the respondents in this study emphasize their work-related identities because they were asked about their experiences in work settings during our interview with them. Such work-related personal identities include job skills and therefore reflect job content - especially what people know how to do. However ... people may generalize aspects of their work-related personal identities to their general identities so that how they see themselves at work is related to how they see themselves in general. (Beyer & Hannah, 2002, p.638)

The participants in this investigation were identified by a work related construct – that of being a high-achieving IT professional, and all chose to give their narratives at work. All discussed their job skill and job content, and the analysis done on their narratives reveals the general identities that emerge from their work-centric narrative.

4.4 Collection of Narratives

This section summarises the practicalities of the collection of narratives, and covers the selection of the participants (Section 4.4.1), the ethical approval that was obtained so as to respect them and their rights as people (Section 4.4.2), the guidelines that the solicitation of narratives followed (Section 4.4.3), and the mechanics of that solicitation (Section 4.4.4).

4.4.1 Participant Selection

Participants were selected on the grounds of being perceived by their peers as successful or ‘high-achieving’ IT professionals. The term ‘high-achieving’ was not defined in prescriptive terms such as Smits et al. (1993) had done, but left to the subjective understandings of the IT professionals contacted. The general understanding of ‘high-achieving’ by those contacted was that the IT professionals they referred to the researcher stood out from their peers in terms of either their technical skills and prowess, or their achievements in the IT industry (or both).

Prospective participants were identified through word-of-mouth originating from the listener’s technology industry networks. The message was that “high-achieving IT professionals” were being sought. Initially the listener’s old colleagues were called upon, along with professional and industry contacts. These people then asked their colleagues and professional and industry contacts, with the net effect being that of a virus spreading and reporting back until, over a period of almost a year ten prospective participants were identified. In addition, some participants further referred others as participants selection and the elicitation of narratives unfolded over the year. The referrers of participants, in so readily being able to suggest prospective participants, appeared to understand, accept, and impose the social identity of “high-achieving IT professional” on the people that they referred. That no prospective participant appeared shocked at being approached or declined on the grounds that they had been misidentified, suggest that the prospective participants also understood and accepted the social identity of “high-achieving IT professional”.

All prospective participants were initially contacted by email, of which a generic sample is shown in Appendix I. The essence of the email contained a declaration;

- That research was being performed into high-achieving IT professionals and how they saw the world,
- That they had been identified as such a high-achieving IT professional,
- Who had identified them (after seeking the identifier’s permission to do so),

- Who was coordinating the research,
- That the time commitment would be approximately an hour,
- That the researcher would like to meet with them to discuss their participation.

A total of ten participants were selected and asked if they would like to participate, and nine agreed. The sole abstainer said he felt flattered that his peers held him in such high regard, but that he was so heavily engrossed in a large project that he would not be able to participate. While this claim to enmeshment with his project yields insights into his identity, he was not pursued beyond a follow-up email to which he maintained his unavailability.

There was no dependant relationship between the parties involved in the study other than that of researcher and voluntary participant. The methodologies selected for this inquiry are intensive and yield vast data arrays. It is accepted that large ‘sample sizes’ are not necessary, and can in fact be counterproductive as the data produced overwhelms the researcher and drowns the voice of individual participants.

The people who agreed to participate in this research were assigned pseudonyms that began with the order in which they gave their narrative, with ‘A’ being the first and ‘I’ the ninth and last. The participants are summarised in Table 4.1, below.

Table 4.1 Participant Summary

Participant	Age	One Line Synopsis	Referred by
Alan	Early 30's	Active software developer, working on a large industrial project.	A colleague
Bruce	Late 50's	Ex-electronics technician, who moved into computers and now management.	An ex-colleague
Charles	Mid 50's	Ex-electronics technician, who moved into computers. Linux advocate.	A colleague
David	Early 70's	Ex-military electronics engineer, who built the department he now manages.	An industry partner
Erika	Mid 40's	Eastern Bloc immigrant, and self-identified IT “geek”.	David
Frederic	Late 30's	Developer, turned consultant, turned salesman, turned manager.	Someone who hired Frederic
Gerald	Mid 30's	Bullied “maths geek”, strategist, and now manager.	Frederic
Harold	Mid 40's	Mentored cadet and technology-business integrator, turned executive.	A fellow board member
Ian	Early 60's	Corporate executive and IT entrepreneur.	A co-investor

In the initial meeting, participants were advised that no identifying information would be used in the write-up of the research, that they would not be individually identifiable, and that all identifying information, such as participant information forms, would be stored in accordance with AUT Ethics Committee guidelines. The prospective participants were briefed more fully

on the research, including their right to withdraw at any time, in conjunction with the participant information sheet and consent form, and asked if they would like to volunteer.

As there is no dependency associated with these informal networks, the potential for coercion was negligible. In discussing the research with those potential participants, the voluntary nature of the research was stressed, and no pressure for participation was applied. A participants consent form (Appendix III) was provided, along with a participants information form, which was signed and returned before commencing the narrative solicitation. The identifying personal information of every participant has been sanitised to preserve their privacy, and a false name assigned to each narrative. Only non-identifying information is presented in the introduction of each participant's narrative, and this has been done to aid the reader in building a mental picture of the participant and to help distinguish the participants in the minds-eye of the reader.

4.4.2 Ethical Approval

This research was approved by the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEK) on 2 July 2004. The AUTEK reference number was 04/47. A copy of AUTEK's letter granting approval is in Appendix IV.

4.4.3 Interview Guidelines

The participant interviews were conducted in a manner that was designed to allow for the free expression of the participant's thoughts and feelings. While it was hoped that the narrative would explore workplace relationships, interactions, and perceptions of status and rewards with the participants, no specific questions, such as "*What reward structure best suits you?*" were given to the participants as these questions often yield front-stage responses (discussed in Section 4.4.4, below). As Riessman (1993) notes:

Respondents (if not interrupted with standardized questions) will hold the floor for lengthy turns and sometimes organize replies into long stories. Traditional approaches to qualitative analysis often fracture these texts in the service of interpretation and generalization by taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response edited out of context. They eliminate the sequential and structural features that characterize narrative accounts. (Riessman, 1993, p.3)

The starting questions are presented in Appendix II, and these are open-ended, allowing the participant to "hold the floor" and give their stories in their own way. These stories are presentations of the participant's identity.

Subsequent questions such as “*Who do you work with? Describe them?*” were used on occasion and were designed to obtain insights into the participant’s perspectives on relationships and interactions with others, and reveal the context and status as perceived by the participants. Alternatively, questions such as “*How would you describe yourself? How do you think others see you?*” are overt questions on self-identity, and participants’ perceptions of others’ perception of them.

4.4.4 Mechanics of Narrative Solicitation

As Tan & Hunter (2003) used the resume of IS professionals as a starting point in the solicitation of their narrative, this investigation used similar comments to spark the narrative (Appendix II), while not confining, judging, or influencing it any way, as warned against by McCracken (1988).

The narratives were obtained (and analysis begun) over the period of almost a year, until theoretical saturation was achieved. As noted above, after a potential participant had been identified, he or she was sent an email that advised them as such, and asked for their assistance. If the potential participant agreed to discuss it further, an initial meeting was scheduled so as to establish the foundations and frameworks and build a rapport of sorts between the listener and the participant giving their narrative. Only one identified potential participant declined the invitation to meet in the generic email that was sent. Should there not be a ‘match’ at this meeting, such as the participant trusting or valuing the listener, it was hoped that the email recipient would be able to open further networks for the listener. Every potential participant that met with the listener agreed to participate in the research.

The second meeting and the collection of the narrative involved meeting with the participant at a time and in a place of their choosing, which could have been their place of business, their home, the university where this research was being driven from, or at another place agreeable to the participant. It was suggested that the participant decide on when and where this occurred in the hope that the open invitation would make the participant feel comfortable.

Once the listener arrived, the participant was allowed to guide the subsequent events and drive the pace at which they readied for the solicitation and the pace that it took place. The narrative was not intended to be structured in any particular way (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The narrative was audio-taped for later transcription, notes were taken, and the solicitation was not terminated until the participation indicated that they had said all they wanted to say. The shortest narrative was one hour, and the longest was three hours.

4.5 Narrative Analysis

This section discusses the procedure of the actual analysis of the participants' narratives. The narratives were considered as individual data sets to be analysed and interpreted on their own, and it was from this process that the individual themes and identity assets presented in Section B emerged. Benwell & Stokoe (2006) argue that there is no correct or singular way of analysing narratives, and accordingly that it is up to the interpretation of the researcher to engage with an individual narrative as a natural act:

Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations. There is no hard distinction in postpositivist research between fact and interpretation. (Riessman, 1993, p.2)

The participant narratives were subsequently re-analysed as collective body to establish common themes across all the narratives, as suggested by Potter & Wetherall (1987), and these are presented and discussed in Section C.

In performing the analysis, the analytical model presented and discussed in Section 3.5.4 was created, kept in hand, modified, and validated in the hermeneutic manner presented and justified in Section 4.1.2.

The location of the author is declared in Section 4.5.1 as both Riessman (1993) and Mir & Watson (2000) note that it is important to locate oneself in the analysis prior to commencing the analysis:

All constructivists believe that ... the separation of the researcher (subject) and the phenomena under investigation (object) is not feasible. (Mir & Watson, 2000, p.942)

The mechanics of the narrative analysis are discussed in Section 4.5.2, with special attention being paid to the front-stage vs. back stage narrative in Section 4.5.3. The unspoken 'extra-narratives' that emerged in the analysis are discussed from an analytical methodology viewpoint in Section 4.5.4.

4.5.1 Locating the Listener

The listener is a New Zealand born IT&T/Engineering trade and graduate qualified male who was in his late thirties at the time of listening to the narratives. His upbringing was typical of someone who has a minority mixed-blood where the minority blood was drowned in derision cast upon it by all members of the extended family. For the class-conscious, his family would be classified as lower class, with his father being a taxi-driver and his mother a cleaner and contract fruit picker, and later a sickness beneficiary. Alcohol and violence featured

prominently, meaning the listener was always watching, listening, interpreting and anticipating his environment as a means to protect himself and his younger sibling. Observation and interpretation were essential survival skills as he ran away from home on numerous occasions, with tales of perilous night-time trips on an illegal motorcycle through the back roads of rural New Zealand, and stumbling across whanau from a grandparent's illegitimate offspring at 10pm in a small-town burger bar. After a subsequent stint labouring and living in his car, he moved in with a Minister of the Presbyterian Church for a year, and returned to school.

The schooling of the listener was an abstract and surreal experience that gave him sanctuary and did not challenge him. His desire for solitude lead him to wiring a speaker from the stereo into his room and an indirect result of this was a cadetship as a telecommunications technician the last time he left school. This grew into a collection of trade qualifications and two technical degrees obtained after practical work followed by a repeating cycle of study, consulting, and boredom. These cycles facilitated observation in the workplace, consulting offices and engineering faculties, which he sought to explain to himself through formalised business studies. He observed that today's organisations depend on IT professionals for growth and survival, and high-achieving ones are sought after, with little thought of each on the other. He also observed the behaviour of these IT professionals as he was one and worked alongside them, or studied beside them, every day. The behaviour, expectations, and reactions of others were also closely observed as a means of advancing their personal career and maximizing their technical outputs and wealth. The desire to gain an understanding on how other IT professionals achieve the same, as well as perceive themselves and their role within the organisation grew. His scientific background convinced the listener that the scientific method was not an appropriate tool to be employed in understanding the vagaries of the human animal: an animal that interacts with its environment to change both itself and its environment, and an animal that will lie and deceive others as well as itself using its own words.

This research therefore is founded in the narrative of the individual that the listener has heard, and again watched for, listened to and interpreted. By looking at the situation with an experienced, open, and informed mind, educated in both engineer's rational logic and the academic's openness to understanding, he can then turn Plato's light on his environment and bring forward pathways to positive experiences in work.

4.5.2 Mechanics of the Analysis

Riessman (1993) provides a 5-level representation of narrative analysis, which includes Attending, Telling, Transcribing, Analysing and Reading the narrative that a participant gives. These levels are not definitive, and Riessman uses the word “porous” (1993, p.8) to describe them.

Level 1: Attending to the Narrative

The first level involves attending to the experience of the narrative, and requires the acknowledgement that the experience always exists, but that:

By attending, I make certain phenomena meaningful ... There is choice in what I notice, a selection from the totality of the unreflected on. (Riessman, 1993, p.9)

In attending the giving of the narrative, the listener participates in the construction of the narrative, and becomes part of the narrative. Whilst the experience in the narrative exist independent of the listener, the expression of these experiences by the participant and the formation of the narrative involves the listener, and at this point the listener becomes part of the construction of the narrative which is told.

Level 2: Telling of the Narrative

The telling of the narrative is a an act that the participant and the listener both individually and collectively participate in. As Riessman (1993) says:

The story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener ... In telling about an experience, [the participant is] also creating a self - how [they] want to be known. (Riessman, 1993, p.11)

The participant tells his or her narrative and constructs the listener into it, choosing what he or she will say. In doing so, the participant tailors aspects of the narrative to the listener, and even if the listener was passive he becomes part of its telling in this process. The telling of the narrative was recorded on audio-cassettes, for later transcription.

Level 3: Transcription of the Narrative

The first step in the formal analysis of the narratives was to have them transcribed by a third party. The transcripts were then gone over in conjunction with the audio cassettes to ensure the transcriber had not made any errors or omissions.

The transcription of the narrative sought to capture the colloquialism of the language used by the participants, but not to the level of showing the structure of the language, the stresses on differing syllables, or the actual length of pauses.

These seemingly mundane choices of what to include and how to arrange and display the text have serious implications for how a reader will understand the narrative. (Riessman, 1993, p.12)

While many discourse analysts note the importance of these details, a linguistic or conversational analysis approach was not the focus of this investigation. Of more interest was what the participants said, rather than how they said it. The transcribed narratives were then analysed.

Level 4: Analysing of the Narrative

The analysis of the narrative is best relayed in Riessman's own words:

The challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation. An investigator sits with pages of tape-recorded stories ... and tries to create sense ... the analyst creates a metastory about what happened by telling what the interview narratives signify, editing and reshaping what was told, and turning it into a hybrid story. (Riessman, 1993, p.13)

The analysis of each narrative involved repeated close readings, ponderings, and the use of manually collated associations of extracts from the narrative. Firstly, each narrative was analysed in its own right and in isolation from the others to see the stories that emerged, and how each participant performed and presented their construction of themselves. These emplotted stories (Somers & Gibson, 1994) were identified and are presented in the analysis of each participant. In doing the storied analysis, 'nuggets' of extracts from the narrative were identified and placed upon a large flat surface⁶ covered in sticky-tape. As the listener sat on the couch in his office, the extracted nuggets were easily visible allowing hours of pondering which nuggets were related to others, and how. Snap decisions on these relationships could also be made as the listener entered or exited the door. The extracts were then read and re-read closely and moved accordingly to be grouped and regrouped as the themes revealed themselves to analysis. A photograph of one such narrative part way through the thematic extraction is included in Appendix XVII. This technique was used in conjunction with thematic noting on an adjacent whiteboard, a snapshot of which is shown in Appendix XVI. It was during this stage that the model emerged, which hermeneutically informed the analysis. These resulting identity assets that emerged from each narrative are presented in Section B.

Subsequently, the narratives were re-read, re-listened to, and re-analysed to identify common themes and other commonalities in the narratives, using the same technique of sticky-tape, long ponderings, and snap decisions. These are then presented in Section C.

⁶ Namely the back of the listener's office door.

Level 5: Reading of the Analysis of the Narrative

The reading of the analysis of the narrative is the final level, and the one that therefore decides if the analysis has been valid (Section 4.2.3). Because of the subjective nature of the interpretation of the narratives and the lack of one true and correct method of analysis (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), there can be no definitive and absolute interpretation to emerge. However, the reader should be able to engage with the analysis and be persuaded to accept it as valid. Cote (1996b) comments on the reading of narrative material and the criticism of different interpretations, saying:

Life-historical researchers have often justifiably been criticized for with-holding their data: for giving their readers interpretive summaries of narrative material and presenting interview excerpts only as illustrations. This quite naturally leaves the reader wondering if he or she might come up with different interpretations upon seeing the text itself. I have therefore chosen to present as much of the verbatim texts as possible. (Cote, 1996b, p.419)

For the reader of this analysis, the listener has sought to follow Cote's path and has included as much of the transcript possible while addressing the analytic requirements of an investigation into constructed identity and the space constraints of a PhD thesis.

4.5.3 Frontstage and Backstage Narratives

Bryant's (2005) investigation of narratives and organisational change exposed the existence of frontstage narratives. Frontstage narratives are character-laden, littered with the positive aspects of change, and are acceptable to the organisation, whereas with backstage narratives:

Performers step out of character and openly construct illusions and impressions which may knowingly contradict performances or narratives developed in the frontstage ... backstage constructions of organizational change are more natural or valid than those constructed in the frontstage as the performer is not in the presence of the organization or their managers as an audience. (Bryant, 2005, p.9)

Accordingly, narrative solicitation was conducted away from colleagues and supervisors, and anonymity was assured. The backstage narrative may only reveal itself during analysis and after long and considered contemplation or a sudden dawning on the listener of what was not said as often as what was said. This point of the said versus the not-said is also explored in the summary and explanation of the many methods of analysis of discourse by Stubbe et al. (2003).

4.5.4 Unspoken Extra-Narrative Features

The identity construction that can be obtained through analysis of a narrative is not exclusively contained in the spoken narrative: there are indications of the construction of

identity by the participant in their physical surrounds, their actions and mannerisms and in their rituals. Halford and Leonard (2006) talk of unspoken artefacts of identity in their investigation of workplace subjectivity, Davies & Harre (1990) acknowledge the non-verbal in identity, and as previously discussed Riessman (1993) notes that attending to the experience is an important part of the analysis as is noting things that are not said.

In particular, Riessman (1993) notes that observing the participant extends beyond the telling of a narrative:

I describe the setting, characters, unfolding plot, and stitch the story together in a way that makes my interpretation of the events clear. To capture the moment on that particular morning, I describe at great length the sunlight, the color of the men's lungis and the women's saris, bringing these objects from the real world of the beach to a narrative space in my friends' living room in Cambridge, MA. My rendering draws on resources from my cultural context, notably the gender-based division of labor that all participants in the conversation value as a category of analysis. [In telling, I] refashion the events in response to their cues and, to make the importance of the scene real for them, expand on what the moment means in the larger context of my life plans for living and working in India. By talking and listening, we produce a narrative together. (Riessman, 1993, p.10)

Such eloquence and visual imagery cannot be obtained from a simple survey, and nor can it be obtained from a rarefied analysis of the participant's story and the emerging themes without observing, presenting, and discussing the non-verbal clues and artefacts used by the participant in the construction of their identity. Accordingly, at the beginning of each chapter on each participant there is an introduction of the participant and how they presented themselves to the listener, and how they were perceived. They are a part of the narrative and yet extra to it in that they are not spoken.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the postmodernist and constructivist epistemological stance of the investigation and justified the use of narrative inquiry to achieve that. The collection of narratives has been explained and justified along with the mechanics and foundations of the narrative analysis performed.

Section B

Analysis

The chapters in this section present an analysis of each participant's narrative in this research. Each analysis was initially performed independently of other participants with each narrative being treated as an individual data set. (The analysis of the emerging themes and commonalities across the narratives is presented and discussed in Section C.)

The order that the participants' narratives are presented in broadly represents three groupings: those technologists still working in IT services, being Alan, Charles, and Erica; those technologists who have moved onto IT management roles, being David and Bruce; and finally those technologists who have moved into the commercial sphere; Gerald, Frederic, Harold and Ian. In some regards, these groupings are akin to Kunda's (1992) operators, engineers, and executives.

In each chapter in this section, the participant is introduced with a vignette, and the nature of their narrative is presented for the reader. One of the problems facing a narrative analyst is how to present the detailed 'hybrid story' (Riessman, 1993) of multiple participants without overwhelming the reader (or for that matter university thesis word limits). Consequently, a decision was made to include in the main thesis the full narrative analysis for one of each of the three groupings, namely Alan, David, and Gerald. This was done to demonstrate how the detailed narrative was performed. For the remaining participants, Charles, Erika, Bruce, Frederic, Harold and Ian, a summary of the narrative analyses are presented, with the full analysis being removed to the appendices. The appendices also contain an extended extract from each of the participants' narratives including the listener's comments, as this extended narrative encompasses many of the themes and identity assets that emerge in narrative. It also means the extracts referred to in the analysis have been presented in context and in their entirety, showing the interdependence and complexity of the identity themes and assets. From some of the extracts, extraneous comments like the listener's affirmations of "yeah" and "OK" have been removed from the narrative, and examples of the assets are often presented in a chronological order in the participant's life or as they were presented in his or her narrative.

After introducing each participant and his or her narrative, the identity capital assets were identified in the analysis are discussed in depth (for Alan, David, and Gerald) or summarised (for Charles, Erika, Bruce, Frederic, Harold and Ian in this section, and in depth in the appendices). The final part of each chapter integrates these findings in terms of the analytical model of identity construction presented in Section 3.5.4, including the general sources of identity on which the identity assets proposed appear were built, and a discussion of the interrelationships between the identity assets that have emerged. These identity assets are presented in graphical format to allow the reader to relate these back to the analytical model. These diagrams are not causal or absolute, but are meant to be illustrative, and to assist the reader in understanding the analysis.

5.1 Introducing Alan

Alan is a New Zealand born male of British-European decent in his early thirties. He comes from a modest socio-economic background where he attended a generic co-educational state school in a large New Zealand city. At the time of narrative solicitation, Alan had been working for four years as a ‘Senior Software Developer’ for an export-focused company that designs, builds and sells complex tooling and manufacturing machines. He had been living with for eight years with his female partner of eleven years. Alan spends his spare time landscaping his home with his partner, and professes a lapsed interest in Tai Kwon Do.

Alan completed a 4-year undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering with honours in three and a half years, and while doing this was employed in computer support and systems administration. After completing his undergraduate degree in engineering, Alan took an offer for a job that came from this part-time work and moved into software-based control systems, designing the systems and writing the code. In this role, he travelled widely and was often away on contracts for his employer for months at a time.

Several years later, Alan returned to study for an undergraduate degree in computer science which he achieved in two years, and his current role has grown from his first job out of this second degree. His narrative was the first given, and he is the first of three participants presented who are still active in the technical side of the IT industry.

Alan’s referral as a high-achieving IT professional was founded on his current coding endeavours and his acknowledged position as lynchpin at his employers, as well as the academic success he had during his second degree. It was said of Alan that “this is a guy who is going places”.

5.2 Alan’s Narrative

All participants nominated the location and place for giving their narrative (Section 4.4.4), and for Alan this was in his employer’s boardroom, where he sat with his back to the workshop-floor while giving his narrative. The interview occurred at a time when Alan was

officially on annual leave. By sitting with his back to the factory, Alan compelled the listener to see him in the context of the factory in the listener's peripheral vision. Alan was also the only person (apart from the receptionist) observed to be wearing the company-branded T-shirt.

Prior to giving his narrative and without prompting, Alan took the listener to the office he shares with other developers and spent a lengthy period of time demonstrating the code he writes. On entering the office he shares with his colleagues, he was greeted with a worshipping gesture⁷ from one of them, and both these actions suggest identification with role and his status as Senior Software Developer and with the code that he writes. The visibility of the two-screen PC setup, showing his process development arena with the other administrative communication programs like email, appeared to demonstrate his connectivity to the business. An email was opened and clearly visible which said 'Alan was not due at work that week', and the demonstration of his code whilst this email was displayed beside it reinforces the overt identity work being performed.

In speaking, Alan gave extended technical explanations and descriptions both of the code and his life experiences. He spent considerable periods of time discussing his keyboard-based repetitive strain injuries which he suggests are the result of his coding, and his presentation of his education and career was such that he has played an active role in developing both. He was quite open about the events and experiences he has had in his life to date. Even though Alan was explicit about his perceived shortcomings of the past, it is not apparent that he appreciates the influences these experiences have had on him or his identity, or that his experiences have provided both the meaning and the characteristics of his success (Wagner and Wodak 2006).

While Alan's measured, firm and polite narrative was sequential and chronological, he seemed to locate himself by events rather than dates, such as on moving from one project to another, or adopting and mastering a new technology. It started as a narrative of pleasing, where he sought to find out what the listener wanted to hear. On being prompted with a statement about getting some background information, Alan launched into a chronological explanation for his secondary schooling experiences, providing a detailed explanation of his advancing through school and notably avoiding discussing failure – such events were minimised, glossed over, or not registered. In his narrative, Alan continually referred to some form of hierarchy, mechanisation, and formalisation. These form identity assets that emerge

⁷ Where the 'worshipper' feigns reverence, raises their hands in the air, and performs a series of stunted bows often while mock-chanting "I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy..."

from analysis of his narrative and are discussed later. This hierarchically and mechanistic view occurs variously in the form of an organisational structure, a desired sequence of events such as learning, or in formalised and distinct roles in relationships. After much discussion on technology, Alan appeared keen to show balance and human compassion, turning at length to a focus on relationships that show his concern for others and the efforts he has expended to 'get along' with everybody while maintaining his self-perceived technical reputation. He talked at length about his partner, and his assessment of his colleagues, and his compassion for what he appeared to see as their shortcomings.

Alan's presentation was that of a man keen to exert his competence as well as his balance. He is a serious and contentious man who is deeply involved in, and rightfully proud of, his work and keen to be judged by it. At the first initial meeting, he sought clarification of the metrics of the research and spoke clearly to the points raised and offered assistance, saying where he located himself relative to terms such as 'high-achieving'. His demonstration of his technical prowess and competence was shown in his over-explanation of his study being done concurrently with work, and also in telling how he was regularly sought out and 'shoulder-tapped' for significant roles. His opinion that many technical duties are now beneath him is shown throughout his narrative with singular and seemingly dismissive comments like:

It was basically like a flick of a switch on the payroll system or whatever it was.

Mentally it was quite a tedious type of thing to do.

Alan not only displayed his proficiency with technology, such when he demonstrated his code before giving his narrative, but also expressed his technical mastery at various stages throughout his narrative with buzz-words, or stories on what he did or achieved before moving on to the next event.

An example of his accentuating of his abilities in the telling of a story is when Alan was describing his return to tertiary study to study Computer Science as shown towards the end of the extended extract in Appendix VII. Alan begins with a piece of identity work that utilises the identity asset of balance (discussed in Section 5.3.6) before using other assets of formalised education (Section 5.3.3) and asserting his ability (Section 5.3.1). The extended extract reveals many of the assets that emerge in his narrative, and which are presented and analysed in the following section. After the overemphasis of his abilities and as if to contrast them out, Alan overemphasises his compassion as a human being and this manifests itself as presentation of his balanced identity. His self-perceived balance is shown by his regular reference to his relationship and home life, although this does not show through until he

relaxed into his conversation and his technical credentials are established. The apparent keenness of Alan's to show this balance and human compassion was manifested in his discussions about his colleagues, noting their shortcomings and ways they have or have not addressed these. In discussing these colleagues in light of these shortcomings, he reinforces the mechanistic metaphor that he appears to apply to people, and in doing so could be considered to present an image that runs contrary to the presented compassionate man.

5.3 Identity Assets in Alan's Narrative

Several of the identity assets that emerge in Alan's narrative appear to stem from the asset of his inherent and innate abilities. These include the informal learning he has observed and undertaken as well as the formal education he has, and how he compares his successes with those that are more educated than him. From his self-perceived need to get a formal education, a related identity asset is Alan's integration with the hierarchy and mechanistic metaphors into the way he sees the world and his place in it, and his place influences the balanced state that he attempts to present to the listener that he is. From his identity asset of balance comes his identity asset of mutual dependency and then failure and its avoidance. The identity assets that were identified in Alan's narrative are discussed in detail below and summarised in Table 5.1 on page 5-24.

5.3.1 Ability

A significant identity asset that emerges from Alan's narrative is the importance of his abilities and skills to him, and how these are a building block of his identity. Alan demonstrates a confidence in his abilities very early on in his narrative, claiming that he knows all about the software his employer provides, and positioning himself as an expert. He suggests that his expertise and ability means that he is not bound by industry norms, and he differentiates between capable and not capable people. Alan also suggests that his abilities warrant some deserved leniency from his managers towards him that others might not receive, that he is sought after due to his abilities, and that his abilities enable him to deliver even when operating outside his fields of expertise.

Alan's willingness to be closely identified with his skills and ability is clear:

I know pretty much all of how [our software] works and if you ever get stuck just ask me how this goes ... I've got something I'm working on which is reasonably um, you know it needs a bit of brain power to work your way through it, um I'm getting it to

the point where it's nearly finished. You're starting to test it and ... on my computer you can simulate it.

Alan active positioning of himself as technically able can be seen in his assertions that “I know pretty much all of how [our software] works” and “It needs a bit of brain power to work your way through it”. These assertions not only make identity claims but also provide apparent support for these claims, with comments like “it's nearly finished” and “on my computer you can simulate it” suggesting proof is available if required. These assertions of ‘fact’ that Alan presented followed the detail tour of his code that preceded his narrative, and sit atop it as he actively constructs his identity in his discourse.

In his presentation of his technical abilities, his expression is quite clear, self-deprecating and unequivocal as he talks of his forecasting:

I can tell them how we'll do it in two months, [shrugs] we'll do it in two weeks.

Here Alan acts the role of advisor, imparting his professional view that a given solution will take two months to code. This is presented to the listener as a believable estimate. His act is concurrent with his able-self suggesting that he is so able that this two-month-timeline can be achieved in two weeks, and his shrug acts as a non-verbal clue that he believes that this is not unnatural or unexpected. He draws confidence and constructs his skill-based identity from this belief, explicitly and confidently stating that he can over-deliver on his promises in better times than he promises his employer, and the implication to the listener is that Alan is comfortable with both aspects of his able-self: the able-advisor and the even-more-able-technologist.

Alan's self-assuredness of his abilities extends to not documenting his software⁸. He expresses that it is because he is the only person in the organisation can understand the nuances and demands of the software, and he finds this amusing:

Ahhhhh-yeeahh, there iiiissss documentation [grinning] ... Yeah, pretty much the design documentation side of things we sort of don't do, except for very high level, this is vaguely what we do sort of stuff ... [the code is documented by] Code comments [laughs].

His claim that he can always over-deliver in better times than others and his suggestion that he does not need to document his code, suggest that Alan is presenting his skills and ability as an essential aspect of who he is. His disregard for software development norms is justified on

⁸ Documenting of software is considered good design practice. While executable code is ‘commented’ throughout with embedded – and sometimes rather cryptic – notes for the coder in the actual code, additional and separate standalone documentation of routines and functions is the norm. This documentation could be provided on CD-ROM or bound, and acts as an easily readable guide or map to the codes objectives and how these are achieved.

the grounds of his ability as the senior software developer, and the implication to the listener is that it is only the less-able developer who needs to do documentation.

The distinction between the able and the less-able as a key component of who someone 'is', is apparent in Alan's description of his technically capable superiors in his early work experiences. In recalling these technically capable superiors, Alan says they were:

At this obviously more technical higher level, so you basically very very junior ... but you're being able to interact, interact across that divide as such ...you purposefully do the interaction, um and that gives you quite a bit of confidence when, um, you can get your point across, you can get the answer you require, you get to know the person as well, plus I guess with the previous job you know you get chucked in the deep end quite a bit sometimes. You go to site and sometimes you're the only one from the company, representing the company, doing the job.

In this extract, Alan is working on his identity as a high-achieving IT professional recognising where his is, and knowing where he wants to be. Alan quite openly admits the confidence he obtains from his superior skills and ability and this reinforces his identity. He locates himself "at this obviously more technical higher level" and his ability to "get chucked in the deep end quite a bit" and survive are both presented as assertions to his perceptions of his self.

In his narrative, Alan often returns to the subject of money, but not apparently for its sake. As he says:

Initially, I wasn't all that interested in the job when I was approached ... they offered an exorbitantly high amount of daily allowance and when you're on a mining operation everything's provided for you anyway, so it's just like money in the back pocket ... the management level [of the client] was talking to my manager they approached us and said 'do you have resources' and said 'yeah they've got me', but they approached me and I said no, not really interested, had enough of mining operations you know way up to here [points to his neck]. Um, so they to'd and fro'd and offered us something like \$100 a day ... we actually had nothing else on so it's kind of like "OK you really should go!" [Laugh] Er, alright. Yes, so went, I forgot to tell you about America, anyway, I was in America for 4 months as well, er, same sort of deal, there two months back for Christmas, back for another two months.

Rather than a claim to money in itself, Alan appears to use his references to money as a means of demonstrating how important his abilities are to his employer. By bringing up his value to the organisation, Alan asserts his identity as a skilled and desired person. He suggests that others have recognised his skills and abilities as they continued to pursue him and offer what he suggests is significant sums for his services as negotiations proceed. His identity as an able person is also seen as he equates himself with being a resource to be used. By 'reminding' the listener about America, he suggests that this negotiation and desiring of his abilities was not an isolated event, but was the norm.

By relying on his ability and tenaciousness, Alan has had reinforced to him on several occasions that his technical prowess is a key identifier of himself that he appears to deploy as something that makes him stand apart from others. This is apparent in the extended extract from his narrative (presented in Appendix VII) where Alan claims he was identified as a high-achiever by his lecturers breaching academic guidelines on course structure, and overachieving with his grades and allowing him to do prerequisite papers concurrently. In that section of his narrative, where Alan has already overachieved at work and is confident of his abilities, he does not bother with convention and rules, and backs himself to circumvent the procedures in place. His confidence in his abilities allows him to do that. Alan uses an alleged discussion between two of his lecturers as a means of imparting his skill-based identity to the listener, and is quite explicit about the nature of this conversation and the authority of the participants to make these laudable comments about him.

In another extract from his narrative, Alan discusses his current job and again takes pains to explicitly detail how his skills and abilities were recognised by those who should have the knowledge to do so. He says he:

Sent my CV through to the email link and er, was probably within an hour later I actually got a phone call from my [now] boss saying, 'you know, we're interested in you, your CV's got a good background', um told me a bit about what they did, whether I was still interested and I was, so we organised an interview ... two days later, um they had about 3 or 4 other guys they were looking at as well, and so I came along, brought a couple of projects I'd done at the university, um, my final project I actually did by myself, usually it's in groups but because of my schedule I had to try and do more flexibility so I managed to get a single project, some good person project, and this huge stack of paper of all the design and all the code listing ... I only showed him one folder so it was like the design and everything you do for a project essentially, plus screen shots, user manual and all that sort of things, and I had about that much [indicates three inches thickness with fingers of one hand] code listing and I said, OK I've got that much [indicates a vast quantity] extra code listing which I didn't bother bringing but you've got to see an example of what it looked like. ... so he was obviously reasonably impressed, um knew that I was straight out of Uni of course but had previously worked and had an Engineering degree which was also a bonus. Um, and probably, he had one or two more people to interview so he was interested in offering me the job in that we were discussing what sort of pay levels at that stage sort of thing ... so it was basically everything but saying yes, because they still had a few interviews just to make sure, and then a couple of days later, after those interviews, they actually rung up and said, yep we'd like to offer you the job, so that was good.

In the extract above, Alan's narrative shifts from referencing personal characteristics acquired and used in the past (Beyer & Hannah, 2002), to the validation of his own self and the recognition he sees in his prospective (and eventual) employer. Alan makes special mention for perhaps the only time in his narrative of the specifics of timing in this job-interview, and

presents how the prospective employer was by normal standards indecently keen to secure Alan's services. By doing so, Alan reinforces to the listener that his skills are in demand, and therefore by extension he is desirable. It is worth noting at this point that this validation was what Alan sought when he returned to tertiary study to consolidate his technical education. This extract also contains another nugget of information on Alan's views on his skills and abilities and how important they are to him, when he takes a sojourn to explain his project, and how what should have been a collaborative effort was completed entirely on his own. The project was presented to the listener as a mammoth body of work contained in multiple binders, and then played down with apparent modesty that served only to reinforce how significant it was. The proportion and placement of the sojourn in the narrative extract belies the façade of modesty that Alan paints over it, and it is clear to the listener that Alan is particularly proud of this work and is keen to be judged on it, both by the listener and the prospective employer.

Alan is quite keen to present how, as he has advanced through the technological demands and barriers of his work, he has used his skills to overcome adversity. In doing so, Alan has quickly seen that competence, and more importantly excellence, is rewarded. Even if when placed in new situations:

There's not a heck of a lot you can do beforehand study wise ... they started branching out into the mining industry ... we had nothing on and they needed extra people because they had a quite a big mining project up in Queensland and they couldn't actually cover most of it so we got basically in charge of the child again.

They had a big project just start and were actually looking around for people at the time, and he came up and he said "Hey we've got this project come up, do you know what we do" and it was like "Sort of".

Alan is subsequently at pains to point out that these projects were successfully delivered, and in being so that he is capable and skilled. He suggests that he was needed (Tan & Hunter, 2003) and it was his abilities that meant "we got basically in charge of the child again". Alan gets approached to be involved in more and more work, being sent hither and thither on various contracts, in a 'connected career journey' (Nicholson & West, 1989). These extracts show Alan is evaluating the options being laid before him based on the interest they have to him and how he was needed by his employer. He presents the reason he was approached was that others recognised his abilities, and his abilities are the reason he was successful even though he was operating outside his area of expertise. This ability of his to hold sway over others in the organisation reinforces to Alan other things that appear as identity assets and are discussed later, such as the hierarchy of the organisation, and the potential subservience of the

organisational structural hierarchy to the technically skilled. He has an apparent ability to learn on the job, and to take advantage of situations when they arise, and learn from them.

5.3.2 Informal Learning

Alan's previously presented ability allows him to suggest that he has often learned in an informal setting, and he appears to use this as a point on which to construct part of his identity. He suggests that he is always willing to learn and adapt, and to modify the way he conducts himself. Informal learning is suggested as an identity asset for Alan because of this on the job learning, his observed and adopted perception of engineering culture while learning on the job, and the way he had his informal learning reinforced to him by an employer not wanting him to leave.

In the last two extracts of the previous section, Alan presents the default situation of having to approach a situation relatively uninformed as he says "there's not a heck of a lot you can do beforehand study wise" and he "sort of" knew what the client did. As such, Alan presents a face to the listener that is relatively uninformed, before proceeding to build on that with suggestions that it was his ability that enabled him to overcome his initial ignorance and succeed. His success is attributed to his ability to learn on the job, and his abilities are internalised as part of his identity.

In recalling the environment of the professional engineering firm he was employed by, he presents it as a story in which he was able to observe and learn, which in turn led to opportunities to learn engineering culture and technology on the job. He notes:

It was professional engineers, but I could actually watch what was involved with the job ... the engineers being professional so I'd usually most of their time in the office some of the time on site which obviously the part I didn't see, um we got various people in different areas where you've got more design people, so the CAD operators actually designed a fair bit of the plant, um the process engineers specified what had to happen but between the two the CAD operators usually designed the layout or, um, where it went type of thing, which was probably the CAD operators I had more to do with in the end because, um, they were more computer based. The engineers at that stage, you know computers were Windows 95 was basically 95 so Windows 95 had just come out and computers still weren't particularly friendly so it was quite paper based, and being in the IT admin role I was more involved.

Alan's reflective rationalising of the role he had, and how he found it, showed that he was very aware of the hierarchy of the organisation, and that he was able to learn. In the environment Alan was compelled to be in, he watched in the same way De Wall (2001) describes an apprentice sushi-maker doing. He saw the bidding and winning of work, the

partitioning of that work, how it was worked on and the outcomes that were delivered, and the technologies employed to do it. He learnt differences between the roles of those involved, and this seems to have left a mark on him with regards to his aspirations and sense of self-worth that comes through in other parts of his narrative. His involvement with professional engineers in his IT-admin role presented him with the group participation required for identity construction as part of group activity (Cantor et al., 2002) as part of the identity work discussed in Section 3.5.3. As he claims, “I was more involved” in the company and its technology. In reconstructing these events to himself, Alan takes the shared values, ideologies, and norms of the professional engineering office he worked in and adopts them as part of his identity.

As Alan reconstructs and adopts these professional values into his identity, from that of tertiary student and into the ‘elite’ identity (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006) of a professional engineer, he realises that he has skills valuable to the organisation. This was made apparent to Alan when he confided to his boss that he might leave:

I talked to my boss um it obviously goes through the gossip chain and that sort of thing, and the head of the software department in control systems heard about that the fact that I wanted to leave and actually offered me a job.

In adopting this ‘professionalism’, and the subsequent value of professionals to the organisation, he automatically asks for more money and receives it, and he accepts the new offer and goes contracting in another part of the business for his current employer. The reinforcing nature of success built on his abilities and learning is complete, along with his learning from the opportunities that were presented. Because he has learnt, and now his employer seeks for him to stay, the identity of informal learner is reinforced to him.

Previously Alan has explicitly noted his ability to ‘stand alone’ and be self-reliant, and to apply his general ability (discussed previously) to up-skill in any gaps when under pressure to deliver. As he says:

I didn’t actually do too much of during the degree but gave me a little bit of understanding what sort of thing they are getting into ... basically you were sort of left to your own devices.

The ability of Alan to ‘swim’ in such a sink-or-swim scenario is a key component of how he views himself and is a foundation of his identity. The subsequent component to the asset of Alan’s ability to self-educate is his apparent perception that others do not recognise this ability he has, and what he has taught himself. At several stages through Alan’s narrative he

espouses the rationale behind his return to study to formalise his IT education with a practical degree in computer science majoring in programming.

5.3.3 Formal Education

The education that Alan has, and his reliance on his education relative to others, appears to be an important plank in the construction of his identity as Beyer & Hannah (2002) would suggest. However, it is noteworthy that it is not just Alan's formal education and learning that forms this plank, but rather his perceptions about his ability to self-learn as the previous asset shows, and his lack of education relative to his colleagues. He was frustrated at his lack of formal computer science and programming education, and once he achieves a formal computer science and programming education he assert it as part of his identity in his job-search, and his achievements relative to others.

Alan reached a point of frustration where his perceptions of himself as an IT professional are not being reflected back by others (see the beginning of the extended extract in Appendix VII), and so decided that he needed to formalise his occupation with an education in IT. Alan had built his identity around his ability in IT and his identity was not being recognised by some others because of his lack of IT-specific qualifications. Alan's analytic and mechanistic mind then evaluated all options and he settled on the one that would provide him with what he sought: a practical means of validation of his self-identity with an external and contextual representation of how he viewed himself. This is so important to him that he resigns from his employer, who depends on him and upon whom he depends for a significant part of his identity, and returns to student life. Beyer & Hannah (2002) note that the past experiences, and in Alan's case this lack of explicit recognition, results in tactics that will aid the perceived assimilation into the desired identity, and so Alan resigns to pursue external studies to validate his desired identity as a high-achieving IT professional.

After graduating a second time with an undergraduate computer science degree, Alan's aspirations of acceptance hit a road-block: the mindset of recruiters. After reasserting his unique skill-set in his narrative, Alan notes of recruiters that:

I went in basically to see one person at an agency and she had about 3 or 4 jobs which were very much beginner jobs which I would have gone for if I had to but I didn't really want to if I could avoid it. Um, and basically that came to nowhere funnily enough. Um, was looking around Netcheck and stuff like that, um there's more, I guess like Business Analyst type of roles that were, which I didn't really want to get into, I wanted to get into a base level programming and work my way up that way. Um, was looking through the paper and actually found an ad for this job here, and they had previously gone through employment agencies and not got the type of person they wanted ... this type of job is probably reasonably specialized in that

having a bit of machine type of knowledge is very handy, um a mixture of control type of background, um, so I guess sort of an engineering background in general which I had the degree.

This extract of Alan's narrative is interesting from several points of view and in relation to his identity in the new economy. Alan rejects the label and identity of 'graduate' that the recruiters attempt to foist on him, and demonstrates a mobility and willingness to deploy new technologies in his search as well as traditional methods. This is to be expected given his education, self-perception, pragmatism and desire to cement his new identity as a high-achieving IT professional. The recruiters' perceptions of his educated self (as a novice graduate) do not marry with Alan's perceptions of his educated self (as a skilled and educated IT professional). He is frustrated with those who only see traditional career models and not those of the 'new career' he has built his technical prowess and identity on. Alan again exerts his own identity as a high-achieving IT professional with a strong engineering background and education.

While Alan has achieved the education in programming he sought to validate his role to date and perceptions of himself, he still evaluates himself within a hierarchy of education. In describing others, Alan uses education:

My boss um did an engineering degree, he went through to the PhD level, so is very much into the mathematical side of things, um, the other person they had, about a year or so before me I guess maybe less, was also quite involved. He was actually a Russian guy, I don't know what his background was, but he was quite mathematical background. Um, another guy ... also gone to the PhD level and was very mathematical based.

The above section of Alan's narrative was immediately preceded by the comment previously mentioned about how he knows the most about his employer's products, and how to troubleshoot any issues that arise. In giving this extract immediately after commenting on ability and practicalities, Alan appears to again use education as a distinguishing feature of how he views others and himself. Rather than ranking on undergraduate versus postgraduate education, Alan implies that in spite of some of his colleagues possessing advanced tertiary qualifications, he is better informed than them about the problems at hand, which provides weight for his informal learning identity asset. He identifies with his practical programming and engineering undergraduate degrees, but distances himself from the 'mathematical and impractical postgraduate degrees of his boss and his predecessor who failed to deliver. In this regard he is not relying on his formal education as exclusively as Beyer and Hanna (2002) suggest, but rather his ability to augment the gaps in his education as commented at the

beginning of this section. Alan's use of his education to distinguish himself from others raises the next two assets of his narrative: hierarchy and mechanism.

5.3.4 Hierarchy

As the gaps and levels of education became clear in Alan's narrative, his keen awareness of the hierarchy of skills as well as the traditional interpretation of hierarchy emerged. His observation and identification with positional power and positional role within the organisation also became apparent. Alan's language is sprinkled with references to hierarchy as his career unfolds through his industrial experience as part of his first degree, his first job, in looking for more work, a workplace, and as he himself hires others.

Alan noted that as part of his first degree in mechanical engineering he was:

Required to do a certain amount of practical hours and the first couple of years I had like engineering workshop experience ... where they are basically professional engineers ... it was more like a professional office rather than in the workshop, and in the last year of when of, ahh, when I had to do it ... it was basically crawling around under the desks just mapping out where all the connections actually went to and figuring out how the office was actually all set up, so it's all, you know, complete bum-boy sort of work,- but it was in an engineering company.

In this extract where he introduces his first real work experiences, Alan has placed himself in the hierarchy. By belittling the role he elevates his self-worth in relation to the role in a manner that places his sense of self higher on a skill and value hierarchy, as these "bum-boy" work experiences are immediately reconstructed to present himself in a more positive light that he believes is more worthy of him.

Of his first real job which grew from his holiday work, Alan discussed his evolution through the role and uses a series of ranking and organisational structured language to place himself in the organisation and to place relative relationships of others and with others. He notes that:

I was just the junior and um my boss was the IT admin manager ...so I got all the junior jobs and it's fine when you're learning ... I'd been and gone from junior to, I guess you'd call it intermediate, sort of general sort of role, dogsbody role, put in charge of that job and we got it done within the time frame.

Alan has self-labelled and placed himself in the hierarchy relative to his boss. He associates his role with his function and he rationalises this with an earlier asset: his learning. As he learns, he reconstructs his identity as he goes from "from junior to, I guess you'd call it intermediate". He suggests to the listener that his ability grew and was recognised.

Alan's recognition of hierarchy and his place in it is again shown by descriptions of when he has begun job-hunting, noting the recruiter or employer:

Had about three or four jobs which were very much beginner jobs which I would have gone for if I had to but I didn't really want to if I could avoid it ... I wanted to get into a base level programming and work my way up that way... I'd actually seen it in the paper and thought, "Mmm sounds a bit too advanced for me, no that's more at a senior level", um whereas I was thinking of heading to the intermediate level ... they also had a junior control system engineer [who] resigned, and so they actually offered me a fulltime position.

Alan's narrative is laden with references to organisational hierarchy, and his place within that hierarchy. The above extract from Alan's narrative suggest that he believes he has a need for low-level credibility by referring to 'ground floor' and 'working his way up', while noting the special and unique nature of the job, his abilities, and the identity he draws from the melding of the two. He locates himself in this hierarchy as he says "sounds a bit too advanced for me, no that's more at a senior level" and suggesting "I was thinking of heading to the intermediate level". His position and identity is then confirmed as "a junior control system engineer", and the implication is that he now knows his place.

Now employed, and in describing one of the new offices he worked at, Alan's first words are detailed words of organisational structure and relative roles. He says:

The basic setup of that department was, there were two senior programmers, um generally one or two electrical people, so they were more like installers, sorry, not so much installers like as in wire-pullers and stuff, but more the designing of the electrical layout and then when it's on site making sure it all actually does work electrically, so there's quite a division between the control system and the electrical, it's like the software guys and the electrical guys working quite closely together so it would be, like you'd test um something on the screen and go "OK does that input work?" and we'd be there on the screen going "OK yep, that part works and it's the right output", and the electrical guy would be at the PLC tracking the wiring, and so it's that sort of division.

In describing the place he works, Alan has employed hierarchy to show who is ranked where and how the work is partitioned. He places himself in a role in this exchange and gives himself a voice that is central to the exchange. By giving himself a voice and locating himself in the hierarchy, Alan has identified his place as he sees it relative to others

This relativistic placement of others in an Alan-constructed hierarchy is shown further when he explained an aspect of his own team in his current role:

We had [a new-hire], who was new to the job, we had myself which is supervisory essentially and that sort of type of input, and we had [a contractor] which was the part-time guy who had his own company worries part time and was no longer working for us because his company took off. Um, so they were basically working together, me as the supervisor, [him] as the manager essentially working two days a week, um, doing the more complex stuff, and [a colleague] doing all the grunt work essentially.

In this team, Alan paints himself as the glue that holds the disparate collection of people together. His self-labelled role as supervisor (and recalling that that Alan's job title is Senior Software Developer), suggests Alan believes he has moved in the hierarchy for some reason, and his presentation is again focused on his positioning relative to others around him. He presents the hierarchy as a means of locating himself and identifying his place at work.

5.3.5 Mechanism

The identity asset of mechanism and the mechanistic metaphor emerges throughout Alan's narrative, and he uses these explain himself, his views, and his interrelation to the world he finds himself in. Sometimes this is done in conjunction with the previous asset of hierarchy, or in dealings with another asset such as in the comparisons of education as discussed previously. The mechanistic view of his self is seen as he describes himself, and the use of mechanism in story to place himself, as he 'diagnoses' himself, and as he places himself in his workplace.

Alan had previously described himself as a structured and 'mathematical thinker', and Wagner and Wodak (2006) amongst others have observed that one's perception of the self is important. Alan was asked to describe himself:

Describe myself? [pause] Oooo, that's a tough one inn't? [pause] The one they always ask you in job interviews. [pause] Um, how would I describe myself? [pause] Um, [pause] let's see, I guess pretty competent, ummm, ooooo, that's a tough one. Um, I guess, work-wise, um, I'm more into doing the technical side of things in that I enjoy a problem, solving it, um, working through, making sure it works all the way through, so pretty, ah, ah, pedantic's not quite the word for it, but it's more like seeing it through making sure it works at the end rather than going, "ah yes good enough". So I'm more ah guess particular in getting it working, sort of a higher level than a lot of people would, um ... make sure the damn thing works, to my standards.

The freeness of speech that had existed in his narrative to that point changed and he floundered with multiple pauses until resorting to a mechanistic worldview, whereupon he began to speak freely again. He appeared to seek sanctuary in the relationship he had with his work, identifying strongly with problem solving and working things through in a logical, yet inspired, manner that uses metaphors of personal identity (Halford, 2003) such as problem solving and technical. He explicitly states "pedantic's not quite the word for it", but analysis of this extract and the surrounding narrative shows that pedantry, precision, and competition is exactly what he identifies with as he tries to express his views of his self.

Immediately after the above extract, Alan told a story as a way of presenting his self to the listener:

Um, I guess one example for that is while I was, [at university] doing a Software degree I had um, ah, it was a competition with two other people, and we'd, I'd never really met them before but we were working along on it, and we'd, um, run into problems and one of the guys was, um, having all sorts of problems with it, you know bugs here, left, right, and centre. I was going, well, um he got me to help him solve the problem and you know there's bugs all over the place, and after it when we were talking after the competition and going, and "You've got to get a bit more, um, tight with how you do it you know, have less bugs, define the problem and more", he goes, "Ah no, just leave the bugs to the testers". It was like, "Oh shit" [laugh] So that's probably the complete opposite to me, as in you start at the beginning and you make sure you finish it rather than doing a half-arse job.

This diversion into a story that shows how superior he was to his fellow students shows Alan's social-identity, and Alan's thoughts about his skills and desire to achieve, and he uses the "doing a half-arse job" value system of another to contrast himself to. He places himself in a central position of this story, as he talks of "going well" and "solv[ing] the problem" in a way that reflects on a 'not-identity' (Watson et al., 2000) that he assigns to his fellow-student. He freely uses the problem-based worldview found in the mechanistic paradigm to present an understanding of his self made relative to others.

After this comparison-based diversion, Alan immediately returned to describing himself more explicitly in mechanistic and computational terms:

I probably like the more complex problems rather than, um, you know repetitive simple problems, 'cause they get pretty boring after a while, generally thought wise, mental wise, I guess generally in programming you've got to be pretty linear, um but I find that even though I am reasonably linear you know you can see start point, you can see a path to the end point, but if you get into more complex problems it's more like a tree, you've got all these other paths and sometimes they come back to the end point, so it's not really multi-tasking as such but you can see more than one path at once. [You can] see the big picture, but you can also just focus on the one path you are working on at the time and you get to a point where you go, 'OK I've got to the end of where I can go, its at a branch' and you've got to go this way that way or finish something off so that I can join on. So you can see the picture, big picture, where it's got to go but you can also see, like, at the detail level ... I guess, for me, it is quite a linear path but it's, um, but I can skip over steps where it's just completely obvious to me sort of thing, so from the outside it might look a bit intuitive.

This extract clearly shows that Alan's perception of himself is built on his analytical thinking and the role he plays within the organisation. He talks of how "I probably like the more complex problems", "I am reasonably linear", "paths" and "the big picture". His repeated reference to mechanistic models and thought, and of the mechanics of task centric activities is clear as he employs "from the outside it it might look a bit intuitive" at the end of the extract to dismiss any suggestion that his thoughts were anything much structured and defined. He also demonstrates in his narrative a reference to personal characteristics that are reflected in

the skills and behaviour he has acquired and used in previous jobs, as discussed by Beyer & Hannah (2002).

The suggestion that Alan has a mechanistic view of his self is supported in another part of his narrative, where he says:

I guess from the outside it come across also as being a bit of a perfectionist, as in you've got to get it right, um, probably to a higher standard than most people probably.

Alan is task orientated, both in his actions and speech. In discussing interpersonal interactions the discussion was very quickly, often with the initial sentence, brought around to tasks, outcomes, functions or procedures. In this extract, it is “you've got to get it right”, which alludes to the binary logic⁹ distinction of right-wrong or yes/no. Alan has a large vocabulary when discussing matters of a technical nature yet seemed significantly slower and considered in his cadence of speech when discussing personal matters and his vocabulary became much more guarded and limited. The eloquence that was there when discussing technical matters faded when things turned personal, and he actively resorted to the mechanistic paradigm at an early opportunity as shown in the extracts above where he describes himself.

Alan's mechanistic world view extends to 'self-diagnosing' himself, using his diagnostic skills to identify a 'weakness' in his composition. He says of his youth that:

Didn't really like going out, meeting people, I was happy with my friends, which was fine, but was reasonably uncomfortable meeting new people. Um, and at that time my dad had a milk run and um I worked for him for quite a while doing that and getting to run on the side, and with that interact with people all through the run they go, yeah 'I want this milk here's the money, blah blah blah', and it's an interaction which isn't really social as such but it's still just getting out there doing your job, meeting the people, um once you've done an interaction you go on to the next one, and from there learnt that it's not such a hard thing to do. Um, so doing that sort of job, is, I guess, reasonably confidence building. Um, gives you the confidence that you can talk to people ... you can do the job, you can, do the job, talk to the people in the context of the job.

In accordance with a mechanistic worldview that sees things as working or faulty, Alan has identified a 'fault' in his self then deliberately gone about addressing it and has built identity capital in the process. He uses another identity story in recalling his lack of confidence in interacting with others when he was much younger. He talks of personal interaction in terms

⁹ Binary logic has choices or outcomes defined into 'one' and 'zero', often used to represent 'go' or 'no-go'. The 'if-statements' and 'for-loops' that can be used to test conditions and create choice still resolve to binary logic outcomes. Binary logic is the foundation of computing and programming. There is no grey in the black-and-white world of binary logic.

of “once you’ve done an interaction you go on to the next one” that he “learnt that it’s not such a hard thing to do”, and in doing so suggests that he is a part of a mechanical world – albeit a sentient part.

A particularly telling extract of Alan’s narrative was a poignant expression of his self-reflection and acceptance of his cog-like nature in the bigger machine of his employer:

I’m an overhead. Complete and utter overhead, my whole salary is just overhead, an overhead to the company.

While he believes that he is a vital part of the organisation, Alan uses the language of the unproductive to describe his place in the organisation. This appears to be an inability to reconcile his crucial contribution to the organisation, and the belief that the organisation cannot fit him into a ‘proper’ part of the organisation. As he cannot be fitted ‘into’ the organisation, Alan suggests that he is an appendage of it. In doing so, he again places himself in a mechanistic paradigm.

5.3.6 Balance

The degree to which Alan constructs himself as balanced as part of his identity is seen in his presentation of his relationships and health. While these two areas would appear to struggle to be considered collectively, for himself as well as others Alan interleaves both these areas in his narrative, presenting them concurrently and in an intertwined manner. Balance is seen as an identity asset in Alan’s narrative as he describes himself, his life now and how it used to be, the efforts he has taken for his health, and his place relative to two colleagues with perceived unbalanced lives.

It appears that Alan has a desire to be seen as well-rounded, caring about both health and relationships. This is apparent in his claim that:

I don’t really have negative opinions about anybody.

[I’m] pretty easy going mostly, um, from people who don’t know me too well probably pretty placid, reasonably easy to talk to, um, [pause] ah, another good example is, um, [my partners] sister, um, they’ve got quite a close relationship and she always says, “When [my partner] wants to pick a fight she comes to see me” [Laugh] yeah, it’s hard to pick a fight with me sort of thing, so, from the outside I guess.

These extracts present Alan’s perception of himself as neutral and balanced as he performs a presentation of his self. His preferred self is to not “have negative opinions about anybody” and to be unbaitable in an argument, and suggest to the listener that this is a valid perception by using his partner’s sister as an external frame of reference in creating this story of his self.

Alan integrates his well-rounded status with his health when he presents an extract which weaves the two regulated aspects of his identity together by mentioning his partner, noting of her that she:

Quite often goes to the gym, I do squash, um, we go see our families on Tuesday evenings, um, so most of the days of the week it's either, er, I dunno some sort of sport thing or off to dinner with families, um sometimes working late, yeah. [laughs] So during the week it's you know just normal life after work, during the weekends last year or so we've been doing a landscaping project which has taken most weekends [laughs].

The impact of Alan's work and his role-based identity on him is also presented in his narrative through the asset of well-rounded relationships and health. Balance is presented in this extract as being a natural part of Alan's life, as he presents a balanced physical, home, and family life. He asserts that this "just normal life" with the implication that it is no different from anybody else's life and in doing so lays claim to an balanced-now identity, which is in contrast to his unbalanced-old identity , next.

Very soon after the above extract, Alan presented his old, unbalanced life as a lens for the listener to view his new, balanced, life through. He says he would:

Work for about the twelve hour day you come back for dinner, um, quite often we'd actually go back on site for another couple of hours, so you ended up like a 100 hours a week type of thing seven days a week. Um when you got back from work they also had, um, basically a pub there and nothing else to do, go for a drink or two, or three ... there was basically three months of actually no life essentially, 'cause you go away, if you are doing sports you can't do sport ... there is nothing else to do on site, there's no facilities as such and your life back home basically goes on hold whereas they continue going on. So you get back from three months and it's like, um OK, [laughs and slaps his belly] we've got a bit more here! Um, I'm actually unfit for doing sport, I used to do Tai Kwon Do so quite a struggle to pick that up again, you get quite unfit. Um and of course you start dropping friends in that they have continued on, they've gone on to do other stuff and you get back and it's like OK, right, try and pick up the life again sort of thing.

Here, Alan sees the costs of his career to date on both his sports and his relationships together. He repeatedly mentions the intensity of all-work or all non-work in the form of friends, interests and his partner, and implies a lack of balance as he says "there is nothing else to do on site, there's no facilities as such and your life back home basically goes on hold whereas they continue going on". While he may present his work as a reason for a perceived lack of success in either, his continued interweaving his relationships and his health together is apparent throughout his narrative. This extract, following so soon after the previous one in his narrative, serves to highlight he discrepancy that exists and reinforces to the listener the balance currently in his life, and which Alan identifies with. Again Alan has interwoven

relationships and health, and now he has managed his career (Arthur et al., 1999) to a point where he now no longer spends weeks or months overseas, and this enables his relationship to survive.

In discussing the effect his occupation has had on him, Alan notes the physical toll and comments on the massages he receives for his RSI/OOS:

Mainly actually for my arms and body in general making sure it doesn't hit OOS or anything like that, which is the main reason for the hours. Um, as well as keeping a normal balance of things. Um, socially wise it's obviously a heck of a lot better, um during the week we don't really do a heck of a lot anyway.

He says his regular massages are part of the "normal balance of things". The implication here is that balance is normal, to be sort after, and is part of his desired self. As he suggested previously that he had focused too heavily on his work, Alan now suggests and reinforces to the listener the previously presented movement to obtaining balance by explicitly saying so.

Balance is also seen in others, or in the case of a mentally unwell colleague, should be in others. His re-telling of this story of unbalance is also done in a way that presents Alan's response as considered and balanced:

He's, um, [pause] just actually recently gone through a mental breakdown type of thing which is pretty unfortunate ... he's been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder which they reckon has progressively been since childhood, slowly to this point. Um, but he is pretty competent, but through that period obviously is pretty much a space cadet. He is medication wise pretty much settled down now so he still gets tired and stuff ... So he's pretty much up to speed again, um he's noticeably a bit slower and um sometimes doesn't catch on quite so quick as such, but he is still himself so, so that's fine. [He] was in hospital for a bit longer but we got to get him out for a couple of hours a day, partially to get the project back on track but also to actually get him um back into life as such ... when we got him back in he was still not, um, correct medication, so he was still reasonably delusional about it, but um just wanted to get him out away from, er, all the other crazies, I guess. But the problem is when you are in the Mental Ward there's a lot of other people with similar sort of outlooks on life.

In this extract, Alan is reluctant to say anything bad or negative about the person, and the condition described is immediately placed in a context of blamelessness. As an attribute and identity asset, balance is seen in how this colleague is "pretty much settled down now" from being "a space cadet" and away from "all the other crazies". Alan presents his actions as a rational attempt to normalise his colleague and inject balance into his life, all the while alluding to the mechanical metaphor discussed previously of fixing problems with medication. His actions are suggested as being based on compassion for the person and others around, and an emphasis in 'getting right'. Alan presents the persona of someone who

has successfully melded his technical and social skills together in his unofficial role as team leader and by doing this he builds identity capital in himself as a well ‘rounded’ person on top of his identity founded on his technical prowess.

Alan reinforces his apparent self-belief of his rounded and balanced nature when he judges another colleague, noting:

He’s extremely bright, um, obviously very compassionate as well. He’s very interested in, people getting along, um, [pause] ah, doing his best for them. He, I would say he’s a workaholic, that, [pause] um, doesn’t know when to stop as such ... in his personal life I’d say he’s is on site way too much, ‘cause it makes it very hard to have a relationship which, um, I had the experience of as well.

Here, Alan judges this person according to the value system mentioned previously, and adds his personal experience as an authority with respect to over-work and relationship stresses, which acts as an identity assertion of his old self. His judgement of this colleague is based upon his own perceptions of balance, and he places himself in this colleague’s shoes for added authenticity and voice. Because Alan has presented that he has led an unbalanced life and now leads a balanced one, he appears to feel justified in judging the balance in others lives.

5.3.7 Mutual Dependency

The nature of Alan’s skills means he appears to believe that his employers and peers have depended on him, but this dependency does not appear to be one-way in his narrative. The narrative of an IT professional being needed (Tan & Hunter, 2003) is a thread that runs through Alan’s narrative, and is one example of where a mutual dependency exists as they need him, and his ‘ontological security’ (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006) is established as needing to be needed: each lack value without the other. The mutual dependency exists in his narrative as he seeks work and in turn is sought, his extracting identification from being needed by clients, and his concerns about being stranded alone on site without any support.

The example in the extended extract in Appendix VII where Alan discussed his rapid hiring into his current role shows that he identifies strongly with his employer’s need for him. While he needed work, his employer’s have always needed him and Alan appears to relish in saying how quickly he was offered both his previous roles and his current role. These past experiences appear to have shaped his self-view (Nicholson & West, 1989), where his now-employers were desperate to hire him, and Alan appears to find comfort and security in his achievements to date as well as his desirability. His prolonged presentation of his hiring episode emphasises this.

Alan's success has come from his integration into the business and through being relied upon, and that has enabled him develop an identity of being depended upon. This symbiotic reliance is shown with a story of how he was relied upon. In Alan's words, his employers:

Basically put me on the plane to [the clients] to go over and basically check out what was actually happening, what was going to be involved, as we could be there for two weeks and after a week it was "Oh shit, these guys can't handle this at all" [laugh] and got on to my boss and said "OK, um, it's a hell of a lot worse than we thought, er it's not just me having to help them out", it's "Oh shit we should actually be doing it for them, 'cause there's no way they could actually handle it" and so after we'd got on the phone and that day I was back on the plane back home with as much information as possible that we could get ... so, um, I was in charge of that job ... we got it done within the time frame but having, you know, been sent off round the world type of thing.

Here, the previously combined identity assets of being able and of being part of the machine combine for Alan to mean he is needed. This is more so when he suggests that "Oh shit, these guys can't handle this at all" to "it's not just me having to help them out" and eventually "I was in charge of that job". Alan was needed, and places himself in the position of identifying with "been sent off round the world type of thing". Their need of him reinforces his views of his self as an able problem solver. Without any problems to solve, this part of his self has no meaning and they are mutually dependant on one another.

Alan's abilities and his identity as a go-to person have been presented by him as a burden on another part of his identity: that of a man in a balanced relationship. Alan clearly identifies with such an attitude and actions, and does so explicitly. He says he:

Finished off that job and as kind of probably seems pretty usual for me I was last to leave the building on my last day, just finishing tidying up the job and doing the final email and back up and that sort of thing, so of course I was also IT admin side of things on and off as well so, generally when you leave a building it's all security and that sort of thing, they take the key off you as you leave but it like "Oh, OK, I'll lock the door behind me, better come in next week and actually hand in all everything" 'cause I knew exactly what I had to, 'cause I'd got to hand over to quite a few people all the time, um, so I always find that quite amusing that you're the last one to leave on your last day [laughs].

In this extract, Alan associates himself with being depended on twice, as his opening and closing comments that bracket another claim to his skills. The responsibility he feels he has to his employers and the mechanistic task at hand is a component and consequence of his identity. Alan discusses finishing up a contract, and he expresses a perfectionist desire to see a job through and be there to the end. What Alan presents as a stand-alone, solitudinal, stoical requirement of the job has developed symbiotically with his identity as his personal identity

and the context or environment influence each other. As he is depended on, which “seems pretty usual for me”, he depends on others to validate that need.

This dependency and being the last one left is expressed again in another case where Alan was the last to leave when the clients’ business collapsed. Alan claims:

I was the last one of the company left on site and when it was all collapsing. The main problem was I got cut off in that it was all political at that stage, so I was trying you know talk to my people in the office who were actually in charge of the job, but they weren’t taking any calls because it was, all falling round their ears at the time, so it’s like, “OK, I need backup and I’m not getting anything”.

In this extract, Alan claims ignorance of the politicking in organisations, and a need for support when he says “I need backup and I’m not getting anything”. This suggests to the listener that Alan recognises that he is not an island and operates in a mutually dependant networked environment. While the previous extracts have shown that Alan was needed for his technical abilities, this extract shows that he needs others not just to reinforce his identity but that he is dependent up their delivering various forms of support to him. Should he not receive this support that he is dependant on, failure is a real possibility. This failure would be a clash with the previous identity asset of ability, and so the next asset in Alan’s narrative is avoiding failure.

5.3.8 Avoidance of Failure

Failure as a part of Alan’s identity is there in its avoidance. There is apparent avoidance of negativity in general, and of failure in particular, in his speech. This avoidance of negativity and failure is a noticeable component of his back-stage narrative (Bryant, 2005), and correlates to pauses and a period of quiet reflection before an utterance, and extends to not wanting to say anything negative about anybody. The listener is left with the impression that Alan is focusing on constructing his place in the interpersonal relationships discussed previously and ranking himself in that hierarchical relationship, but refuses to see any failure as a component of who he is. Specific examples of his avoidance of failure are seen as he discusses his grades at university.

Alan’s avoidance of failure in his speech appears while talking about his time studying mechanical engineering at university. Alan says he:

Got enough grades [at school] I got [into] mechanical, um, funnily enough, and at that point because I didn’t know really what I wanted to do it was just go to University, do a degree, um basically cruise through it, um had the odd paper I didn’t quite meet so I had to extend it by half a year to repeat papers that I missed ... it was more a case of I wasn’t particularly interested, um which was why I actually

had to repeat some further on. I didn't get them conceded because the grades weren't actually up there. I got slowly more bored with it essentially.

In this section of Alan's narrative, Alan has belittled his entry into one of the most restricted undergraduate degree programs in the country¹⁰, and in doing so has further asserted his ability. After an earlier flippant comment that secondary school was effortless, Alan appeared to be surprised he did not experience the same degree of success with minimal effort, and failed some papers. These failed papers are dismissed as "missed". By any objective measure Alan has failed, but Alan immediately dissociates himself from these events as "I didn't get them conceded" and reconstructs them to be a natural consequence of his apathy and disinterest as "I got slowly more bored with it essentially".

In the subsequent portion of his narrative, presented next, he immediately switches his un-stated failure at university to a point of determination, justifying and rationalising it by saying:

Um but I got through it so knuckled down at the end of it 'cause you know when you do actually miss a few papers you go mm OK need to work a bit harder. [Laugh] ... it was basically just er lack of interest really ... so I decided that I actually [should] finish this thing... knuckled down at the end of it 'cause you know when you do actually miss a few papers you go "hmmmm, OK, need to work a bit harder!"[Laugh].

In these extracts from his narrative, Alan repeatedly uses the euphemistic 'miss' to describe a period of sustained academic failure as a means of constructing his experiences in a way that maintains his skills, the dependency of others on him, as well as his education. This failure is attributed to a lack of effort by Alan, and not a lack of ability for that would cause significant conflict with the identity asset of his ability. His failure is placed in the context of learning, and is justified as a natural consequence of a lack of application and disinterested boredom, and rationalised to not be an innate part of him or his life. Alan even goes as far as to repeatedly laugh away this period of his life and these very formative experiences.

Table 5.1 Identity Assets in Alan's Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
Ability	Dependant on me	I know pretty much all of how [our software] works and if you ever get stuck just ask me how this goes
		They approached us and said 'do you have resources' and said 'yeah they've got me'
	Confidence	That gives you quite a bit of confidence when, um, you can get your point across, you can get the answer you require
		He was obviously reasonably impressed, um knew that I was straight out of Uni of course but had previously worked and had an

¹⁰ GPA requirements or their analogues for Engineering exceed those for any other undergraduate degree at the both universities Alan attended.

		Engineering degree which was also a bonus ... so it was basically everything but saying yes, because they still had a few interviews just to make sure,
Informal Learning	Aspiring	It was professional engineers, but I could actually watch what was involved
		[It] gave me a little bit of understanding what sort of thing they are getting into ... basically you were sort of left to your own devices
Formal Education	Deficiencies	I didn't really know enough about that sort of programming, so I wanted to go back and retrain
		This type of job is probably reasonably specialized
	Not-Education	My boss um did an engineering degree, he went through to the PhD level ... another guy ... also gone to the PhD level
Hierarchy	In Space	It was more like a professional office rather than in the workshop
	In Role	I was just the junior and um my boss was the IT admin manager ...so I got all the junior jobs ... I'd been and gone from junior to, I guess you'd call it intermediate, sort of general sort of role, dogsbody role,
	Regarding Technology	I wanted to get into a base level programming and work my way up that way.
	In Task	They were basically working together, me as the supervisor, [him] as the manager essentially working two days a week, um, doing the more complex stuff, and [a colleague] doing all the grunt work.
Mechanism	Of Self	How would I describe myself? [pause] Um, [pause] let's see, I guess pretty competent, ummm, ooooo, that's a tough one. Um, I guess, work-wise, um, I'm more into doing the technical side of things in that I enjoy a problem, solving it, um, working through, making sure it works all the way through,
		I guess from the outside it come across also as being a bit of a perfectionist, as in you've got to get it right, um, probably to a higher standard than most people probably
		Generally thought wise, mental wise, I guess generally in programming you've got to be pretty linear, um but I find that even though I am reasonably linear you know you can see start point, you can see a path to the end point, but if you get into more complex problems it's more like a tree, you've got all these other paths and sometimes they come back to the end point
	In others	He got me to help him solve the problem ... when we were talking after the competition and going, and "You've got to get a bit more, um, tight with how you do it you know, have less bugs, define the problem and more",
	In Interactions	It's an interaction which isn't really social as such but it's still just getting out there doing your job, meeting the people, um once you've done an interaction you go on to the next one
Balance	In Self	I don't really have negative opinions about anybody
		It's hard to pick a fight with me sort of thing
	In Life	So during the week it's you know just normal life
... as well as keeping a normal balance of things		
	Compared With Others	I would say he's a workaholic, that, [pause] um, doesn't know when to stop as such ... in his personal life I'd say he's is on site way too much, 'cause it makes it very hard to have a relationship which, um, I had the experience of as well.
Mutual Dependency	Skills-Based	I was back on the plane back home with as much information as possible that we could get ... so, um, I was in charge of that job ... we got it done within the time frame but having, you know, been sent off round the world type of thing.
	Durable	I always find that quite amusing that you're the last one to leave on your last day [laughs].
	Level-headed	I was trying you know talk to my people in the office who were actually in charge of the job, but they weren't taking any calls because it was, all falling round their ears at the time.
Avoidance of Failure	In Language	[I] had the odd paper I didn't quite meet so I had to extend it by half a year to repeat papers that I missed
	Justified	I didn't get them conceded because the grades weren't actually up there. I got slowly more bored with it essentially

5.4 A Summary of Alan’s Constructed Identity

Alan’s narrative reveals several ways in which his identification with role – in both functionality and status – plays out and informs his constructed identity. His positioning during the interview, the overt displays of his computing environment, his wearing of the company shirt, and the nominating of his workplace many miles from his home and while on annual leave speak to that influence.

The analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 shows the lower level building blocks of identity. For Alan these include his various roles and the way he has worked his way up from “bumboy” to his current role as Senior Software Developer. Another block that his identity appears built on is his education, in particular his second degree and his lack of the higher degree possessed by his colleagues that he compares himself to.

The assets themselves that emerge from his narrative appear to be initially based on his ability, which in turn has contributed to his informal learning. In conjunction with a mechanistic and hierarchical value set that he presents of himself and others, Alan also identifies himself and others through formal education: indeed his presentation of his education and career is such that he has played an active role in developing both. His identity assets and the interdependencies are presented in Figure 5-1.

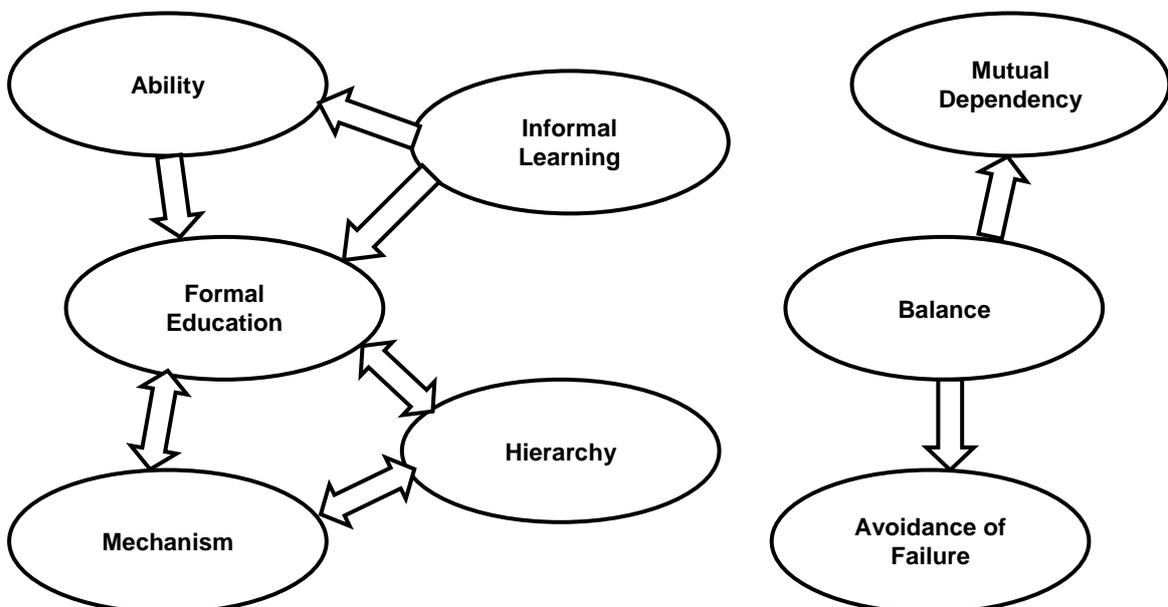


Figure 5-1 The Integration of Alan’s Identity Assets

The mechanistic and hierarchical metaphors are used by Alan and appear to be interacting identity assets in the narrative he gave, which in turn influence and are influenced by the asset of his formal education and the many ways this manifests itself. His formal education is informed by both his abilities and his informal learning. Three other assets appear in his narrative, namely his presentation of his self as being balanced, which informs both the asset of mutual dependency and the asset of his rejection of his failing.

Alan's narrative also provides examples of Collinson's (2003) multiple selves, such as his demonstration of code and wearing of the company shirt being a representation of his workplace self, and his being an educated and delivering IT professional being a representation of his achieved self. Likewise, his crafted self is seen in his avoidance of failure, and the importance of his relationships is a civilised self.

The level of confidence that Alan demonstrates is clear to the listener occurs when he discusses his code with another technologist (Orr, 1990) in a way that he might not do with a non-technologist. Only another technologist could appreciate the degree of self-confidence Alan is imparting, such as his claim above that he can simulate his plan on his computer, and the un-stated inference that another person could not do so on theirs – or even on his computer. Alan's mechanistic world-view has possibly been picked up on by his employers, even subconsciously, in providing him with the tools and massages he needs to deliver his outputs. Alan presented himself as a machine that was told what was expected and in turn he expected to be 'maintained' with dual screens, regulated hours and massages.

6.1 Introducing Charles

Charles is a New Zealand born male of British ancestry in his early fifties, who at the time of giving his narrative was employed in a part-time advisory and consulting role to a provider of computer services. He is in a relationship he did not discuss in any detail, and he professes an interest in fast European motorcycles and small-bore shooting.

Charles grew up in middle-class New Zealand and attended a coeducational state secondary school before commencing part-time sub-degree trades training which led him to a succession of roles as a technician with various New Zealand electronics manufacturing companies. In the mid-1970's and in his early twenties, Charles enrolled as a part-time territorial soldier in the New Zealand Army, and around this time moved from roles as an electronics technician to being a computer technician, operator, and programmer.

In the late 1980's, the government department he was writing software for was corporatised and the projects that Charles was working on were abandoned and he was seconded to Australia. After his return to New Zealand in the early 1990's, he used his network of personal contacts to obtain his current role, which is now a half-time role due to his obvious ill-health. His narrative is the second of three participants who are still active in the technical side of the IT industry.

Charles was suggested as a participant on the basis of his technical prowess and deep passion for technology. He was described by one referrer as “a hard-core tech-freak with no life”. Those that referred him spoke of his programming abilities, and his involvement in mainframe computing.

6.2 Charles' Narrative

The initial meeting with Charles was in a local café, to which he arrived wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with “Linux Terrorist”¹¹. His poor health is obvious to the casual observer, and

¹¹ Linux is a computer operation system based on Unix. It is a free operating system in direct competition with operating systems such as Microsoft Windows, and has a reputation for being more stable than Windows.

his ashen gauntness is amplified by his greying beard. His gauntness means he looks much older than his chronological age due to his poor health of recent years and the years of heavy smoking that he has finally managed to quit.

Charles elected to give his narrative in his office, which was a moderate-sized windowless room he occupied by himself, located next to the door to the server room and appended to the room half-full of desks and cubical that his colleagues occupied. On display were some small-bore targets and a sign saying “Welcome to the world of Charles’ Useless Facts”, and he would later refer to both of these artefacts while giving his narrative.

He appeared stressed both during the initial meeting and while giving his narrative. Often uncomfortable and anxious, he displayed a never-ceasing nervous energy that appeared to compel him to exert his authority on his environment. For the solicitation itself, Charles began with the precise ordering of the pens on his desk, before expounding on the precise nature of English grammar after finding a grammatical error in the participant information sheet shown in the first extended extract in Appendix VIII. After spending the first 15 minutes discussing a split infinitive in the forms presented to participants for their information and consent, Charles dictated the flow of his narrative. The rest of the elicitation was spent rearranging and aligning the pens and paper on the desk in what appeared to be an obsessive manner.

The narrative Charles presented is one laced with anger, pedantry, profanity and several descriptions and threats of violence he perpetrated on others or was subjected to himself. It was easy for the listener to see how this slight and sick man could have been bullied as youth – a reoccurring asset in his narrative. In response to the initial open question about his education, Charles spoke at length about his schooling, of bullying, and of other related stories, before talking at length and detail about his ‘career journey’ (Nicholson & West, 1989) at work, from electronics to computing. In doing so, he told a number of stories in which he saved the day or was envied, and provided an expert opinion on many other projects that he was not involved with. Some of Charles’ stories are related to his work, but many are not. The narrative solicitation was long, running into several hours and using many cassettes. Charles’ narrative was rich in resources and roles (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), and the stories (Halford, 2003; Somers & Gibson, 1994) of being bullied and bullying re-occur throughout the narrative. The tone is one of competitive one-upmanship, and the listener was uncomfortable throughout as what appeared to be an undercurrent of hostile rage simmered.

Earlier versions lacked user familiarity, and maintenance was performed or obtained from knowledgeable users as opposed to paid vendor software support.

The previously mentioned T-shirt that Charles wore to the initial meeting to discuss obtaining his narrative suggests Charles was stamping his strongly held views and opinions on the interaction¹². With it, he apparently invokes emotive language around terrorism and associates it with a computer operating system that is not commonly accepted by many computer users (despite the arguments of its proponents who insist that the technology is superior). His views of Linux users versus Microsoft users were expressed forcefully elsewhere in his narrative, and he appeared to be happy to be identified with an alternative technology and group of like-minded people. In wearing this shirt, Charles appears to identify with the underdog battling a monolithic giant, using any means fair or foul to disrupt the status quo. He appears to assert to the observer “I know better than you, and I am going to make you see it” in his identification with this particular computer operating system.

As noted above, Charles began the narrative-proper by immediately referencing his being bullied. The first exchange after the previous extract was:

What’s your educational background?

Well, standard, primary school, um did well there, got pushed up a year ahead of myself, um was the youngest and smallest in the class so really alienated by savage bullying. Very quickly learned to defend myself.

Verbally or physically?

Physically, you pick up piece of a 6 foot waterpipe and threaten to beat the crap out of the bully, and he shits his pants and runs away.

This combative line continued as he justified any shortcomings and placed the blame on others, such as poor quality teachers, envious employers, undisciplined clients, or deficiencies which led to the above bullying. In suggesting that he overcame and survived, Charles accentuates his self-reliance and ‘tough-guy’ nature, also revealed in his talk of his overseas contracting experience, and of overcoming his addictions. Many of the identity assets that emerged in his narrative are seen as he talked about his schooling forty years beforehand in the second extended extract in Appendix VIII.

A noticeable feature of Charles’ narrative was the way that he engaged the listener in his narrative, incorporating aspects and facets of the listener into his own narrative and therefore in his presentations of his own identity. One such example was the apparent contrast in health between the Charles and the listener, which may have been the trigger for the exchange in the third extended extract in Appendix VIII which seems at odds to the flow of the narrative to

¹² For evidence of the passion of Unix supporters for ‘their’ platform, consider the Unix developmental timeline/summary created by one adherent at www.levenez.com/unix/unix.png

that point. In it, Charles appears to try and match and better the listener in at least two aspects. While his health is obviously poor, Charles claims to have adopted a weight-training regime for his shooting, and on hearing that the listener is an avid hunter Charles proceeds to ‘compete’ on hunting tales and knowledge. In this way, Charles tailors his narrative to the listener’s feedback, adjusting his narrative, his story, and the self he seeks to project to the listener in a way that makes him a peer of the listener. It was soon after this that Charles presented his binary counting drinking game as another way of bettering those around him.

6.3 Identity Assets in Charles’ Narrative

The identity assets that emerge from the analysis of Charles’ narrative are what appears to be his belief in his detailed and expert knowledge (including his belief he is right and the pedantry he demonstrates), the bullying he was subjected to and his tough-guy status. Charles’ narrative is laced throughout with references to his overcoming all obstacles including his addictions and obsessions in times gone by, his self-taught learning and the subsequent achievements. Charles believes he is needed and has brought exceptional skills to his employers. The identity assets that were identified in Charles’ narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 6.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XVIII.

6.3.1 Expert Knowledge

One identity asset that is extensive and significant in Charles narrative, and that permeates almost every story that he tells, is that of his expert knowledge. This asset comes through in the opening expression of his narrative with his lecture on split infinitives, the sign on display on his office door, his passion for Linux, and the story he told of showing up a teacher while at school. Charles also presents his expert knowledge to the listener in quite a blunt way by suggesting he is always right. Further examples are seen as he talks of using .22 rim-fire rifles on Crown land, his tale of the USS Westmoreland being stranded due to running Windows software, and his binary numbers party trick he uses to win a wager.

6.3.2 Bullying

Bullying is another significant identity asset in Charles’ narrative. This asset is integrated with the use of power over others, and the exercising of such power through violence was perhaps the most disturbing aspect for the listener of Charles’ narrative, and the hardest to

analyse. The bullying in his narrative was done to him and arguably by him at school, later in life, and as he raises his concerns about himself becoming a bully.

6.3.3 Tough Guy

Charles rebellion is enmeshed with the identity asset of him being a ‘tough-guy’. While this identity asset could initially be considered to be part of the bullying and use of power in the previous asset, those were more actions he identified with and this asset is more about his self perception and the identity he draws from that. Charles demonstrates to the listener just how tough he is as he comments on his lack of diplomacy, his rebellion at school, and his assertion that he is uncontrollable. He reinforces these assertions in presenting stories of his motorcycling days and an artillery bombardment he directed.

6.3.4 Overcoming

In his narrative, Charles often paints himself as the underdog and describes how he overcomes of obstacles that are placed in his way. Overcoming in his narrative is seen in his talk of an overseas posting he was on, the struggles he has with obtaining his trade qualifications, and his surgeries.

6.3.5 Addiction

Charles battles with his addictions form a significant part of his narrative, and the listener is left with the impression that he identifies with the battles themselves, as well as the overcoming of them – the identity asset of the previous section. While the overcoming of the addiction is significant, Charles identifies with his addictions themselves – and the effects his addictions, have had on his health. The subject of his smoking is the primary vehicle for his addictions played out over several of the following paragraphs, with a secondary role reserved for his shooting.

6.3.6 Self-Learning

The self-learning that Charles has done is contrasted to education: Charles never obtained a university degree, and much of identity seems to be drawn from his teaching himself, from his doing, and from his experience. His foray into formal tertiary education at university was truncated by failure (which he attributed to his youth) as he left university part way through repeating his first year before commencing trade qualifications. Learning as an identity asset is seen in the way he talks of trying to get his trade qualifications, his self-learning, and the superiority that this self-learning gives him over others.

6.3.7 Achievement

The achievements that Charles has made are presented to the listener in both an active and passive manner, where Charles will assert that he achieved or merely implied there was something in the event that he considers important to him. Examples include technical achievements such as mastering programming and his quest for 400 consecutive uptime computing days, or achievements related to qualifying for a position of some kind.

6.3.8 Needed

The asset of being needed is one that emerges through Charles' narrative, and has been suggested by Tan (2003) as being important in the turnover decisions of IT professionals. For Charles, being needed is something that he injects throughout his narrative in relation to his work, and there is no appearance of the needed identity asset in his personal life. His being needed is apparent in his narrative as he talks of his early career.

Table 6.1 Identity Assets in Charles' Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
Expert Knowledge (Appendix XVIII.a)	Technology	Don't touch [my Linux computer] Over my dead body ... Linux software is so reliable there is virtually no maintenance ... Whereas my colleagues around here have the new machines reimaged, two or three times a year ... "Gee, poor things".
	Self-Labeling	I'm not satisfied with just competence; I've got to be an expert in the subject. I develop myself to that level.
	Being Right	I'm always right., except for when I'm wrong [laugh] ... Like to think I am prepared to admit my mistakes, and I [long pause] I say that because I haven't had to admit many.
Bullying (Appendix XVIII.b)	Being Bullied	[I] was the youngest and smallest in the class so really alienated by savage bullying. Very quickly learned to defend myself.
	Bullying Others	I bullied [the person who hired me]. I've never, ever, applied for management and I don't want to do it. I'm too afraid of being a bully.
Tough Guy (Appendix XVIII.c)	Self-Labeling	I'm not very diplomatic. I call, I call a fucking shovel a digger.
		I'm uncontrollable.
	'War' stories	I'd scare the shit out of the driver by going past at full throttle. Boy that is destructive. 105 lbs of high expos-, explosive in each shell, 6 shells coming down and you're doing 6 rounds per gun, that's fun.
Overcoming (Appendix XVIII.d)	Work	The first year was a bit rugged ... I would go to [the polytechnic] at eight o'clock in the morning, I would finish there at eight o'clock at night ... And then I'd go to work and finish at six o'clock the next morning ... I made it through. I was sent over there to deal, work on Unix C programming, "Oops, haven't met Unix before" ... So I put in the professional hours ... I learnt Unix the hard way. I bought the books, I hammered on the system, and I worked out how it worked.
	Health	Hearing the scalpel going hack, hack, hack, up here by your ear's quite an interesting experience ... he cut that out, stitched it all up, bandaged it up and I went away.
Addiction (Appendix XVIII.e)	Behaviour	After three weeks I thought, yeah, I have this conquered. I wasn't sure how it happened, but I ended up smoking again.
		The [the Army] introduced me to shooting competitively which has become addictive.

Self Learning (Appendix XVIII.f)	Education	I wanted to get off and go into, well to complete my NZCE ... I'd end up enrolling in the, to do the subjects and then having to pull out of it because of work commitments.
	Work	I learnt an enormous [amount] about that system and before long I was running it as the system administrator. Because I knew more about it than anybody.
	Technology	I'd been building my own radio equipment and, um, radio, radio receivers and electronic gear at home, for years.
Achievement (Appendix XVIII.g)	Technical	There it [the Linux machine] was, still running, and I looked at it and said, "ooohh, it's 365 days of uptime". Magic number in those days was to try and get 400.
		I learnt so much about ACL [scripting], that if anybody wanted something done they always tossed it my way. "Yeah, do you think you could have a look at this and see if you can do this one". Five minutes later I'd say to him, "Done!".
	Qualifying	I was interviews last and they said, "We really want you", they said, "You cam top in the, you got, scored the highest marks in the aptitude test" I qualified for [NZ Army] officer training twice
Needed (Appendix XVIII.h)	At Work	I went back to [my employer], and on the Monday walked in, next thing I know everyone's cheering, well, pleased to see me ... you know, they were really keen to get me back.
		I'd been back at work for about six weeks when [another company] rang me up and said, 'Do you want that job as a computer engineer?'

6.4 A Summary of Charles' Constructed Identity

Charles appears to construct his identity based on his past as opposed to his present. His expert knowledge in many fields is presented to the listener from the initial meetings and discussions and his belief he is right and the pedantry he demonstrates, as well as the bullying he was victim of, and perpetrated on and feared doing more of to others, heavily influence how he sees himself. Charles' expert knowledge and belief means he believes he is right and that he is more than willing to assert his perceived status as correct by confronting those he believes to be wrong. His rebellion does not appear to be limited to when he believes he is right, however, as he appears at pains to express his views and identify outside the norm. His association with Linux is stereotypical of a high-achieving IT professional (Chmielewski & Wellman, 1999).

The identity building blocks suggested in the model presented in Figure 3-1 for Charles appear to include his education, and specifically his uncompleted trades training and his self-taught skills. His roles in organisation also figure prominently, as does his nationalistic identity where "I'm a Kiwi" who is "not gonna let my country down", and perhaps also his identification with country's Army.

The identity assets that Charles presented in his narrative, and the interdependent and interrelated natures, are seen in Figure 6-1, below. The foundation asset of Charles appears to

be his expert knowledge, which exists symbiotically with his learning. This expert knowledge influenced both his needed asset and his achievement asset, and the latter of these two influences the former. His expert knowledge also appears to influence his overcoming, which in turn exists with heavy interdependencies with his addictions. Charles identity asset of being a tough guy is influenced by and in turn influences his asset of bullying, and bullying in turn influences his overcoming asset.

The way that Charles presents and enacts is expert knowledge, seen in the asset of that name, supports the workplace selves that Collinson (2003) discussed. Charles' identity work on being aloof and not wanting to be a bully could be considered a desired civilised self, his target shooting and self-teaching of code could be considered an achieved self, and his identity work around being a non smoker is a crafted self.

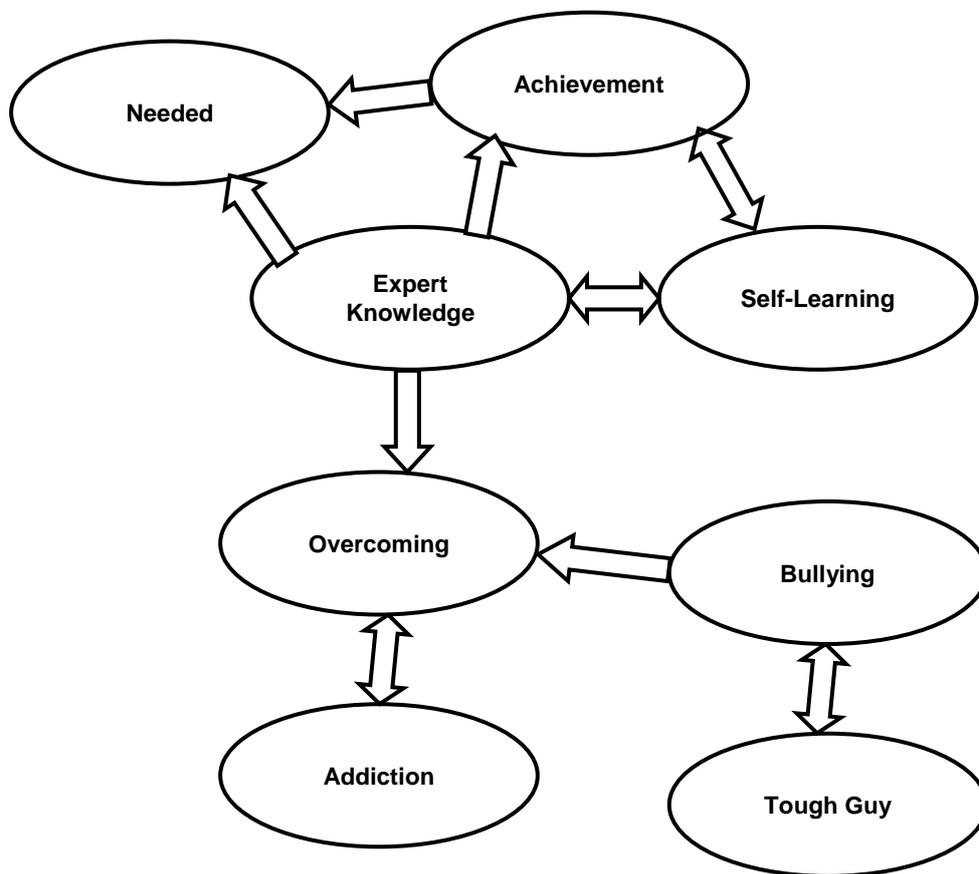


Figure 6-1 The Integration of Charles' Identity Assets

7.1 Introducing Erika

Erika is in her mid-forties and is of European ancestry, born in a now-former Communist European state. She is employed as a programmer/analyst in the IT services department of a large organisation, is married to a man she met at school and with whom she has had a son. She immigrated to New Zealand with her husband and son in the early nineties, via South Africa. Her immigration story is one of fleeing and fearing being shot, of sought-after tourist visas and suitcases of cash, of her family being separated and of sadness, and of unhappiness in a second country, and seeking and finding reconciliation and happiness in a third.

Erika finished school and was considering studies in architecture when she was counselled to look at IT and programming, graduating with a five-year degree in economics and computing in her country of birth. After graduating from a university she described as prestigious, Erika was bonded to the State for three years and was assigned to the IT centre for a State monopoly in a remote part of her country of birth. She talks with pleasure about being lucky to achieve a transfer back to her home city to be close to family and friends. Her English is precise, accented, and she sometimes pauses as she seeks the correct English word to convey herself.

After immigrating to New Zealand, Erika sought employment with various organisations, and while waiting to hear about an application she had made with a large telecommunications provider, Erika had an informal interview with another company which resulted in an offer that she accepted, and she has been employed in the same organisation for the last decade and a half.

Erika was referred as being a high-achieving IT professional by another participant, with the comment: “You have got to speak to Erika: she is the best that I know of, and she is quite personable too”. Her narrative is the third and last of the participants who are still active in the technical side of the IT industry.

7.2 Erika's Narrative

Obtaining Erika's narrative took two attempts as initially she was under the impression that the solicitation would only take 30 minutes and she had scheduled other things to do subsequent to the time she had allocated. Erika's reaction to the off-the-cuff comment from the listener that no interviews had been so brief to date was a self-depreciating utterance about how she doubted she would have much to say or could talk for even part of that time. The listener then suggested re-scheduling in a few days time, which she agreed to. In the second attempt, the narrative solicitation lasted for an hour and a half, a period which Erika subsequently announced she was surprised by.

Her narrative flowed in a logical sequence, beginning with her pre-immigration story that contained her education and life in Communist Europe. In telling this story, Erika made a clear distinction between 'us' who lived that life, 'they' who made life difficult, and the 'others' who do not understand that life because they had not lived it. These distinctions are an aspect of her identity work defining others in relation to herself - and herself in relation to others. Her immigration story followed, detailing how she left her country of birth and the struggle she and her family went through to reach New Zealand, a country as far from her homeland as possible. The third stage of her narrative took the form of a post-immigration work story, and then finally a reflective personal narrative account.

To give her narrative, Erika chose an unused office at her workplace that looked out onto the area where her desk and her colleagues were – a place she referred to as “The Eastern Bloc” for its concentration of people who hailed from the former Soviet states – and in turn be seen, and the listener felt this was in part to ensure her safety and wellbeing. In choosing an office in this area and inviting the listener ‘behind the curtain’ Erika could be considered to be inviting the listener into her world – be that her new world as an high-achieving IT professional in NZ or her old world in the former Communist Eastern Europe. In choosing an office in this area and inviting the listener ‘behind the curtain’ Erika could be considered to be inviting the listener into her world – be that her new world as an high-achieving IT professional in New Zealand or her old world in the former Communist Europe.

Erika gave her narrative is a very upright position, seated properly and she presents as an immaculate, petite, and inherently stylish woman with stereotypically European taste, elegance, and flair combined with a professional and conservative presentation. Her manner is polite and considerate, and she had a directness of stare accompanied by an apparent shyness. While a measured and serious exterior exists, she has a bubbly and cheerful nature

that peeks through on occasion. Once relaxed, her laughter moved from a nervous laugh to a humorous laugh, although she appeared to never completely relax as other participants appeared to, she demonstrated a warmth of personality that the other participants did not.

Initially, Erika's narrative account was stilted and unsure, with exact answers given to the questions put to her. She seemed willing to let the listener "drive the conversation" and was unsure of what was expected of her. In managing her account, Erika appeared mindful of her representation in it, such as in the following early exchange where she initially felt that she was drifting off topic as she saw it, away from the mechanics of her position and role and onto more personal matters:

Um, yeah, that was that from the economy point of view [pause] And yet, anyway, let's not

Nah, that's, I'm, I'm, I'm interested in that sort of thing. What I'm interested in, I'm interested in your experiences to date, and personal experiences also are part of that, so don't, don't, please don't chop yourself up.

Well, you, you drive the discussion wherever you want it to go.

[Long pause] How did you get into the industry? Why?

Why? Well, when I was in my last year at school, ahh, and all the other people around me...

Once it was made clear that the listener wanted to hear what she had to say, Erika talked freely and animatedly, commencing a 500 word monologue on how she started in the IT industry, the trials and tribulations she faced, and the obstacles she overcame as part of getting into university. After a common technical experience and background between her and the listener was identified, Erika's narrative was often expansive, relaxed, and with humour. This relaxation in her prose occurred after she suspected that the listener did not understand the technical complexities of what she was talking about:

The mail relies to LDAP well that the network devices like computers and printers also rely on LDAP, now that we've got all the information about the them that can be pulled down the information from the servers. What is your background?

My back, my background?

Yes

[A quick summary of the listener's technical experiences]

So I'm not talking gibberish?

Nah, no, not at all.

[Laugh] Just worried a bit.

After establishing a common technical experience and background between her and the listener (Orr, 1990), Erika relaxed into her narrative, talking freely and animatedly. This checking and validating of the listener's experience in a related area and his ability to understand what she was saying is both an act of consideration and a form of identity work in that by validating the listener's abilities, Erika also reinforces her own preconceived self-representation as a technically capable IT professional.

An extended extract of Erika's narrative is given in Appendix IX, in which she tells of her story about immigration. It provides a good example of her narrative presentations and included many of the identity assets identified in analysing her narrative and discussed in the next section. In this extended extract, Erika initially asserts a preferred identity of a hard working and conscientious person who likes the technical subjects, before branching off into her immigration story (to which she would later return), her proficiency and her professionalism. The extended extract closes with her strong identification of being "in IT", an identification she extrapolates to the other members of her family in declaring that they are a "family of geeks". Part of that identity is the presentation of a "technical mind" and "working in a very structured way", and aspect that Erika emphasises throughout her narrative.

Many of the events related in Erika's narrative are not in chronological order and she often appears to frame her experiences using the technologies she was working on or with at the time. A good example is in the above extract, when she dates her son's birth to the point where she "was between Fortran and Oracle".

Overall, Erika seems very aware of hierarchy, of delivering a service to her clients, and of the differing views and competencies of different people, and what they offer compared to herself. She appears to trust herself, and to see herself as a technology professional – a professionalism that presents itself in her composure, demeanour and carriage.

7.3 Identity Assets in Erika's Narrative

Erika's narrative could be characterised as the narrative of an immigrant, filled with talk of survival and coping, of being lucky and taking opportunities, of working hard and of the inherent merit of some people. Running concurrently with the 'immigrant's narrative' is an

awareness of lost opportunities and wastage, and the importance of relationships and a distaste for organisational politics that interfere with the delivery of the business. The listener was left with an impression of a woman who had survived, stayed true to herself, and found a peace at last, all the while being pragmatic and realistic. The identity assets that were identified in Erika's narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 7.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XIX.

7.3.1 The Immigrant

Erika's emigration from her birth country and her experience of being a 'stranger in a strange land' forms a dominant identity asset that emerges in her narrative. An important part of her narrated identity revolves around her struggle against adversity and active escape to a better life, including taking opportunities when they present themselves. Her immigrant identity reveals itself in the importance of place in her narrative, such as the compulsory placements she undertook after training in her birth country, or the way that she chooses to remain in her current employment. She also presents herself as the odd-one-out, either by her gender in a male-dominated industry or by her language and accent. Her identification with the immigrant is complete with her referring to her immediate colleagues, who all work in the same wing within the organisation, referred to as "the Eastern Bloc".

7.3.2 Her Technical Proficiency

Erika's technical proficiency appears to be a significant identity asset. It is mentioned by her throughout her narrative, beginning with her description of her education, which was technical and scientific in nature. She also emphasised the technical skills she has acquired in her career, as well as the skill bases she expects of others.

7.3.3 Being Conscientious

In addition to the emphasis Erika places on technical proficiency, her narrative reveals an apparent identity built around being conscientious. This identity asset is implicated across many facets of her life as presented to the listener, and is reflected in her use of language about being hardworking, a workaholic, conscientious, of providing a service, and of striving for perfection. Erika often explicitly references aspects associated with competency and conscientiousness, and uses these to label herself.

7.3.4 Being Professional

Part of Erika's reluctance to compromise her competencies and her conscientiousness stems from her identity as a professional. In analysing Erika's narrative, it is apparent that being

professional is an important part of who she is, and is also related to her use of her technical proficiency as a source of identification. She presents her professionalism in two main ways, by defining herself as a professional rather than a manager, which echoes Sveningsson & Alvesson's (2003) work on manager and non-manager identities, and in the professional boundaries she creates with her "work-face", which echoes Zaretsky's (1994) and Collinson's (2003) work on public and private identities.

7.3.5 Of IT

While Erika placed herself outside of the norm in her immigration story, she locates herself inside a technological community, that of IT, a source of identification that provides her with an identity asset. She does this through the language she uses to describe herself, or suggest how others see her, as a geek, a nerd, or as a weirdo. She also frames people according to their technical abilities and manages her discourse accordingly, even suggesting that technologists and non-technologists could be considered by some as different species.

Table 7.1 Identity Assets in Erika's Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
The Immigrant (Appendix XIX.a)	Being the 'Other'	Well, yeah in this very, really very hard to understand, unless you live [pause] that life.
		We've got our Eastern bloc over there [laugh] and we've got Croatian, Romanian, Russian and Bulgarian [laugh]. All ... of us, they've isolated us, stuck us up there, and there's not even a fire exit over there! [Laugh] In the event of a fire we are the first ones to go!
		I am the only female here, and er, I've been working in a male environment pretty much since.
	Actively Taking Opportunities	I just happened to talk to someone that was working in er, in er, IT then ... Well, anyway, I thought it was a good idea so that's how I got into things. So I just decided.
		I managed to transfer myself to [the capital] quite easily and to work in their IT centre, and I started there doing Cobol and Fortran programming.
	Importance of Place	I'm still here twelve years later, because it's a very nice environment to work in ... I never thought it was worth while [pause] going to somewhere else ... I think it's very important that you come to work and you like what you do.
Technical Proficiency (Appendix XIX.b)	Education	What they were recommending was ... economic and political studies, but you could also have geography or physics, so I chose physics because I always like mathematics and physics and this kind of er, um, scientific subjects.
	Technical skills - her	So, um, IT here decided to take them over because by then MacOS was Unix-based and um, since we've know Unix we thought we, can take care of them. So I was asked if I as interested in um, in um, working with them, and I thought, "Why not?" So that gave an, an extra dimension to my job.
	Technical skills - others	He was a very good er, analyst and er, an analytic mind in everything.
		I expect him to have, after three years of working together, some understanding of what, how things work.
Being Conscientious (Appendix XIX.c)	Self-labelling	I was always hard working, quite conscientious and I, and I, I mean, I like work, but, and I'm a bit of a workaholic I guess.
	Preparedness	My whole Oracle back up and restore strategy relies on these things ... I'd really be worried who would be able to solve the problem ... So, I have this thought last week and I came to work today to start to

		test my procedures.
Being Professional (Appendix XIX.d)	Not a Manager	I'm professional rather than a, I don't know if I would really [like] to manage people or manage other things, probably not people. No, I'm the kind that does probably tend to do the thing by, by, herself rather than delegate to someone.
	Having a 'Work Face'	It's maybe a face that I'm trying to present other people ... I do understand, and I realise that I've got a specific er, behaviour at work than I do outside work ... Um, I dunno um, I, yeah, I guess it is more restrained. I don't, I think I'm a private person, I don't er, go telling people what's happening outside work in general.
Of IT (Appendix XIX.e)	(Self) Labelling	We are a family of geeks! People out there perceive us the IT [function] is um, er, I don't even know how to say it um, so [pause] some nerds, or some weirdos.
	Different Worlds	What I'm thinking is that probably we're from such different worlds that one could even say that we are a different species, me and all the IT people.

7.4 A Summary of Erika's Constructed Identity

Erika appears to construct her identity on the 'what she is' of her professionalism, and technical proficiency and conscientiousness, while her being of IT and her immigration narrative are representation of 'who she is'.

The identity that Erika presents is this narrative appears to built on several of the building blocks suggested in Figure 3-1, such as her abilities, education in her birth country, and her language abilities.

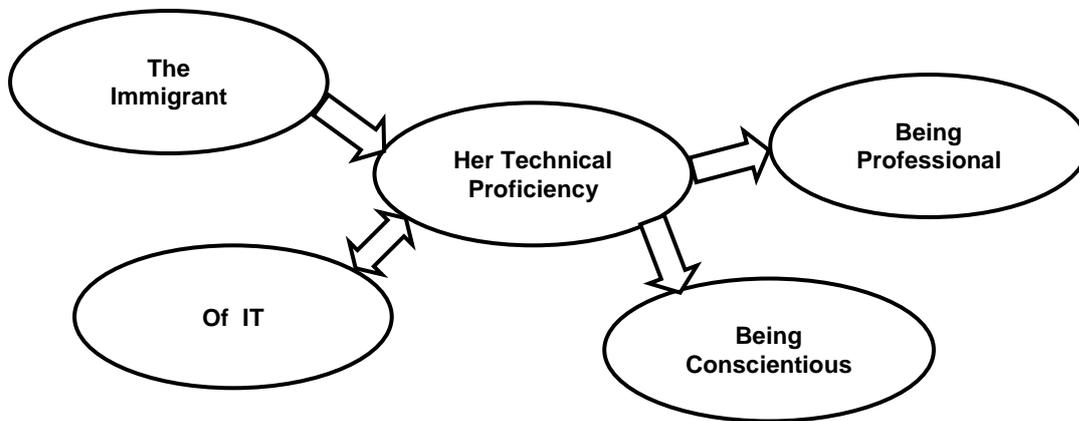


Figure 7-1 The Integration of Erika's Identity Assets

Erika's identity as the immigrant is the most obvious and clear identity asset that emerges from her narrative. However, it is her technical proficiency that seems to function as the central identity asset in her performance in this context, as it influences her being professional, her being conscientious and her being of IT. The interrelationship is shown in Figure 7-1.

Erika's presentation of her technical proficiency occurs throughout her narrative, and is a significant part of her discourse. It reinforces the distinction she makes between the technically competent 'us', and 'others' less proficient, and act of identity work where she defines herself in relation to others and others in relation to herself. It also underpins the strong identification she has with working in the IT field, as source of difference with others.

Perhaps as a protection against the implications of such differences, she creates a professional and impersonal persona that she projects at work. Using a 'work-face' allows her to compartmentalise her life and protect her privacy in a way perhaps similar to how she did living behind the Iron Curtain and wanting to escape to the West. These actions support Collinson's (2003) suggestion of multiple selves with Erika's active and aware presentation of her workplace self and her escape from a homeland where one could be shot representing the civilised self. An achieved technical self was presented as she discussed her technical abilities and the reliance placed on her and that she cultivates, while a crafted self is represented in her happiness at work and play.

8.1 Introducing David

At the time of giving his narrative, David was the Director of Information and Communication Services for his employer: a large New Zealand service provider. He is a married father of three adult children and a grandfather, who brought his family to New Zealand from the United Kingdom when he was forty, which was thirty-two years prior to the solicitation of his narrative.

After completing his National Service in the Royal Air Force together with an undergraduate degree, David undertook a Masters degree in electronics and spent time teaching in academia. On migration to New Zealand, he worked as an electronics designer and ran the design lab for an electronics manufacturer in New Zealand for six years. His experience of working in the New Zealand manufacturing industry during the economic reforms of the late 1980's when many manufacturing industry protections and tariffs were removed, led to a re-evaluation of his career and a subsequent move to a position in the service sector.

David has been with his current employer, for whom he initially started looking after a mainframe as a systems administrator, for the twenty-six years preceding the giving of his narrative. This represents a long time with one employer in the IT industry. The initial systems administration role grew, as did the workload, the computing resources, and then staffing requirements, until David was managing his employer's computing centre. David had an influential role in the development of the centre, defining how the department grew and selecting all the staff. This growth was to such an extent that his department eventually required new premises. David played a major role in this project, choosing the new building, and overseeing its expansion and refit.

The people who referred David to the listener as a high-achieving IT professional said that they considered him as such due to his development of the team he leads, his past expertise in managing the mainframe computer, the standing in which he was held by his peers, and his public profile in the IT industry. His narrative is the second of two participants who have moved from the technical and operational side of the IT industry into a managerial role.

A paternal kindness and concern is evident in much of David's narrative, along with the exasperated humour a father might show for a young and learning child, yet a hard rigidity that could easily be associated with military functionalism exists underneath which means the listener was left feeling that he is not soft and will stand firm on matters of importance, integrity, and doing his job. He does not look his seventy-two years of age, and indeed this was not revealed until deep into his narrative, as he presents as a sprightly and agile man in his late-fifties. His vigorous appearance that defies his chronological age is not the only deceptive thing about him, as it was not revealed until deep into the narrative that he is also profoundly deaf and relies on 'smart' hearing aids. In verbalising these non-verbal points about him, David brings them to the fore and performs as a vital man with much still to offer his employer:

I don't think you realise the situation here, You don't realise my situation though. How old am I?... Try 72, 71, 71. I should have retired years ago.

8.2 David's Narrative

The lead-up to David's narrative was a straightforward and simple affair, as he readily replied to the initial email contact, and suggested a time to meet in the near future. He elected to give his narrative in his office at his place of work, and afterwards took the listener on a tour of the department's building and to lunch in his employer's cafeteria. His office is located on the ground floor by the mail door of the building, which allows him to see all who enter and leave.

David's narrative unfolded in three distinct parts. The first consisted of a sequential presentation of his 'career journey' (Nicholson & West, 1989) in which he presented his formal status as an engineer and manager who developed and ran the department. In the second part, he told a series of stories about his work activities, which served to reinforce and cement his previously-presented formal position. In the final part of his narrative, David engaged in a reflective summing up of his experiences and life that served to share his self-perceived knowledge and the experiences he had garnered and formed part of his identity.

The elicitation of David's narrative took almost three hours in total. He spoke for sustained periods of time on matters he felt strongly about or wished to convey, such as his longevity in the industry and his presence during its evolution. At times he interspersed his narrative with the names of recognizable people, companies or places, as a way of locating himself and his

narrative in time and space. Similarly, his repeated use of technical terms, specifications or computer technologies emphasised his industry experience and knowledge. Indeed, David frequently used references to particular technologies to mark the passage of time in his narrative. This might be the name of an operating system, a programming language or a make of computer. Often such references were accompanied by an explicit attempt to involve the listener (who David was aware had a technical background) in the narrative. This can be seen in the following two extracts, where David is using changes in the computer technology at his work to structure his description of his career there:

When we had Windows 3.1, which was probably before your time ...

We've now moved again, we're using VMware for a lot of our servers. Are you familiar with VMware?

David consciously used stories as an important part of presenting his narrative. In telling these stories or anecdotes, David typically acted out the dialogue of others as if he was quoting or pantomiming, at times becoming quite animated in his performance. He also used props, such as photographs of the department building prior to its substantial expansion and refit, and a large, framed aerial photograph of the company property, including the building he inhabits, which hangs on the wall of his office. In the course of giving his narrative, David used the aerial photograph as a 'map' to point out particular functions and where they are performed, or where things or people are (or were) located. In part, David's incorporation of the photograph into his narrative acts to emphasise boundaries, such as between the 'us' of his department and the 'them' of the rest of the organisation. Another noticeable feature of David's storytelling was the way he often alternated between use of the collective 'we', used by him to emphasise inclusiveness and a shared perspective (e.g. of his team), before switching to the personal 'I', in order to emphasise the active role he gave himself in large parts of his narrative. Many of these narrative features appear in a long story, extended extracts which are presented in Appendix XI.

David told the story about how he identified the need for a new building to house his growing team, found the site, convinced the executive to let him redevelop it, and successfully achieved the project. Indeed, David prefaces his account with an explicit reference to it as "an interesting story" in the extended extract in Appendix XI. In the story, David frequently uses the inclusive term 'we', but also highlights his personal drive and judgement in his use of the more personal 'I' to allocate an active and leading role to himself in the story. This is illustrated in the extract, where David says "I need some more space", "I scoured the whole site", "I found this place", and suchlike. On occasion, this creates an apparent contradiction

with ‘we’ terms, such as when his statement “We wanted to be together” is later followed by “I determined it would be better for us to be ... all together”.

This extended extract in Appendix XI also illustrates David’s rehearsal of dialogue between himself and others, together with his use of photographs as artefacts to support and locate his story. In the second half of the extract, he uses the building itself as way of pointing out his contributions and responsibilities over the years.

The story also functions to demonstrate David’s practical and ‘hands on’ skill in designing much of the building, and includes many details of construction and layout that reflect the importance of ‘building’ in his narrative, and how he knows every nook and cranny of the building – and, by extension, those in it. It demonstrates David’s leadership of his team and his apparent desire to build an appropriate working environment for them, as well as providing an opportunity to highlight his influential relationships with others and his ability to ‘manage’ senior executives in the organisation. These latter points reflect aspects of David’s identity work in presenting his narrative, and are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

8.3 Identity Assets in David’s Narrative

Analysis of David’s narrative identified a number of key themes that were related to his identity work in accounting for himself as a ‘high-achieving IT professional’. These themes that emerged in David’s narrative represent identity assets, part of the identity capital David has accumulated over his long career and which he draws on in situations such as the interview to maintain and present a secure sense of the self. They include his experience, being an engineer, his ability to manage – be it his team, his life, or managing to make do, his exercise of control over others, his competency and ability in building – both in the practical sense and in building his team, the importance of the relationships he nurtures and maintains, and his position as a key cog in his organisation and industry. The identity assets that were identified in David’s narrative are discussed in detail below and summarised in Table 8.1 on page 8-24.

8.3.1 His Experience

An important identity asset that David draws on throughout his narrative, and which appears to be used to inform and influence the other identity assets observed in his narrative, is that of

his experience. David's narrative use of his experience has many facets. It is not just his experience at his workplace or in the IT industry that David has constructed as an identity asset, such as starting the department he now manages, but his experience as a pioneer in obtaining his Masters degree in an emerging field, his experience in circumventing protectionist trade policies, as a man who knows deafness, and his experience as a builder – a asset explored later.

In presenting his experience derived from his work, David asserts himself frankly and succinctly, with statements such as:

I started the department, I was the first member of the department, and I've been here 26 years doing just that.

We would be one of the first places in Auckland, probably one of the first places in the country, to put our own fibre under a public road.

Such overt assertions serves to present simple, indisputable, facts to the listener, which are then supported with further details so that there can be no doubt about David's workplace and industry experience. This experience in the industry, colloquially known as 'been there and done that', present David's foundational role in establishing the department which he now manages, his initiation of the technologies and infrastructure which are being used in his organisation today, and the pioneering role the organisation tool in the industry under his leadership.

Early in his narrative, David establishes his longevity in the IT industry by pointing out that his postgraduate qualification was necessarily in electrical engineering because computing as an industry had not been 'invented' yet. By locating himself as a pre-existing the industry in which he now works, David establishes himself as a pioneer within it:

I've got a Master's degree in pulse and digital, which is er, [pause] which before computers were really um, mainstream. Er, my course supervisor, a guy called Professor [X], who um, invented –

Why is that name fam[iiliar]?

PCM.

Yeah, OK. [PCM]. I knew the name, I recognize the name [X]"

There you go.

In the short exchange above, David's credentials are further enhanced through association with his Master's degree supervisor, a well-known academic in the electrical engineering field who the listener recognises – a point that David appears to take satisfaction in acknowledging.

For David, his experience is an important source of knowledge and wisdom. At one point he retells his experiences as a senior technologist during the last days of New Zealand's sheltered and protected manufacturing industry. He says:

This was 1980 and I'd really seen the writing on the wall for er, for um [pause], manufacturing here, Electrical because I was, I was helping to kill it. I was going to Japan and finding ways to get fully made up things into New Zealand. I was killing the industry myself ... We'd go to the Japanese and we could import kits, but we couldn't import everything. Like, you could import a transformer but you couldn't import the windings, a ready made one. You could import, a, front panel but not if you put printing on it. Because there was industries here that did that. And so you'd have to go, so we'd go along, so we'd go along to Japan and say, "We'd like some of those, we'd like a thousand of those ... but we can't import that, that and that", and they'd say, "Well, we take it out", and it would cost us money to take it out. And then we'd get back here, and, metal, metal work was the big thing, couldn't import metal work, and so we'd, we'd come back with a sample and we'd go to, we had a company called PPP ... which we, aw "piss poor products" [laughs] I mean we'd take it along and say, "Right-o, [Bob], I want a thousand of those". "Aw well, we can't tool up for that, we'll knife-and-fork-it", which meant they punched the holes and so on individually, which meant that when it came back from PPP the, the hole that should have been there was over by millimetre and half or whatever ... You know, they'd have to file it on the line, and ah well, [whistles] ... And so we found ways round this, we used to call things different things, and we used to, you know, we got up to all sorts of tricks. And so I, I really could see that, and [a competitor], they were doing the same, we all used to go up together, well we all, we were all doing the same, we were all doing the same thing, and [another competitor] were doing it bigger and better than we were!

In this extract David presents himself as an active participant in the subversion of New Zealand's trade barriers, and their subsequent removal at this influential time in New Zealand's history. The level of detail that David is able to provide on what could be brought into New Zealand and could not be, together with his use of the vernacular of the metal fabricators (e.g. "we'll knife-and-fork-it") locates and adds authenticity to his claims. His whistling appeared to the listener as an 'informed sigh', indicating that he knew more than he was letting on and it was all a bit of chore, and again served to convey a wealth of experience of too great a magnitude to convey verbally.

At the end of this extract David qualifies his acknowledged role in circumventing the trade restrictions by claiming that many, if not all, of his competitors were doing the same thing, and that his role and organisation was not the largest participant in this activity. The listener was left with the impression that this was an exercise in perception management by David, as he sought to underemphasise the impact on his actions had on New Zealand's unemployment rate whilst concurrently emphasising his active involvement in a fundamental shift in the way New Zealand does business.

Overall, the story serves to emphasise David's wisdom and discernment in foreseeing the impending collapse of the protected manufacturing industry. This story comes before a story of how he moved into the service sector, and seems to be a way of understanding or making sense of his subsequent decision to transition out of the manufacturing industry – and important stage in his career journey.

Later in his narrative, David calls on his experience to instruct or judge others outside the workplace setting. The experience David has of being deaf is attributed to his time working on Royal Air Force bombers – a claim the listener has heard from other ex-Air Force technical staff – and he uses this experience to warn others, saying

When you've got four Armstrongs leading, Armstrong Sidley Sapphires, I used to be in D bombers ... er, they're not quiet, and of course ear protection was not something we had, not one of the things that they did in those days. Which really hacks me off when I hear these young guys going around in their cars, boom-booming, and I think, "You're so stupid". And you tell, you know, you see somebody mowing their lawn with, without a muffler on or whatever, you go and say to them, "You know, you'll be deaf by the time you're 50 if you carry on like that". Um, but it's stupid.

In this extract, David's appeal to his past reinforces for the listener the experience and associations he has had which inform his current views (Cantor et al., 2002). He extrapolates this previous military experience into the modern and topical suburban context for relevance, and judges accordingly based his experience. With experience comes knowledge and wisdom.

8.3.2 Being the Engineer

David's initial education and postgraduate studies were in the field of engineering, and it appears that this association with engineering has been the basis for an ongoing identity asset in his construction of self. Very early on in his narrative, David asserted:

I'm a member of the IEE, which is the electrical arm ... and I'm also a chartered engineer.

This authoritative statement of David's professional affiliation and training is a manifestation of a construction of identity through role (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) and profession (Nicholson & West, 1989). As Cote (1996b, p.425) discusses, establishing a stable sense of self "is bolstered by ... associations in key social and occupational networks".

David draws on his membership of this collective group (Cantor et al., 2002) to highlight differences between himself or his colleagues, who have an engineering background, and others who are not engineers. In particular, David does this in attributing differences in ideas, behaviours and practices. This is apparent in the following comments he made in discussing

first his company's, and thus his, approach to performing data backup and disaster recovery, and second, his involvement in establishing the internet gateway at his employers site:

We also do things differently to everybody else um, do a lot of other things.

And so we were different right from the start.

Using such comments, David both explains difference in approaches to technical tasks and derives a personal sense of identity by claiming an engineering background and mindset for himself.

In another part of his narrative, David similarly ascribes an historical difference in approach to managing computer applications between his departments and those of his employer's competitors to "the engineering background" that he and his colleagues shared:

We were all seen as being quite different to the others and. I don't know how it happened, I, I guess that it comes from [pause] the people that we had in the department at the time, and you know how you come across an idea and stick with it really, so we, [pause] I can't say it was me, all I can say is that it was in our, [pause] we thought it was a good idea ... We, we were different, right from the start. I think it had something to do with the engineering background.

In doing so, he attributes the "idea" of the approach adopted by his team to the group, rather than to himself as leader, by using the collective 'our' and 'we'. His identification with engineering does not have to be exclusive to him, but can encompass group membership.

8.3.3 Managing

David manages his team, his life, his superiors, and he manages to make to do with what resources he has available, and it is these many facets of managing that appear to form a significant identity asset in his construction of self.

As an identity asset, managing presents itself in particular to the listener in the way David manages to cope with and integrate disparate technologies, and antiquated equipment. His belief in his ability to provide service with minimal or old infrastructure appears in the descriptive stories he tells of his work, for example;

Then through the 80s we gathered other bits of computer systems, we put a network in, put an S-Bus system in from MDL for accounts, and we also put in Gateway network, and then we started using the Bell networks. So by the end of the, towards the end of the 80s, then we were doing quite a lot ... towards the end of the 80s then we had um, [pause] probably 4 or 5 computer nodes on Novell networks, we had a mini computer, and um, and also the Unix system.

By detailing the specifics of the disparate technologies that he had available to him, which were not only of differing vintage but differing technological standards and interfaces, David

presents to the listener a catalogue of his achievements in which he coped with resources that others may not have been able to have coped with, in building up a usable computer system for his employer. In another part of his narrative he notes the lack of spares by saying “we had no hard drives on site, apart from in service”, and through these stories he presents to the technically literate listener that he managed to still provide a service.

Further support for managing as an identity asset comes from another part of his narrative, where David describes the limitations of the minicomputer he was responsible for:

As far as I remember, there wasn't a C-compiler on it. And we got what we got, you understand, and we are, when I say mini computer, I mean it was like ah, [pause] I think from memory, was probably [pause] it was bigger than 1K store but not much more I think and probably a 1 Meg store, and I think the hard drives were like 4 Meg or something like that for, and they were 20 inch drive discs, removable, was it a movable pack? not it wasn't a removable pack, no it wasn't, it wasn't a removable pack it was a fixed drive, and I remember we spent a lot of money getting up to something like 40 mg on the hard drive. It had [pause] 12 [cough] excuse me, I think we had 12 terminals [cough] but you couldn't have 12 people working on word processing all at the same time, 'cause it'd just run out of steam, 8 was a reasonable number. So it wasn't, I mean probably had about the same computing power as my mobile 'phone ... the machine we got because Data General were, [pause] oversold the machine, it was probably 5 years old by the time we got it, yeah the technology. Yes, [cough] it wasn't, it was sod all.

In this extract, David's details the technical limitations of this supposedly new piece of technology, which in reality was five-year-old technology¹³, not even possessing rudimentary compiler for 'C'¹⁴. All through the extract David is creating for the listener a picture of him facing the odds, and yet still managing to 'make do' and provide a service with an inadequate computation environment.

This asset of managing do with inadequate or outdated resources occurs throughout David's narrative, with a number of stories based around it. Later in his professional life, when new (presumably commercial grade) equipment had been purchased and installed, David again presents himself as 'making do' as the new technology became outdated, saying:

When we wanted Windows 95-98 we moved into Citrix, and we had, and we used exactly the same machines we were using for Windows 3.1, some of them were very old and tired but they did fine for Citrix. So we, we were big in Citrix um, and we carried up through until the, the bloat Microsoft bloatware go so much that you couldn't really run all the applications that would be Citrix, and so we moved into a

¹³ In the context of computing, 5 years equates to several generations of technological advancement.

¹⁴ 'C' is a structured programming language. A compiler takes the code written by the programmer, and converts it into executable code the computer can understand.

um, thin-client¹⁵, we've got hard drives in all the machines now, though we still run Citrix for some applications.

David had previously talked of the expense of hardware and software. In the extract below, he describes how in the face of what he sees as the excesses of Microsoft software, he adopts the controversial Citrix¹⁶ as a means for making do with the “old and tired” existing computers and still providing a full service to his users. Again, David manages his budget and resources in order to cope. This kind of thrifty management is emphasised in other places in his narrative such as when he details the ratio of IT support staff to computers in the organisation:

So it shows in the number of people that we have relative to the number of machines that we have. We've got three and a half thousand machines out there ... and they're looked after by [pause] two people, perhaps three at the most.

In a later part of his narrative, in similarly describing his thrifty management of computer resources, David comments more explicitly on his “good financial management”:

Um, I'm, um, I've had a history of good financial management I think ... I think [pause] you need really to get a bit deeper into how we've operated over the years and we, we are different to the others. We've got HP LaserJet 4s out there, which are now eight, eight and a half years old, perfectly serviceable. We look after our gear, if, if, if there's a problem we get it serviced or we service it um, our machines. We, we [pause] allocate machines based on peoples' needs, so the, the [particular] department ... need very good, latest machines. So we tend to buy machines for them and then take their machines and give them on to somebody else and take their machines. We might have three [pause], three moves.

Interestingly, David's management ability to ‘make do’ is presented by him in the above extract as a point of difference with his competitors. At another point, David emphasises this difference through managing by referring to his peers in competitor organisations as “DP [data processing] people” rather than a capable manager like himself:

Other people, who were mostly DP people ...they were, they didn't care about it. They ... were more interested in playing with the machine than they were actually [pause] producing, providing a service, and I guess that was the difference, that, that we were more interested in getting it right for the users and providing a good environment and so on than we were in actually playing ourselves. Um, and all those people that were DP people disappeared fairly quickly, as managers, 'cause they weren't managing it. You get the idea?

¹⁵ A ‘thin client’ computer is a users machine in client-server network which depends primarily on the central server for processing activities, and mainly focuses on conveying input and output between the user and the remote server. Examples are machines that run only web browsers or remote desktop software, meaning that all significant processing occurs on the server. In contrast, a ‘thick client’ or ‘fat client’ does as much processing as possible and passes only data for communications and storage to the server,

¹⁶ Citrix is a company with a troubled history, and that sells software and services specializing in thin clients and remote access software for delivering applications over a network. Adopting Citrix would have been controversial decision.

For David, managing or ‘making do’ also extends beyond technology, to areas such as managing his team and his company executive. This is particularly striking in his story about acquiring a new building for his department (presented in the extended extract in Appendix XI). There he talks of cajoling both his team and his superiors into going along with his plan. His placement of himself at the centre of this story suggests to the listener that David’s considers this project significant in not only its achievement, but for his place in managing the design, the budget, the contractors and the staff involved in the project.

8.3.4 Using Control

David is quite open about his belief in centralising decision making in his work environment, and often in his narrative this appears to be about centralising it with him. His many years in the same organisation, and his having built the team he leads, has placed considerable power in his hands. His use of this power and the control he exercises appears to be a significant identity asset of his, and can be seen in his repeated use of “centralised management” as a way of describing his management style, in the way he controls sales representatives, vendors, and contractors, and in his suggestion to the listener on several occasions that he may be a controlling person.

“Centralised management” seems to be the expression David uses when explaining his management approach. In particular, it reflects the degree of control that he exercises over decision-making and control in his department, as when he says:

We’ve always been very centrally managed, right from the start we liked the idea of central management ... I can’t tell you where it came from, it was just, well there were only two of us so it had to be one of us I suppose. And um, and we carried that right the way through, and the people we employed since then have been of the same mind, [pause] now whether they’d be the same, of the same mind when they came, [pause] I’ve been very lucky in the people we’ve had here, good, hard and good um, and really the success of the department’s nothing to do with me really, but them, I’ve got some seriously smart people and they’ve got the same ideas. Well, we’re not here to do a job, we’re not here to turn a handle, we’re here to give a good service to the users, and to do that we need to know what the users want and what they’re getting, and so we’ve carried on with that centralised management um, ever since.”

It can be seen that in light of David’s influence in building the department, his use of the collective pronoun ‘we’ is actually a term for himself: the second person he refers to is not the boss, and never was. David has previously stated that he has made the hiring decisions, and so the people he has hired have met with his approval and presumably have similar value systems in that they integrate well into his department (Cantor et al., 2002). This extract also presents the listener with a collective value system in his speech and action, as well as the

vision and values he claims the department that he has created possesses. While to the casual listener it appears the centralised management is a *fait accompli*, this is a product of a man who has managed the department since its inception and been responsible for its people and its performance – to say ‘we’ he usually means ‘I’, but it is the collectivist values and terms that permeate his language and apparent values. The second half of the above extract appears to be rhetorical business-speak, but these values present in many other parts of his analysis, and his military service and the value systems of military service such as service and collective responsibility can be seen in his narrative.

David appears to acknowledge the above points around his use of the collective pronoun ‘we’ to refer to himself in another part of his narrative, where he begins to correct himself to take individual ownership of an initiative, before continuing. He says:

If we are successful [pause] as an IT department I think it goes right back to when we started when we [pause] said, I keep saying we and I guess, yeah, when we said, “If you’re gonna have IT in this place then, or computers in this place, you only want one authority to computing, you can only have one” ... we cottoned on to that very early and went to the executive and said, “do you want one, do you want a decent computer system, do you want one authority. And, I don’t have to approve everything, I don’t have to buy anything, but I want to be in the position where I approve it before it was brought” And they said, “yes that’s fine”.

Here he not only presents the collective when meaning the individual, but he also provides an example of how he has stamped the centralised control value systems on his department, insisting on a right to veto purchasing decisions that is to be centralised in his hands. David gives no justification or rationale for his belief other than a second-voice assertion, but it is this assumed and apparently unquestioned value that only one authority was desirable that reflects a centralised value system is core in his values and identity. This centralised control in David’s hands that can be seen in the above is also seen elsewhere in his language, when he claims:

The fact that we’ve only had one, one authority um, and now we’ve got the situation, as I was saying, where nobody owns a machine, I own all the machines, if a machine fails I give them a new machine with the image that they had when [pause] they were given the machine in the first place.

David again appeals to the ‘way it is’ line of reasoning to explain the centralised approach that he has imposed on the department, and emphasises this with a possessive claim to “own all the machines”. Although an obvious exaggeration, as it is the department he heads which has the machines on its books, his claim emphasises the degree of control vested in him as the ‘giver’ of computers and belief that he is integral in the collective of the organisation.

David's exercise of control extends to outside his immediate department to his dealings with suppliers and contractors. In quite a blunt and matter-of-fact manner, David gives an example of how he controls vendors, saying:

I only see the [sales representatives] that I want to see um, [pause] again, very interesting because I still deal with some of the people I dealt with when I was in industry. We don't change suppliers ... I can tell you who they are, just about ... We've actually got, when we have a, every Christmas we put on the splendid lunch for our suppliers, which is, again, an unusual thing in the industry, and I started that, ooo the year dot ... It's very, very popular, if you, if you, if you don't get an invite to that you, you know you've got a problem.

The initial part of this extract contains a simple assertion of the consequences of his position: that he will only see the suppliers that he wishes to see, irrespective of the merits of their offer of the organisation they represent. By maintaining his relationships with suppliers and vendors over many years, David would appear to provide them with a high probability of a sale, and in return he can demand more and more from them in the probable expectation that a fear of losing him as a client will facilitate compliance to his wishes. This manipulation of his suppliers extends to the Christmas lunch, which David appears to use as a signifier to his suppliers as to their status to him. This control and manipulation of people is seen in another parts of his narrative, such as in another extract that deals with suppliers:

We'd just go and say, "Your service is slipping er, I had to wait two days for this" and, "Oh sorry we've got a guy away" or whatever, "Well it's not good enough", "Alright we'll fix it", and they put us back up the um, the tree or whatever. Um, somebody over in [a supplier], our accounts manager left, and I'm not very keen um, I've done that before with the company, bigger companies er, you know, like [a couple of suppliers] or something and I said, "I don't like this new account manager". "Alright we'll find you a new one".

Here, David details how his influence and control can alter his and his organisation's position in the vendor's client hierarchy, and even cause vendors to adjust their account management. This is a consequence he appears quite comfortable with, and suggests to the listener that David is not only aware of the power he has, but that he is quite willing to use this to control the actions. This asset reoccurs in other places in David's narrative, such as when he discusses yet another supplier, saying:

We use [that supplier] because we always have just about. They're small enough, they're, they're big enough to do what we want, if you want the 100 machines, 200 machines, they can do it, and they're, I say, they're big enough to do that but they're small enough for us to say, "Oi, I'm annoyed", and for them to jump or do something, and we've had very good, very good service from them.

David seems to justify this power he has wields over the suppliers in the above extract in the name of obtaining “very good service”. His identification is seen in his constructing himself at the centre of the exchange.

The use of control also extends over contractors, where David retells an incident in which a contractor had helped write the specification for a job and then under-delivered:

So Monday morning, “How did they get on with the duct I wonder?” ... I said, “Mm is that supposed to be 600”, “Aw it’s fine at that”, it, “Look you wrote the bloody spec, you said it had to be 600, it’s not 600 it’s only 200 in places”... we’re still arguing about, well I’m not arguing ‘cause I’m just saying, “You wrote the spec, that’s what you signed”, I wanted the 600. So they agreed in the end that the contractors had got it wrong, they’d put the duct in, and so they were, and that was the delay, they were fighting at the end saying, “We told you 600” and, and, you know, and he was saying, “Well it’s more or less 600” So in the end they decide they’d dig it up and put a new one in, right the way, at their cost not mine. So I was fairly happy with that. So they came along and then the new guy, they sacked that contractor.

Here David plays out the exchange with the contractor in some details, maintaining a pedantic precision and asserting the authority he has to ensure that the contract is delivered on as agreed. He details the flaws in the other, all the while maintaining that there is no argument – despite his initial use of the root of that very word. He closes this extract with noting to the listener that not only was he right, but he was vindicated at the contractor’s cost and the person who under delivered lost their job.

Given David’s ability to influence and use the control he has, more self-reflective comments at several points in the interview about being “a control freak” do not come as a surprise to the listener, such as:

I just, I like, I dunno, perhaps I’m a control freak or perhaps I’m, I dunno.

Perhaps I’m a control freak. I just like, being in charge. I wouldn’t, I really don’t like not being in charge. I wouldn’t do pro rata, I wouldn’t, I couldn’t do that. I mean I don’t do anything at home in the kitchen, not a single thing, because I’m not in charge.

In using the phrase “a control freak”, David places it in the consciousness of the listener, while appearing to deny its relevance. In doing so he denies what is, while admitting and accepting it. David appears to identify with this expression of power (Knights and Willmott, 1999). He even goes so far as to declare he does nothing in the kitchen (which was accompanied by a detailed second-voice description of an interaction with his wife about the correct way of preparing vegetables), because he lacks the control derived from being “in charge”.

8.3.5 Building

In several places in his narrative, the identity asset of ‘David the builder’ appears to be a significant asset in his construction of his identity, as he builds his team and his department, the infrastructure at his workplace, and indeed his very own house. He places himself at the centre of these events and stories that he tells about them, signifying their significance to him.

David’s foundational role in establishing his department has been previously. In the extract that follows, he elaborates on that building role, placing himself at the centre of what he has built by emphasising his success in surrounding himself with “seriously smart” people and the low staff turnover under his leadership:

I started the department, I was the first member of the department, and I’ve been here 26 years doing just that, and um, and I’ve got a lovely lot of people they’re absolutely magnificent and seriously smart, really really smart. I’ve been very very lucky in getting people into the department that, in that, in all the time that, that the, the turnover is very very very low, people only leave to [pause] go overseas.

Building his team was also an asset presented in the extract in Appendix XI where he described his initiative to locate his department in a single, new, building. This story highlighted his intimate involvement with the planning and design of the building, such as his detailed description of changes to the original structure and the positioning of doors, windows, and corridors. The detail that he goes into is more that would normally be seen by a manager arranging an office shift, and the passion in his voice and his use of artefacts to make his point all suggest that David as identified with the building, and with building it.

The construct of ‘David the builder’ is even more prevalent and explicit in when he describes building his own house. David is at pains to point out that by building his own house he does not mean hiring a builder and architect, but doing the actual planning and construction himself. He says:

I built my own house, ah I mean built it, now we’re not talking about getting a builder you understand, it’s building, I did the plumbing, I did the electrics ... I had to get somebody in to Certify everything. The only things I didn’t do were I, I used fibrous plaster on the walls as well as the ceilings, which is unusual, and when I came to do that I got somebody to do, to help to start, and er, he died after he’d done about half of the house, and did me a big favour ‘cause all the ones he did have cracked ... And all the ones I did, he didn’t understand, he was an older guy, he didn’t understand glue, he didn’t understand what happens with movement and so on, they all cracked. But I fixed them up, I, I did that last year actually. Um, the house, I’d like to spend more time, I need to spend some time tidying it up. It’s all, not, it’s all double glazed and it’s got super insulation and all sorts of things that you don’t normally find. Like, I didn’t use building paper, I used a thing called TrimLess which is a 15mm, you don’t, I don’t think you’d even buy it now ... Great house, big

workshop, double garage and seven bedrooms I think ... well seven rooms you could use as bedrooms.

In this story, David adopts the active role of the ‘doer’, appearing keen to quantify his contribution, identifying what was done by him, the materials he used, along with the specifications of the house, noting with what appeared to the listener to be a degree of disgust that he had to have some things certified by the state. In making the comment about certification, David appeared to the listener for a moment to have been hurt by the need to have his work certified. His confidence in his practical abilities and in building his house extends to appreciating his only contractor dying which enabled him to do the contractor’s job properly, and fix up his errors.

David’s practical building ability with his hands and tools extends into his professional life, as can be seen in the following extract:

I insisted that we had to be an office environment where the terminals were, so we had carpet on the floor, we had air conditioning, and I designed a table, suitable for these terminals. I designed it, I made it at home, bought it in meself, made me tools like that ... OK, I did that.

David takes an active role in this story, illustrating to the listener his design and building skills and ability in actually constructing office furniture in order to more appropriately configure part of his working environment.

8.3.6 His Relationships

The relationships that David has appear significant to him and he presents his relationships with others through his work as in Section a significant part of his narrative. This has been seen in the initial extended extract, where he discusses the need to collocate his staff and the space they need, and how he knew the facilities management people necessary for that to happen. It is also seen in David’s presentation of the interaction he has with his colleagues and those that report to him as he seeks to build a rapport, how he talks of turnover and presents that as part of the relationship they have, their acceptance and consideration of his deafness, his staff’s motivation and willingness to own problems, and his suggestion that he knows everybody who matters.

David expresses his relationship with his team when he describes the regular meetings that his department has, saying:

The people that are there they are always very friendly to one another and they’re a happy bunch. There’s no, there’s no animosity [there] and there’s no, everybody’s very happy. I like to come to work.

To the casual listener this may sound like a utopian workplace, but analysis of this extract reveals aspects of the backstage narrative that is not discussed so freely. Most noticeably is David noting that those that are there are very friendly to one another, which is a comment that overlooks and marginalises those that do not attend these meetings. The listener is left wondering if these non-attendees are not considered important by David, or whether they do not attend because they do not wish to disrupt what the listener perceived as being a ‘love-fest’ of like-minded individuals all smiling and agreeing with each other, or do not wish to participate in what appears to be one. David places himself in this relationship by noting that he enjoys coming to work. A second aspect of the backstage narrative to be seen in this extract is the claim about a lack of animosity during the meeting, which says nothing of the events before or after the meeting. Indeed, in another part of his narrative David had touched on the inverse of this very point early in his career, noting how he would be walking amicably to a meeting with a colleague only to be turned upon once the meeting started.

The stressing of the niceness at work and the relationships he presents as having with his team are evident in another extract, where David presents a very collegial environment in his description of the start to a typical day:

I’m usually first here. Er, we go and fetch our coffee. We’ve got a kitchen here, but we still walk over to the staff room to make our coffee, and bring it back here er, you don’t really. And then by the time we’ve had coffee and got that sorted then um, er, I carry on with email and I deal with anything that’s come in as a result of that. Er, I try and talk to everybody in the department every day, so I spend some time every day walking round, sitting with people er, “What are you up to”, “what are you doing”, “How’re you getting on with that”, “Do you have a problem with that”, so general chat.

The claim to being the first into the office is an individual claim on his status, that of first-on-deck, but his narrative then switches to a collective ‘we’ as he describes a collegial stroll past their own facilities and to the organisation’s ones, before again reverting to the ‘I’ to place himself in this environment and identify with it. In doing so, the listener is left with the impression that David goes to the central facilities more as a means of seeing others, and being seen, than for the quality of the coffee, before he (in the singular) address any problems from overnight. The MBWA¹⁷ extract of this narrative serves to remind the listener that the workplace David manages and has created is a positive and ‘nice’ one, where his staff are pleased to work. This pleasure and niceness of work from David’s perspective is reinforced in another extract, where he says:

¹⁷ MBWA: Management By Wandering Around is a management idea credited to HP founders Dave Packard and Bill Hewlett, and popularised and turned into a management fad by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin in their book *“A Passion for Excellence”*.

I've only had one person leave ... He was very reluctant to go and we pushed him to go because we felt that he should, and he was at that point where he needed to get out in the world and see some more. And he's in London, and he writes, he sends us email, I've had some pictures from him two days ago, 'cause we've got an interest in photography and er, he's got a new camera, and he sent me some pictures, so we have a good, a good relationship with everybody.

In this extract, David reinforces the low staff turnover and that the workplace is so desirable and consists of such good relationships that staff have to be pushed away for their own good. The strength of his relationship with staff is supported by the claim to a shared hobby of photography with the staff member in question. In phrasing the story in such a manner David reinforces the benevolent nature of the workplace that has created and built around him, and presents himself as a father-figure, who likes and is liked by all, and who is still on contact with others even though this is not compelled through the social interaction of the workplace.

In discussing his staff's response to his profound deafness, David presents a picture of consideration and niceness in the workplace, which in turn is integrated into a 'nice' life:

They all understand, and nobody comes up behind me, or anything like that, if they, want to talk they, the door's usually open, and they knock on the door and they wait until they've got my attention and they say, and if I don't get it the first time they have another go. They're marvellous, they're lovely people. So then, why wouldn't I come to work?

In this extract, David reciprocates this consideration of his deafness with his considerate policy of having an open door as a manager, and reiterates the nature of his work, life, and role – a consideration and understanding that may not be forthcoming in other facets of his life or in another role should he elect to not come to work one day. The suggestion here is that that David would severely miss these relationships should he retire. Indeed, to this end his narrative is laden with claims of enjoyment with his life, how happy it is, and how fulfilled he is in both his work and private life, and how everybody always 'gets along'. One of many examples of this comes in David retelling why he comes to work:

I come to work 'cause I love coming to work! I'm, I'm, I've got plenty of money, I've got enough money to, more money than I'll ever need in my lifetime. I come to work 'cause I like coming to work. It's a lovely place to come. The people are nice. I have lovely time.

The collectivist and egalitarian values that David emphasises in his discussion of workplace relationships further demonstrated in his description of what happened when much of the network had to be relocated in moving into the current office space:

We planned it that way and everybody volunteered to come in for the weekend, and the rather surprising thing to me was that we did that job over the weekend, we started at [pause] 5 o'clock on Friday, there were 130 servers, we knocked them all

down, moved them and had 'em all back up and running by [pause] Sunday [pause] midday. We had mail on by 11.30 on Saturday [pause] and nobody was in charge of the job, [pause] all those people and nobody was in charge, they just came along, they knew what they were going to do um, and when they did what they knew they had to do they just looked round and did something else. And it was amazing to see, I'd love to have had it all on film. Like we had to take all the old cables out of the file server, and not to reuse but because we were getting that ready for moving as well. And people would just come in and, "I've finished", they didn't have, they would ask, you know, "Do you need help", or wanted to do, somebody who looked as though they, otherwise they'd pick up some cable and coil it up and tidy it up, or do something. It was amazing to watch ... They were, they were magic, they really were. They were a really good team, and I think that's the, that's the key word probably. They really are a team and er, if anything happens they're all in there together, nobody, something goes down there's nobody saying, [pause] "It's nothing to do with me", it's, "We've got a problem", and it's our problem not somebody else's problem, it's ours. So we own the problems.

This extract adds further weight to David's projected perceptions on how everybody in his team has good relationships with one another, and the importance of relationships to him. A congenial and collaborative approach is presented, along with the lack of explicit technical discourse, as a means of reinforcing to the listener the high levels of functional and personal relationships, and the extent that his team will go to for one another. It appears as if David considers such collaborative activities as a sign of a functioning relationship, and presents it as validation of his previous claims about everybody getting along and cooperating together. It also appears to be used by David to distinguish his department from other departments or organisations. Initially he says it was all planned, but then in the same sentence says that "everybody volunteered to come in for that weekend", which leaves the listener wondering how much volunteering actually occurred in a department run by an ex-military man. He then details some achievements before carrying on with what sounds like an egalitarian utopia of combined effort for the greater good, emphasising cooperation and team-work, before closing with a collectivist piece of modern management-speak saying "we own the problems", as if to impose himself in these relationships and present this to the listener.

A harder edge to David's presentation of his relationships was evident when he claimed:

I know most of the people around the place. I certainly know all the people that matter.

In making this assertion, David categorises people into two camps: those that matter to him and are therefore worthy of a relationship with him and those that do not. He clearly places himself in the company of those who do matter, and he makes similar assertions throughout his narrative, referring to his early activities in the developing electronics industry and the IT industry as it exists today. In this extract above, he identifies with a group (Cantor et al.,

2002) of those who are important and “matter”, and in doing so, demonstrates his extensive experience in and knowledge of the organisation (Watson et al, 2000).

8.3.7 Being a Key Cog

David presents himself as being a central player and figure in his stories about his relationships, in the context of his work, and with regard to his professional standing and being well known in the IT industry.

In extending his discussion of his knowledge of people who matter discussed in the previous section, David discusses a senior IT manager in another organisation, part of senior IT staff across New Zealand with similar roles who meet annually:

He used to work for me. Not here, in industry. In industry, he came to me, and I was, I was chief engineer, and he came and worked in the lab with me and, and in that group [of industry peers], which I was saying, which I don't, I don't go to very often because they usually have their meeting in September now, this is country er, New Zealand wide and they still have the meetings once a year. Um, I haven't gone for quite a long time, mainly because they have it about September and it's usually the time I go overseas, sort of thing, but um, I'm really, I'm reasonably well known and I've run the meetings several times as ... whatever you like to call him, master of ceremonies.

Here David asserts his seniority and longevity in the industry by pointing out that a senior peer originally used to work for him. In doing so, David appeals to his former industry position as a chief engineer, and emphasises his central and active role in the relationship: “he came to me”. He then observed that he is both “reasonably well known” in his specialist group of peers, and presents himself in the trusted role of master of ceremonies for the groups meetings. Noticeably, however, David's role in running the meeting is in the past tense, and could be interpreted as his waning influence.

Similarly, at another point in his narrative, David discusses what seems to be a decreasing level of involvement in the IT industry more generally, saying:

I guess that's why I don't appear in very many [industry] magazines now, I don't get very much involved with the [industry body] ... They have meetings every month or so, either a breakfast, usually at the Hilton or one of those places they have a breakfast, and we have a speaker ... I go to those occasionally, breakfasts, I don't bother with lunches very much, I certainly don't go to dinners. Um, it's too hard from here to get back into town ... and then [an industry magazine] have er, monthly or two monthly dinners or breakfasts or lunches, and I go to those ... I don't join in very much.

David subsequently uses his hearing issues, which he previously had been at pains to point out were not a hindrance to him doing his job, as a reason to avoid the public interactions that

come with his perceived profile, as well as using the commute as another excuse to not participate. This is in stark contrast to the asset of ‘managing’ that was discussed in Section 8.3.3. Despite David’s excuses for downscaling his involvement in the industry body, he name-drops the location of where these meetings are held as if it lends credence to the industry body he is affiliated with and his level of operation in the industry body. While he asserts the centrality of the past roles he has played in the industry, he appears to suggest that he has moved beyond these and that these are no longer important to him. Only a more closely involved observer could speculate on whether David is right, or where the roles have moved beyond him and this is his way of rationalising to himself that while still maintaining the identity capital asset of his being a key cog.

While he appears to distance himself from the industry body, he is more willing to overcome the barriers and excuses he has presented to be associated with the higher profile industry magazine, which he says he has been featured in on several occasions. In downplaying his industry organisation ties and lending weight to his presence and participation in the industry magazine’s activities, David would appear to be actively managing his profile and perception in the industry to ends that he sees fit. It is possible his consent to participate in this research was another plank in that active construction of his perceived state. These events don’t simply present the active construction of one’s perception by others in the new economy, and therefore the identity drawn from that construction, but they also present and reinforce the asset of his identity where he presents himself and being known and trusted by others due to his profile.

In parts of his narrative, David presents himself as a key facilitator and risk-taker without whom many of the technological developments in his organisation would not have occurred. In presenting this picture of himself, he adopts the language and terminology associated with being an outsider who is apart from the herd, such as in his description of when an IT policy group was established:

Because I would make a decision in my position and ... Whenever anything was changed or we wanted to do anything or, “We’d like to do this” and, “Well it didn’t suit me”, “I want to close the server down”, “Well I don’t want to, I want to” um, and so we set up this group by IT Policy and um, Planning and Advisory Group er, in the mid-90s ... We got the CEO on it, the CEO, um, me, some ... there were about 15 of us I used to get hammered every time, I mean it used to be every month and it used to be my ... Pick on David day, boy, I used to come back and say, “Do yer wanna knife, here you are have one of mine!!” [laugh] Hah! [laugh] And so, and you’d be incredible, they were incredible situations ... Every time!! You know, “Ah, my guy told me there was a problem with”. Oh boy, I had some bad times, I did have some bad times.

David is quite open with the reasons for the IT policy groups being established, which he attributes to a consequence of his using the control he has in the organisation – a asset discussed in Section 8.3.4. He describes the individuals and stakeholders in this group, as well as their rankings and positions within the organisation, and then relates of the open warfare conducted in these meetings in which he and his department were isolated and attacked by everybody else. David then takes this part of his narrative to the personal, pointing out that it was he who has the “bad times” and was put upon by an excess of a dozen other stakeholders in IT service delivery – people of importance within his organisation including the CEO. In this way, he emphasises his centrality and importance in the organisation, and so makes the story a personal one of who he is (Halford, 2003).

The identity David derives from his perceived centrality to the organisation extends to a stated belief that he knows the jobs of others better than they do, saying:

I can look at that map or I can look out there and I can tell you where every wire is in the ground. Every one of ‘em ... I know more about, where just, the financial controller left at the end of last year, I know far more about the finances in this place than the accountant, ‘cause she’s new, and she’s learning by successive approximation, and one of the mistakes they’re making [is] not coming to talk to me.

This extract provides an interesting insight into the way David values his knowledge, others and his place in the organisation. David draws the listener’s attention to an existing artefact as a representation of knowledge, and his possession and creation of that map implies possession and creation of that knowledge. He then reinforces that representation with the statement that he knows where every wire is in the ground, which works as a literal statement but also as an electrical or computing metaphor for the more common expression ‘knowing where the bodies are buried’, as well as expressing considerable organisation knowledge (Watson et al, 2000) that he identifies with.

David’s claim to know more about the financial state of the business than the accountant may appear startling at first, and the qualification about the accountant being new is not the sole limit to this assertion. In his role, the listener can presume David has access to information, or the ability to access it, which many others would not, but primarily his claim to knowledge appears to be a function of his longevity in the organisation. Central to this David’s espoused belief that the new accountant should come and talk to him, not only to learn about the accountant’s job, but to tap into what he believes is his vast reservoir of institutional knowledge.

This knowing other people's jobs extends to David deciding what software will be run on people's computers, which David appears to think is quite a rational decision to take upon himself, saying:

I could go along there and say, "I want to make um, Office 2003 the standard for next year", you know, in other words, if you send out a document it's got to be able to be read in 2003 or whatever, and so we say, "Yes that's right, that's what we'll do", and then I would send it out to staff in June or whatever and say, "we've decided that next year we gonna use 2003 so you need to be prepared for it". And, so it works very well.

David's faux-consultation is seen in this extract, where he retells asserting what will happen and gaining immediate acceptance for his views, which he immediately justifies and rationalises by saying that "it works". David's central role in the organisation his superior knowledge and expertise, and his exercise of control (Section 8.3.4) all come together in this extract. This view is replicated and presented when he discusses his users' hardware requirements, saying:

They don't give a stuff what their machine is, providing they switch it on, within a reasonable length of time it comes up and they work all day with it without blowing it away and, and, that's all they're interested in.

Here David depersonalises those he is talking about referring to them with the collective and unnamed 'they'. In his dismissive account of their computing needs and activities throughout the day, he boxes the many employees in his organisation into simplified roles which the listener could interpret as further reinforcing his superior knowledge and wisdom on matters involving the business. When that knowledge and judgement is questioned, as in the following extract, David becomes quite animated, saying:

There's one thing that we don't supply, that they want, and we're working on that now, and that's they want bloody Outlook ... Microsoft Outlook, they've got a calendar, they've got mail er, but they want Microsoft Outlook ... And so as soon as you start looking Outlook, then you start looking at exchange server and all the rest of it, but we have a solution ... then there's this flaming PST file that all the data for Outlook's on, which it insisted on storing locally on the C. Well you take the machine away and give them a new machine, "Oh dear me, I've lost all my marks and er, contacts and everything else", "Where's your PST gone, did you back it up?" "No." I mean people don't back it up today.

In this extract, David expresses his disagreement with what is wanted by the users. While the demand is too great to deny, in yielding to the masses David maintains that they don't need what they want, and that he knows better. He then proceeds to catalogue the woes and problems that he will face in delivering what he believes is an unreasonable expectation, and a detailed rationale which has been trimmed from the extract presented. He then proceeds to outline one potential problem that giving the users what they want may result in, namely the

lost PST file no backups are done when the hard-drive is replaced, and in doing so effects what amounts to a ‘I told you so’ comeback. By presenting this comeback in this hypothetical situation, David reinforces to the listener that he always knew best, knew this would happen, and that if he had had his way the problem would never have occurred.

Table 8.1 Identity Assets in David’s Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)	
His Experience	Getting Experience	I started the department, I was the first member of the department, and I’ve been here 26 years doing just that. I’d really seen the writing on the wall for er, for um [pause], manufacturing here, Electrical because I was, I was helping to kill it.	
	Using Experience	I used to be in D bombers ... er, they’re not quiet, and of course ear protection was not something we had, not one of the things that they did in those days ... you know, you see somebody mowing their lawn with, without a muffler on or whatever.	
Being the Engineer	From Position	I’m a member of the IEE, which is the electrical arm ... and I’m also a chartered engineer	
	From Action	We were different, right from the start. I think it had something to do with the engineering background	
Managing	Technology	Then through the 80s we gathered other bits of computer systems There wasn’t a C-compiler on it. And we got what we got, you understand, and we are, when I say mini computer ... it was probably 5 years old by the time we got it, yeah the technology. Yes, [cough] it wasn’t, it was sod all. When we wanted Windows 95-98 we moved into Citrix, and we had, and we used exactly the same machines we were using for Windows 3.1, some of them were very old and tired but they did fine for Citrix.	
		Money	I’ve had a history of good financial management I think
		By Others	All those people that were DP people disappeared fairly quickly, as managers, ‘cause they weren’t managing it. You get the idea?
	Using Control	At Work	I don’t have to approve everything, I don’t have to buy anything, but I want to be in the position where I approve it before it was brought I own all the machines, if a machine fails I give them a new machine
On Suppliers			I only see the [sales representatives] that I want to see ... when we have a, every Christmas we put on the splendid lunch for our suppliers ... if you, if you, if you don’t get an invite to that you, you know you’ve got a problem I said, “I don’t like this new account manager”. “Alright we’ll find you a new one” I say, they’re big enough to do that but they’re small enough for us to say, “Oi, I’m annoyed”, and for them to jump or do something, and we’ve had very good, very good service from them.
		Self-Labeling	I just, I like, I dunno, perhaps I’m a control freak or perhaps I’m, I dunno. Perhaps I’m a control freak. I just like, being in charge. I wouldn’t, I really don’t like not being in charge.
			Building
My Work		I insisted that we had to be an office environment where the terminals were, so we had carpet on the floor, we had air conditioning, and I designed a table, suitable for these terminals. I designed it, I made it at home, bought it in meself, made me tools like that ... OK, I did that	
His Relationships		As a Peer	The people that are there they are always very friendly to one another and they’re a happy bunch. There’s no, there’s no animosity [there] and there’s no, everybody’s very happy. I come to work ‘cause I like coming to work. It’s a lovely place to come. The people are nice. I have lovely time They’re marvellous, they’re lovely people. So then, why wouldn’t I

		come to work?
	As a Manger	I've only had one person leave ... He was very reluctant to go and we pushed him to go because we felt that he should ... he writes, he sends us email, I've had some pictures from him two days ago, 'cause we've got an interest in photography.
		I try and talk to everybody in the department every day, so I spend some time every day walking round, sitting with people er, "What are you up to", "what are you doing", "How're you getting on with that"
		I know most of the people around the place. I certainly know all the people that matter
Being a Key Cog	Networks	I'm reasonably well known and I've run the meetings several times as ... whatever you like to call him, master of ceremonies
		I guess that's why I don't appear in very many [industry] magazines now, I don't get very much involved with the [industry body]
	Position	I would make a decision in my position
	Knowledge	I can look at that map or I can look out there and I can tell you where every wire is in the ground. Every one of 'em ... I know more about, where just, the financial controller left at the end of last year, I know far more about the finances in this place than the accountant

8.4 A Summary of David's Constructed Identity

David appears to construct his identity on stories centred on himself as a key player in the unfolding events around him. He emphasises his relationships and exerts control over his workplace and those in it. He presents his longevity and experience as important part of who his and places himself in a central position for his employer, such as his comment that the new accountant should come and speak to him because he knew the business. It is his knowledge of the intricacies of the business that David appears to construct his identity on.

In relating the analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 to the apparent construction David's identity, it appears that the general lower level building blocks of identity include his longevity in the industry and its precursors, such as the person who supervised his Masters degree. His position and role in the rise and fall of the New Zealand electronics industry is also built upon to form several of his identity assets. Further to these are the relationships he has built over the years, and the comfortableness he has within them.

Significant identity capital assets in his narrative are his experience, his being the engineer, and his managing and making do with the situations he has found himself in, and building his environment. These assets influence and integrate with some other identity assets that emerge in his narrative from this analysis, and these are presented in Figure 8-1.

The identity capital assets that is David's experience appears to be a foundation asset, as it informs, and yet is informed by, the assets that are his building and his being the engineer. A non-technical reader may mistakenly assume that building and engineering are closely

entwined, however building as an identity capital asset in David’s narrative appears to be the founded on the construction of artefacts “I have built” for display to others, whereas “I’m also a chartered engineer,” is a state of being such as his assertion around his education and membership of professional bodies.

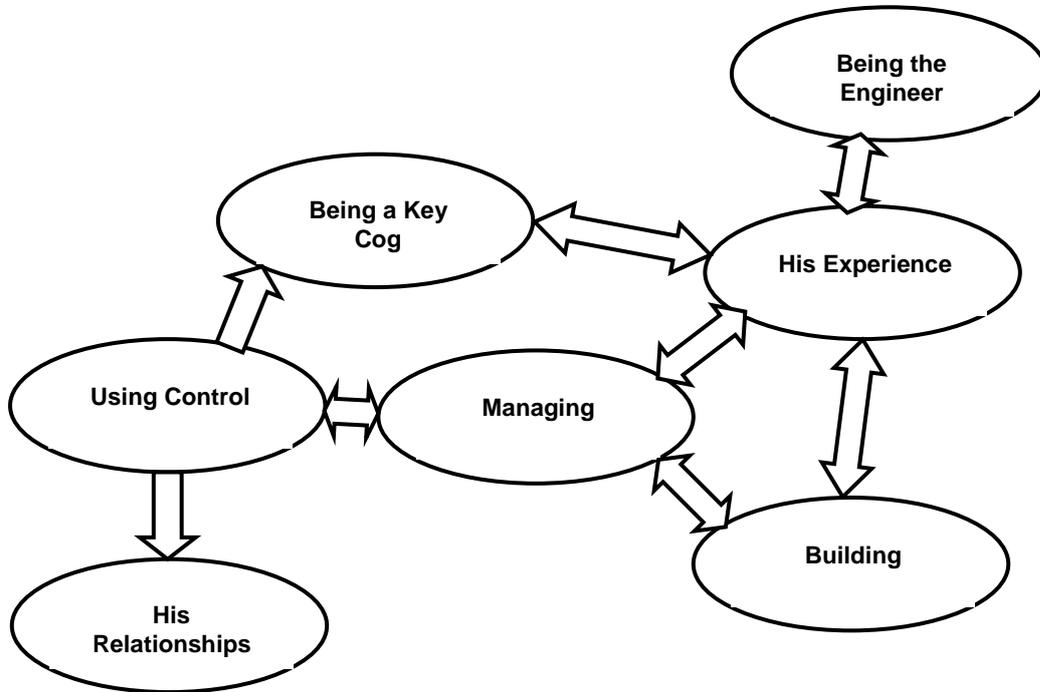


Figure 8-1 The Integration of David’s Identity Assets

Similarly, his identity asset of managing is informed and informs the foundation identity asset of his experience, as he calls on his experience to justify and validate his management decision-making and, in turn, his managing to cope serves to reinforce his (successful) experiences. Managing also integrates with and is a part of his use of control, which in turn appears enmeshed with the emergent asset of his relationships and being a key cog in events that surround him. However, while control may be exerted through his relationships and his relationships are a means of control (such as controlling the long-term suppliers he has worked with for several decades), he appears to use relationships to presents a benign face to the listener, and as a means of demonstrating his success in his role of manager. While control is an action, his relationships are a demonstration.

The multiple selves that Collinson (2003) argued for is seen in David’s narrative, such as in the identity asset of his managing being a workplace self, while the identity asset of his relationships represents his civilised self. His discussions of his building is a crafted self, and his achieved self is seen in the way presents his experience.

9.1 Introducing Bruce

Bruce is a New Zealand born male of British decent, who was in his late fifties at the time of narrative solicitation. He is the “IT Strategy Manager” for a large state institution that has undergone significant structural and environmental change in the last ten years, and is now operating in a competitive environment. He is married to a woman he had been involved with for an excess of thirty years.

Bruce went to a ‘Technical High School’ in a moderate sized city of New Zealand, failed School Certificate, and never went to university. On leaving secondary school, he commenced a technical cadetship with full-time employment with a government department, and was trained in the technologies of the time. His exposure to technology at work and through his wife’s early work in a computer centre appear to have inspired him to become curious about micro-processors and computing alongside his electronics work, and in his early-twenties, Bruce resigned and moved to a large NZ city to commence work as an electronics technician with a quasi-governmental organisation.

A vacancy two years later resulted in Bruce applying for and getting a promotion to Senior Technician with the responsibility of running the technicians’ workshop, where he was actively involved in deploying, repairing, and supporting the computing infrastructure in one ‘silo’ of his employer. A decade later, and in the midst of the ‘siloed’ organisation undergoing a significant growth and change of environment and focus, Bruce took the vacant role of the organisation’s computer centre manager, which has evolved into his current role.

Bruce’s referral as a high-achieving IT professional was on the basis of his early reputation as a problem solver, his self-taught computing skills, and his successful transition into a management role. His narrative is the first of two participants who have moved from the technical and operational side of the IT industry and into the managerial side.

9.2 Bruce's Narrative

Bruce chose to meet at his open plan office, before leading the listener to a pre-booked, glass-walled, meeting room off the main corridor of the building. From here, he was in full display of all comers, goers, and passersby for the several hours that he took to give his narrative. A statuette of Rodin's 'The Thinker' was openly at his desk, and mention was made that it was a gift to him.

The narrative that Bruce gave is laden with reflections and mixed moods. At times he seemed morose, weary, and pessimistic, and at other times he was animated, excited and joyous. His speech is slow and deliberate, and he seems tired and appears to feel his significant achievements, and he himself, are underappreciated, yet feels he still has much to give. His narrative was largely structured around the evolution of computing technology, processing power, and networking capabilities and he gave himself an active role in these developments. He talked in great technical depth of the developments and their rationale, and as his narrative moved into the managerial sphere the detail shifted from 'bits-and-bytes' to 'dollars and cents' as he conveyed a depth of knowledge across matters both technical and managerial. He started with a tone of reasonableness combined with a tired and reflective expression, as if he had been here too long and had granted 'interviews' like this before. In his tired and reflective beginnings, he employed terms such as:

They get a bit carried away these days, but it's fair enough.

Those were the old days.

Bruce's narrative suggests that he is a man who has seen many things, yet he will still laugh when tickled by humour. Bruce consciously chooses his words and seems keen to be correct in what he says and not wanting to allow room for misinterpretation, which appeared to the listener as part of his considered and rehearsed narrative. While Bruce uses the current business-speak term of "passion" to describe his interest, the listener is left with the impression that Bruce's use of the word is closer to its original meaning. He presents the identity of a man caught up in the thrill of the technology, who lived and breathed the technology, until he "outgrew" it. His departure from technical work and into a managerial role is explained by Bruce in the extended extract in Appendix X, in which the reader can see the identity assets of practicality, of giving service, of his being sought after, and his thinking.

Bruce's narrative unfolded from when he was asked about his educational background, to which he responded:

Minimal.

Minimal?

Minimal. Ah yep. I [long pause] went to, where [pause], [A] Technical High School [down south]. [pause] Many years ago, and I never even got School Cert.

After explaining his ‘failure’ at school, Bruce’s narrative then proceeded to make a series of comments about the role of education and how it does not necessarily mean that a person is capable, culminating in:

This is my personal belief, I believe that these, er [pause], education’s to get you your first job or change of a career, um and your working history is what, you know, I guess, gets you your promotions.

This expression of his belief was a lead into more discussions on his beliefs and understandings, such as the needs of business in New Zealand, covering taxation and research and development funding. As if to validate the above, Bruce then turned the narrative to a detailed, and given his profile a seemingly rehearsed, discourse on his technological experience and progression through his career to date. The appearance of a rehearsed discourse reinforced the initial impression made on the listener that this was not the first time that Bruce had sallied forth with his views and values on these subjects, and that his narrative had been worked on and crafted over the years. This discourse employed many technical terms and references to then new and emerging technologies and their adoption by the business in a disaster scenario told in the extended extract in Appendix X. The presentation of this disaster scenario then set the stage for Bruce to bring forth how he was approached by the staff within the computer centre to manage it after internal political turmoil took its toll on the incumbent manager, and the subsequent lengthy discourse on how he asserted his power and control by locking the technicians out of the server room. This allowed Bruce to talk at length about the efficiencies that he had introduced since taking on a managerial role within the organisation, and how he has been able to roll out new technologies at minimal costs, before turning his narrative again to the imposition of personalities and politics on the delivery of technology to the users.

From the technical positioning of his past, Bruce specifically notes that his role has evolved from an operational one to a strategic one, and in doing so presents the identity of a technologist who has been elevated beyond the everyday to the visionary before reflecting back on his technological roots and background which he appears to hold dear. Bruce presents his desired identity of the technologist to the listener very early in his narrative, and

immediately after discussing how his lack of education was the result of a lack of application and interest and never held him back.

Bruce repeatedly asserted an interest in technology, with explicit references to technology forming a significant part of his life, using the phrase ‘logical’ to describe himself, and associating his abilities and affinities with logical and technical things. He actively rejected the identity asset of ‘creative’, and yet immediately and subsequently claimed an association with many traits and abilities that would otherwise be considered creative: building things and putting them together such as the computers he fondly recalls having built. Bruce reinforces this technological foundation for his identity in noting that in his spare time he built an analogue computer, and again Bruce reinforces to the listener the foundation of technology on his identity in the extended extract in Appendix X.

The reality of his new managerial role appears to be settling on Bruce, with his tired discourse on political interference in how he knows things should be done. He appears to have one eye on a nostalgic past - an environment of ‘boys playing with toys’ and the single-minded excitement that provided, yet his deliberate actions in his new role have contributed to the destruction of that laissez-faire environment. The changes Bruce has experienced as well as his position in the organisation impress on the listener that he sees that his current employment will soon run its course, and has his other eye on a potential retirement or moving on to a consulting role outside of his current employer. One is left with the impression that the politics of a large organisation are getting him down.

9.3 Identity Assets in Bruce’s Narrative

The identity assets that emerge in Bruce’s narrative are his presentation of himself as a practical person and as technologist – and the two are not the same – as well as a first mover and a thinker in the technological revolution of New Zealand. Control and power emerge from Bruce’s narrative as a distinct identity theme as he wields them both, and in doing so he positions himself as a change agent within his employment. Bruce believes he is needed and is focused on providing a service to his users, and he believes himself to be just and fair in his dealings with others. The identity assets that were identified in Bruce’s narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 9.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XX.

9.3.1 The Technologist

A significant identity asset asserted by Bruce are his claims suggesting he is a technologist. He makes these claims in many forms, and in repeated manners, and they are seen in reflections throughout his career such as when he reconstructs his early life as always being interested in technology, and some of his mid-career technological achievements. In the extended narrative in Appendix X he makes the straightforward claims that he has always been interested in the technology, which he calls his “passion” and his “life”, and claims to having “done everything”. He also makes these claims to his status as a technologist in his reflection on his early life.

9.3.2 Practical

Bruce’s narrative is laden with ongoing expressions of his identity assets of both doing and thinking (discussed in part in Section 9.3.4). On some occasions Bruce distinguishes these as personal characteristics of achievers versus “flappers”, and at others as practical versus academic. He advocates an education where a person can problem solve, but is critical of over-analysis and excessive ‘book-learning’, and claims that an academic education will get somebody their first job but from that point on it is matter of their success and outputs. His views of himself as being practical are seen as he claims he is not creative but can fix things, on getting on with the job at hand, on the over-educated who can’t do anything, and as he relates his practical staff to himself. He also appears to revise his view of practical being not just about doing things, but doing them efficiently (as he suggests he does).

9.3.3 The Pioneer

Pioneering emerges from Bruce’s narrative as an identity asset, and is one that he often presents and has recourse to throughout his narrative. This occurs in his claims that he occupied key positions in the development of technologies for his current employer and has spent thirty to forty years on the cutting edge of new and emerging technologies. Specifically, pioneering as an identity asset is seen as he reconstructs his past and as he tells stories of his early internet adventures. He presents himself as one of the first to build data bases, and makes explicit references to frontiers and forging his own destiny in relation to the emerging IT industry.

9.3.4 The Thinker

Bruce's presentation of himself as a thinker is seen both in his discourse and in his actions. In his narrative he used the word "think" 105 times in its various forms¹⁸, personalising it with "I think" on 84 occasions. His narrative presentation of his self as a thinker is also seen in the way he points out to the listener the copy of Rodin's 'Thinker' on his desk, as he discusses thinking itself and thinking as part of learning.

9.3.5 Control

Bruce is fully conversant about the exercise of control and power in his organisation, and the control and power that he wields by virtue of his position in it. In his narrative, he often interweaves his strongly held views on power and control into his reflection on himself, and his keen to present himself in a position of authority. He exercises power and control in his actions in taking over leadership of the computer department, and he also recognises the wielding of control and power by others.

9.3.6 The Change Agent

With examples such as the above imposition of his values on others, the identity asset of Bruce as a change agent emerges. Bruce's perception of himself at the forefront of technology, and the identification he has with his position, is heard in listening to his narrative, where the flow periodically changes from a reflective and contemplatory tone to a forceful and assertive one for a short period of time. These changes correlate to Bruce asserting himself in the workplace, and he does not appear to shy away from such interactions. Bruce as a change agent is seen as he talks of his first managerial role, what he has done since as a manager, and how he has built the departments to be like himself.

9.3.7 Needed

The needed asset that emerges from Bruce's narrative is one that has been observed in IT professionals elsewhere in the context of turnover decisions (Tan & Hunter 2003), where the employee will move on if they feel they are no longer needed. Bruce employs the identity asset of his being needed as he discusses getting and keeping the role that he currently holds.

9.3.8 Outcomes and Service

Bruce's speech is laden with explicit and implicit references to outcomes, success, and achievement, and these references occur independent of tense. In many of the examples he is

¹⁸ e.g. "I was thinking", "I think", "a thinker", "not think".

providing a service – as well as whatever else he may be doing like enjoying himself. Bruce’s incorporation of outcomes and service into aspects of his self are seen as he talks of how his current role has evolved, how some of his hiring decisions have unfolded, and how others act in crises situation as opposed to how he suggests that he reacts. This identity asset is also seen as he talks about the problems business faces, his legacy as he contemplates leaving, and the obstacles he has overcome in his time at his employers.

9.3.9 Just, Fair, and Reasonable

In hearing Bruce’s narrative, the listener was left with the feeling that Bruce would like to be liked and to be popular, but that his focus on outcomes and his perception of himself as a change agent has given him the impression that he is not popular because of some of the decisions he has made. Bruce’s stated perception about his lack of popularity is an interesting foil to his language and description of others, and he is happy to be seen as both distant and diplomatic. This self-belief that he has about being just, fair, and reasonable is seen in his careful choice of words as he evaluates the competencies of others, and when he discusses some employment issues he has faced as a manager.

Table 9.1 Identity Assets in Bruce’s Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
The Technologist (Appendix XX.a)	Self	Right from when I left school, [I] was always interested in technology.
		It was just my personal interest [laugh] It became my life, my hobby, my work, you name it, it was a passion,
	Work and Career	Because of my interest in microprocessing, [my boss] ... allowed us to build one for his office ... That was the first desktop computer [here].
		In the old days. you played with technology for technology's sake ... we're not allowed to play with technology for technology's sake anymore.
Practical (Appendix XX.b)	Self	I'm not very creative but I [pause] can build stuff and put stuff together and understand concepts very quickly. I think that's what [pause] enabled me to be as successful as I've been.
		I can pull stuff to bits and I seemed to have a bit of an affinity for it. Um, the practical side of anything and I can pick these things up very quickly.
	Others	A few other, people, that worked for him who were, graduates, as well, they'd sit down and try and analyse it, you know, from the theory side of stuff ... and I'd fix the frigging thing while they're talking about it.
		The guys that work within the Technology Department here, say, are practical people that, um, get on with the job, they're (sigh), and they're good guys, they have good knowledge of what they do, they will work when they have to to get stuff done ... they're good pragmatic type people ... I think that the managers tend to employ people that are very similar to themselves.
The Pioneer (Appendix XX.c)	Emerging Technologies	I might have been [pause] the sixth person here to get an access to the Internet, and it was before the web we used to use, um Telnet and FTPs, and you had to know where to go to get stuff.
		The chips, well they didn't have chips for it, it was done with [pause] a lot of electronics, and the, I think our first Ethernet network was using Thicknet I don't know if you've ever seen the size of coaxial cable.

		That was, yeah, the beginning of desktop computing.
	Frontier	In the early days it was a frontier ... Exciting, in that it was a frontier and you could control your own destiny and all that sort of stuff, it was good fun, immersion and all that sort of stuff.
The Thinker (Appendix XX.d)	Perception	I'm the only one that comes out as a thinker ... And they've actually given me a carving of a naked dude sitting like this and it's called "The thinker". But that is how they see me as sort of the thinker, and so if there is a problem to solve ... then they'll come to me with these challenges.
	Learning	We try very hard to get the guys to understand ... they should learn from it ... they should observe what that person does ... that's what I tell them. Learn from it, don't just walk away from it.
Control (Appendix XX.e)	Imposing Control	The first thing I did when I came here was lock the technicians out of the server room.
	Keeping Control	It's not that simple! [laugh] nobody lets go of control around this place [laugh].
	Justifying Control	And that's why I want to go on to service level agreements, is, is that to do that you need to be able to retain that surplus and be able to scale your resources to meet the growth.
The Change Agent (Appendix XX.f)	Business	I redistributed the budget based on the activities that were going on, and ... people understood, or started to understand that looking after a PC did actually cost some money ... and that's worked very well for us.
	People	"The people who work for me, er, I wont say like me, but they're influenced by any other choice of the persons influenced by me, and what they do is, you know, we can influence, what they do"
Needed (Appendix XX.g)	Roles	The Computer Centre manager ... just quit, and the place was in chaos ... The staff that were left here actually asked ... if I'd come down and take care of the place while things were sorting out ... So I talked my boss ... about it at the time and he said, "yeah as long as you come back", sort of thing.
Outcomes and Service (Appendix XX.h)	Delivering Technology	I said to [the CFO] years ago, "Look just continue giving us [a lot of money] a year, we'll ensure the technology meets [our] needs.
	Work	I think this is a big challenge in a lot of industries is that they want productivity, so they want workers that will come and get on with the job rather than academics
	Self	I like to think that, you know, er I will achieve what I say, I will achieve when I commit to someone I will deliver.
Just, Fair, and Reasonable (Appendix XX.i)	Evaluating Others	Oh-um, I have [pause] you know, opinions about this. I think some people ... just they donat have, what, I guess, and affinity or whatever to these things

9.4 A Summary of Bruce's Constructed Identity

In discussing his current role, Bruce present himself as an achiever, who is to be trusted. This perception of his is one he believes in, appears keen to promote, and uses as a foundation for his identity. He claims he stays because he enjoys the progress made to date and the services delivered, and his input into business planning and modelling. Bruce could be reflecting on his early life and in his narrative he links himself with his success in building his first analogue computer, in his current role where he discusses his success in forecasting technological change, or in his future where he anticipated successful consulting.

The identity that Bruce has constructed and presented by him in his narrative appears to be one founded on the lower general sources of identity, shown in the analytical model presented

in Figure 3-1, such as his technical skill and work history. Others include his transition from technical to managerial based on his technical prowess..

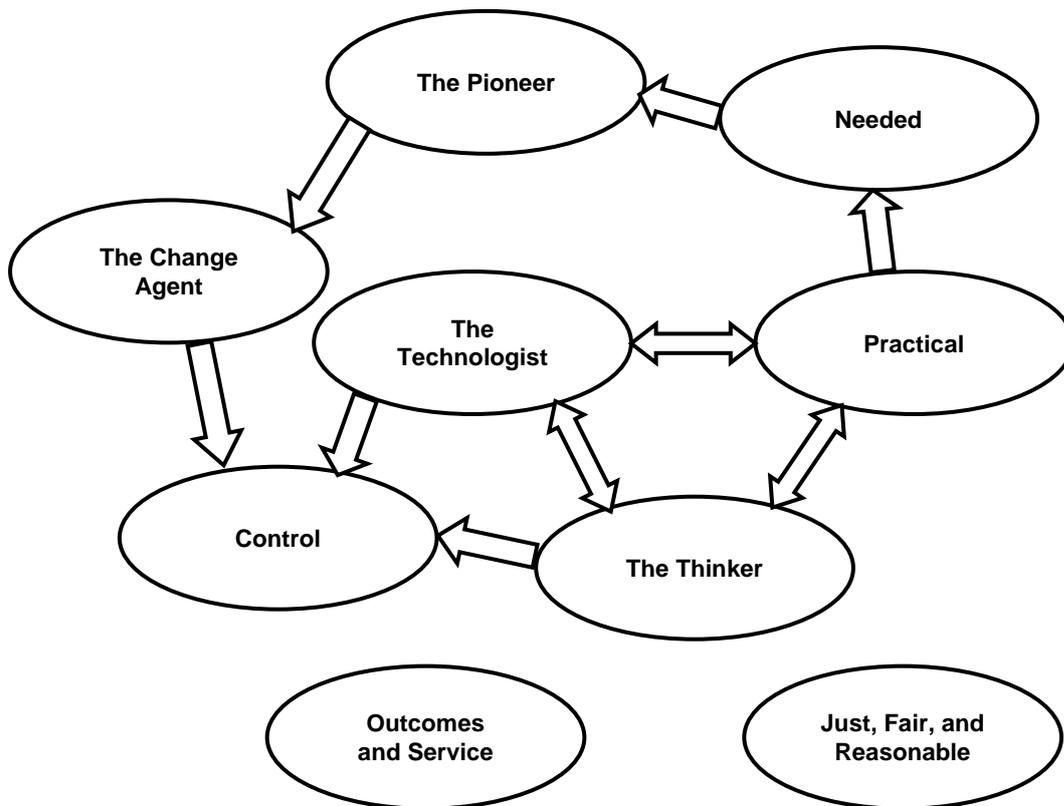


Figure 9-1 The Integration of Bruce's Identity Assets

The identity assets that he presented, and built on the above include himself as technologist, the practical person, the (experienced) pioneer emerging from his narrative at regular and frequent places. Bruce presents himself as a thinker, as exemplified by his reference to and use of Rodin's 'Thinker' that he was given, and his use of this along with his suggestion that is how others see him reinforces to the listener that this is a primary identity plank of Bruce's. In presenting his technology-based narrative, Bruce presents himself as somebody who is needed both those he leaves and those he goes to, is a change agent, and who will deliver outcomes and services in a way that he thinks is just, fair and reasonable. His regular use of language that places him at the centre of these events reinforces to the listener his enmeshment of his own self with these actions. The inter-relationships that exist between these asset is shown in Figure 9-1.

A three way inter-relationship appear to exist between Bruce's identity assets that are seen as his technologist, his practical and his thinking self, with each of these feeding into and in turn being informed by the other. A loop then appears to exist, as his practical self informs his

needed self, which informs his pioneering self, and his self as a change agent which in turn informs the control and power that he wields and identifies with. This control and power asset of Bruce's is also informed by two of the initial trio: the thinker and the technologist. Standing alone from the other identity assets appears to be Bruce's outcomes and service assets and his just, fair, and reasonable assets.

The identity asset of Bruce as a technologist represents the workplace self Collinson (2003) discussed, while the identity asset of him as a thinker is an achieved self. Bruce's civilised self is seen in the identity asset of his being just and fair and reasonable, and the identity asset of his being needed is a crafted self.

10.1 Introducing Gerald

Gerald is a slender man in his mid-thirties who is on his second marriage, with whom he has a young child. He had recently taken redundancy from his previous role as General Manager of logistics for a large transportation company.

Gerald was raised in small town rural New Zealand and in a blended family consisting of his mother, his stepfather who he considers his father, and his father's three children from a previous relationship. He was educated at a state boarding school, before studying agriculture at university for one year and then switching to a BSc in mathematics and statistics.

A summer job led to a fulltime job consulting with executive teams internationally, from which he returned to New Zealand and working in the IT-development part of a business that was launching a GPS tracking and computer-controlled asset management system. In his late twenties, Gerald resigned to help set up a small consultancy firm before moving through several roles before eventually to manage IT and strategy for a large corporate. Subsequently he moved to the role he has just taken redundancy from, as he ponders the next stage of his career.

The people who suggested that the listener approach Gerald did so on the basis of his skills in mathematical computational modelling, his early IT work, and his porting of those skills into the predictive modelling and forecasting he did for his last two employers. While Gerald has the title of General Manager, it was his technical achievements that led him to his being perceived as a 'high-achieving IT professional' rather than his managerial prowess. As the reader will see, Gerald may see these as inverted, as he presents himself as a technologist who has learnt to lead and is now a successful commercial manager. His narrative is the second of four IT professionals who have moved from the technical realm into the entrepreneurial and commercial space.

10.2 Gerald's Narrative

Prior to the initial interview, Gerald had emailed through his impressive résumé, and brought a hard copy to the initial meeting held at a café on the fringe of Auckland's CBD. There, he presented it by thrusting it at the listener almost immediately, as he acted the identity of man with much to offer and looking for his next role. The listener was left with the impression that this document was of significance to Gerald as he used it in justifying his nomination by a peer as a high-achieving IT professional. It appeared that Gerald was flattered by the recognition of his abilities and sought to demonstrate that the nomination was justified and had validity. Gerald's resume was one of two extra-narrative artefacts that emerged as a part of Gerald giving his narrative: the second was what he referred to as the "bunker" in which he gave it.

This "bunker" was a converted apartment deep in the secure offices of his former employer who he was still contracting to after taking redundancy. To meet in this place, the listener was required to have a prearranged and documented visit scheduled with those guarding the building. On arrival, the listener was required to sign in, and to be escorted at all times while on the premises. Physical access was past the guard and through a series of secure doors of armoured glass and steel bars. As Gerald escorted the listener through the building, it was clear that every door was very solid, had specified access codes, that it was a controlled environment. Once the "bunker" was reached, the converted and spartan nature of this former apartment was clear. The bedrooms were now offices while still having wardrobes, and the combined living and dining room had stacks of papers everywhere. Whiteboards were on display with charts and diagrams, and some of Gerald's colleagues were feverishly 'working telephones' while cursing. The impression given was of a wartime operations centre where manipulation of the outside world was being planned, but the outside world would not influence those inside and their machinations.

Gerald's narrative began with his secondary and tertiary education, his holiday jobs, and then getting his first job on an ex-pat assignment. From there he talked of moving into IT and communications, before presenting his consultancy and commodity managing stories. Enmeshed in the commodity managing story is story of self-discovery and leadership development discourse, which Gerald uses to portray himself as a compassionate leader to the listener. Flowing from his compassionate leader projection is Gerald's presentation of his self perception.

Gerald has a lean and energetic presence that reveals his marathon running and passionate road cyclist history. He appears earnest, serious, and keen to ensure that things are right. He also seems full of nervous energy, and while he does sit still the listener felt that as soon as ‘business was concluded’ that he would power over to the next task at hand. His narrative was an exercise in perception management and in presenting his preferred self. He sought to manage the interaction, and ensure the that ‘right’ message was received buy the listener, often breaking his narrative into segments as he explicitly sought to convey a particular idea or aspect of his self. Often these were woven together in a coherent story (Halford, 2003) and in closing out his narrative, Gerald went so far as to seek the listener perceptions of his self as if to validate to himself that the ‘correct’ projection had been made. His management and presentation of his identity in a way that suited him began right from the beginning of his narrative, and indeed much of his narrative was an actively managed presentation of his identity. Consider an opening exchange, where Gerald says:

Ok, so what are you gonna do today?

Um, what, what I basically, there’s some, a couple of stuff, there’s a couple of things that you mentioned in our initial chat that I kind of want to talk about.

Yeah.

And that, to start off with um, I think, if you can just recap that bit of your education when you left university, high school, university and that transition.

Ok, from going, so you want to start back in a bit of ground, so you just want to re, retune some of that stuff, and just go through a bit of background etc. OK, so I guess we can start back at the beginning I’ll start, start at the beginning and then cut, build it back up.

OK

Just a brief summary. Um, I think we discussed a pretty ordinary background. Um, probably, the first 5 years er, my mum was a solo mum um, she was probably more the norm these days [laugh] certainly not normal back then though.

This extract shows Gerald starting with seeking guidance in where to begin, with the listener feeling that this guidance was being sought by Gerald so that he could be ‘right’. The listener tried to avoid such guidance and prescription, instead suggesting that Gerald recap some material that was given in the initial discussion ‘for the record’. In doing so, Gerald was given rein to re-present aspects of himself ‘for the record’ as and how he wished. This approach was validated with Gerald suggesting “retuning” what had said covered previously, with his suggestion to “start at the beginning” and “rebuild” his narrative “for the record”. He was very aware of his use and telling of stories, and this appeared to be a deliberate strategy

on his part. This is seen in his coming to the first meeting with his resume in hand, enabling him to present a coherent narrative and his career as a journey (Nicholson & West, 1989), to the listener, in which he has been an active participant in his life and career.

Gerald spoke at length and for sustained periods of time in his narrative, initially asserting his normality in his “ordinary” upbringing such as in the above extract or his stated belief that his father wanted him to take over the farm, before moving on to his transition from university to working life and his overseas experience, using several stories to illustrate and reinforce to the listener how he was ‘ordinary’ and yet also ‘extra-ordinary’. Early on in his narrative, Gerald relates a story about his first job, an overseas posting, in which he described himself at that point as “just a maths geek”. The evolution from this self-declared early identity as a “maths geek” and IT developer into a business-savvy person identifying company needs and applications was expounded on at length, which then evolved into the ‘being needed’, and then into being poached and headhunted. In the extended narrative extract in Appendix XIII, his ambition (Section 10.3.3) is clear, and his achievements (Section 10.3.4) and success are laid out for the listener when he talks of earning more money than the owners. This leads to his being in demand (Section 10.3.7) by other consultancies and his pioneering (Section 10.3.8) new technologies and strategies.

The narrative Gerald gave was one that he sought to ground in his commonness of origin, where his rural upbringing and the meritocracy of farming life, his laddish exuberance, and his perceived ability to communicate with all walks of life was reinforced on several occasions. His mercenary approach to business early in his career is a reoccurring theme, along with the continued reference to the counselling he underwent, which he appears to view as a benchmark in his personal development that separates the roles (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) of ‘old-bastard-Gerald’ with ‘new-compassionate-Gerald’. Repeated references were made to his own leadership, be it traits, training or achievements. The effect of this counselling has not extended to his stated intolerance of elitism or work groups he does not relate to, often referring to ‘exiting’ people who don’t perform, or for infractions of company policy. While Gerald treated the listener with a far-ranging discourse that included his views on national politics and the education system, it was clear that he was actively and significantly working on the presentation of his identity beyond the self-labelling he did when he called himself “a maths-geek”, and was acutely aware of what he was doing, noting:

I’m media shy. So on one hand, it’s quite, ‘cause there’s conflicting statements here that when you replay your tapes you’ll probably pick up. Wanna be seen to a lot of people to be successful, don’t want to show it through monetary means or flashy, you know, items. Want to win but don’t want to be in the media.

His narrative ended not long after the above extract, and after Gerald asked the listener what the listener's views were of him after meeting him for the initial discussion and after the giving of his narrative. The perception management he performed and story-telling he engaged in, and the purposes of these, are apparent when he was asked to describe himself. He responded with:

I think of myself as a hard working loyal um, [pause] friend to most people er, and somebody who has a huge [pause] amount of giving within him. However, that is all tempered with a very withdrawn um, protective er, emotionally protective of oneself and can project an image of being um, very harsh in terms of thick skinned, harsh, nothing phases me, prepared to take on anything um, in both work and life er, etc. Um, so there's, there's my own view and there's what some people view of me externally, and some of that is projected on purpose um, and some of that through defence mechanisms er, and some of that is actually naturally me. Um, the, the thick skin, sort of, that's like projected, the withdrawn shy is actually really me [laugh] and um. Yes, so it's er, and I'd ask you the same question actually. So what do you see um, me as just after having coffee and a two hour chat? 'Cause it's a damn hard question to answer.

Here he actively creates and presents his preferred self and serves to summarise the points previously suggested to the reader. The effectiveness and desire for the correct presentation by Gerald is seen as he closes this extract by seeking the listener's views on his self. Gerald's closing comments on self speak to his narrative as being a presentation of his identity and a performance of his identity.

10.3 Identity Assets in Gerald's Narrative

The identity assets that emerge from Gerald's narrative include his self-perceptions of himself as a leader, which appears to flow into other assets such as his perceptions around his commercially driven nature and the asset of his successes that come from another asset: his ambition. He seeks to present himself as normal and of humble origin, and these contribute to an asset of not being an elitist. This not-elitist identity asset may be a product of the journey of self discovery that he suggests he has been on. As part of his journey, Gerald has had to rationalise and justify many of his actions which are in accordance with his ambition and commercial drive, and this is not always a clean-cut rationalising.

Of interest is the significant absence of his technological achievements as significant identity related themes and assets in their own right. Gerald appears comfortable with these and the success they have brought him, but these technical skills and abilities which form part of the foundation for his being suggested for inclusion in this investigation do not seem to stand

apart to Gerald, rather they are subsumed into his identity asset of success. The identity assets that were identified in Gerald's narrative are discussed in detail below and summarised in Table 10.1 on page 10-26.

10.3.1 Leading

Gerald's presentation of his leadership discourse appears to be a dominant identity asset in his narrative, as it permeates other identity assets such as his ambition, (Section 10.3.3), his being in demand (Section 10.3.7), and his journey of self discovery (Section 10.3.6). He appears to use his self-perceptions around his leadership to define his success and achievements (Section 10.3.4) although to the listener the expressions of leadership and the discourse on leadership appear to be rhetorical perception management. He overtly refers to cultivating his leadership skills, and on how his views of leading differ from the actions of others. Gerald also places himself in the position of being a figure of focus for his employees and at odds with the employee's natural union affinities, and he equates his leadership with that of his current role, job title, and therefore himself.

In reflecting on his experiences to date and where he is, Gerald puts himself in the position of a leader who is self-made and is worth following, saying:

I really realised I had to hone my leadership skills big time, and, you know, there were different, different things about leadership that I was very good at. The commercial astuteness absolutely 100% you know, the ability to write business strategy absolutely 100%, the actual ability to actually deliver that strategy and inspire with vision was actually very good, only because I could deliver the same vision over and over and over and over again. What was not good was my ability to listen and not listen, that's not listening one on one, anyone can do that, and you can actually practice that, but listening to the mood of an organisation and listening to the team is a lot frigging harder. So, you know, you can tell me what your issues are, I can listen to you and I can sympathise and I can engage with you ... So you have to learn how to listen to the mood of the organisation and understand its needs and requirements.

In saying that he "had to hone [his] leadership skills big time", Gerald suggests that there was something lacking and that needed addressing. He asserts his expertise in many fields and stakes a claim in what they represent, and claims self-analysis and a course of self-improvement, which is discussed later in Section 10.3.6. By starting with a flawed self in this story, the improvements serves to suggest a complete self made so by actively addressing the leadership shortcomings. As he identifies his competencies and areas for improvement, Gerald performs the role of reflective leader at the very time he is discussing his leadership. He is listening not only to people but to "the organisation". By claiming he has developed the

ability to “listen”, Gerald asserts he has achieved something special, and that this makes him a better leader of men. Now he suggests that he is the complete leader: one who not only delivers on the technical, but also understands the human aspects of the business.

As Gerald presents himself as someone who can inspire people to achieve the goals of the organisation as well as fulfil executive functions himself, it allows him to believe that he is adding value as a leader, such as when he says:

The ability to develop a team um, as well as individuals and bringing them together er, to work as a team um, which is bloody tricky with people. It's easy to say that, man, people are very good at protecting their own turfs and their own patches and delivering results for them while screwing over their mate, you know, down the corridor which doesn't deliver value for shareholders um, and that destroys a lot of value in most cases. So, you know, [I] really, really concentrate[d] on that aspect of leadership and management.

Here Gerald presents his interpretation of what it is that he does, and by extension he presents some aspect of how he sees himself and wishes to be seen: as a developer of teams and a people-person. He accentuates this with a negative contrast immediately afterwards by talking of others who in “protecting their own turf” harm the organisation. In the same way he enacts the leadership part of his complete self as suggested previously, and in doing so contrasts his own self with these others.

The contrast in perceived roles above, of Gerald as a value-adding leader versus others as a bickering disruption, is spelled out more explicitly where Gerald discusses his perceptions that the union is a barrier to employer-employee communications:

I've been quite successful at it, is that it's been developing back to the leadership style, developing those relationships at the grass root level where the people are starting to more, were, well now I am going to leave, follow me more than the union.

Here Gerald reinforces to the listener that he is a leader, claims success and sourcing identity in that role. He suggests that his leadership is now so well received and acknowledged that he believes he has elevated his standing in the employee's eyes above that of the union. He explicitly uses language such as “follow me” to describe the actions of others that has flowed as what he sees as the natural consequence of what he has done. The suggestion here is that Gerald leadership attributes, technical as well as personal, have now superseded the traditional workers vs. managers paradigm, and evolved into a fluid personalised meritocracy associated with the new economy.

Gerald also uses aspects of his roles and positions to reinforce the identity asset of leadership, saying in one example how:

It had a bigger impact on me in my leadership capability than um, [my employer] would ever, ever have thought could happen and I could ever have thought happen. 'Cause after completing that you've got from now, from then to now, a 5 year journey from being effectively being a commercial manager of a large [commodities] company to acting chief executive of the largest [of this commodity] company, into GM of [a large transport company].

By laying out this process of events, Gerald appears to imply to the listener that his course of action was valid, just, and successful. His leadership abilities, and the addressing of any shortcoming as previously discussed, are presented as the foundations for his commercially driven success. He uses his role and suggests the inherent requirements for leadership in his roles demonstrates to the listener the validity in his claims to being a leader. As Gerald presents it, because he has been successful in his commercial pursuits, he must therefore be a good leader.

10.3.2 Commercially Driven

Gerald's professed actions around the commercial imperative form a significant part of his discourse, justifying his many decisions on commercial grounds and overtly identifying with his abilities to cut costs out of the business and improve profitability margins in an organisation. His identity asset of being commercially driven is shown as he justifies, excuses, and rationalises some hard and unpopular decisions, and uses money to pay off people and buy out contracts.

Gerald presents his commercial self in one instance when he talks of why employers continued to employ him, saying:

I was delivering the dollars, and that's what those companies focused on, particularly listed companies. You get a guy in who can sit down and look at your supply chain and take [lots of money] out in 6 months, they want to keep you.

Gerald has immediately and actively identified with a commercial metric – “delivering the dollars” – and places this at the fore of the discourse by noting that it was valued by the employers. Because of his abilities, Gerald suggests that his employers “wanted to keep [him]” and therefore his continued employment is attributed to his commercial drive and ability, reinforcing to Gerald this link and forging his commercial drive as an identity asset.

In making these savings mentioned in the extract above, Gerald has had to terminate employment and supplier contracts, and these actions in the past require justifying and

rationalising of these actions which need to be correlated and integrated into his existing narrative without destabilising other constructs and identity assets that will be discussed shortly. The outcome of these terminations appears to be Gerald being comfortable with the result on a commercial footing, such as when he breaks a contract and pays the contractor enough to clear any debts that he had incurred in setting up his business, saying:

As for, one, one guy, you know, we gave him a cheque for, he had a debt to pay off, it was like a [lot of] dollars.

For Gerald, who subsequently made light of the contractor's wife wanting to buy a motel and the contractor not having any other experience apart from contracting having to start over again, this course of action is presented as the only option if the company was to survive: he had to strip the cost of the contractor out of the business. Giving a contractor a very large cheque was the cheaper option he could see, and therefore this was the rational and commercial course of action. The generosity of Gerald in paying him more than he may have been entitled to and clearing his debts is presented by Gerald as an example of his compassion for this contractor.

In conjunction with the above 'buying out', Gerald presents a before-state and an after-state in his narrative, and the transition point is the journey of self discovery that he went on, which is in itself an identity asset and is discussed in Section 10.3.6. The events above, and the extract below, occur before this 'journey' and the then-value of Gerald appears to be that money was the metric of everything. He justifies the above contractor termination with:

What happened is, [commodity] prices went bottom down, ocean freight rates went up, exchange rate went the wrong way, business went from making [lots of money] to losing [lots of money]. What you have to do, you had to halve, halve ... how do you do that? You put a hell of a lot of people out of work, and they're sub-contractors, so the mums and dad, typically mum and dad businesses who owned [businesses], their house was in it, everything, so I was the guy who, and this attracted a lot of media attention, who had to go out there and cancel contracts. We had legally binding contracts, we had to get out of, and it was fair to say it was pretty draining after 6-7 months, pretty hard work.

In his justification, Gerald presents himself as being in an impossible situation, and having no choice. By having no choice, his choice is justified, and he assigns himself the role (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) of terminating contracts. He has identified with this role in saying "I was the guy ... who went out there". While subjecting the contractors to a loss of their livelihood and what the listener can presume is a very hard time, Gerald also appears to again identify with them as a anti-elitist 'normal person' (Section 10.3.5) again by also claiming prior to this extract and again at the end to have suffered himself in this course of events.

The costs that he believes he paid during these events is shown in another extract, were he would:

Remember stopping to see a friend's parents and, "you're at [my employers] why, and I, my brother's son has just [lost his job] because apparently those wankers did beep, beep, beep". And I'm sitting there going, "uhha, that was me". They had no idea that that was me [laugh] and you sort of sit there and you think, "Good God!" You know why you had to do it, you know but, you know, it gets to you. So um, you know, it can become pretty conflict, you get quite conflict in those sort of um, times and er, you know, when you do think about it from all other players aspects you rationalise it from an economic sense and an industry sense, you know, longer term value. Um, it was still the right decision, the right things to do um, it was just bloody difficult er, in there.

Gerald here is directly faced with the impacts of his decisions on a very personal level, and in his narrative he openly accepts it to himself, before immediately justifying and rationalising the decisions he made. He identifies with the commercial pressure he faced, saying it got to him, and his commercial rationalisation is sound to him in both an economic sense and maintaining the industry for the future. Despite the costs to others, and the cost he claims to himself, Gerald has justified these events to himself, and of himself.

Indeed, while giving his narrative and after his presented journey of self-discovery detailed in Section 10.3.6, Gerald can reinforce to the listener that his decisions are rational and come from an informed stance, while placing himself at a distance. In expressing his self interest in progress, Gerald freely admits that he would employ the services of a person as he presents himself as being before his 'journey' – and thereby profit from it while keeping his own hands clean – saying:

I know a guy that I personally won't work with again, but if I had, you know, a million bucks and, you know, spare and he was looking after it in a small company I'd be absolutely, know I'm gonna get my return on investment. He would do it and he would be bloody ruthless about it, he would do it and, you know, I recognise, yeah, that, you know I just particularly don't want to be working with those people in that business.

By saying he would employ this person to achieve a monetary objective, but not wish to work on a collegial level with him, Gerald is rationalising his values. While he professes to be a people-person, the pursuit of money may take priority over such niceties, and the use of this person would be justified on the grounds of 'getting a commercial return'. His commercial self is not conflicted with his not-elitist self nor his post-self-discovery self.

This dichotomy between commerce and civilisation appears to be justified to Gerald by its ubiquitousness, as Gerald's comments on the selfishness of union organisers as well as entrepreneurs and businessmen, saying of them:

The union officials and leaders and it's all about their political ambitions - nothing else. So I look at people like [a prominent unionist], and he's on the radio on TV, in the [union], about all sorts of issues. He was er, last night on the news, talking about [a] strike, he doesn't have any members [in that strike, it is] Because he hopes in the next election, to be running for [a political party]¹⁹.

I know a lot of entrepreneurs out there ... by their own admission, you can't be a nice guy, and it's dog hungry, small, small man businesses, lots of competition and yeah some of the deals you do and you're ripping off people and they go, "yeah all the time, all the time, all the time". You're undercutting people, cut throat, bad mouth, all, you know, the, the dirty dog tactics that go on to be a successful um, small businessman, 'cause it's quite phenomenal ... Nice men don't succeed, or women in, in business these days. Sounds bloody harsh, but it's pretty much frigging true. Have you ever met a CEO of a large company or of a really successful businessman who did it by being a nice guy [laugh], I don't think so.

Gerald uses an alleged admission about the competitive nature of business to judge those that are involved in it, and he presents the mental image of the stereotyped plunderer to support the judgement that he has concluded. For Gerald, who has just been made redundant and is now actively seeking employment for only the second time in his life after he addressed his own ruthless nature which was reflected on and addressed, he now appears to judge others on such a value system as he has held dear. He attempts to add validity to his judgement by suggesting it is harsh but true, and the justification and identification continues.

10.3.3 Ambition

Gerald suggests that his ambition derives from his background and upbringing, and it appears that his ambition is an important identity asset for his making sense of his life. Ambition is present in his narrative as he recounts his early career and his sporting successes, and as a demonstration of his self by claiming a liking of winning

Gerald makes much of his ambition in the extended extract in Appendix XIII, and he explicitly relates his ambition to his upbringing. As Gerald repeatedly asserts he "started getting pretty ambitious", he personalises this trait and makes it part of his self. This is done both in constructing his future-self, by saying "I wanted to be one" and acknowledging that his ambition is part of his present-self, by saying attributing issues to "it [not going] that well probably because again my ambition".

His ambition is also shown in his sporting endeavours, saying:

I've won lots of, you know, sporting events etc where simply I got given a hard time for years 'cause I never showed round for prize giving, stayed around for prize

¹⁹ At the time of writing, the election Gerald is referring to had been held. The unionist in question has not stood as an MP as he predicted, but after the election took a high-profile role in that political party.

giving. You know, they want to call the winner up on stage, I'd already gone, gone home, didn't care, couldn't be bothered. Then I worked out that actually to the race organisers that's actually quite important. "Who cares a shit about what you think, you actually need to stay and actually need to get up there and need to say "thank you, and you did a, put on a good race"" and,

"Thanks to the sponsors"

And you see the other thousand people who have just spent months just training to finish let alone, "Wow he did it in half the time I did" and, and they need to see you on stage sort of thing. When, when you, you're before, this is before the sort of self discovery sort of piece that you just think, "Nah who gives a toss I'm not hanging round they can, if there's a prize then they can post it to me in the mail!" [laugh].

Gerald here presents another aspect of his ambition. While he is driven to succeed, he presents it as not being for any extrinsic rewards or recognition, but for the simple act of winning. He disassociates himself from the baubles, and does identity work in suggesting that he would miss any prize-giving ceremony if he could. In doing so, Gerald uses this story to suggest to the listener that his ambition is what is important to him and is part of his self, and not the actual winning. This second re-expression and re-enforcement by Gerald of his motivators again summons up the non-elitist identity asset discussed later his upbringing in its closing, but along the way he again represents to the listener the hard-nosed edge he suggests that he moved on from as part of his journey of self discovery (Section 10.3.6).

Gerald's suggestion that he is ambition-driven and not rewards-driven is presented again as he talks of his financial success in a series of highly paid roles as being a by-product of his motivation to succeed. Again and as before, he suggests that it is his drive to be first, as opposed to being motivated by the actual rewards themselves:

I don't see the point, you know, but I, I reflect, earlier on I said, you know, I wanted to be, to show people that I could succeed etc, it's not actually in material things. It's in a, in terms of monetary flashiness wealth, it's in a lot of, sporting, you know, I like to come first.

Because you're a cyclist²⁰ aren't you?

Yeah, then, then, so it's not a, it's not a, a, it's not a monetary thing, I like to win. You know, I like to say, "I'm acting Chief Executive" [laugh]. You know, so, I like, "I'm running [this company]", "I manage [lots of] people", "I do these different things".

Gerald performs this identity work in the above extract, while even saying to the listener that it a point he has reflected on and therefore presents to the listener as true. This reflection he

²⁰ The reference to being a cyclist was made because the listener knew it was true, as well as knowing from firsthand experience the hyper-competitive nature of cyclists. As both the listener and Gerald have a history of competitive cycling and each was aware of the others, a common understanding of what that sport entails is known.

mentions appears to justify this presentation of his to the listener, and lends weight to his active construction of his ambition as an identity asset. By presenting his status and job title, Gerald can demonstrate that this ambition has been fruitful. Because he has succeeded in a competitive environment he suggests ambition must be part of who he is. However, his claim of liking to declare his job-title may appear at odds with his previous claims to not liking the spot-light. His boasting-or-not is independent of the underlying asset in these extracts: his ambition. Indeed, it is this ambition that has, in his eyes, led to his success and achievement: another identity asset in his narrative.

10.3.4 Success and Achievements

The large roles that Gerald has had, and the financial success that he has achieved is presented to the listener by Gerald as being an important part of who he is to himself. His overcoming childhood trauma and bullying, succeeding at university, and his technological achievements, are all presented to the listener, along with the previously mentioned running of companies, of being a General Manager, of flying first class, and the recognition he receives and his sporting endeavours are all entwined in his discourse of success. This success started with his university research and endeavours, grew into his IT success, and is now part of his commercial success. Gerald explicitly uses ‘achievement’ interchangeably as a metric, as a status, and also as an excuse.

At times in his narrative, Gerald actively constructs the reasons for his success and achievements to the listener, such as when he says:

It um, a lot of [the problems I had] stemmed from the fact of wanting to over achieve and to prove to people, particularly my parents and um, and generally kids at school as well from little that, from when I was younger, that um, I was a real achiever and that came from a background of a lot of bullying and harassment, being the scrawn, scrawny little kid at school, being beaten up, you know, being the kid the girls call “you-a-na-na [Gerald] he’s got scabs, he’s got scabs” you know, the whole, you know, kids are brutal.

In starting over at a new school and with a new father, Gerald portrays himself as somebody with something to prove relative to the social patterns and norms from which others derive identity (Wagner & Wodak, 2006). It is clear is that he places his current successes in light of the obstacles he faced. It is not success in itself so much as success in spite of the obstacles he must overcome that is important to him and a significant part of his narrative. The identity work Gerald performed here compliments his identity work as his bullied self and his ambitious self.

The significance of his achieving in Gerald's narrative is apparent when the appropriate extracts are taken and arranged chronologically, so that the listener can see that it influences every aspect of his life to date that he considers significant. He describes his upbringing as:

Changing primary school pretty much every one or two years, because if you contract changes over as sharemilker they shift farms and then you shift areas and you get a new, sort of um, schooling. Yeah, yeah, so you flick mid year so pretty much, you know I would have had 5 or 6 primary schools that you sort of went through. So you didn't really have any continuity of um, friends as a, as a kid, ... I stayed all the way through to 7th form, however my results were mixed all the way through, and there were a few issues. Um, one was, I would get top class marks um, for a lot of my um, classes, but I had an attitude and effort scores of around Ds and Es um, ... my marks were actually very good um, but it wasn't very hard, didn't find it hard, so boredom etc and um, enjoyed my sports a lot more.

In this extract, Gerald presents several examples of his success in overcoming obstacles, which serve to magnify to the listener his perceptions around the amount of success he has. First is the discontinuous nature of his schooling and the lack of childhood friends, and he presents staying to the end of high-school as a measure of overcoming these two unpleasant facts. That he stayed should prove to the listener his success. The second obstacle he succeeded in overcoming was his 'scrawny' physique, which he acknowledges and addressed with sporting pursuits. In doing so, he takes this attribute he has and turns it to his advantage, with pursuing sporting endeavour best suited to his frame. The third is the boredom of scholastic life, which is overcome with getting top marks which he then presents as a foundation for his later successes.

After completing school the next obstacle to be overcome was tertiary study, and the abandoning of his agricultural studies for mathematics as previously mentioned. Of this, Gerald says he:

Completed that degree and er, in the three years I had to basically start from scratch. Um, my grades when I started off as pretty much Cs and then, sort of, as I went through on turned into B's and A's.

The expression 'starting from scratch' implies that Gerald viewed a lack of any cross-crediting from his first year agricultural studies into his second year of study, being the first year of mathematics, as a disadvantage. In claiming to have finished in three years, Gerald does not say if it was three years of mathematics study or three years in total, but the asset of his success is seen in his expression of his mark progression: not only did he pass and graduate in a given time frame, whatever that was, he did so with style.

The next phase of his life was his overseas secondment straight out of university, and succeeding in operating in a new culture. Gerald says:

So, that, that year [overseas] um, was a fantastic start to my career. You know, not only was I getting to help modernise [the clients business] and develop a lot of new modelling techniques and introduce a lot of new technology for them as well.

In employing the concept of starting over and achieving, Gerald places himself central to this story as he talks of “that year [overseas] um, was a fantastic start to my career” and his talk of introducing new technologies for others are achievements that he identifies with. He presents the developing of modelling techniques as an achievement that was made in spite of the prejudices that existed in the country he was in.

After Gerald was seconded to an overseas posting straight out of university, above, he describes his success and achievements on return to New Zealand as another starting-over experience with more new technology and in new business opportunities:

To get them set up we had to send them CD ROMs to their house and get them to load software on their computer with their dial-up internet access [Laugh] Aw, ‘cause you couldn’t download all that information at once, so all the initial [database] and everything was all on the DVD and in there, then all it was, was do updates and it was, you know, the technology was pretty rude but, crude at the time but, you know, the crudeness ... so we started doing cool things like that was, that was, you know, you look at it now and you laugh [Laugh] ... we would have this [great product]. Unheard of!

Gerald presents this product and its rollout as a success that was achieved after both embracing the challenges of a new technology while simultaneously trying something the new technology was not yet ready or able to deliver properly, necessitating a ‘work-around’ that achieved the objectives. In reflecting back on this and exclaiming it was “unheard of”, Gerald serves to reinforce to the listener that this achievement was significant and the obstacles overcome were hard to surmount. The success and achievement that Gerald identifies has been made part of as he not only starts over with a new technology based on his previous abilities, but he overcomes in a spectacular fashion. Here the identity is not the technical ability as Beyer & Hannah (2002) imply, but the success in overcoming in itself.

Gerald’s next significant role, for a company where “black boxes”²¹ were used for computational modelling, is presented at the end of the extended extract in Appendix XIII, above. Gerald’s identity work here is seen in the way he claims he has no idea how they work or what assumptions have been incorporated into these models, and he compounds the magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome by accentuating his age relative to those who had

²¹ A ‘black box’ is a term used to describe a device or process which generates an output for a given input. The means and machinations of that process are unknown to the user. To many, a car could be seen as a ‘black box’ or a collection of ‘black boxes’, where one puts petrol in and turns the steering wheel, but the workings of the internal combustion engine or rack-and-pinion steering are a mystery.

developed these models and subsequently retired. In taking on this challenge and succeeding in validating and replicating mathematical models that are now transparent, Gerald's identification is seen in his assertions that "I came in um, I was in charge of IT, I was in charge of strategy". His later references to the economic survival of his employer indicate that he believes he succeeded in achieving his goals, validating his identity claims.

10.3.5 Not Elitist

Gerald makes often and repeated reference to his background and upbringing, appearing to make his success all the more incredible to those he projects his success onto. He actively identifies and empathises with the "common worker" and toil, and relates of his "normal" upbringing where he was bullied at school. He claims to be normal in his work by staying in normal hotels, being opposed to private schools, and he presents his 'non-flashy' car and lack of extravagant clothing as supporting evidence of these claims to identity. Yet much of his identity work that uses this asset serves to reinforce to the listener that despite his claims, Gerald's engagement with his normality is to suggest that he is not.

Gerald often appears at pains to present himself as being normal, as the quintessential 'Kiwi-lad' growing up without any privileges or 'on the farm' and 'working the land' in the same way he works on his identity, with extracts such as:

I went to [a small town high school with boarding capabilities]. Um, it's a normal public school.

Mum was a solo mum um ... probably more the norm these days [laugh].

I worked on farms in the school holidays as a source of income, not only my parents one but other peoples farms um, because you could make money, you could earn more money than other kids earn, you know, carting hay um, milking cows etc um, then you could actually buy cars and all the toys that, you know, boys at age 16, 17 desperately wanted, mainly to impress girls and [laugh] all those sort of things um, so, you know, you worked on them but for me it was, it was fucking just hard work.

Gerald actively places himself in the norm, by both explicitly using that phrase and his personalisation of these statements. Both these actions serve to present them to the listener as unchallengeable and conventional, thereby bounding his discourse in norms. The last extract provides an insight into the identity that Gerald portrayed in the previous two. He initially asserts the farm-worker role he performed during the school holidays, which is a common discourse in rural New Zealand, before noting that this 'normal' holiday activity actually set him apart from the students at his school – based on income – who did not have that 'normal' holiday work. In doing so, Gerald asserts his normality while also noting that he is extra-normal and successful. Gerald continues the theme of normality in this extract with

references to more iconic and stereotyped group activities from which identity can be drawn (Cantor et al, 2002) of other adolescent New Zealand urban and rural males, namely cars and ‘chasing girls’. As Gerald presents the identity asset of his normality in youth, he closes this extract with another not-normal reference, saying he “worked on them but for me it was, it was fucking just hard work”. In hearing this, the listener is unsure if Gerald is referring to the physical labour on a farm for a slight youth, or efforts expended in impressing girls. No matter which of these Gerald refers to, the asset of his presentation of himself as being normal/not-normal is consistent in this extract.

Gerald’s presentation of himself as being ‘normal’ and fitting in with others extends to when he was newly in charge of a large company with rigid rules around travel and accommodation for differing people in differing roles in the organisation, saying of some employees insisting on travelling separate from others and staying in 5-star accommodation:

So here’s the GM of the organisation, I’m quite happy staying in a 4 star hotel with [some staff] but [these other guys are not] because they are above everybody else, and that grates me.

In this extract, Gerald appears to make a deliberate effort to show his identification with his employees who stay at four star hotels as opposed to those employees he presents as elitists who are entitled to stay at five star hotels. In doing so, he again presents himself as normal while his explicit reference to his role (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) as General Manager serves to inform the reader that he is not normal and does not wish to be seen as such despite the verbal comments that he makes. In making the comments, Gerald appears to pay lip-service to the normality of his life and position, presenting and differentiating on it at the same time. This view is also presented in another part of his narrative but on a similar note, saying:

The same with the, the labour work force ... a lot of them are on four on four off, but when they work four they work hard they deserve their four off. You know, I can immediately relate to those people. So that’s more of a personal thing. And that also comes from I guess the back, my background of, of family background where my, my family, everything they got they’ve earned, they have not been handed anything. Um, so I have a respect for hard working people who earn every cent.

Here Gerald again presents the discourse of the working man, and claims to identify with it by empathising with their lot and reminding the listener of his humble roots. However, his reference to the employees as “the labour work force” serves to depersonalise these people he claims affinity with, and the listener is left with the impression that the respect that he claims is a respect of distance, of a respect that one would not want to get too close to. In using these terms, Gerald appears to try and emphasise his non-elitist nature, but to the listener he actually

does the opposite – he isolates himself from them by the simple act of acknowledging ‘they’ exist as a separate grouping or identity. His identity work is in differentiating himself from them.

Gerald’s narrative of his present life echoes that ‘normality’ and his claimed ‘non-elitist’ value system in the narrative of his early life. Of his life today, he says:

I’m against private schools and um, just because I’m against that, elitist, status, all that stuff.

I would be classed I guess as reasonably wealthy [yet] I drive a \$5000 Japanese import car, I have a very normal house, I have nothing flashy, I dress well, I don’t dress crappily I dress what I want to wear but I don’t buy \$2000 suits [laugh]. You know, I don’t drive a Porsche.

These extracts contain protestations of normality for Gerald as he lives his life in the present, but as with his past he also presents an aspect of not-normal in doing so. The first extract about private schooling can be contrasted with his later criticism of state school education in New Zealand and his revelation that he and his wife are investigating Montessori schooling options for their child. The second extract in which he claims to normality in his car and dress is countered by the very expression of his ability to wear \$2000 suits and to drive a Porsche if he so desired – options which are not available to many ‘normal’ people in New Zealand.

10.3.6 Self-Discovery

Considerable parts of Gerald’s narrative contain his expounding at length on what he presents as his development into a compassionate people-person. Gerald asserts his past-self as “a right prick” who was merciless in business. After some counselling, in which he claims he could not even name ten emotions, his current-self is presented as that of a compassionate person. This process of counselling and learning, as well as the before and after states, is a significant identity asset of Gerald’s. The disconnect between this perception of his and actions such as those detailed in Section 10.3.2 comes about as Gerald reflects on his own experiences and his journey of self-discovery and change that he has undergone. He present himself as someone who has learnt empathy, consideration and has evolved into a compassionate human being without losing any of his other self-perceptions around his ambition (Section 10.3.3) and being in demand (Section 10.3.7). Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that this journey of self-discovery has made him a better leader (Section 10.3.1).

Of his previous-self, Gerald makes several identity-based assertion, such as:

I was a right prick. I basically didn't give a shit about anyone else's feelings er, including my first wife's, it was all about me. You know, it was about me, and part of it was back to that whole ambitious career focused, and all of these other drives in place.

I will point out at this stage, getting on to about 30 now, terribly un-self aware of myself and others, absolutely shocking. Um, and it was at that point my marriage broke up, and, er, I wasn't having a good time.

In making these assertions about himself and presenting to the listener what he was, Gerald serves to contrast this unpleasant past-Gerald with the more pleasant present-Gerald that emerged from his self-discovery journey. Gerald again places himself central to the story. Not only is it an issue of himself and his inability to empathise, but it is his marriage and him who was not having a good time. He does so while reinforcing to the listener his motivation and his attempts to present as what he calls in this extract his ambition and focus on career. Gerald places himself central to his story, saying "it was all about me". The way this was done and the manner and outcomes of it are presented to the listener as a journey of discovery of his humanity for the "maths geek" as part of his migration from hard-nosed businessman to a compassionate individual aware of his surrounds and his impact on others. Gerald presents this as part of an intervention from his employer at the time, who suggested that he and a colleague underwent counselling of some sort, discussed later.

Gerald presents the process of counselling and reflection in a manner which flows freely, and it is not until the end that his characteristic nervous laugh emerges. In his words he says:

If somebody wasn't delivering in the team, I'd just exit them, there was no coach and supporting development or figuring out if they could win the role, it was pretty cut throat. Um, and that, so, so, so [my employer] recognised that, um, so what they did is, they invested a fair amount of time and money in my development, and how they did that is, they partnered with me a guy out of Australia who was basically a corporate psychologist, psychiatrist, call him whatever they call him or want ... and er, and with somebody else in the organisation who was very similar to me, who happened to be female, and um, we remained good friends er, and we went through this discovery journey together and it was very interesting and it went, and it was very much focused on developing our own self awareness, and self awareness of others. Um we learnt about ourselves but about our own emotions and, you know, we did lots of things like, for two weeks recording your diary every three or four hours how you were feeling and what actually caused those feelings. And I worked out what wound me up, and what made you happy and what made you sad, and all of those sort of, those different emotions and down to the test of, you know, you know, "[Gerald] describe, you know, 10 emotions." Christ I couldn't. [Laugh] There's 100s of emotions and feelings but I couldn't even get to 10 [laugh] ... so it, it, it was quite a, you know, it, it took a year. So it was, it was difficult um, process to say the least.

Again in this extract, Gerald seeks to minimise the effects of his actions, using language like 'exiting' which rolls off the tongue easier than 'sacking' or 'firing', although he acknowledges

the consequences by using a depersonalised metaphor in describing the work environment he created as “cut throat”. In saying that his employer placed him in a programme, Gerald again presents as part of who he now is (Halford, 2003), namely being valued by his employer to the degree that they would support him and help him ‘develop’ in a way that he did not allow any of his underlings to do. This serves to reinforce to the listener that he was of more value to the organisation than other employees. The journey he describes is emphasised with his story of his inability to list ten emotions, and as with all good mechanistic metaphors of progress Gerald achieves and makes progress on his journey.

The presentation of difference between his past and his present occurs frequently in his narrative, and appears to form a basis by which he evaluates himself and his actions, and how he has changed.

No-one could drink me under the table. And that was like an achievement. Sounds pathetic I know.

TV and drinking beer with the boys, those are the two things that are gone and, guess what, I don’t miss either of them. At all. Where there used to be two very favourite activities [laugh] but I don’t see the point anymore.

While he can present himself as having left behind certain parts of his old self, Gerald can also use engage with these socially constructed labels to reinforce his new identity assets: while above he refers to his drinking and in other places to being a maths geek he believes he has discovered himself. By dismissing his past as “sound[ing] pathetic, I know” he actively removes that part of his self from his current self, performing identity work in the process. By suggesting to the listener that he has changed, Gerald can disassociate himself from some of his actions of the past that the listener can see he finds uncomfortable. This disassociation often occurs in the form of a statement of the past and the immediate critical claim to change, such as the above.

The reflection back on his past life is often laced with references to other identity assets, noticeably his ambition and perceived success:

“Why was [Gerald] successful?” er, “Why didn’t he stay being an IT programmer”, which could have been a career path for me, well, you know ... I just, you know, and I kind of reflect, you know, what life would be like if I was a farmer.

In referring to himself in the third person, Gerald again, but in a different manner, externalises himself from his previous actions as he reflects on his past. His identity work is seen in self-labelling as an IT programmer, and staying there, which stands to accentuate to the listener that he is no longer there and his identity is not that of an IT programmer any more. His past

and the reflection that has required forms part of the self-discovery process that he has been through and forms a significant part of his narrative.

The outcomes of Gerald's journey is him presenting himself as a reformed man with a sensitive soul, such as when he says he is:

Very withdrawn um, protective er, emotionally protective of oneself [yet] can project an image of being um, very harsh in terms of thick skinned, harsh, nothing phases me, prepared to take on anything um, in both work and life er, etc. Um, so there's, there's my own view and there's what some people view of me externally, and some of that is projected on purpose um, and some of that through defence mechanisms er, and some of that is actually naturally me. Um, the, the thick skin, sort of, that's like projected, the withdrawn shy is actually really me [laugh].

In this way, Gerald comes across as a sensitive man presenting a façade of austerity. Whether that is true or not is irrelevant, but what is interesting is that such a self-belief and self-reflection allows Gerald to continue with some of his actions of the past under such a 'face', while disassociating him-self from that course of action. This is done as he claims 'his view' and others views. He presents his new self that has emerged from his journey of self-discovery in aspects of his discourse with nuggets such as:

I'm fiercely loyal to my, to my close group of friends.

I think of myself as a hard working loyal um, [pause] friend to most people er, and somebody who has a huge [pause] amount of giving within him.

I'm constantly surprised when I catch up with people who I knew from years ago when I went to high school or something, quite often they make a comment, "ah you're quite different".

As such, the presentation of the new Gerald, as a result of his journey of self discovery, is presented to the listener as complete.

10.3.7 In Demand

Another identity asset of note that emerges from Gerald's narrative is that he is demand, and in presenting some of the extracts from Gerald's narrative in chronological order, the reader can see a consistency in message here for Gerald. This asset emerges as he explains his first job out of university on an ex-pat assignment, how employers want to keep him due to his abilities to cut costs, the job offers he has received, and how he has not had to apply for any jobs – until now.

Gerald presents his first job, the expat assignment straight from university, as a watershed moment in his life where he was unaware of the power that his abilities hold and the lengths

that people will go to to ensure he has everything that he needs so that he can use his skill for their betterment, saying:

About four weeks before my last exam they actually rang me up and said ... we want to fly you [overseas] and um, you can work [there] for a year for [our client] ... After spending 40 minutes probably queuing in the economy queue and getting to check-in and told I was meant to be in the business class queue and asking, "What's business class?" Having no idea, at all! and then getting directed to this lounge that just had free alcohol I was so excited I asked to use their 'phone and rang up some of my mates and telling them about this place in the airport that had free alcohol for the people who could fly, and no-one believed me. [Laugh] "Those places don't exist!" "No, no it really does!" I've got one hour before this flight leaves tonight and I can drink as much as I want. Little did I know once you got on the plane in business class they also gave you as much alcohol as you wanted, which was kinda neat for a 21 year old [laugh]. Straight out of university where we used to yahoo, it was a good time ... after the first week there I got given an envelope of cash which [a lot of money] in it, and what's this, well that's your [daily] allowance, I nearly choked again [laugh] "What d'ya mean, I used to live off 100 bucks a week and that included rent!" [laugh] and "You want to give me how much?" So um, and that was the deal that had been struck with the client.

In this extract, he spells out to the listener that he was contacted before his exams had even finished and sought out by the people he had done some holiday work for. He emphasises his normality by describing his lack of experience with business class travel, and this is used to highlight the magnitude of his employer's desire to obtain his services. In doing so, he emphasises the sought after nature of his abilities as a new graduate: he is needed (Tan & Hunter, 2003). Gerald suggests that such is the need for him, he is showered with money and resources to an extent that he and his fellow students could not conceptualise. He works on his identity to both them and the listener in retelling his phone call to his friends. This story, and its included phone call, serve to construct the nature of Gerald's experience, and these events as significant and unusual.

As his career has progressed, this theme of his abilities and being sought after continues, and appears to have provided him much identity capital during his life. An example of his belief in his abilities can be seen in an, such as the extract previously presented where he talks about taking costs out of the business, with the result that "they want to keep you". That extract presented a view from Gerald on how his abilities are in demand and the justification for that view. His identification with being desirable is clear when he says they want to keep him, and his presentation of his skills are the reason why that is so, thereby integrating the two to himself and to the listener. He rationalises a considerable cost saving in a short time as inherently beneficial and asserts that such a course of action is desired by his employers, which in turn makes him desirable.

In looking back at an earlier part of his career, Gerald recounts how he has regularly been offered many other jobs from which he can pick and choose as he sees fit. Some he claims to have turned down because of a variety of many options, and others because they lack balance. Examples of these extracts are:

He offered me a fairly good job in that, in his team um, and I turned it down. Er, the reason being I enjoy profit and loss accountability, I enjoy large roles, I enjoy managing multiple levers not just one big [laugh] bloody lever.

I've already had a number of job offers, and I've been very choosy, because of, I wanna find the right balance in the right organisation.

You've got that wealth of experience, by then a 22 year old. Um, back to New Zealand, and [my then-employers] were like, "Aw what are they gonna do with this guy?" So um, they put me into IT - why not, I could program, I knew a lot about computers and all the rest.

These extracts provide interesting listening, as Gerald presents them as employment opportunities being laid at his feet for him to choose from. He is in demand. An interesting variance on this is the last extract, in which Gerald presents himself as a returning asset that the employer does not know what to do with. He suggests his employer is wise enough to know that they have something of value in him and are at a loss as to what to do with him and his skill-set (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). While this appears different, the core of the theme is still present: Gerald has an ability that is in demand, and if the employer does nothing with it another employer will gladly take him on.

In growing his abilities and building on his successes, Gerald presents himself as a man whose abilities are taking him places and doing so quickly, such as in the extended extract presented in Appendix XIII where he talks of going consulting, the conflict with the owners, and eventually being poached by a large consultancy in demand of his services. In stating his ambition in that extract, Gerald also appears to effectively state his views on his abilities, which he justifies later on with some overt identity work in which he noted his success and his being head-hunted by other companies. His narrative then alters slightly to describe his joining a small consultancy firm, and presents this firm as being too small for him. In this small consultancy, he suggests he was so successful that he was able to earn more than his employer, and this is presented by Gerald as being a reason why he had to leave: he was now too good for the company he had joined. For Gerald's narrative, a large competitor realised his value and poached him from the small-minded employer, which reinforces the identity asset of being in demand and sought after. For Gerald, his abilities are again recognised by another employer, and again he is poached for bigger and better things, and he goes so far as to explicitly point out in his narrative the reoccurring nature of these events in his life. The

explicit referencing of such events is Gerald's accentuating the importance of this identity asset to the listener.

At the time of solicitation of his narrative, Gerald had taken a severance option from his last employer which he presented as being the result of a structural change in the organisation, and was contracting back to that organisation performing various business modelling activities. In response to this he says:

Up until today I haven't had to apply for any of those roles, it's just been people have contacted me, "come and do this come and do that" and, being reasonably in demand because now I can deliver those huge ... savings.

Even as he is now (at the time of solicitation) without permanent employment²², or perhaps because he is without employment, Gerald is touting his abilities to the listener. In reflecting that he has not had to apply for a job since he sought out holiday work as student, Gerald reinforces to the listener that the normal state of affairs is that his skills are sought after.

10.3.8 Pioneer

Pioneering emerges as an identity asset of Gerald's narrative in several differing facets of his life. He does so presenting his involvement in new technologies, and their applications to business as part of his identify asset capital, and he also suggests that he is a pioneer in the way he deals with unions.

In the extended extract in Appendix XIII, Gerald talked of the emerging technology and how "it was great fun", and the business needs that it could fill, in his early career. His identification with one of these roll-outs of a new and emerging technology is complete when he suggests that he and his wife will be using it again in the near future, many years after he was involved in the early implementations. Later in the extended extract he does a similar action, in presenting his redesigning of the 'black boxes' used in forecasting. As the existing black boxes were using old techniques, Gerald presents his redesign as offering unique usability and a higher level of mathematical integrity to the outcome. In both of these extracts, his self-divorcing from the technology itself is noticeable, as he emphasises the impact these have on the business. His pioneering identity asset is not enmeshed with the technology itself, but in the way the new technology can be used by the organisation to make business decisions.

²² At the time of writing, Gerald has found employment as a chief executive in a large organisation with a significant history of mathematical modelling.

In the later parts of his career, Gerald often talked of his confrontations with unions and how they ended up being adversarial. The adversarial nature of these meetings appears to upset Gerald, as he suggests to the listener he was seeking to break the traditional model of partisan combativeness and had the employee's best interests at heart. He says:

I could give examples of, you know, they've got a KPI scheme where they get bonus payments, so I came in and er, said "Well that's great but it's yearly payments, no-one really actually focuses on the KPI" I said "We're gonna make it quarterly" and um, I could never get agreement because "The collective agreement says it's yearly so you'll do it yearly". "Well hang on, what I'm doing is actually, see you're putting all your risk of your \$1200 around your yearly target, and I'm saying break it into \$300 chunks and we'll have resettable targets every quarter. You know we can agree on the quarter targets now if you want and we'll pay it out". "Nah, no the collective agreement says yearly". You know well, "Hang on [laugh] you, I've talked to the staff about this and they think it's great". "Well you, you're breaking the law, you can't engage in changing terms and conditions direct with staff. I'm telling you now [Gerald], we're not changing!" I wasn't, good God that is just ridiculous. An you get those cases all of the time ... And we've just seen it. So we've just be, done a whole year, a whole heap of them, aren't getting some money and some are, they're only getting partial amounts. And you go, you know, "If you'd followed the system I said in the first place you'll be better off!".

He presented his suggestions as being inspirational and for the betterment of everybody, as if they were a new way forward, before being hampered and held back by the dogmatic blinkeredness and selfishness of the union. While Gerald suggests that he is pioneering a new way of doing business to the listener, his story presents the unionist as a traditional protagonist that refuses to budge, and in doing so accentuates the nature of Gerald's pioneering reforms that he seeks to implement. His concluding comments, about the last year, suggest to the listener that he was right all along and if his new approach had been implemented, that the employees would have been better off, and as such serve to identify him with his suggested reforms.

Another example of his vision for the future, and his pioneering as an identity asset of his advocating that he was leading the way is where he says:

It's gonna be an interesting time for New Zealanders going forward in their union/company relationship environment. I firmly believe that in 15 years time there won't actually be, there should not be a need for unions. Um, if, if the relationship between individuals is so strong that, why should there be a need. I, a lot of people disagree with me, but I think that that is a very good goal and aspiration to aspire to, because you only need unions when there's, when there's issues that cannot be dealt with and trouble but if, you know, this is, why else would you need them?

In this extract, given after his union confrontations, Gerald makes predictions and suggestions for the future without unions. These predictions are founded on his own actions, and suggest

‘I have done it and so should society’ in confronting the excessive power that he believes unions hold. He has attempted to action his beliefs, and therefore made them a real part of how he constructs his current and desired identity.

Table 10.1 Identity Assets in Gerald’s Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
Leading	Claimed and Built	I really realised I had to hone my leadership skills big time, and, you know, there were different, different things about leadership that I was very good at.
	Demonstrated	I’ve been quite successful at it, is that it’s been developing back to the leadership style, developing those relationships at the grass root level where the people are starting to more, were, well now I am going to leave, follow me more than the union
	Challenged	It had a bigger impact on me in my leadership capability than um, [my employer] would ever, ever have thought could happen and I could ever have thought happen.
Commercially Driven	Delivering	I was delivering the dollars ... You get a guy in who can sit down and look at your supply chain and take [lots of money] out in 6 months, they want to keep you.
	Justifying and Rationalising	What you have to do, you had to halve, halve ... how do you do that? You put a hell of a lot of people out of work ... I was the guy who, and this attracted a lot of media attention, who had to go out there and cancel contracts.
		You know why you had to do it, you know but, you know, it gets to you. ... Um, it was still the right decision
	Contrasting	Have you ever met a CEO of a large company or of a really successful businessman who did it by being a nice guy [laugh], I don’t think so.
Ambition	Driving	I know a guy that I personally won’t work with again, but if I had, you know, a million bucks and, you know, spare and he was looking after it in a small company I’d be absolutely, know I’m gonna get my return on investment. He would do it and he would be bloody ruthless about it,
	Now	I wanted to be, to show people that I could succeed etc, it’s not actually in material things. It’s in a, in terms of monetary flashiness wealth, it’s in a lot of, sporting, you know, I like to come first.
Success and Achievements	To Show	I like to win. You know, I like to say, “I’m acting Chief Executive” [laugh]. You know, so, I like, “I’m running [this company]”, “I manage [lots of] people”, “I do these different things”
	Academically	I want[ed] to over achieve and to prove to people, particularly my parents and um, and generally kids at school as well from little that, from when I was younger, that um, I was a real achiever
		I would get top class marks um, for a lot of my um, classes, but I had an attitude and effort scores of around Ds and Es um, ... my marks were actually very good
	In Business	I started off as pretty much Cs and then, sort of, as I went through on turned into B’s and A’s
You know, not only was I getting to help modernise [the clients business] and develop a lot of new modelling techniques and introduce a lot of new technology for them as well		
Not Elitist	Then	We started doing cool things like that was, that was, you know, you look at it now and you laugh [Laugh] ... we would have this [great product]. Unheard of!
		I went to [a small town high school with boarding capabilities]. Um, it’s a normal public school.
		Mum was a solo mum um ... probably more the norm these days
		I worked on farms in the school holidays as a source of income, not only my parents one but other peoples farms um, because you could make money
		I guess the back, my background of, of family background where my, my family, everything they got they’ve earned, they have not been handed anything

	Now	So here's the GM of the organisation, I'm quite happy staying in a 4 star hotel with [some staff] but [these other guys are not] because they are above everybody else, and that grates me
		I would be classed I guess as reasonably wealthy [yet] I drive a \$5000 Japanese import car, I have a very normal house, I have nothing flashy, I dress well, I don't dress crappily I dress what I want to wear but I don't buy \$2000 suits [laugh]. You know, I don't drive a Porsche.
	The Future	I'm against private schools and um, just because I'm against that, elitist, status, all that stuff.
Self-Discovery	The Problem	I was a right prick. I basically didn't give a shit about anyone else's feelings er, including my first wife's, it was all about me. You know, it was about me, and part of it was back to that whole ambitious career focused, and all of these other drives in place.
		I will point out at this stage, getting on to about 30 now, terribly un-self aware of myself and others, absolutely shocking. Um, and it was at that point my marriage broke up, and, er, I wasn't having a good time.
	The Solution	Um we learnt about ourselves but about our own emotions
		TV and drinking beer with the boys, those are the two things that are gone and, guess what, I don't miss either of them. At all. Where there used to be two very favourite activities [laugh] but I don't see the point anymore.
	The Present	I kind of reflect, you know, what life would be like if I was a farmer.
some of that is actually naturally me. Um, the, the thick skin, sort of, that's like projected, the withdrawn shy is actually really me		
I'm constantly surprised when I catch up with people who I knew from years ago when I went to high school or something, quite often they make a comment, "ah you're quite different".		
In Demand	Skills	They actually rang me up and said ... we want to fly you [overseas] and um, you can work [there] for a year for [our client]
	Desire	He offered me a fairly good job in that, in his team um, and I turned it down. Er, the reason being I enjoy profit and loss accountability, I enjoy large roles, I enjoy managing multiple levers not just one big [laugh] bloody lever.
	Now and the Future	I've already had a number of job offers, and I've been very choosy,
		Up until today I haven't had to apply for any of those roles, it's just been people have contacted me, "come and do this come and do that" and, being reasonably in demand because now I can deliver
Pioneer	Systems	If you'd followed the system I said in the first place you'll be better off!
	Forward	I, a lot of people disagree with me, but I think that that is a very good goal and aspiration to aspire to
	Technology	It was all very, you know um, it was leading edge stuff, it was great fun.

10.4 A Summary of Gerald's Constructed Identity

Many of the identity assets and themes that emerge from Gerald's narrative start with his self-perceptions around himself as leader. He acted his identity as a proficient leader, and this may have been influenced by his current employment status in looking for a new role. His perceived leadership is also seen in the way he acts out his commercially driven nature and his successes that come from that and his ambition. His anti-elitist normality and humble origins for a significant part of his narrative as he seeks to present that his humble roots and being in touch in touch with the common man, which may be a product of the journey of self discovery that he suggests he has been on. As part of his journey, Gerald has had to

rationalise and justify many of his actions undertaken which are in accordance with his ambition and commercial drive, and this is not always a clear-cut rationalising.

In relating the analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 to the apparent construction Gerald's identity, it appears that the general lower level building blocks of identity include the roles he has had, particularly those later where he emphasises his role as CEO and GM of various organisations. Also included is his education and old status as "a maths-geek". The interrelated nature of the identity assets that Gerald presented to the listener are presented visually in Figure 10-1.

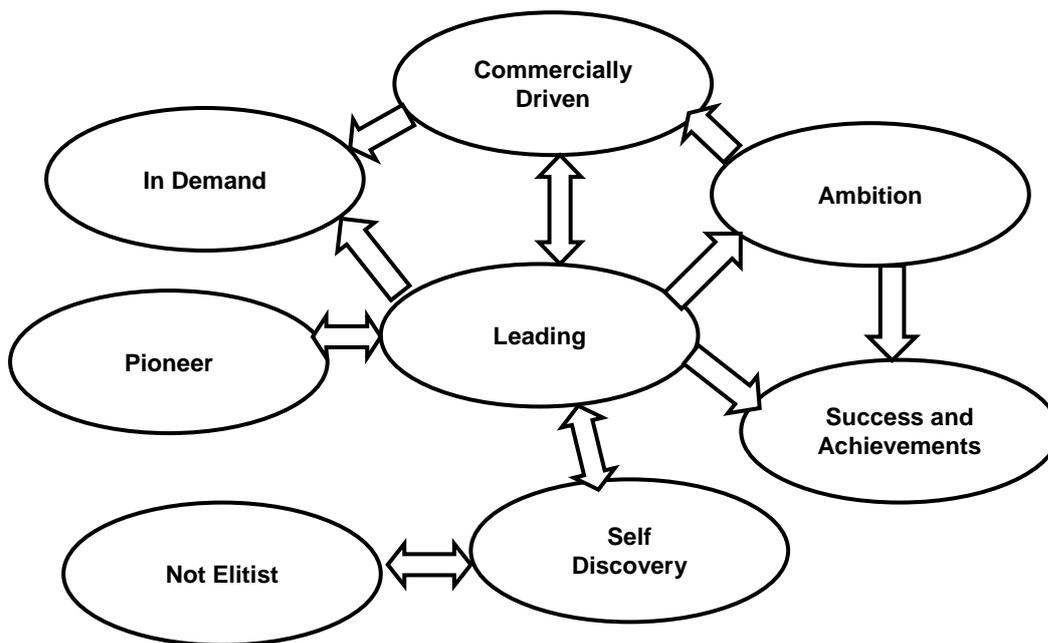


Figure 10-1 The Integration of Gerald's Identity Assets

For Gerald, his leadership influences his ambition, his success, and being in demand, while both informing and being informed by his commercially driven self, and the journey of self discovery that he went on and is now an identity asset for him. The ambition that he present is attributed by Gerald to be a key contributor to his success and his commercially driven self, which in turn also influence his belief that he is in demand. For Gerald, his non-elitist perceptions of his self appear to originate from his journey of self-discovery, but also appear at odds in his narrative with his projection on his success, his ambition, his driven self, and his being in demand.

Aspects of Gerald's narrative support Collinson's (2003) discussion of multiple selves. His presentation around his being commercial and analytical is a workplace self, while his journey of self-discovery is a civilised self. His achieved self is demonstrated in Gerald's claims to

being an understanding manager, and his crafted self is his use of leadership as an identity asset.

Of interest to the listener is the noticeable absence of his technological achievements in Gerald's narrative as significant identity related assets and assets in their own right. He appears comfortable with these and the success that his technical "maths geek" abilities have brought him, but these technical skills and abilities which formed part of the foundation for his being suggested for inclusion in this investigation do not seem to stand apart to Gerald, rather they are subsumed into his identity asset of success. It is also worth noting that a conflict appears to exist in the identity assets of his being commercially driven and a product of his self-discovery, given his stated belief that nice people can not succeed in business and yet his success and achievements appear to be a significant identity asset.

11.1 Introducing Frederic

Frederic is of mixed British and Mediterranean blood, and in his late thirties. He was born in Europe and his parents immigrated to South Africa when he was a young child. When giving his narrative, Frederic was the recently-appointed General Manager of a New Zealand software start-up that targeted graphical applications²³. He wears a wedding band, but there was no mention in either the initial meeting or the narrative solicitation of a partner or family.

After his secondary school in South Africa, Frederic won a scholarship to study art and design, and graduated with a diploma. His family then immigrated to New Zealand where he studied and graduated from university with a computer science degree. He was then employed for 18 months writing software for a consulting company that was building its own suite of business tools. Frederic subsequently moved to a large telecommunications company as an analyst-programmer, while performing contracts for his previous employer and colleagues. In his mid-twenties, and after two years of part-time contracting, he set up his own consulting firm to hold the intellectual property and deliver on these contracts and resigned from his ‘day-job’.

Five years later, Frederic sold his consulting firm to a competitor and became an employee for another three years in both technical and business development roles. He then left the firm he had sold out to, and returned to performing short term contracts before joining a multinational consultancy. This role grew with Frederic until he was a senior manager, and it was from this role that he left for his current one.

Frederic was referred to the listener because of his reputation as a strong software developer, who had expanded beyond the technical sphere and successfully operated in the business and people sphere. The people who referred him said he was “great”, “successful”, and “going places”. His narrative is the first of four IT professionals who gave their narratives that have moved from the technical realm into the entrepreneurial and commercial space.

²³ At the time of writing, the listener was made aware that company in question was wound up do to insufficient sales revenue a year or so after Frederic gave his narrative. This may have significance to the reader in light of some of the identity themes to evolve in Frederic’s narrative, namely his ability to adapt to change, his entrepreneurial self, and his identity with being a commercial manager.

11.2 Frederic's Narrative

The initial meeting with Frederic took place in a trendy bar in the central city, very close to the offices of his employer. The narrative solicitation itself occurred not long afterwards in the glass-walled 'goldfish bowl' meeting room next to the board room at his employers ultra-modern offices. This meeting room looks onto the minimalist open plan main office, and in turn those in the office can see into the meeting room. These offices are in stark contrast to those of the pragmatic employer he would later say he respected and was employed by to which he credits much of his learning, and appeared to the listener to be more aligned with the artistic identity capital that Frederic would later reveal.

Frederic's narrative was very considered, polite, deferential, and cautious, yet he was not afraid of correcting errors made in reflecting on previous conversations or in reflecting on what he had said. He is considerate and aware of the consequences of the technology he is involved in. Frederic suggests there is a difference between himself and others in the IT industry, and programmers in particular, and uses his Art Diploma as an example of that. His narrative often consisted of a cyclic comparison of himself to others, to learning, and then the use of many mechanistic metaphors commonly used in business. Frederic professes a belief in formalised strategy, structure and business fundamentals, and one gets the impression from listening to Frederic that there is a 'right' way of doing things. When probed on matters of attachment, such as selling the business he had built, Frederic was quiet and withdrawn. While his tone indicated that it was not a pleasant experience, his language was philosophical and pragmatic with a view to the need to move on.

There appeared a degree of hesitancy in Frederic's narrative and this was compounded in the beginning as he talked about not fitting in due to his accent, which he actively changed. As he settled into his account, Frederic started talking at length about his beginnings in the technology industry, the establishing of his own company, moving through his career, and achieving on various projects. His narrative appears to be a career journey (Nicholson & West, 1989), as he evolved through his youth and education, early work and entrepreneurial activity, to his corporate experiences. From his corporate identity, Frederic continued his narrative as one of change by using his resignation story to highlight his artistic identity and reflection.

Frederic tells of his school years as being within a structured and hierarchical environment commonly associated with South Africa, and consisting of core academic subjects, rugby, and cricket. He was usually in the top class, "depending on my motivation that year [or] whether I

liked the teachers or not”. Towards the end of his secondary schooling, Frederic won a drawing competition and was rewarded with a scholarship to study for a Diploma in Art from a Parisian tertiary institute, which he did. When his schooling in South Africa was finished, his family immigrated to New Zealand whereupon he commenced a BSc in computer science. This shift presented him with some academic and social challenges he identified and overcame, and contribute to the identity capital asset of his adapting to change, discussed later.

In the extended extract of Frederic’s narrative presented in Appendix XII, the reader can see his emphasis on his being a pragmatic commercial manager, his adaptability to change, his learning and growth in his roles, the value he adds to business, his entrepreneurial activities, and his assertion of his artist’s identity. The performance that Frederic did of his identity was an exercise in demonstrating his balance and compassion, as well as his sense of justice and fairness. He appears as the cosmopolitan man, operating out of the newest-of-the-new offices, but seems uncomfortable to be singled out for attention. However, he is keen not to be seen as a conventional technologist but would rather as a creative artist, as someone who operates on the fringes – be it of the dominant culture or of the stereotypical technologist.

Despite the initial hesitation, Frederic talked comfortably and freely when his narrative turned to his success in business development, before commenting disparagingly on a person who failed to deliver and used a façade to cover their inadequacies. This was a point to be returned to when he discussed another colleague, who used his over-promising and under-delivering to earn a promotion and another manager who misrepresented his team’s abilities and achievements. This apparent disquiet at their inabilities reflects several of the identity assets that emerged from his narrative, like being a commercial manager and an entrepreneur.

11.3 Identity Assets in Frederic’s Narrative

The sources of identity that Frederic appears to engage with and construct his identity as part of who he is appear to include his artistic and non-typical engineering self, which can be seen in his extended narrative presented in Appendix XII. His immigration to New Zealand and his movement through his entrepreneurial and corporate phases contribute to his ability to adapt and change to his environment, and each of these form identity capital assets in their own right. The vision he demonstrates in performing those acts is another asset that emerges from his narrative, along with the people he knows and the networks he has that have

facilitated that. In addition, his learning and reflection on these things form another asset in his narrative, which in turn takes the listener back to the sensitive artist he appears to believe he is. The identity assets that were identified in Frederic's narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 11.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XXI.

11.3.1 The Artist

The identity asset of Frederic's artistry is not confined to his mention of his Art diploma and a claim to not being a typical engineer or IT person at the end of the extended extract presented in Appendix XII. He also discusses an ability to draw and links this to his introduction to the IT industry through multimedia, emphasising his creative affinity while claiming a balance of left and right brain thinking abilities. He talks of seeing more than just the technology, of how it interfaces with life, and of the need for emotional integration that he needs in his work and his life.

11.3.2 Change and Adaptability

The change that Frederic presents in his narrative arises from his experience as an immigrant to New Zealand and attesting to fit in, as well as his changing face in his journey through his career (Nicholson & West, 1989). He emphasises his adaptability as an immigrant at several points in his narrative, such as discussing how he has tried to adapt his accent to New Zealand and the differing academic standards in the two countries. The theme of change is also apparent in his discussion of the fast changing technology used in projects he was involved with and in how the business he established was required to change and adapt.

11.3.3 Learning

The learning that Frederic does, and which appears to be so important to him is a process of personal experience and development. He talks of learning business skills from both running companies and those who employed him, of learning personal lessons, and he suggests that what he has learnt has become a part of who he is.

11.3.4 Commercial Manager

Frederic stresses the importance of business fundamentals in giving his narrative, and observes that it is not just about the technology. At one point in his narrative, he suggests that he has a prolific output – doing six months work in three months. He also refers to a professionalism in his documentation, and professional integrity. He projects his commercial management self to the listener as he talks of hiring-and-firing, the difficulties he has faced and the decisions he has had to make, his self-belief, and liberal use of management-speak.

11.3.5 Visionary

Frederic presents his predictions of future events, as he talks of his perceptions of others, and he presents a view of his self that related to a mission that he has adopted which is based on adapting technology to people. Frederic’s vision an identity asset is a forerunner to his entrepreneurial identity, which is explored next in Section 11.3.6. He introduced chronology into his vision for the future as he presents his past predictions and how he foresaw existing events, and then extrapolates current events into the future.

11.3.6 Entrepreneur

Analysis of Frederic’s narrative suggests that a significant identity asset for him is as an entrepreneur. This comes through from his vision as previously discussed, as well as his discourse around going contracting and then forming his own company, and the equity stakes he takes in his employers business. He talks of his attraction to working with high-tech start-ups, and appears to consider being asked to stay on and write his own job description as a sign of his uniqueness and ability to add value to the organisation.

11.3.7 People and Networks

Frederic refers to his networks for finding jobs, and places a heavy influence in his narrative on people. He often repeats that he has always sought to hire and work with the best people, with like-minded people, and those he can learn from. He suggests that he was shoulder-tapped and hired through his network, and that he shows concern for others and the relationships he has.

Table 11.1 Identity Assets in Frederic’s Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
The Artist (Appendix XXI.a)	Being Creative	I've learnt the left brain thing through necessity, through having to be structured and organised, but naturally I'm probably more a creative type person ... my natural infinity would be the people that are, kind of, more adaptable, more, you know, more creative types.
	Not-engineer	I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't necessarily fit the typical mould of an IT person. I'm not an engineer ... I've also got a diploma in art.
	Emotion	I'd never really established emotional bond with the company. Um, there were very competent people working there um, so I'm not taking anything away from the, but there was, I dunno, maybe a certain lack of personality.
Change and Adaptability (Appendix XXI.b)	Culture	There are certain words which I still you know, if I say "can't" you know people go "oh you must be, South African or" you know I think it's all, basically if you live somewhere you, it makes sense to integrate. So I felt I had to do a bit of a catch up.
	Technology	Some of the things we were doing for customers was fantastic, you know ... We ended up taking on all the e-commerce ... Basically there was some very exciting projects that we were involved ... [such as] the biggest Java system in the country.

	Business	So, after two failed attempts at having a third business partner in, we ended up buying them out and it was just myself and the silent partner. So I ended up, I was running [it] and I hadn't gone into business to be on my own and to be, you know, taking on that sort of responsibility.
Learning (Appendix XXI.c)	At Work	There was growth in the role ... Being given responsibility um, learning to manage larger teams of people er, learning to run my own P&L, learning some new accounting cycle, and that's really why I had gone to [this company] to learn why they had been so successful.
	About People	I quickly noted that performance was linked with emotional state. You know, so if you were really enjoying something you're passionate about it you'd quickly fit in and you do well.
Commercial Manager (Appendix XXI.d)	Business Fundamentals	The problem is you can have ... people that come across very professionally and can present very well, communicate really well, but can't add value to a business.
		The enquiries I made about the organisation [pause] kind of indicated that they had some challenges ...in terms of some of the business fundamentals. So um, that actually appealed, 'cause I thought, well it's a good opportunity to maybe bring what I'd learnt ...[and] make an impact.
	Performing the Role	There's a particular person which, who basically had no integrity um, they had had a pivotal role in the organisation and hadn't delivered. Over-promised. They hadn't represented their team properly, or well.
		The biggest issue I had with the person was they had no integrity ...It was just, yeah - "How stupid do you think I am?" ... I just um, squeezed him down to only billable hours, [before forcing him out].
Management-Speak	Look at some of the Geoffrey Moore principles, in terms "crossing the chasm", "inside the tornado". That range of what again gives you frame and form for technology adoption and, and what are the strategies you use around that.	
	It was a Jim Collins book ... One of the first principles is that you get the right people on the bus and you get the wrong people off the bus, and you also have your 'hedgehog concept'.	
Visionary (Appendix XXI.e)	Business	There's, there's too much hanging on the outcomes um, it's got phenomenal opportunity um, the issue is what's the exit strategy for the company and at what point does it make sense to be acquired.
		They never had any real definition of what they were, you know, the raison d'être wasn't there ... You know it was really glib, it was real um, it was real cliché
	Technology	I always kind of, in the back of my mind, wanted to set up a multimedia business here even before I knew what multimedia was. If I have got a personal mission it's about helping influence, how technology's used, you know, and the effect it has on people.
Entrepreneur (Appendix XXI.f)	Taking Opportunities	So I had to make a call as to whether to split off. So that's what I did, ended up getting a contract ... forming a company.
		We offered to subsidise it if they gave us some ownership. Paid us license fees, royalties um, so we sent up the vehicle to actually hold intellectual property and the ownerships and trademarks of the um, of the software and the tools.
People and Networks (Appendix XXI.g)	The Right People	I was looking for people to be lead managers and um, you need, again you need people to be really well rounded ... I would have spent, 12 to 18 months not finding the right people.
	Connected	I was getting calls from agencies about once every three to six months all the time I was [with my employer]
	Relationships	I'm not a micro manager, I'm not a control freak, so I need people to see where I'm coming from and take some initiative.
I was running [my company] and I hadn't gone into business to be on my own.		

11.4 A Summary of Frederic's Constructed Identity

Frederic appears to have adapted to his environment and to take a degree of pride and identification from his movement through his technical beginning developing code, to his entrepreneurial achievements which made him wealthy, into staid, beige, 'body-shop' consultancies which he learnt so much, and to his new self as a commercial manager. In adapting, he has learnt about business, about people, and now he can deliver and add value to the business and organisations which employ him. He presents this as a natural state for him to be at, in the centre of his world, his workplace, and his network of people.

In relating the analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 to the apparent construction Frederic's identity, it appears that the general lower level building blocks of identity include his education as an artist and his lack of formal education in multimedia. Others appear to include his past business ventures and consulting businesses. The identity assets which appear to be significant to Frederic in the construction and presentation of his identity are presented in Figure 11-1, over. These identity assets appear to be constructed as part of a career journey, in which the commercial manager is informed by and yet at odds with the entrepreneur, who in turn is also informed by and at odds with the artist.

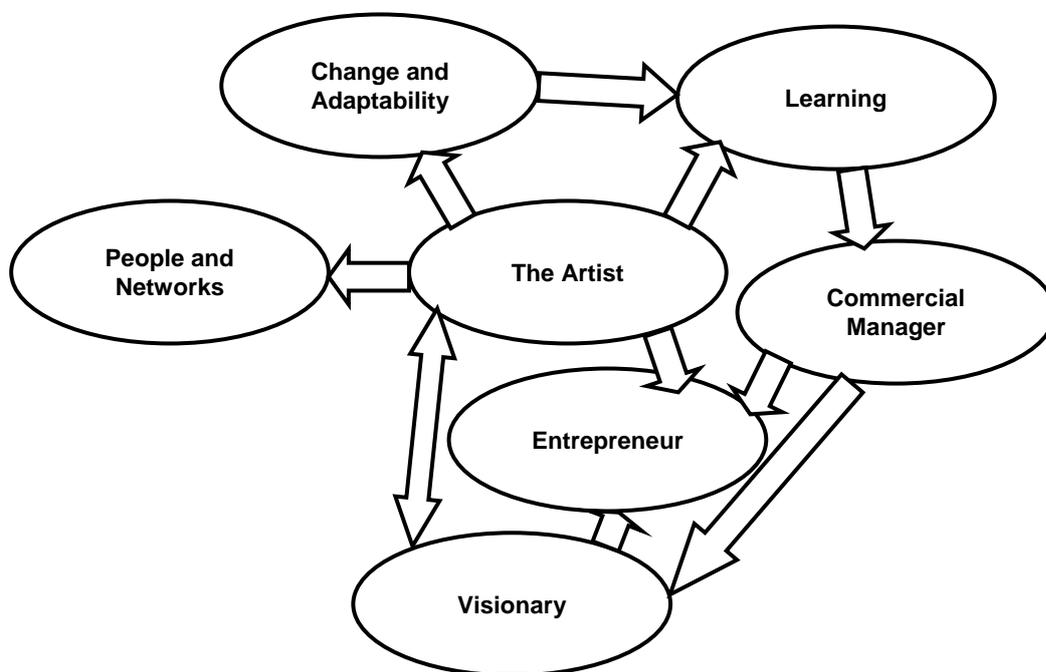


Figure 11-1 The Integration of Frederic's Identity Assets

Central to Frederic's identity is the asset of his artistry, which is an asset that informs his presented self as an entrepreneur. His self-as-artist also influences his learning, his views on

others and the networks he moves in and judges himself and others by, and the change and adaptability that he presents himself as being.

Frederic also presents two identity assets that could be considered end-states: his self and entrepreneur and his self as a visionary. While both of these have the asset of himself as being a commercial manager as an intermediary identity asset – and is what he is employed as – the primary presentation of Frederic as he appears to be wished to be seen is that of the artist, the entrepreneur, and the visionary.

The multiple selves that Collinson (2003) discussed is seen in Frederic's narrative, with workplace self being represented in his identity asset of being a commercial manager, and being the artist represents a civilised self. His crafted self is seen in the asset of his being a visionary, and his achieved self is represented in the identity asset of entrepreneur.

12.1 Introducing Harold

Harold is a married man in his mid-forties of British decent and New Zealand birth, who at the time of giving his narrative occupies his time with mentoring and taking executive roles in technology firms in which he has taken an ownership stake. Harold met his wife through his work when she reported to him as his Business Analyst, and has taken significant portions of time out from his career to care for her and nurse her through a serious illness. No mention was made of any interests other than his work, his wife, and functional exercise.

Harold attended a large public school many consider prestigious in a large New Zealand city, before commencing university studies in business, majoring in management. He never finished his undergraduate degree, pulling out in the first year after an injury and taking a management cadetship with a manufacturing company. In this organisation he was tasked with integrating the business needs with the abilities and shortcomings of the mini-computer that was unveiled, before he ended up taking over the management of the mini-computer. This experience appears as an integrator of business needs with technical requirements and capabilities appears as a foundation for much of his narrative.

Harold eventually left this manufacturing company to work for the vendor of the technology he was integrating with after it became a reference site for the vendor. He helped to set up an overseas office for the vendor in North America, before moving to Europe to establish distribution channels for the company. After a subsequent sojourn in North America, Harold returned to New Zealand and spent several years in senior IT management roles in several telecommunications and computing companies. During this time, he was heavily involved in establishing business that were and are significant in the IT and telecommunications space, before moving into the investment and mentoring space he now inhabits.

Harold was referred to the listener as a successful and high-achieving individual in IT because of his experiences in venture capital, building businesses and their business plans, and in launching IT and telecommunications companies. His narrative is the third of the four IT professionals who have moved from the technical realm into the entrepreneurial and commercial space.

12.2 Harold's Narrative

Harold's narrative was given in a very open space, being his glass-walled minimalist office in a refurbished factory-cum-loft-cum-warehouse that housed one of his technology companies, in which he has an executive position and an ownership stake. He sat behind his expansive desk, with the listener on the other side in a much smaller chair. From this office, one could see all those employed in the company, and in turn be seen by them.

Harold's narrative was one laced with names of people, places, and positions. Given names alone were used when mentioning well-known people, company names were bandied about, and deals freely discussed. Harold was the only participant to refer explicitly to his career using that word, and a parallel could be drawn between large parts of his narrative and an expanded résumé. His narrative is laden with a focus on deliverables and strategy, and metric of success built on ambition runs through what he had to say. A disdain for uninformed decisions is also apparent in his narrative, and this disdain has been instrumental in several of his decisions to move on to other business opportunities.

Like many of the participants in this research, Harold structures a large part of his narrative using a 'career as a journey' (Nicholson & West, 1989) metaphor. While this partly reflects the opening questions posted by the listener, it was also apparent that Harold sees his career as a sequence of short term projects involving 'starting a company up', 'turning a business around', 'an opportunity to learn', and variants of 'moving on'. His narrative follows a defined sequence of being mentored, striking out on his own and the drama that entails, finding his entrepreneurial calling, and now mentoring others. He presents his "mentor" as both being his reason for being there in terms of his abilities, training, and experience, as well as his motivation, before detailing his current experiences in corporate work which he presents as being entrepreneurial. Towards the end of the elicitation, and in response to questions such as those about 'normal days', Harold reflects on his relationship and presents his nurturing his wife during an illness, as well as reflecting on his rural upbringing

An interesting feature of his narrative is the way it commences with the mentoring that began his career and ends with his self-perceived role as mentor for the companies that he operates in. The first part of his narrative is a reflective positioning that appears to incorporate what May (2004) calls a "foundation myth of the self". Harold's foundation myth has his initial employer being a person who "treated us like sons" before calling on him to solve the problems of integrating the needs of the business with the mini-computer that had been purchased, as both technologists and business people alone had failed to do. Harold suggests

to the listener that he was ideally positioned to solve the problem of integrating technology and business of his mentor, when he sets the scene for the story:

[My employer was] a real er, innovator and one of the first, installed one of the first mini-computer systems to be brought into this country er, and had a, and had a vision of being able to accurately cost, quote and manage the actual costs of manufacturing, production, in then what was a fairly complex job shop, process orientated job-shop environment. So um, um, so [he] had this very early boom in terms of using computers to drive the business and reduce cost um, er, but initially they really struggled to actually make computer systems to do anything that they were supposed to deliver. Er, this was the days when computer systems were run by people in white coats. Er, er, I think after the first couple of them had been er, moved on Bill, in frustration, turned to me and said, “you know my business see if you can make the computer systems work.”

The above extracts serve to presents to the listener Harold’s self-constructed abilities too move beyond the limitations of discipline, firstly with his cadetship teaching him more than his university, and secondly with his ability to cross the technical-business divide in solving the problems with his first employer’s computer system being run by men in white coats. The listener is left in no doubt as to the significance of this in Harold’s eyes, as he immediately then goes on to say:

Aw, I mean, we’re talking an investment of millions of dollars of, of, investments in millions of dollars at this point in time, so um, giving up was not really an option, a change of approach was clearly, was clearly the right thing ... I had a pretty good, you know, a pretty good understanding of how he worked in his business so, and I set about, you know, marrying the two together. I mean the biggest problem back in those days and potentially today with computers, is they don’t reflect the way the real world thinks and works so um, getting people engaged was a case of um, asking what sort of information would most help them do their job, and working backwards from there. Er, so, I guess I’m from a bottom-up computer implementation rather than a top down methodology. Um, so I got um, immersed in that, loved it.

Harold has been acting out his self in telling this foundation myth in the opening stanza of his narrative. He places himself as a person who gets across technology and business as he talks of the integration between the business and the technology in his foundation myth where his mentor.

The preferred self that Harold projects is framed in terms of the contributions that he can make to the businesses that he is involved in, interlaced with his experiences to date which he presents to justify that claim. He manages his performance of his self and ensures that he is placed correctly in his physical environment with which to do this such as where he chose to give his narrative, as well as his connectedness to others in his networks. While he claims he “loved” working in computers and in software, and the excitement that it brought him, he is at

pains to observe that he is “not a geek”, and it as a mentor and successful entrepreneur that appears to be the way he prefers to be seen.

An example of this that can be seen in the extended extract shown in Appendix XIV is Harold’s suggestion that thought he was employed by large corporate entities on several occasions, his true self is that of the entrepreneur that he self-identifies with. At several points in Harold’s narrative, he differentiates himself in some manner from the technology and technologists in general. It is as if he has moved on, past, or away from the technology and no longer identifies with it as other participants have done, and this is noted throughout the following assets where it occurs. Harold’s presentation of a self extended to ascertaining the listener’s interpretation of what he said, presumably an effort to ensure that the listener received the ‘right’ interpretation that Harold wished.

Harold presents as a well-dressed and urbane sophisticate living the inner-city life of the technology entrepreneur, which is what he is. His success is obvious from his appearance and clothing, language, his presented history, and the circles he says he moves in, and in expressing these he performs the role of technology entrepreneur. He chose a trendy café in a trendy part of town for the initial meeting, and made appoint of noting that it was his constitutional circuit.

While he appears the consummate professional in his dress and his language, he appeared upright, and not comfortable in giving aspects of his narrative itself that fell outside what appeared to be rehearsed stories. Harold appeared keen to present himself as able, needed, and connected, and these assets come through in his narrative. He spoke for long and sustained periods, and often without interjection or any feedback from the listener. Harold’s demeanour is friendly and professional, yet with a level of guarded reticence. His narrative appeared to the listener to have been rehearsed and was not spontaneous in its giving, as he spoke in a considered and reserved manner as he projected the self that he sought to influence the listener with. In projecting this urbane and sophisticated connected self, it was with an air of presumption that the listener was assumed to know who was being referred to from the context of what was said. Examples of this occurred in the extended in Appendix XIV.

In giving his narrative, Harold emphasises to the listener that his incomplete education was not of major significance and certainly of no disadvantage. He is keen to demonstrate a sound grounding in theoretical matters that he has built on with what he presents as being more important: his practical ‘apprenticeship’ under his mentor discussed previously in which he presents in a coherent piece of discourse. Harold’s narrative serves to present himself as a

person who has moved beyond what he appears to suggest is the lack of relevance of a tertiary education in business. Instead he instead uses the language of construction to describe “building” his career. In the extended extract in Appendix XIV, Harold not only presents to the listener the desired self of mentor, but he returns to reinforcing to the listener what his contributions are and his abilities, by explicitly stating that limitations that he places on his activities.

12.3 Identity Assets in Harold’s Narrative

The identity assets that appear in Harold’s narrative and seem important to him in constructing his self are founded on his pioneering experience (including his foundation myth), and the business skills he has acquired. As part of these skills, Harold has become connected and will use first-names as a means of conveying this. He strongly believes he is an entrepreneur, who is in demand because he believes he is right, successful and ambitious, and that he has much to contribute back as his original mentor did for him. The identity assets that were identified in Harold’s narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 12.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XXII.

12.3.1 Pioneering Experience

The identity asset of Harold’s pioneering experience emerged periodically throughout his narrative, and often in the context of other assets such as his success (Section 12.3.7). It was seen in his foundation myth as he talked of the real-world experience he gained in the early integration of his mentor’s business with computing, how his pioneer experiences in technology and business are a fundamental part of who he is, and his overseas business experience such as his involvement in the dot-com boom.

12.3.2 Business Skills

Harold emphasises his business skills to the listener at regular intervals in his narrative, and specifically refers to his skills in building teams of people, his strategic views, and his business development roles. The importance that he places on his skills suggest that this is an important identity asset for him, and is seen as he talks of what he has to offer, the successes that he has had in overcoming poor decisions, and his belief around his strategic contributions.

12.3.3 Being Right

The identity asset of Harold's being right emerges from Harold's narrative as he suggests on several occasions that he knew something all along, and is usually right. Aspects of this asset emerge in his narrative when he talks about business opportunities he has identified, and business plans he was expected to implement.

12.3.4 My Connections

Harold's status as 'connected' is evident in listening to him and hearing the names of the people that he knows and 'drops' into his narrative. This implied connection with 'movers and shakers', places and technologies forms a distinctive identity asset for Harold

12.3.5 Entrepreneur

Harold-the-entrepreneur emerges from his narrative in the way he relates having been presented with opportunities and having taken them up as they have entered his life. Taking advantage of these opportunities that appear is a constant aspect in his description of professional life, and forms important an identity asset evident in his narrative. The first opportunity he describes is getting his initial job as a cadet with the employer that he lionised in his foundation myth. In addition, Harold uses the language of the entrepreneur in the stories he tells. For example, the refrain of 'taking product off shore' and 'facilitating business' comes through regularly, and he refers to himself as an entrepreneur by association with some of his actions.

12.3.6 Being in Demand

In the various places in his narrative where he discusses being wanted and how people need him, Harold appears to be utilising an identity asset of being in demand. The early experiences he tells of with his first employer and the subsequent approach by the company's vendor are presented by him as examples of being in demand. His presentation of being approached for new business opportunities can be interpreted in a similar way. Harold also suggests to the listener that he is in demand both as a manager and as an advisor or mentor, and perhaps even as an asset that is bought with the company.

12.3.7 Successful

The demand is which Harold presents himself is also enmeshed with aspects of other assets that have emerged from his narrative, particularly the identity asset of his success. Harold's success is a significant asset in his narrative, and permeates much of what he talks about. He

often frames himself in light of his success and appears to identify closely with his successes. While success is a common asset that could be expected to be found in the narrative of many high-achievers, in Harold's case, success is closely bound up with who he is. He acts out his success for the listener as he discusses his successful investment portfolio, the roles he has held such as CEO, his achievements in raising capital, and turning around of poorly performing companies. His reactions to the occasions when he is not being successful also reinforce success as an identity asset for him.

Table 12.1 Identity Assets in Harold's Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
Pioneering Experience (Appendix XXII.a)	Formative	I mean the cadet programme gave me great exposure to some um, some brilliant managers and mentors, um, and frankly the um, the level of excitement and enthusiasm and passion I had for the, you know, the hands on nature of the training I was getting.
		When you've had the experiences and development skills that I have
	Business	In those days the, the venture capital industry in the US was in a relatively early stage as well um, so I was part of um, that whole process.
		I spend a lot of time in the US understanding the internet era ... I can remember at the time it was so crazy.
Business Skills (Appendix XXII.b)	Strategy	I think the core skill I have to offer is, is, is, is around um, strategy um, and the way in which strategy creates value um, for companies.
	Perseverance	When you're building businesses you get a lot of "No's", you get a lot more "No's" than "Yes's" so, you know, you have to learn that um, to handle that rejection.
Being Right (Appendix XXII.c)	Retrospectively	I mean that strategically I saw a huge overlap between the adoption rate of [one technology] and the adoption rate of ... the internet.
		The technology just wasn't up to, to, to, to the marketing. Um, we were forced to launch um, on the date that we did ... [The company] probably never really recovered from um, the screwed-up business plan that they had.
My Connections (Appendix XXII.d)	People	One of New Zealand's leading manufacturing entrepreneurs in exports ... treated a couple of us who were in that programme pretty much like sons.
		Probably the best boss I ever worked with, a guy called [named him], one of the smartest guys I've, I've ever come across.
	Work	[I] have operations in different parts of the world, means you are working across time zones.
		The executive role I have ... that's an international team I'm dealing with.
Entrepreneur (Appendix XXII.e)	Opportunities	I'm always looking for, for um, business ideas and business opportunities that you can create value around.
		The potential for the computer industry um, so it was an opportunity to be in, you know, the forefront of, you know, the development of a, of, you know, what at that stage was a very basic industry.
	Self-Labeling	You know, life of an entrepreneur.
		I ended up working as an entrepreneur in residence for them.
Being in Demand (Appendix XXII.f)	Head-Hunted	[I] was approached by another organisation] to become involved in um, in a start up.
		A couple of times I'd been offered roles ... so on the third occasion I, I accepted their, their offer.
	As a Mentor	I got involved in, as, as a mentor and advising to these, these [technologists] and over the last four years we've built, you know, a company.
	As an Asset	We ended up selling the company ... [and] as part of that sale process I ended up er, living in Toronto for the next two years under contract.

Successful (Appendix XXII.g)	Function	The company was losing a lot of money, we restructured the company, got it back to profitability.
		We were very very successful and, you know, over the first 12 months in, in getting a number of [product] manufacturers on board um, and using our technology
	Position	I wasn't the first CEO in New Zealand I was the second CEO
	By Myself	Everything I've actually focused on, done, are either, they are opportunities I've created myself or I've been shoulder tapped for ... I've certainly applied for jobs I haven't got and, you know, when I think back and er, in hindsight, I probably never really wanted them anyway.

12.4 A Summary of Harold's Constructed Identity

Harold presents himself as an integrator of business and technology, as a man able to stand astride these normally divergent and yet mutually dependant spheres of business and bring them together in order to provide a solution for the business. While he claims that he “loved” working in computers and in software, and the excitements that it brought him, he is at pains to observe that he is “not a geek” and that it was the solutions and not the technology itself that excited him.

In relating the analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 to the apparent construction of Harold's identity, it appears that the general lower level building blocks of identity include his foundation myth where he was tasked with integrating his employer's business and technology, and the mentoring that he received and now claims to do. Further to these are the roles that he has undertaken and the responsibilities that have gone along with him being “entrepreneur in residence”, the CEO, or the marketing manager.

With regards to the second level of the analytical model, and the identity assets that are built on the lower level building blocks, the interrelated nature of the identity assets that Harold presented during giving his narrative to the listener are presented visually in Figure 12-1, below. A significant identity asset is his pioneering experience in integrating technology and business, and his business skills. From these he has acquired connections and he refers to himself as an entrepreneur both by using that word and by describing his actions and endeavours. Because of these, he suggests that he is in demand and successful, and these are both significant parts of his construction of his self in the new IT industry economy.

The identity asset of business skills that Harold presented represents what Collinson (2003) calls a workplace self, while his discussions of his wife and her illness suggest that he has a civilised self. An achieved self is seen in the way he presents his entrepreneurial self, and the identity asset of his success is a crafted self.

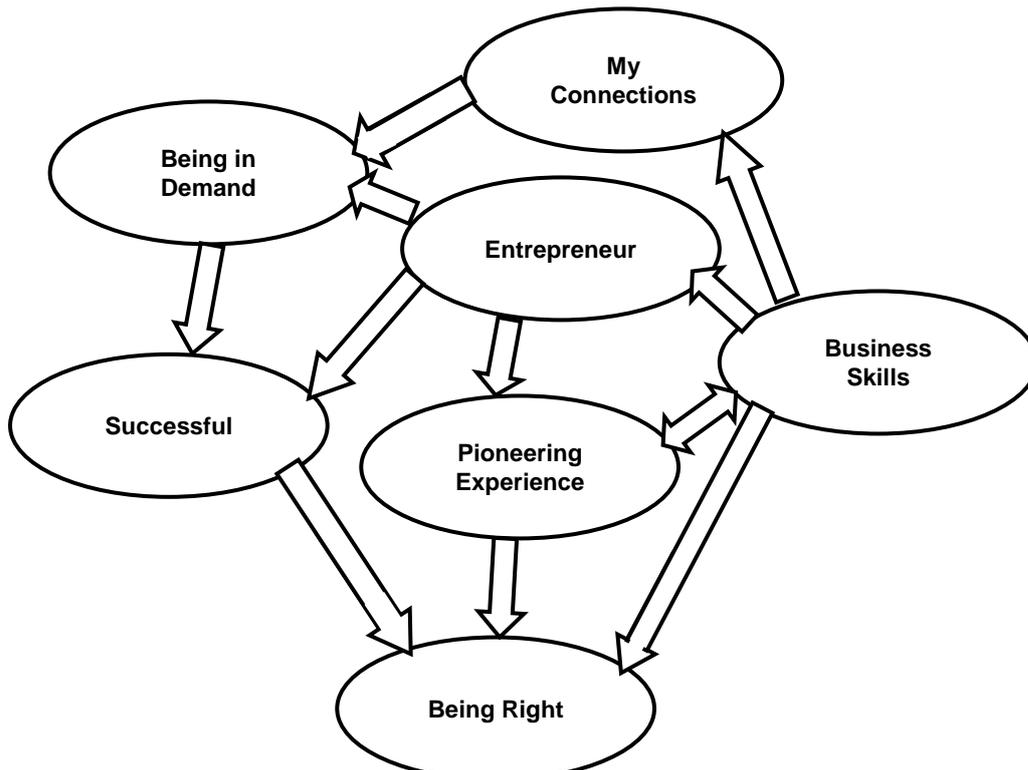


Figure 12-1 The Integration of Harold's Identity Assets

Central to Harold's constructed identity appeared to be the identity asset of him as an entrepreneur. This asset informs his belief that he is in demand and successful, and is used to inform the asset of his pioneering experience. Because of his experience, he believes that he is right and that his business skills stem from that experience (while also reinforcing his belief that he is right). These business skills also complete a circular loop of reinforcement back to his entrepreneurial status, as well as enabling his connections which in turn influence his being in demand. Harold talks a lot of 'giving back' as his mentor gave to him, but this did not appear to be a specific identity asset in his narrative. Rather, it appeared to be a narrative technique by which he justified and made acceptable his desire to get into emerging businesses.

13.1 Introducing Ian

Ian is a New Zealander of British heritage and was approximately sixty years of age when he gave his narrative. He is married and has several children ranging from late teens to early twenties. At the time of giving his narrative, Ian was self-employed as a business and technology consultant for IT start-ups, occasionally sourcing or providing equity, as well as mentoring and providing business and technology advice. No mention was made of any interests outside of his work other than his family and a conscious decision to live in New Zealand while his children grow up.

Ian started tertiary study towards an accountancy degree, but abandoned it one paper short and has subsequently completed an MBA. He started his working life in the technical side of data processing developing accounting software, often travelling for his work overseas. In his late twenties he returned to New Zealand to start up a software company that developed bespoke business systems and turn-key software solutions for a large international computing company. In the late seventies, Ian's company acquired the nationwide distribution rights for a large multinational software vendor along with the distribution rights of several other companies. He then grew the company further before selling it off to a large corporate. Ian then left and headed up the sales and marketing division of another large computer services company which took him outside New Zealand for much of his time until the repercussions of the stock market crash in 1987 meant that the business was brought by a large corporate with more financial resources.

Ian then moved through various senior executive roles in sales and marketing before spending the last few years dealing in buying and selling IT-based operational businesses. He has now moved more into becoming involved in IT start-ups, either as a consultant, a sourcer of equity, or by taking equity stakes in the company himself, providing the start-ups with mentoring as well as business and technology advice. It is for these reasons rather than his early technical work he was suggested to the listener as a high-achieving IT professional. His narrative is the last of four IT professionals who have moved from the technical realm into the entrepreneurial and commercial space.

13.2 Ian's Narrative

Obtaining Ian's narrative was an experience that was continually postponed as he claimed he was constantly called away to meetings. Ian would always willingly reschedule, and eventually a space was found free in his diary at the last minute. Ian was the only participant in this research to actively manage the time allocated to the narrative solicitation, assigning and restricting himself to the one hour he had allotted between other meetings. He was also the only participant to wear a suit. Like all other participants, he chose to give his narrative at his place of work, a serviced office in a large building in the CBD. The building formerly housed a large player in the IT industry that Ian had previously been employed by, and he mentioned the name of this business as he guided the listener to his offices, which included the ex-boardroom. It was in this room which looked out over the city from a privileged position that Ian chose for the location of the interview. The offices, boardroom and his narrative, which felt like a polished business interview only broken by a few bouts of humour, reinforced the impression of Ian as a businessman and consultant. His performance was that of a man who believes he has much to contribute and if that was not recognised then he would take his contribution elsewhere.

Ian's narrative was constructed as a sequence of entrepreneurial stories, and indeed his self-as-entrepreneur is an identity asset that can be identified in his narrative as shown later. He talked often of starting up or developing a business, and then moving on – yet another identity asset in his narrative – to the next challenge. His narrative construction as a series of entrepreneurial actions and endeavours took on the 'career as a journey' (Nicholson & West, 1989) refrain. Ian initially described his education, before launching into a long chronologically-based monologue of his professional history, in which he emphasised his foresight and value delivery, interspersed with the successes in his professional life. As his narrative came to a close, it was more focussed on actively presenting his identity, and relied heavily on asserting his hindsight. The final part of his narrative was more reflective, focusing on his current role, in response to prompting questions from the listener.

Ian presented to the listener as a polished professional, and his dress, carriage and demeanour were akin to an applicant for a job or a consultant involved in a sales pitch. He gave the impression of being always keen to 'network' and promote his experience and abilities, indicative of his claim that his contacts, reputation, and word-of-mouth are what generates new business for him. His front-stage narrative was clean and crisp, and he was keen to show his understanding of any covered in area the preliminary conversations.

Several things which are innocuous by themselves combine to form an extra-narrative artefact in Ian's narrative. These are the previously mentioned office in which the narrative was given and its location, the suit that he was wearing, and the way he managed the solicitation. The offices that Ian works from and at which he desired to give his narrative were currently a series of serviced offices in a CBD building undergoing refurbishment. Ian worked out of an office on one of the upper floors, and gave his narrative in a room that used to be the boardroom of the company who previously occupied that building, complete with the boardroom table, the view out over the city, and the associated accoutrements. The company that used to occupy that building had previously employed Ian for a reasonable part of his professional life and in a senior role, and it was by the company's name that Ian referred to the building. In listening to Ian's narrative, the listener was struck by how Ian fitted seamlessly into this boardroom and how at ease he appeared in his old habitat. While the previous tenant had moved on, Ian had stayed behind, still doing deals and seeking to lend his expertise to those who needed it. He managed the giving of his narrative as he continually rescheduled and postponed the elicitation several times before 'finding' an hour with which to talk. Ian was not pursued for his narrative with only the initial email seeking to obtain it: all other communication was at his initiation. In presenting himself thus, Ian projected the aura of the professional businessman not afraid to speak of significant monies made and lost, and the names of the people of the people he had worked for and with. In wearing an expensive suit, sitting in his (old) boardroom, and discussing money and people, Ian projected the image of the consummate professional 'suit'.

Ian's narrative began as if Ian was doing the listener a favour, by granting managing to find an hour to spend with the listener. However, he managed to present the impression that he was keen to assist, in doing so assert his importance and contribution, as if it was a self-promotional or networking and advertising exercise. The perception of the value of his time and contribution was reinforced towards the end of his narrative, when Ian said:

The opportunity-cost of spending time on something you can't actually influence is not investment of your time. 'Cause I make money out of, out of using my time effectively in a variety of ways, so the moment I start to use my time ineffectively then it becomes quite expensive.

Ian's presentation of his identity appears founded in his successes and contributions to the companies he has been involved in. His monetary success is related to his use of his own intrinsic resource, namely his time. By extension, he suggests that 'finding' the hour to talk to the listener has been a cost to him.

The extended extract in Appendix XV presents a long and uninterrupted part of Ian's narrative, that reveals many of the identity assets identified in the analysis of his narrative. These include his self-entrepreneur, the active role he gives himself in his narrative, his pioneering role in the IT industry, his foresight and judgements, as well as his construction of success as part of himself. As he talks, he mentions an IT company he owned and sold out of, before buying it back again at a significantly reduced price. In presenting the successes he has had, and in overcoming the setbacks he has experienced, Ian manages the listener's interpretations of his success and contribution in a way that makes them all appear linked and natural, such as above when he talked of the "unhappy transaction". Ian is actively managing the presentation of his identity in this extract, presenting the failure to list and the 'unhappy' nature of the transaction as a natural precursor to being needed in another setting. He goes so far in this extract as to take stock of these events and ensure they are presented as he wants them to be in the chronology of things, placing them in their correct place as he sees it to be.

The contribution that Ian seeks to present to the listener is presented in such a way as to indicate that others cannot match or equate what he can do. Ian presents this in a very clear manner when he details his contribution in building businesses and targeting corporates, in the extract above. Here Ian is not content to simply mention his contribution and hinge his identity on it, but goes further in noting that others failed to maintain what he had built. Their failure to maintain and grow the business, or integrate it into their own, opened the way for 'Ian-the-tech-savvy-businessman' to re-enter the business and recapture it for much less than he sold it for. This is presented to the listener as a win for Ian and as a reinforcement using the hard currency gained as a metric or validation of his contribution.

Ian presents his financial compensation in various matters²⁴ as a means of acknowledging his contribution to the organisations to which he belongs or works with. He believes he holds certain knowledge or abilities, as can be seen when he draws the parallel to large legal consultancies in one part of his narrative. By his clients accepting the terms and conditions of engaging with him, and paying him, they reinforce to him that part of his identity built upon his contributions.

Ian's presentation of his identity is also reinforced to the listener when he relays his self-perceived self seen in the eyes of others, saying:

I think people would see me as being um, very straight very ethical um, pretty direct um, I do, generally people would um, rate my deliverables pretty highly um, I think

²⁴ Ian has mentioned elsewhere in his narrative that he may be compensated by professional services fees, taking of an equity stake or shares, or by taking a seat on the board.

they see me as pretty dependable um, I [have] a work ethic in which you work hard to um, ensure um, or to make sure people think well of you because it is a small market in New Zealand and you, you only need to do a few dud deals and screw people up um, but inevitably, you know, if you, you don't always get it right. You know, you get a few people out there who would um, say, you know, I hadn't always got it right. But I think generally there would be a lot more out there that would say they were very comfortable in coming back and doing something.

In this extract, Ian suggests by the second line that his contribution is important in the eyes of others, and his consciousness of his presentation to others is apparent when he discusses the perception of his reputation. Ian raises the spectre of dissenters and those who would critique him, but does so as a means of reinforcing what he sees as a majority view who, in continuing to send him work serve to reinforce his contributions and his self perceptions of his presented identity.

13.3 Identity Assets in Ian's Narrative

The first identity asset to emerge in Ian's narrative is that of his experience in both the early stages of the IT industry and the establishment of businesses operating in the IT sphere. His experience appears to be symbiotic with his reflective presentation of his pioneering foresight, and these two assets contribute to the other identity asset, being an entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur, Ian suggests he has delivered value to those he engages with, and has been successful in his ventures. Whether he has been successful or not, an identity asset based around his regular and oft-repeated moving on to new challenges is consistent in his narrative, as well as the hindsight that this experience brings. The identity assets that were identified in Ian's narrative are briefly summarised below and in Table 13.1 and are explored and presented in depth in Appendix XXIII.

13.3.1 Experience

Ian's involvement with IT since the formative stages of the industry constitutes an important identity asset in his narrative performance of identity. His experience as an identity asset is not restricted to that of a technologist, but expands into his self-presented role as an investor in new and emerging technologies. Ian presents his experience as he philosophises about wins and losses, his comfortableness in talking about business, and in noting the deficiencies in others relative to himself. His desire to mentor start-up companies and the judgements he makes of others appear to be founded on his experience.

13.3.2 Pioneering Foresight

Ian's pioneering foresight is an identity asset that appears to stem from his experience, and is presented in situations such as his claiming to have predicted the transitions from mainframe computing to PC computing, his involvement with early technology companies, and his early work in establishing a technology business. He discusses the latter in the extended extract presented in Appendix XV, and uses that account to emphasise his foresight in seeing the possibilities of the internet for telecommunications companies. Other examples include his predictions that a small technology company at the beginning of the computing industry would grow into an international player (and how nobody would listen to him), and how other people focus on the small issues and not the big picture. He also notes that other people have unrealistic expectations of the future and that his expectation and predictions have some validity.

13.3.3 Entrepreneur

A key aspect of Ian's performed self is that way that he presents himself as an entrepreneur in his narrative. To do so, he describes entrepreneurial action, uses language related to entrepreneurship, and tells stories that show him in the role of entrepreneur. These may involve his capitalising on opportunities that present themselves, and which others may or may not.

13.3.4 Delivering his Value

Analysis of Ian's narrative suggests that having something of value to offer, others recognising that a value, and his delivering that value, are aspects of an important asset in his identity capital. The rewards he receives for delivering his value means each time he is paid this identity asset is reinforced. This asset appears in his narrative in the way that he claims all his work comes through his network and how he adds value to the organisations he is involved with. His being rewarded is mentioned repeatedly by Ian, as is his belief about what happens when others do not agree with him about the value that he adds.

13.3.5 Success

Ian has had success in delivering the value discussed above, but success has also appears in his narrative as a separate identity asset in its own right. In particular, he presents his success as being a result of his diligence, and suggests that his previous successes work to recommend him for more work.

13.3.6 Moving on

Ian’s narrative includes numerous references, both implicit and explicit, to ‘moving on’. This concept is a characteristic feature of his discourse and serves as a metaphor for his career journey, encompassing the setbacks he has experienced and has overcome as well as his successful and failed entrepreneurial activities. Literal references to “moved on” or “move on” appear at least ten times in Ian’s narrative, and are used to punctuate changes of circumstances or the cutting of losses.

13.3.7 Hindsight and Rationalising

The reflective identity asset of Ian’s hindsight and the pragmatism that Ian expresses in many of his comments is seen in the rationalising that he does in parts of his narrative. He does this as he reconstructs and represents the past to present a more desirable presentation of his self. As others have made mistakes it is only natural that he might have too. These mistakes and shortcomings are then put in the context of other things, like the national economy.

Table 13.1 Identity Assets in Ian’s Narrative

Asset	Dimensions	Sample Quote(s)
Experience (Appendix XXIII.a)	Learning	I’ve had some ups and I’ve had some downs but the thing I’ve learnt is that you learn from that experience.
	Generalist	I had some IT knowledge, I had some commercial skills, certainly quite a bit of experience in operating the ICT game offshore. So brought all of that together.
	Means Value	I’m adding some value because of the experience and knowledge or skill that I can bring.
		I’ve got relevant experience but I don’t provide my services for nothing and, and don’t see why I should.
Lacking in Others	You could almost guarantee [there] will be [a] very naïve of view of how they would take it to market. They probably under capitalise and the experience needed would probably be found wanting.	
Pioneering Foresight (Appendix XXIII.b)	Business Opportunities	I picked up the New Zealand rights for his product line and brought that down here and launched [it] and, you might say, well, you know, it was a really insightful thing to do.
		[I] looked at a few initiatives and decided that they needed to get into what’s now called the ISP business ... It was by no means intuitively obvious in those days that you build an ISP around internet.
	Business Needs	The fact is um, he needs a [lot of money] and he ... will only want to give away about 10 or 15% of the company, whereas he’s probably gotta give away um, 20 to 30%.
In Mentoring	So you get the opportunity to see lots of very innovative ideas, how the business is at an early stage ... You get the odd win, but there’s a very significant number of things you see where ... they’re simply not going to make it.	
Entrepreneur (Appendix XXIII.c)	In Language	I saw an opportunity.
		[It] was my own initiative
		[They] gave the agency away to another entrepreneur.
	In Action	So that gave me my first early taste of taking Kiwi software off shore.
So I grabbed the opportunity and developed accounting software [to sell with these].		

Delivering his Value (Appendix XXIII.d)	Is Natural	I think because of my natural inclinations I actually enjoy days where I'm dealing with people and I'm dealing with um, deals and transactions and I'm adding some value because of the experience and knowledge or skill that I can bring.
	Is Recognised	I get nearly all my work on my network. My next meeting is with a law firm a big one that's called me out ... I get two or three calls like that every week.
	Is Worth Rewarding	I wouldn't expect to walk into ... someone like that and er, suck a whole lot of IP out of them and not pay. So they, they just need to be reminded about that themselves. I'm pretty up front about the need to get commercially rewarded um, ... I don't provide my services for nothing and, and don't see why I should.
Success (Appendix XXIII.e)	Stories	They paid plenty for it, screwed up the integration of that business with other businesses which they had acquired at the time, so eight months later we bought it back from them [cough] for about half what they'd paid us.
		We got there and we set [it] up and um, I think time has demonstrated that it was a very successful business.
Moving On (Appendix XXIII.f)	Pragmatism	I'd rather pull the plug and move on rather than just persist with something that's going to be um, inevitably unsuccessful.
		Those are always very tough decisions to make, but the sooner you make them the better and move on.
		I think it's just one of the things that you have to do, just, again you have to keep moving because you can.
	From Failure	And er, if you do make a few mistakes, you learn from them, you recalibrate what you're doing and you move on.
		You've just got to keep going, you've got to be able to pick yourself up.
Hindsight and Rationalising (Appendix XXIII.g)	Past Actions	Given what's happened in the New Zealand economy, I am sure I would make more money out of property.
		I think if you, if you don't make some mistakes it demonstrates that you're probably not trying hard enough.
	Current Situation	I could have made a lot of money if I'd moved offshore, but I've chosen to live in New Zealand and I like living here.

13.4 A Summary of Ian's Constructed Identity

Ian's identity in his narrative appears to be constructed as a sequence of entrepreneurial stories, actions and endeavours that conform to Nicholson & West's (1989) idea of 'career as a journey'. He talked of starting up or developing businesses and of moving on, as well as giving a long chronologically based monologue of his professional history, before becoming reflective about his current role, in response to prompting questions from the listener.

The identity assets that emerged from Ian's narrative are that of his experience in both the early stages of the IT industry and the establishment of businesses operating in the IT sphere. From his experience the related reflective presentation of his pioneering foresight emerges, and these two assets contribute to another asset of him as an entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur, Ian suggests he has delivered value to those he engages with, and has been successful in his ventures. Whether he has been successful or not, the identity asset of his

regular and oft-repeated moving on to new challenges is consistent in his narrative, as well as the hindsight that this experience brings.

In relating the analytical model presented in Figure 3-1 to the apparent construction Ian's identity, it appears that the general lower level building blocks of identity include his executive roles in various business and ventures: both successful and not. Another role that appears to be a building block of his identity is that of his being mentored. The inter-related nature of the assets that emerged in the narrative Ian gave are shown in Figure 13-1, over.

Ian's preferred self as an entrepreneur contributes to the identity assets of his success and his delivering value, and these two inform each other. His entrepreneurial self also informs, and is informed by, the asset of moving on which in turn is informed by his pioneering foresight. This foresight completes a loop back to the asset of his experience, which is informed by his hindsight and rationalising of past events.

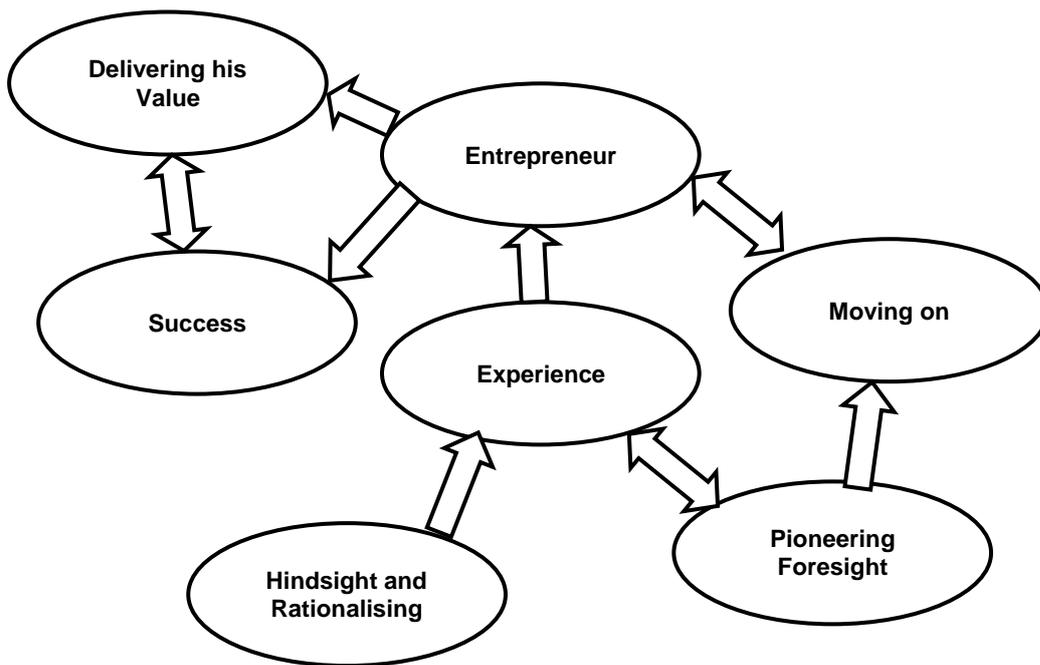


Figure 13-1 The Integration of Ian's Identity Assets

His presentation of his identity in the new economy is seen in his choice of work place and his choice of a suit as attire in what is often considered an informal work attire industry, and this represents what Collinson (2003) referred to as a civilised self for Ian. His use of identity assets such as entrepreneur and pioneer were workplace selves, and Ian's moving on and

experience are crafted selves that are consistent with work in the unstructured new economy. The wealth that Ian talks of having made and lost and made again is an achieved self.

Section C

Discussion

This section concludes the thesis by drawing together and discussing the themes and contributions of the research. The focus is on looking across the nine participants' narratives. The first chapter in this section explores how the participants' identities were constructed in their narrative accounts, the commonalities emerging across the participants' narratives, and the potential for the emergence of a high-achieving IT professional archetype, and an explication of the model of identity construction developed in the study, including the identity capital built and the identity work performed. Also discussed is identity in the new economy, the inherently dynamic nature of the participants' changing identity, and some implications of identity construction in high-achieving IT professionals. The second and final chapter in this section concludes the investigation, addressing and asserting the contribution to theory, method, and practice. Limitations of this research and the possibilities for further research are also discussed.

Chapter 14 THE CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY OF HIGH-ACHIEVING IT-PROFESSIONALS

14.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together and discusses the main themes and contributions of this study. These can be organised into three parts. First is a discussion of how the high-achieving IT professionals who participated in this research constructed their identity in giving their narrative (Section 14.2). Second, an analysis across all the participants revealed a range of common elements in their narrative identity construction. These commonalities give rise to the potential for the emergence of an archetype for the high-achieving IT professional (Section 14.3). Third, the deployment of individual identity capital assets by the participants in the identity work contained in their narratives, along with their presentations of self are discussed (Section 14.4). The participant's identity construction in the new economy, the changing faces of the participants' identities, and the implications of their identity construction are also discussed.

14.2 Narrative Identity Construction

In constructing their identity, it appeared that the participants focused on their achievements and their successes, the overcoming of obstacles, and they did not dwell on their failures or shortcomings. In narrating their desired self, the participants used story and metaphor (Section 14.2.1), drew on resources and roles (Section 14.2.2), employed symbolism and extra-narrative artefacts (Section 14.2.3). The identity capital that emerged (Section 14.2.4) and an updated model of identity construction in Figure 14-1 (Section 14.2.5) is then presented.

14.2.1 Use of Story and Metaphor

In giving their narratives, the participants used story and metaphor in their construction of their desired self, and this desired self varied from participant to participant. They did this as they presented their desired self to the listener, in the structure inherent in their narrative identity, in the locating of their selves with regards to the listener, and in what appeared to be rehearsed scripts used by some participants.

In their narratives, participants made use of mechanistic and hierarchical metaphors. The participants were able to work on their identity using the mechanistic metaphor to show they were part of the system as they were traded, or submitted, or as a means of demonstrating their success and overcoming of obstacles. In placing themselves in the hierarchy, either at the bottom as Alan did when talking of his starting out or at the top as Ian did saying how others come to him, the participants work on their identity for the listener, presenting how they have advanced or contributed to the people they profess to serve. Indeed, the very use of concepts such as service as Alan uses, or as Erika explicitly talks of, presents to the listener the participants' desired self.

The use of mechanism and hierarchy appeared to allow the participants to express to the listener that they have grown within the hierarchy and positional status. The previously-mentioned over-use by Alan of ranking and structure to describe junior developers and the technically adept can be a means for expressing to the listener his personal development and how he now sees himself. In the same way Bruce professes to have “outgrown” his technician's role. Both these participants are working on their desired identity in front of the listener by using mechanism and hierarchy to convey their desired self.

The analysis of their story and metaphor in the narratives can reveal the desired self (Barnard, 1938; Barbuto & Scholl, 1988), and Halford (2003) notes this, saying:

Narrative analysis places emphasis on how the stories that people tell—in interviews as elsewhere—both communicate and construct meaning and, specifically, suggests that these stories are about the generation and presentation of self. (Halford, 2003, p.288)

A good example of the use of story and metaphor from the participant's narratives is where Frederic seeks to present himself as having “balance” and not in “the typical mould of an IT person. I'm not an engineer”. He talks of his “struggle” and of his art diploma, talking at length about his drawing ability and how it was this that led him to his current position in computer graphics. He makes much of what he believes are his abilities with both his “left brain” and “right brain” to construct Halford's (2003) meaning, and his concerns with his “brown” employer generates and presents a desired self. Other examples include the more conventional emigration narrative of Erika or as she talks of being “crushed”, of Frederic's use of managerialist metaphors, or David's extended discourse where “I can tell you where every wire is in the ground” as a metaphor for ‘knowing where the bodies are buried’ as a way of presenting his knowledgeable self.

Bruce's reflections on the outcomes he says he has generated and the value he believes he has added are examples of his use of story and metaphor in presenting himself in a desired light. As Gowler & Legge (1989) observe:

Careers are portrayed in a metaphorical fugue of socio-organic images woven in space and time. For example, someone with a "successful career" is a "high flyer" who has survived the "rat race" and beaten competitors on the "fast track." Here the images are positive: of "ascent," "speed," and "winning." ... managing a career or - in everyday language - "having a career at all" involves the development of a "high profile" and "targeting" it at those with the authority to "ease one's way up the ladder." In other words, it involves the construction of a reputation that will further one's career. (Gowler & Legge, 1989, p.446)

Indeed, Bruce goes so far as to employ the metaphor of "I've passed on that mantle", as well as pondering his future and the possibility of moving on to consult to other organisations. Such speculation serves to reinforce to the listener the construct of the skilled professional selling his services to the highest bidder as he adds value. Ian presents a similar story of adding value and his belief that other people should recognise his value helping their clients commercialise their technologies. Likewise, Gerald's narrative was laden with references to his own career advancement up the corporate ladder, and the exiting of underperforming subordinates. Harold presents a timeline for a technology rollout that he infers is unrealistic, and then suggests that the battle he waged to achieve these unrealistic goals earned him enemies in head office which serves to demonstrate his "winning".

In Charles' explicit framing of his actions in his rebellious tough talk, he calls on the strong, stubborn and powerful metaphor of bulls and bulldozer in reverse to illustrate his depth of conviction. He presents himself as a rebel against the powerful dynasty of family and school for the very sake of rebellion. He also presents himself beating his smoking habit as a significant achievement where he projects a story of trial, tribulation and eventually triumphs, which serve as a metaphor for how he presents his life.

The desired self of the now as opposed to the undesired self of the past (Halford, 2003) is seen in Gerald's narrative, where he tries to present himself in the new light of the compassionate leader as opposed to the "bastard" of his past. To achieve this he uses language like "I'd just exit them" as opposed to 'sacking' or 'firing', although he acknowledges the consequences by using a depersonalised metaphor of 'having one's throat cut'. Part of this re-creation of his desired self appears to be the identification of employers' interests that Gowler & Legge (1989) have noted, as Gerald makes an effort to point out that it was his employer who placed him in a psychological development programme, itself a demonstration of his 'developing' and 'value' to his employer.

The structure that exists in the use of story and metaphor in the participants' narratives is an important insight into the way that they construct their realities and their identities (Halford, 2003; Riessman, 1993), and is also part of the listener's engagement with their narrative and the reader's engagement with what the listener presents. As Riessman says:

Story telling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us. The story metaphor emphasizes that we create order, construct texts in particular contexts. The mechanical metaphor adopted from the natural sciences (increasingly questioned there) implies that we provide an objective description of forces in the world, and we position ourselves outside to do so. (Riessman, 1993, p.1)

The order that Riessman suggests is seen in the participants' narratives, in their common use of the hierarchical and mechanistic metaphors (see Section 14.3.6, and in particular Alan's identity asset in Section 5.3.5). Many participants spoke at considerable length on singular storied topics and 'held the floor' (Riessman, 1993). Ian invokes the sort of biological and parasitic metaphor identified by Gowler & Legge (1989), when he talks of himself as the host and the client as a parasitic 'sucker' if he did not stand his ground and charge for his services.

The participants often used stories which incorporated the listener, and in doing spoke at length about things as diverse as killing, winning, fleeing, overcoming, their skill, and successes. In doing so, they revealed and presented their desired self to the listener in a different manner and with different emphasis than what would have occurred had the listener been someone else, as,

The story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener ... In telling about an experience, [the participant is] also creating a self - how [they] want to be known. (Riessman, 1993, p.11)

The participants tell their narratives and construct the listener into it, giving what they give and choosing what they will say. In doing so, the participant tailors aspects of the narrative to the listener, and even if the listener was passive they have become part of its telling in this process. In this regard, Charles was perhaps the most notable in constructing his stories in response to a self-exposure from the listener, be it an interest in hunting and firearms, athletic actions, technology or overcoming. He framed his discourse on such points, often 'bettering' the listener's expressions and it could be pondered on that his discourse on bullying might be a result of the obvious physical differences that existed between him and the listener. Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) work on the presentation of multiple identities was done on military personnel who believe they are the elite, and the best that the military has to offer, and Charles' military stories reflect their findings.

The use of these re-existing terms that conjure up mental images in the listener's mind are akin to the scripts built through narratives that Thornborrow & Brown (2005) suggest identities are self-created and based on. The use of such scripts was most noticeable in the narratives of Bruce and Harold, whose rehearsed stories and tales suggest a repetition of a script that has been previously worked upon and presented to other listeners.

14.2.2 Resources and Roles

Various resources and roles were used by the participants in constructing their identities, providing support for Stryker's (1987) argument that a person's identity is based on specific role-related identities that derive from self-created interactions with one's environment (Down & Reveley, 2004), and for Hogg & Terry's (2000a; 2000b) argument that for some people the organisation or work group may be more important to the formation of their identity (see also Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Arthur et al., 1999; Orlikowski, 1989; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984; Watson, Bunzel, Lockyer, & Scholarios, 2000; Winroth, 2002a).

In many ways, the specific commonalities identified across the nine participant narratives (as discussed in Section 14.3) represent a wide range of resources and roles from which a participant could construct their identity. Three examples, the workplace, education, and knowledge are briefly mentioned here to illustrate how these were incorporated into participant narrative identity constructions.

The activity of the workplace itself as it related to identity was presented by the participants, as Knights & Willmott (1999) note:

The activity of work itself that is important for identity. Equally important are the familiar routines and social relations through which individuals sustain a sense of structure and meaning in their (working) lives. (Knights & Willmott, 1999, p.39)

Erika and David's focus on the 'niceness' of their work and the joy they expressed in coming to work support the suggestion that they derive identity from the structure and collegial nature of their work. For Erika, this 'niceness' was expressed as a factor in her spurning higher paying roles with greater career opportunities, and David expressed concern about what he would do in retirement, which reflects on Marcia's (2002) writings on the loss of work and other changes in one's life on a person in a professional occupation. Alan's identification with his role in giving his narrative at his workplace even though he was on annual leave, or Ian's leasing the offices of his former employer and giving his narrative in its old boardroom. The use of work role and the work place to narratively construct identity lends weight to Beyer & Hannah's (2002) observations that identity and satisfaction is derived from work:

How they see themselves at work is how they see themselves in general. (Beyer & Hannah, 2002, p.638)

The lack of reference by most participants to their employer as such supports Watson et al. (2000) noting of the contextual basis of identity formation in the new economy, such that it is the role and not just the organisation that is a contributor to the constructed identity. While every participant opted to give their narrative at their place of work, it was the work itself that they used to define themselves and not their employer.

The use of education as a resource for the construction of identity has been obliquely touched on by Raskin (2002) in noting that the association of identity through work is especially so with the educated. Similarly, Chickering & Reisser (1993) discuss people building a strong ego and gaining a high self esteem from their education. This is supported by the commonality of education that emerged from the participants' narratives (Section 14.3.2) in various guises. The participants appeared to frame portions of their identity on their education, and the knowledge that it entails and imparts. Several participants, such as Alan and Harold, frame their achievements in spite of their education, and take identity from delivering what other more educated people could not. In cases such as these, the participants appear to use their ability to overcome (Section 14.3.3) in terms of education as a resource for their identity construction.

The knowledge that the identity is built upon is another resource that the participants appear to have used in their construction of their identity, as their sense of self-worth increases (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The abilities that Grotevant (1987) observed and Schwartz's (2001) commented on are seen in the commonality of providing solutions (Section 14.3.5), in the skills possessed (Section 14.3.4), and therefore being sought after for work (Section 14.3.8). The workplace specific knowledge that Adams & Marshall (1996), Alvesson & Willmott (2002), Harrisson & Laberge (2002), Orr (1990), Weinberg (1971) and Wrzesniewski (2001) all comment on are articulated by David's claim to knowing where every wire is in the ground, to Ian's self-belief that only he has the skills to help the inventors who come to him, and Alan's claims to knowledge about his code. Indeed, examples such as Alan's identity defining assertions about knowing his code support Cote's (1996a; 1996b; 1997) arguments around people using skills, beliefs and attitudes as a basis of an individual of identity and how they see themselves in the world, which is a view supported by Hogg & Terry (2000b) and Wong (2002).

14.2.3 Symbolism and Extra-Narrative Artifacts

The representations of the skills and knowledge that the participants presented to the listener serve as a talisman of their identity work. The symbolism and identity work was seen in the way some participants used overt extra-narrative artefacts, the way all participants chose their place to work in which to give their narrative, and things that were part of their work or workplace.

Three clear expressions of identity work that entailed symbolism are Bruce's "The Thinker", Charles' targets and sign, David's map, and Gerald's resume. Bruce's prominent display of "The Thinker" and his reference of it in his storytelling suggests the significance it has to him and to his self. Likewise, Charles' small-bore targets displayed in his office and the sign proclaiming "Welcome to the world of [Charles'] Useless Facts" on his office door appears to be an active symbol of the identity work performed by him, as was the 'map' in David's office and Gerald arrived armed with his résumé.

Less overt was the place of choice for each participant to give their narrative, and the identity work associated with that. Alan came in from annual leave wearing the company shirt, and gave his narrative in the boardroom overlooking the factory floor, just as Ian gave his in the board room of his former employer whose old offices he now leased, and Gerald gave his in his 'bunker'. Each of these representations, and those of the other participants, serves to place the participant in their work and presents the symbol of their employment status to the fore of their identity work. This action of nominating their work and their relationship with it places their work firmly at centre stage of their life and how they chose to be seen.

Once placed in their workplace as a symbol of their identity work, participants used other less overt symbols to express their active construction of their self. Alan was at pains to demonstrate his code and the visibility of the two-screen PC setup showing his process development arena with the other administrative communication programs like email appeared to demonstrate his connectivity to the business. Erika's symbolic claims to "the Eastern Bloc" in her workplace served to present a degree of isolation from other hum-drum of the place of employments, and Harold gave his narrative with a glass wall dividing himself from "the PhDs" while still being connected to them.

14.2.4 Identity Capital

In presenting the notion of identity capital (discussed in Section 3.5.2), Cote (1996b) notes that "the term "identity capital" denotes what individuals "invest" in "who they are"" (Cote,

1996b, p.425). This research suggests that this identity capital represents various social and psychological resources and capacities that are developed and accrued by an individual as identity capital assets in order to regulate a stable and secure sense of self. The analytical model of identity construction developed in this study (Figure 3-1 and Figure 14-1) refers to these resources and capacities as identity capital assets.

The suggestion is that identity assets are individual to the person, but are built out of generic sources of identity, shared by a wide range of people in various contexts. An individual's identity assets are deployed in the everyday presentation of self, including the enacting of a preferred self in the interviews comprising this study. Hence, it is argued, narrative analysis can be used to identify possible assets in participants' interview-based narrative accounts of work, self, and career. The participants in this research utilised a wide range of individual identity capital assets in their narratives. Although each identity capital asset is individually developed and accrued, and hence specific to an individual, various commonalities between them were discussed in the previous section. Because of the individualised nature of identity assets and identity work, no meta-model can be developed that will do honest justice to the narratives or the participants.

However, the range of individual identity assets observed in this study may be categorised by 'type' to provide a useful indication of the nature of identity capital utilised by the technology professionals such as high-achieving IT professionals. Such a typology encompasses the following types of identity capital assets, and is generally consistent with the types of identity capital resources proposed by Cote (1996b; 1997):

1. Those based on social or technical skills,
2. Those based on membership of an association with key social or occupational groups to which an individual aspires,
3. Those based on effective behaviours that generate beneficial outcomes for an individual,
4. Those based on an individuals' psychosocial development to a more advanced level,
5. Those based on an individual's perceived personality attributes or cognitive capacities,
6. Those based on tangible evidence of success and financial achievement, such as resources, trophies, career positions, and educational credentials.

Brief examples of each of the above types of identity asset are discussed below.

Social and Technical Skills

An example of the use of technical skills as a pathway for personal development and an effective outcome is in Alan's narrative where he professes to using his skills and the role required of him as a foundation for his engagement with strangers as people. He suggests that he was actively aware of his shyness, and has identified a weakness in his composition, before suggesting that he has deliberately gone about addressing that, building identity capital in his new-found technical-ability-derived confidence. By using his technological skills and prowess to be a foundation for his communication, he has made it his identity and part of his ideal self (Barnard, 1938; Barbuto & Scholl, 1988).

Group Membership

The use of experiences and decisions to date to secure membership in the circles and groups to which one aspire is an example of Thornborrow & Browns (2005) 'being and aspiring' that was discussed on page 2-8. It is not only seen in Alan's aspiration to professional-engineering, but also in Harold's desire to become an entrepreneur and his assertions that he is a vital member of the team for whom the organisation would fail without, such as what he provides the businesses he is employed with. Ian also replicates this in what he argued he provides the inventors he deals with, and both participants overtly say that the people they help would fail without their input. They reap the benefits of their contribution, as well as derive identity capital from it as they strive to be what they believe themselves to be.

Effective Behaviours

For participants such as Erika, with her expressed desire to help her clients, and Bruce with his expressed desire to provide technology efficiently, their apparent success at doing so allows them the autonomy they have in their work. These participants claim to be trusted to deliver what they commit to, and this speaks to their contentment and identification with their achievement.

Psycho-Social Development

The development of the individual, which reflects the mechanistic view of developing and new technology, is a type of identity capital that appears across many of these high-achieving IT professionals' narratives. Gerald's course and identity capital asset of self-discovery is one example of how he has built on the resources of his experience and reflections to create an identity capital asset. Likewise, Charles' battles and his identity capital assets of overcoming

are also improvements to his own sense of self that he appears to present to the listener as part of who he is.

Personality Attributes

Bruce's overt display of his 'thinker' model, and Gerald's identity capital asset based on being not elitist are both examples of a type of identity capital that is founded on personality attributes. These attributes are ascribed to the participants' by the participants' themselves and enacted in presenting their narrative. Both Bruce and Gerald used physical resources to support their self-constructed personality attribute, with the former's model and the latter's expression of his car and clothing choices.

Success and Achievement

The successful outcomes in their lives, such as position and salary, appear to be used by some participants as demonstration of these effective behaviours. Charles displayed a sign attesting to his broad knowledge and lectured the listener in grammar, Gerald deployed his job-title and perks, and both Harold and Ian built identity capital on their success, delivering value, and being in demand.

14.2.5 An Updated Model of Identity Construction

The model presented in Figure 3-1 can be expanded and clarified to yield the updated model of identity construction shown in Figure 14-1. The updated is still founded on the concept that identity as socially constructed, actively worked on, and presented to others in a symbiotic engagement between participants. People work on their identity, building personal identity capital from general sources of identification, which may be shared with others in a performance of self in a specific interaction context.

The general sources of identity, such as education and career, are still the building blocks from which identity capital, in the form of identity capital assets, is built by the individual participants as part of developing their workplace selves (Collinson, 2003). These identity capital assets may still be multiple and contradictory, and are drawn on by the participants and incorporated into their performance of their self(s) to the listener, in a process of identity work. The identity capital assets are equivalent to Cote's (1996b, 1997) identity capital resources and were identified from a close analysis of the participants' narratives. Figure 14-1 portrays the six 'types' of identity capital assets discussed in the preceding section.

The identity work that occurs in mobilising identity assets and in the performance of self is still akin to Watson’s (2008) identity work between social-identities and self-identity. The performance of the self is done in context, as part of an interaction with others and the environment. This model can still therefore be seen as an integration of Cote’s (1996b) identity capital model, Watson’s (2008) model of managerial discourse and self-identity, and the analysis of the narratives obtained in this investigation.

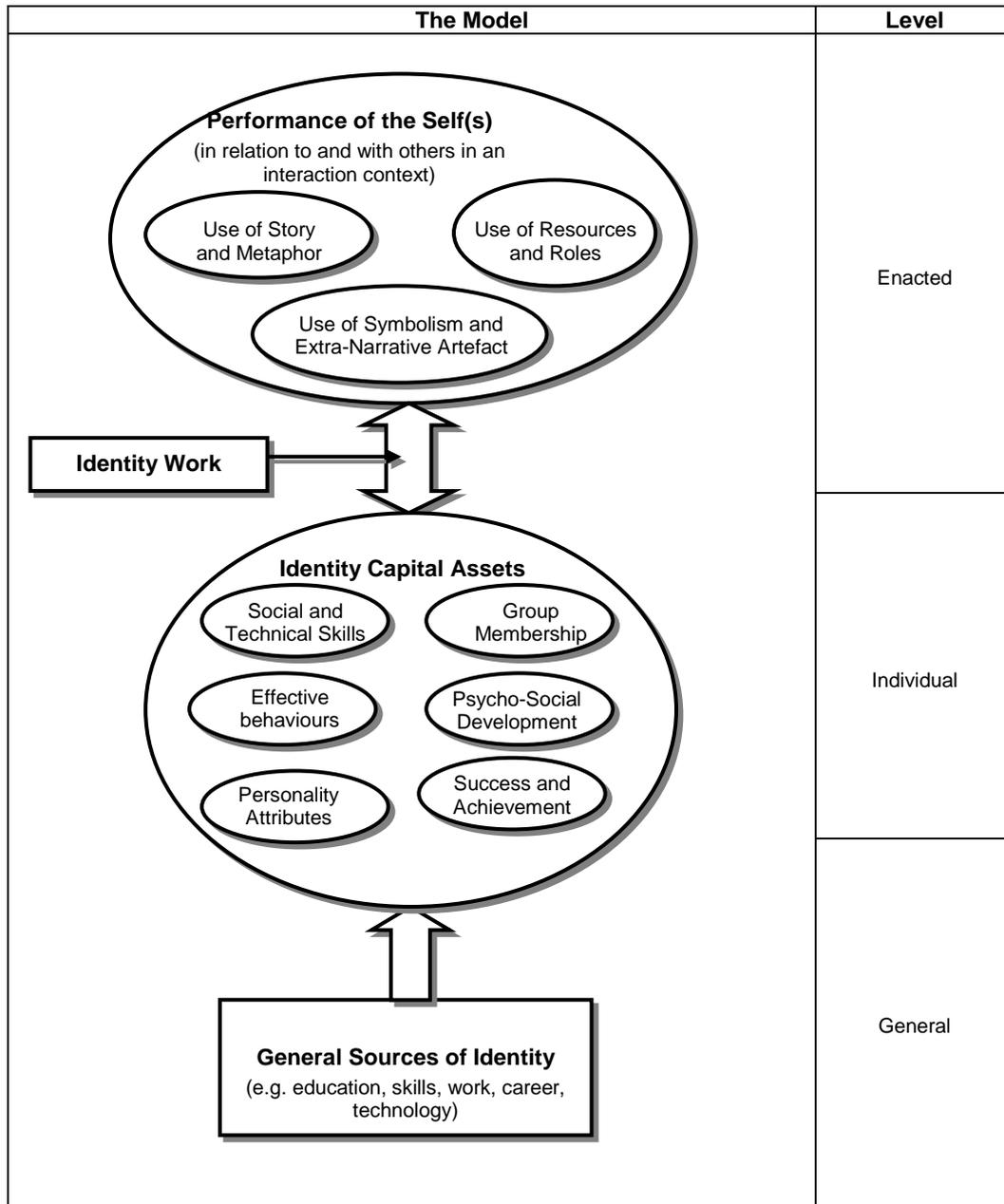


Figure 14-1 The Updated Analytical Model of Identity Construction

The performance of identity is dependant upon the context and environment (Collinson, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2000b; Karreman & Alvesson, 2004), and may take the form of using story

and metaphor, resources and roles, and symbolism and extra-narrative. In engaging the performance with the context and environment, the stories and symbols (for example) being told can be worked on as they unfold which in turn influences the identity assets of the participant. The performance of self and the identity work it entails are thus a dynamic and reforming process.

14.3 Commonalities in the Participants' Narratives

The possibility of an archetype for the high-achieving IT professional gains weight with the consideration of the commonalities in the way that varying participants constructed their sense of self as part of their narratives. This section presents details of these commonalities that emerged to the listener in collectively re-analysing the narratives of the nine participants, in reading across the narratives. These commonalities represent a range of resources and roles that were drawn on as general sources of identification, constituted parts of individual identity assets, or were otherwise utilised in the participants' narrative construction of identity. They are not an exhaustive list and only some extracts from the narratives are given as a means of demonstrating these, as a comprehensive re-presentation would necessitate another thesis. The commonalities identified by the listener and presented here are:

Table 14.1 Commonalities in the Participants' Narratives

Section 14.3.1	Failure, and Its Avoidance
Section 14.3.2	Education, or Not
Section 14.3.3	Overcoming
Section 14.3.4	Skills, Abilities and Knowledge
Section 14.3.5	Providing Solutions
Section 14.3.6	Hierarchy and Mechanism
Section 14.3.7	Experience
Section 14.3.8	Being Sought After for Work
Section 14.3.9	Identification with the Office
Section 14.3.10	Identification with Role
Section 14.3.11	Identification by Self-Labeling

Only salient examples of the commonalities in their narrative are presented, and the flow of each sub-section in this chapter is usually presented for the reader in a participant-ordered approach, unless a specific commonality is made between two participants that necessitated that two non-sequential participants' commonalities be mentioned together for some reason. Accordingly, most sections usually start with Alan, and work sequentially through to Ian.

14.3.1 Failure, and Its Avoidance

While this commonality was present in some participants' narratives it was also significant in its absence in the narrative of others. While there was failure, it was usually presented to the listener as either the fault of another, or the result of a lack of application. Participants' failures were rationalised and excused, externalised and made separate from themselves. The participants who featured failure significantly were Alan, Charles, Harold and Ian. For Bruce, David, Erika, Frederic, and Gerald it was a lesser issue. Failure was seen in its avoidance, in attributing it onto others, in rationalising it, and as part of opportunity.

The avoidance of failure was most noticeable with Alan, and was considered sufficiently significant to constitute an identity asset for him. There is an almost complete avoidance of the word 'failure' in his narrative. For example, he dismisses failed university papers as simply "missed". He immediately reconstructs this event as a natural consequence of a lack of application and disinterested boredom, and rationalises it to not be an innate part of him or his life. It also serves as a means of constructing his experiences in a way that maintains the other significant identity assets in his narrative.

Bruce's expression of his repeated failure in sitting School Certificate is similar:

Twice I sat it, twice. English let me down the first time.

He then also explained and justified his failure in detail, representing his failure as a non-event that did not obstruct his career or his learning about the technology. While the educational milestone of School Certificate was not obtained, Bruce represents this failure as something that was worked around and of no eventual consequence.

The attributing of failure onto others was present in the narrative of Bruce and Frederic. For Bruce, his discussion of two unsuccessful hires that he made is turned into a situation where these new hires failed to deliver in their new role, and the failure is not his in choosing them. In doing so, Bruce is at pains to discuss and present the rigorous testing that he now has implemented: the situation has been a learning experience (as it was with some of Ian's disastrous investment decisions). Frederic's failures in some hiring decisions are also presented as learning situations, and failed projects are attributed to other actors in his story as a result of their inability or ineptitude.

The rationalisation of failure is seen in the narrative of Charles and Ian. For Charles, failure appears in several parts of his narrative, for example when he claims he made the academic standard for officer selection but was not actually selected. This failure is presented by

Charles as being a shortcoming of the military and not of him, as he claims his levels of precision exceed those of the military. The full extract from his narrative on this is as follows:

I qualified for officer training twice, neither times I was found suitable. I, um, 'cause I kept, 'cause remember this thing about me being right?

Yeah.

So I want to be given a job to, to do something or I'd say, "well you're doing it wrong you should be doing it that way".

Doesn't go down well in the military.

Instead of, instead of, no, but if I took over, if I'd taken over and done it I would have got through.

Oh OK.

I would have been accepted because I would have just overruled the other guy and done it, showed them the right way. Well I can contribute as a team member, [pause] [laugh] Yeah [right!]

Charles repackages this failure as being one of not being more of what he is – assertive – and he suggests that if he had just been true to himself that he would have made it through. A momentary decision to be considerate is presented as the reason he failed in his section this time, while not addressing why he failed the second time, and he mocks his lack of will to be a 'team player' as another point around his failure, and dismisses the military's decision accordingly. Ian also rationalises and repackages failure as a natural part of doing business and like Bruce and Frederic presents it as a learning experience.

Failure is also linked with opportunity for both Charles and Harold, but in quite different ways. In another part of his narrative, Charles presents another reason for failure in relation to a truncated university career: his failure to win a scholarship by a few marks. For Harold, the failure of the "boffins" to get Harold's mentor's computing system to deliver what was sought allows Harold to present himself as the bridge between the business and the technology.

While failure is used to present an opportunity by Charles and Harold, it is also used by Charles and Gerald as a way of evaluating and judging, and of natural consequences for some actions. For Charles, whose health is obviously failing, his medical issues form a significant part of his narrative; these are attributed to years of smoking, and his failure to give that addictive habit up. This serves to externalise the failure of his health to a natural order of things that any rational person would expect. The addictiveness of the smoking is the reason

his health has failed and he consequently had such difficulties giving smoking up. It was not his fault. The objectiveness of precision and failure is also seen in Gerald's comments about schooling education, in wanting to know if children 'pass' or 'fail'. It is education that is the next commonality to emerge from the narratives.

14.3.2 Education, or Not

Another commonality to emerge from the narratives of the participants was education in its various guises and absences, what education means, and the construction placed upon education or that lack thereof. Education was used as a tool in the perception of others. In Chickering & Reisser's (1993) "*Education and Identity*" discussion is made of people building a strong ego and gaining a high self esteem from their education, with periodic reconstruction occurring throughout adulthood. An inner feeling of subject mastery provides a framework for purpose and integrity, and they develop a strong sense of self worth based on internal personal standards. This is represented in the narratives of several participants. The participants' commonalities of education or not were manifested in three ways: as a plank of their identity, in its absence, or as baggage.

In addition to Chickering & Reisser (1993), and more specific to IT professionals, Beyer & Hannah (2002) argue that engineers elect to be identified as such based on their education and work experiences. This appears to be the case with Alan, who presented both his degrees as integral parts of his identity during his narrative and going so far as to suggest that it was his return for his Computer Science degree that has set him up where he is today. It was from his education that Alan suggests he was sought after, as indeed does Gerald.

Such an assertion of education and identity was also made by both David and Ian. David asserted his status as a chartered engineer and the professional societies that allowed him to join, along with the details of his postgraduate supervisor, whereas Ian asserted his successful MBA qualification over his truncated and abandoned accountancy qualification. For both these participants, their education was a plank of their identity but not the primary support. Their age and experience was such that their achievements had superseded their education, as Beyer & Hannah (2002) suggest in linking education and work experiences together.

Erika, Frederic, and Gerald used the notion of education to categorise and define themselves and others. Erika's enjoyment of her education and specific mentioning of her economics background was presented in a similar way to Frederic's Art Diploma, and was a way each differentiated themselves from others based on their education. In contrast, Gerald presented

his (mathematical) education as a reason for his sought after skills and as a means of expressing his normality, such as when he claimed opposition to private schools and that he went to “a normal public school”.

The derivation of self-identity in relation to difference from others occurred for some participants around education, and this was seen in Alan’s narrative. While he built part of his identity on his education both as an engineer and as a programmer, he contrasted himself and his achievements with those of his postgraduate and PhD-educated colleagues. In effect he constructs part of his identity based upon his lack of education relative to these people, as he compares their relative achievements. Such a construction of identity on a lack of education relative to others echoes Down & Reveley’s (2004) comments on identity being formed in engaging with colleagues. It was also seen in Bruce’s narrative where he tells of a PhD holder who used to summon him to solve problems that he could not. Similarly, Harold presents his engagement alongside PhD-qualified staff in one of the companies he mentors as being symbiotic; they need him to do what he does, despite his uncompleted undergraduate education.

Similarly, a lack of education is presented by Bruce, Charles, Harold, and Ian as not being an obstacle to their success, which is an integral part of their identity. For example, Bruce says:

So that was my academic, career, over with, I’m afraid [pause] I don’t think it ever stopped me really.

Ian similarly dismisses his incomplete accountancy qualification with:

It’s not a decision I regret.

For Charles, frustrated in dropping out of university and not completing his trade qualifications, it is presented as being the spur in his desire to be an expert and right in spite of that. Charles has overcome his lack of education by teaching himself, and this ability to self-guide is a key plank of his identity, demonstrated by his description of teaching himself a new operating system from the textbook. Harold similarly uses his truncated education in constructing his identity, when he discusses how his degree was interrupted by his injury and how his subsequent cadetship taught him more than university would ever have. In differing ways, these participants have constructed aspects of their identities on a perceived shortcoming or an absence in their education as a way of making sense of what might be otherwise considered an undesirable educational outcome.

Some participants presented education as baggage; something that needed to be overcome in their manufacture and presentation of the self. For Alan, the label ‘graduate’ that went along

with his obtaining a second degree as a mature student was a hindrance that he needed to reconcile and work around in his quest to present himself as a skilled and experienced programmer. Despite having just completed formal programming education in IT, Alan relies on his previous experience. His more recent education, while defining what he will become and what he will identify with, is currently acting as baggage due to its undesirable connotations. In a similar way Bruce presents the negatives of education, and the expectations that are associated with that when he talked of educated people over-analysing a problem. Bruce's belief that the well-educated can pick things up easier may appear to be a truism to many technologists of today, but it is placed in the context of himself. He asserts that he has trained these people to take them from the academic to the practical. While he mocks the academically educated for debating things, it appears that he sees them as being capable of achieving the outcomes he values. However it is worth noting that with Bruce, an interesting twist on the scorn he pours on academic engineers as opposed to the practical one is when the 'thinker' over-thinks a problem and does not know when to either call for help or walk away. Their achievement may be sullied as they have not done so efficiently. Bruce has differentiated thinking from education. In a similar way, Harold also differentiates education from application when he presents his cadetship as being of more significance to him than his education. For Harold, the limitations and inadequacies of his aborted education were jettisoned in light of what was useful to him, namely his cadetship and the mentoring. For Alan, Bruce and Harold, education has some facets that are undesirable to their construction of their identity.

14.3.3 Overcoming

The notion of overcoming an obstacle or event appears to be a case of identity being forged in reaction to life-stage changes. This is seen in many participants' narratives and is a commonality that appears to be either taken from within the participant and projected without, or taken from outside the self of the participant and internalised to being a part of the construction of their identity.

Externalising the overcoming of the self was expressed by some participants, and they appeared to use this as a means of elevating their achievements above that of others. Charles presents overcoming significantly enough to have it be the name of one of the identity assets to emerge in his narrative, particularly his overcoming of his addiction to tobacco.

Overcoming his smoking habit is presented by Charles as a significant achievement, and he tells a story of trial, tribulation and eventually triumph, which serves as a metaphor for how he presents his life. His eventual domination of his addiction is presented as an aspect of who

he is, as Zartesky (1994) suggests. For David, the source of what he overcome was presented as being thrust upon him: his deafness as a result of his military service. However, while his deafness was from an external source, it is part of who he is. He presents his overcoming of it with the use of smart hearing aides as part of the managing and ‘making do’ behaviours seen in his narrative. Likewise, Gerald’s modest background was thrust onto him by his parents and therefore has an external origin, yet is part of him. He presents his ruthless and relentless ambition as a result of a need to overcome his rural upbringing, claiming to use this sense of rage and inferiority to motivate himself to over-achieve.

Some participants appeared to internalise the overcoming of the external other as an achievement, and then incorporate this achievement as part of their identity. For Alan, the overcoming of the technical problems in the overseas contracts he has fulfilled and “finished off” is presented as part of his self-perceived identity. Another participant who internalised the overcoming of the external other and suggested that it was part of who they were was Bruce, who locked the technicians out of the server room in resisting the attempts of others to rein him in or exert control on his department. Bruce presents the overcoming of the actions of these people as a natural function of his positional power as well as his knowing what is right and best in the exercising of his power. The overcoming of these events reinforces to Bruce his role and who he is, and in turn are used by him to present this aspect of himself to the listener. Charles’ use of his overcoming identity asset has him painting himself as the underdog who overcomes through his ability with technology, letting these ‘facts’ speak for themselves about the long hours of shift work and study to the listener. Erika’s ability to survive and cope, explored in parts of her narrative, reflect aspects of her immigrant identity asset. The prospect of being shot for fleeing before the borders opened and the subsequent flight with a large suitcase and a large lump of money on a tourist visa are presented as being “tough times” from which she and her husband survived. Erika tends to this part of her narrative in a way which reflects her identity as an outsider who has survived and overcome adversity. Harold’s narrative also included overcoming, namely overcoming technical obstacles and adverse business situations. Similarly, significant portions of Ian’s narrative involve overcoming the setbacks and obstacles he has faced, with losing money and having businesses fail.

14.3.4 Skills, Abilities and Knowledge

In identifying a commonality based around the presentation, use, and abuse of skills, abilities, and knowledge, the reader could be forgiven for wondering why these three seemingly discreet items are grouped together. However, it is the participants themselves who appear to

use these and related terms interchangeably and the artificial separation and imposition of boundaries by the listener would lack validity.

Alan's assertion that he knew all about his employer's software, and that he was the person to ask about it, is not confined to his skills as programmer, or his ability to read and decipher code that his predecessors have written, but also extends to his all-encompassing knowledge of the code, and what the business need is that the code is supposed to be meeting. Indeed the significance of this in his narrative is such that an entire identity asset is devoted to it.

Likewise, Bruce uses the identity asset of pioneering to convey his skills when he says his work was his hobby and a passion. For Bruce, his skill and knowledge were in demand when he was asked to manage the computer centre, and again in his outcomes asset when he talked of how others 'flapped' at a crisis while his skills, abilities and knowledge gave him the experience to solve the problem, or how he'd fix it while others talked. Bruce also presented much on his skills, abilities and knowledge, when he reminisced on his early days and his involvement in micro-processing and building a desktop computer.

For Charles, much of his identity work was weighted towards his skills, abilities and knowledge, with assertions of his expertise, his computer reliability, or his boredom at school. In a similar way, David's presentation of his building his own house with his own hands, and the lengths of clarification around that that he went to with the listener to ensure the listener understood that building meant actual building and not merely hiring a builder, further testify to the significance that his skills and abilities have to David.

Both Bruce and David appear to imply that their technical knowledge translates in some way into knowledge of the business, and David echoes Bruce's suggestion that the IT function knows more about the business than many of more directly those involved in the business, with David saying that he knew where every wire was in the ground and more about the organisations finances than the accountant. Frederic has his demonstrating his skills and abilities running parallel with his identity asset on learning and on placing and backing himself, with his simple assertion that he was top in his class – subject to his motivation. Gerald waxes lyrically on his recruitment, success in corporates, being headhunted and sought after and not having to apply for jobs, before he lends some reflective criticism of his skills, analysing where his shortfalls lay and presenting in such a manner as to imply that these have been addressed and now do not exist, such as how he describes his honing his leaderships skills.

The integration of overcoming and toil with ones skills and abilities is seen in the narratives of both Charles and Erika. Charles presents his skills and ability as the reason he was able to overcome the obstacles placed in front of him in his secondment overseas, where he taught himself how to program on their system he was unfamiliar with, and Erika claimed her hard work was a foundation for her ability and skill.

Harold asserts his knowledge in his identity asset based on his business skills, stating it was his cadetship that allowed him to learn the business. He asserts that he is needed for his skills and knowledge, such as when he says he was approached by his employer and tasked with integrating the computer with the business, and how he was repeatedly approached for new roles. In his narrative, Harold attributed the success in getting the business plan working to his skills and local knowledge, and in his identity asset on being right he attributed his 'correctness' to his ability and knowledge.

In relation to Ian's identity asset of success and delivering his value, he talks of his abilities in building a firm which was sold to those who lacked ability, enabling him to buy it back later for half of what he sold it for. He also talked of setting up other businesses, his reputation and knowledge and ability bringing him more work, his rescuing companies and of what he brings to those in dire straits. In other assets he talks of bad decisions made by others which his skills and knowledge would not have been allowed him to make. For Ian, and indeed all the participants, their skills and knowledge and abilities are interwoven through many of the significant identity assets in their narratives.

For some participants, skills, ability or knowledge were implicated in their use or abuse, or in representations of them. The use or abuse of skills, abilities and knowledge is a subjective evaluation on the part of the listener, and several instances occurred where this was presented. In David's identity asset of using his control, he was quite open and comfortable with using his institutional knowledge to manipulate vendors and his peers. Charles was equally transparent about his hacking of computer systems as a learning exercise. Similarly, Gerald associates competitive drinking with an ability he is not proud of, and how he would simply "exit" underperformers. The representation made by Bruce of his skills, abilities and knowledge in the prominent display of "The Thinker" are on par with Charles' small-bore targets displayed in his office and the sign proclaiming "Welcome to the world of [Charles'] Useless Facts" on his office door. The 'map' in David's office was another representation of a participant's knowledge, being a large aerial photograph of his employer's property that David referred to during his narrative to point out where a function is performed or where

things or people are or were located. Similarly, as David used his map, Gerald came armed with his résumé as a representation of his skills, abilities and knowledge.

14.3.5 Providing Solutions

The provision of solutions was part of all the participants' narratives in some way as they constructed their identities in the context of their work. It appears to be dependant on the previously identified commonality (skills, abilities, and knowledge) as these enable the provision of solutions. The success that participants had in providing solutions, and the resulting identification derived from that, appears to support Karreman & Alvesson's (2004) observations on the relationship between success and identity. These solutions that participants identified with are summarised in Table 14.2.

With Alan, the providing of solutions is seen in the identity asset of his ability, where he takes his ring-binders of code to an interview as if suggesting to his prospective employers that he comes armed with ability and experience. His subsequent assertions of his ability to provide solution are built on his coding abilities. Seeing trouble brewing and being able to address this, was also mentioned by Bruce when he discussed his taking on the management role of running the computer centre for his current employer. Bruce's solutions were innate in his makeup, such as when he reflected back to his technical days and contrasted his practical self with 'flappers'.

Table 14.2 Participant Provided Solutions

Participant	Solution
Alan	Code
Bruce	Calm Solutions
Charles	Getting it Working
David	Service
Erika	Keeping it Working
Frederic	Professionalism
Gerald	Leadership and Cost-cutting
Harold	Integration
Ian	Building Companies

Charles presented his ability to provide solutions when he talked of being heralded on his return to the workplace for his abilities to fault-find on printed circuit boards, or his mastery of Unix. Charles' solution was based on his intelligence and 'getting it working'. For Erika, her provision of solutions was seen in her identity assets of technical proficiency and being conscientious as she tests her procedures and scripts, and how she comes in to work early in anticipation of problems having arisen overnight, and a desire to 'keeping it working'. The

solutions that David provided in his narrative were more reflective and service orientated, and are found in his managing and experience identity assets. Examples from David's narrative are his skirting New Zealand's import barriers in order to get a product to market, or being "interested in getting it right for the users".

The solutions that Frederic, Gerald, Harold and Ian provided were 'professional'. For Frederic, these derive from his visionary identity asset, particularly in building his own business and then again in a DBM role for subsequent employers. In each of these cases a solution was needed and he suggested that he could provide it. He used his being previously head-hunted into his current role as evidence of this. Similarly Gerald presented his union negotiations as him providing a solution to a problem, as well as the technology he helped develop on his return to New Zealand following his overseas secondment and his self-proclaimed ability to take operating costs out of a business. Whereas Gerald presented his cost-cutting ability as a solution he could provide, Harold presented the solutions he could provide as the achievement of getting the integration of his employer's business and computer system working. Ian presented his abilities to build business and provide the consultancy skills that the inventors needed to commercialise their inventions.

14.3.6 Hierarchy and Mechanism

The narrative of many participants was laced with references to the mechanical or the hierarchical. While the reader may wonder about the connection between hierarchy and mechanism, the listener was left in no doubt that that the inherent structure and formality involved in both allows them to be presented as two aspects of the same phenomenon. An example of the intertwined nature of these two sides is shown when Alan says his employers would routinely send him flying to different places. In such an expression, Alan appears to acknowledge that his employers have the personal and positional power over him to direct him to travel overseas for extended periods of time, and as such he subscribed to the hierarchy of the organisation. In referring to himself as what amounts to resource, Alan also appears to acknowledge his role as a cog in the machine of his employers business, and therefore the mechanistic side is also shown.

The use of hierarchy as a theme in Alan's narrative was such that an identity asset was named accordingly. Alan talked of beginner levels, intermediate levels and senior or supervisory levels in the various jobs he had or had considered. Elsewhere, he referred to work that was "crawling around under the desks" and "complete bum-boy sort of work". In his narrative,

Alan appeared to be quite aware of the hierarchies and the distinctions that he suggests existed within his employers, saying things like:

At this obviously more technical higher level, so you basically very very junior ... you're being able to interact, interact across that divide as such.

This technical level as opposed to another level is echoed in Bruce's narrative, where he talks of outgrowing the role he started as a technician, before being promoted to senior technician and then being asked to manage the computer centre. His subsequent locking of the server room was him exercising the authority that the hierarchy gave him, and Bruce is also acutely aware of the power in hierarchy when he says:

Its not that simple! [laugh] nobody lets go of control around this place [laugh].

For significant portions of Charles' narrative, hierarchy extended beyond the workplace, such as the playground example where he reflects on his place as the smallest and youngest in the class, and the bullying theme is one of hierarchy being imposed by the powerful. Further, Charles' Linux terrorism t-shirt is an anti-hierarchical claim that seeks to refute the dominant hierarchy of market share. In rejecting the hierarchy as Charles does, and his adoption of a ready-made 'terrorist' identity that comes complete with T-shirt, he appears to reinforce Hogg & Terry's (2000b) discussion on the security and self-esteem that can come from the adoption of roles and social-identities through:

Intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or to establish ingroup-favoring evaluative distinctiveness between ingroup and outgroup, motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem. (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p.122)

David's narrative included his use of his position in the organisational hierarchy to impose his values on others, such as issuing invitations to Christmas dinners, when he decided on computing standards, or his following claim:

I'm reasonably well known and I've run the meetings several times as ... master of ceremonies.

Also emerging from David's narrative is the identity asset of control and having the authority to make decisions, seen in his candid expression that "perhaps I'm a control freak. I just like, being in charge. I wouldn't, I really don't like not being in charge." David talks openly of using his position in the hierarchy to see or not see people, to control their interactions with his employer, or to make people 'jump' as he wishes.

Gerald's narrative has reflections on hierarchy based on gender and cultural values, as he talked of how his overseas clients preferred to deal with him rather than his female boss, and how this impacted the neophyte consultant that he was. The importance of hierarchy was also expressed in his frustration at some employees who considered themselves more worthy of perks than others, while he, a senior executive, did not. While some participants like Alan and Bruce have worked on their identities in such a way that they present themselves as having outgrown the hierarchy, and Charles has rejected the hierarchy, other participants like David and Ian appear to revel in it, with the control that it brings. These participants appear to have used the existing structures to their benefit, and worked within – both literally and in an identity-work sense – to reinforce their sense of self.

As noted earlier a mechanistic metaphor is used, alluded to, or incorporated into many facets of life, by most of the participants. Alan talks of 'knuckling down' and 'working harder' in what amounts to the submission to the precise requirements of conforming to his course of study in mechanical engineering. He also describes himself and his thought processes using mechanistic terms of problem solving, standards, perfectionism, and lack of social abilities and graces, culminating in his self-description as:

I'm an overhead. Complete and utter overhead, my whole salary is just overhead, an overhead to the company.

Bruce's identity asset based on being needed has mechanistic overtones, in that he is needed to address a shortcoming or solve problems, and his identity asset on outcomes also has mechanistic overtures, such as when he talks of cost-effectiveness and rationality as being a driver for some of his actions, or his recruitment based on test-taking abilities.

Charles talks of his relationship with the infallible Linux, before decrying the fallibility of:

People, and their petty problems.

In his addiction identity asset, Charles uses the mechanistic metaphor to describe the actions of and by his body, such as his health 'failing', of 'conquering' his addictions, and 'analysing' what occurred. Erika's employment of mechanism can be seen in her linkages of system administrators to their systems, or in the identity asset of being defined by technology, when she says her entire family has structured thought processes.

For Frederic, the Spartan sterility of his futuristic office extends to his language as he talks of mechanistic processes in business and software manufacture, performance, meeting targets, missions, how to motivate people, and of "forging" his way. Gerald also uses mechanistic processes in business and the use of computational models, mathematics, and science, before

wondering about the ‘correctness’ of the models. He talks of people as if they are tools of business, to be refined with development plans or “exited” for non-performance, as he talks of approximation-solving, structured and rostered time with family, and progress or lack of it.

With Harold, his connections based identity asset has mechanistic overtures in the very nature of connections, along with his ongoing references to process and integration, and in his being wanted asset where he equated himself to being a chattel when his services were required as part of the sale of a company. For Ian, the mechanism came in examples such as the tech-wreck of 2001, where he repeatedly uses the language of construction and destruction as he makes his deals.

14.3.7 Experience

An individual’s experience appeared to be used as an important source of identity for many of the participants, and was used to justify their actions as well as their perceptions of self. It is noteworthy that experience was particularly dominant feature in the narratives of participants who had moved onto management type roles (David and Bruce) or commercial or entrepreneurial type roles like Frederic, Gerald, Harold and Ian. It was not significant in those participants who are still active technologists (Alan, Charles, and Erika). These experiences were predominantly in the field of age-related pioneering type experiences, success-related experiences in the commercial focused participants, or a more general experience.

Both Bruce and Harold’s pioneering related identity assets reveal rich sources for the commonality of their experiences as being part of who they are. Bruce’s claims to building some of the first computers for his employer, and his claims regarding obtaining IP addresses and learning what was not being taught because it was so new and fresh, place his sense of self in the domain of pioneer. Likewise is Harold’s assertion that “when you’ve had the experiences and development skills that I have” in pioneering the integrating of business and technology, which formed his foundation myth, places him as someone who has been around “since the beginning”.

The use of experience as a means of portraying success, and vice versa, appears in Frederic and Gerald’s narrative. With Frederic, his experience is presented as he talks of his success as a commercial manager and building his consultancy into a profitable entity that was eventually sold. Likewise with Gerald, it is his success and achievement in managerial and cost-cutting roles that he uses to present an experienced self in giving his narrative.

General experience was presented by two of the older participants: David and Ian. David's appeal to his longevity in the industry and with his employer, along with the knowledge that he gained as a result forms the basis of a distinct identity asset based on his experience. Ian's appeal to experience was in what he had seen, been through, and given to the IT industry.

14.3.8 Being Sought After for Work

Being desirable and sought after for their contribution to their employer was a commonality that occurred with weight in every participant's narrative, and with many of them it occurred often and repeatedly. Almost every participant discussed being shoulder-tapped or head-hunted in some guise for roles, as they presented themselves as being desired by employers, and were knowledgeable of what they had to offer. All participants were aware of the power their knowledge and abilities gave them as Walker (1999) suggests, and in negotiating better employment contracts for themselves. As Gerald says:

I've already had a number of job offers, and I've been very choosy, because of, I wanna find the right balance in the right organisation.

How the participants presented their being sought after was done in several different ways, as an appeal or action of some sort by their employer for them to stay, how they were bought or what they traded their knowledge for, how they were needed, or how they impressed their employers.

The 'please stay' aspect was seen in Alan's story of when he was considering leaving his role doing Systems Administration. This event was presented by Alan as arising as word got around the company after he notified his boss of his intention, and he was approached to stay. Similarly, Harold conjured up images of paternalism and the hurt that his leaving caused his mentor who he had suggested treated him like a son.

'Being bought' was seen in how many of the participants were well aware of the potential rewards that their skills could bring them, and wove these into their narrative in some way or another. Often it was as an expression of only moderate interest in the role that was being offered, to which they then append a comment about how the employer proceeded to increase the remuneration offer. This is perhaps best summed up by Alan's aloof comment that:

Initially, I wasn't all that interested in the job when I was approached ... they offered an exorbitantly high amount of daily allowance and when you're on a mining operation everything's provided for you anyway, so it's just like money in the back pocket

It is also dramatically presented to the listener in Gerald's narrative and in his asset of being in demand, where he talks of his being uplifted from university study and being thrust into an ex-pat role with a daily expenses allowance that exceeded his weekly budget, and again when he says he resigned for a better, unsolicited, offer from a competitor.

The recognition of their skills and the rewards that it can bring are presented by some participants as not being absolute, and that there is more to their being brought than just money. Erika made mention of her ability to earn more money at another employer, but she suggests to the listener that she stayed out of enjoyment of her colleagues when she said things such as preferring to stay rather than take "another ten thousand or twenty thousand a year which, after tax, will be a lot less". This analysis of an offer and its rejection was also performed and presented by Frederic, although he suggested that it was for different reasons, as he weighed up share-option schemes.

Some participants suggested that they were sought after because they were needed, perhaps possessing some intrinsic skill or ability that could solve a problem their employer had. In Charles' needed identity asset, he draws a picture of himself as a conquering hero being welcomed back into the fold on his return from his Army BASIC training, as if the very company was dependant upon his presence. Ian conveys the same level of judgement in calling a company that needed him a "basket-case", and Bruce talks of being sought out by the staff of another department to manage the computer centre during a time of crisis. Bruce suggests his ability to fix technical problems equipped him to address the managerial problems and that he was sought out by those in another department for this experience. Frederic emphasises how he was called upon by external people to help, going so far as to say they "chased" him. In giving that piece of his narrative, Frederic is at pains to point out that while they may have needed him, he did not need them. Frederic suggests that it was only once his criteria had been met that he would consider a new role. In being needed, Gerald says quite succinctly points out why he was needed: "I was delivering the dollars". This matter of fact presentation of an apparent reality by Gerald is similar to Ian's representation of his being in demand by getting several calls a week from consultancies seeking some commercial acumen for their client's intellectual property development. David suggests that his being needed for the knowledge he had was a key factor in his not retiring, despite being well past retirement age.

Impressing others was part of Ian's identity work in suggesting that is why he gets more work. It was Alan's efforts that resulted in his impressing his current employers by arriving

at the interview with binders of his code. The outcomes of his actions are presented by Alan as an almost immediate job offer. Charles suggests that he impressed by action, and that his self-taught learning allowed him to do what no other person could do. For David, impressing people and making them realise they needed him resulted in a job offer that he suggests he did not really want. David shows many of the behaviours of other participants in that piece of his narrative, suggesting that his employers placed more weight on the meeting than he did, that he did not really want the job or was ambivalent about it, and that they needed him more than he needed them.

14.3.9 Identification with the Office

All the participants elected to give their narratives in their place of work, and during normal business hours, although neither of these was suggested or implied in contacting them. The only variant from this pattern was Alan, who was on annual leave the week of giving his narrative, and yet elected to come into his place of work (after a long commute) to give his narrative in the board room. Identification with their role (discussed in the next section) and identification with their office appear to be intermeshed and difficult to separate in the participants' narratives, with many examples of this commonality emerging in the unspoken and the extra-narrative features discussed earlier.

Perhaps the most significant identification with the office was demonstrated by Alan and Ian. Alan, who as mentioned above, came in from his annual leave wearing the company shirt and sat in his employer's boardroom with his back to the shop-floor. This action meant the shop-floor was a visual part of his identity presentation for to look at him meant looking at him in the context of his work. For Ian, the offices he works from and at which he desired to give his narrative used to be the executive offices and boardroom of the company who previously occupied that building, who also previously employed Ian for a reasonable part of his professional life and in a senior role, and it was by the company's name that Ian referred to the building. In listening to Ian's narrative, the listener was struck by how Ian fitted seamlessly into this boardroom and how at ease he appeared in his old haunt.

Several other participants chose to give their narrative in a manner which placed them with others. Bruce chose to give his narrative in a large glass-walled office where everyone could see him and he could see everyone who came by, as did Erika, Frederic and Harold. For each of these participants the discussion of their self was done in the context of being seen by their peers and colleagues. The listener wondered if their colleagues had been advised or briefed

that they were sitting with listener who was researching ‘high-achieving IT professionals’ and whether this was part of managing their identity presentation.

The identification with the office was not just overtly done by some participants, but also appeared to be an act of withdrawal by some participants. Where Bruce Erika, Frederic and Harold were able to be seen by all in the context of their office, other participants such as Charles and Gerald gave their narratives locked away. For Charles, it was in his office between his colleagues and the server room, and for Gerald in his ‘bunker’ in which the listener had to prearrange and document a visit with the guard, subsequently to be signed in and escorted at all times while on the premises. The impression of Gerald’s bunker was of a wartime operations centre where manipulation of the outside world was being planned, but the outside world would not influence the inside machinations.

David’s identification with his office extends further, having designed and overseen the building of it himself. It formed a significant part of his narrative and occurred in several of his identity assets, including his being physically co-located with his department. However, it is the construction of the building and the placement of David’s office rather close to the main entrance that is of interest. His office is partly in the old and partly in the new extension, and on the ground floor. This enables him to see most of who approach and enter the building, whilst allowing him to remain both aloof and part of the goings on around him. In giving his narrative in his office, David has ready recourse to his props such as his map, as well as a physical representation of his location within the department itself: on the ground floor, seeing all.

14.3.10 Identification with Role

As the participants gave their narratives, identification with one or many roles became apparent to the listener. This section only addresses one role for each participant so as to demonstrate that each participant did make role identification a significant part of their identity presentation. These roles are listed in Table 14.3.

Table 14.3 Participant Apparent Role Identifications

Participant	Role
Alan	Coder
Bruce	Thinker
Charles	Wise Rebel
David	Provider
Erika	Balanced Outsider
Frederic	Balanced Manager

Gerald	Compassionate Cost-Cutter
Harold	Mentoring Investor
Ian	Suit

Alan’s identification with the role of coder is seen with his many references to his code, and his re-telling of taking volumes of it to his job interview. There is further reinforcement to this identification when Alan showed his workspace, including the prominent two-screen PC setup showing his code development arena occupying a significant part of the display space while with the other administrative communication programs like email appeared to demonstrate a separate connectivity to the business. Additionally, in spite of Alan being on leave he was wearing the company shirt, and his spoken self-identification is with his role in the company.

Bruce’s identification was with the role of “the thinker”, which he both explicitly mentions and invokes through the reproduction of Rodin’s ‘The Thinker’ that is prominently displayed on his desk. His desk is centrally located, placing Bruce and his talisman in the middle of his department, and as there are no doors, this statuette is clearly visible. In his narrative he manages his identity and seeks to control the way people see him. A previously discussed identity asset of thinking versus doing was discussed and he appears to readily identify with this, retelling how he has been called a ‘thinker’ by others.

One of the roles that Charles appears to identify with is that of the wise rebel, seen in his choice of attire bearing ‘Linux Terrorist’ to the initial meeting and proselytising about Unix. By wearing such a shirt to a meeting with a hitherto unknown person, Charles appeared to stamp his strongly held views and opinions on the interaction. He invokes emotive language around terrorism and associates it with a computer operating system that is not commonly accepted by many computer users despite the technologies proponents who argue that the technology is superior. His views of Linux users versus Microsoft users have been expressed forcefully elsewhere in his narrative, and he appears to be happy to be identified with a small rogue technology and collection of like-minded people. In wearing this shirt, Charles appears to identify with the underdog battling a monolithic giant, using any means fair or foul to disrupt the status quo and impose the ‘terrorists’ values on others.

Erika appears to identify with being a balanced outsider, often drawing on the IT stereotype to either identify with or contrast herself against, and this came through in several aspects of her narrative such as when she suggested that she was a ‘balanced geek’. The outsider aspect of this role identification is added to when considering her comments about being in the “Eastern Bloc” of the office with other staff from former European communist states. Balance also

makes its appearance in a role that Frederic appeared to identify with, namely that of balanced manager. Frederic used his art diploma as a foil for the stereotyped technologist, suggesting that this gives him the left-and-right-brain balance that other technologists might be lacking. Frederic appears to impose this role of balance onto others in saying that he likes to recruit people who are “well-rounded in terms of technical background, commercial business skills, people skills, communication, you know, sales skills”.

The balance that both Erika and Frederic identify with is reflected to a degree by Gerald, in discussing his transformation from ruthless cost-cutter to compassionate cost-cutter. Harold’s role was that of mentoring investor, as he identifies with the role of giving back to the company and wider professional pool from which he suggests he was mentored. This helping to build companies bears some similarity to David’s role as a provider in building his department and office. The role Ian’s identifies with is being a ‘suit’, such as his dress and when he says he should be rewarded for his corporate efforts

14.3.11 Identification by Self-Labeling

All of the participants self-labelled (Wagner and Wodak, 2006) to varying degrees in giving their narrative, and a summary of some of the labels applied to the participants by themselves in shown in Table 14.4, below. Some of the self labelling is overt such as Gerald’s claim to being a “maths geek”, some is by association such as Ian’s associating with angel investing, and some is in the negative, such as Frederic’s claim to not being a typical engineer.

Table 14.4 Participants Self-Labelled Identifications

Participant	One Self-labelled Identification
Alan	Next Port of Call
Bruce	Pragmatist
Charles	Expert
David	Control-Freak
Erika	Geek
Frederic	A-typical Engineer
Gerald	Maths Geek
Harold	Entrepreneur
Ian	Angel Investor

Overt self-labelling was clear in Alan’s presentation of himself as “the first port of call” in his company for technical problems (rather than the help desk). Bruce claims he is pragmatic, and Charles’ narrative contains significant amount of self-labelling as an expert, whether in terms of general knowledge of technical work. The verbal self-labelling in Charles narrative includes assertions like:

I'm not satisfied with just competence; I've got to be an expert in the subject. I develop myself to that level.

I'm always right.

David says, by way of excusing some of his actions or speculating on his motives, that he is a "control freak". An analysis of Erika's narrative shows her self-definition by technology encompasses events or context, people and time, and extends into self-defining herself and her family as:

"We are family of geeks! [laughs]

Gerald echoes this sentiment, in dissociating himself from the interpersonal actions of his ex-pat assignment, saying:

I'm just a, just a maths geek!" [laugh]

Gerald also used his job title as a means of describing himself when in conflict with others values, and when he asserts his identity as a winner in all forms of competition, saying:

I like to win. You know, I like to say, "I'm acting Chief Executive" [laugh]. You know, so, I like, "I'm running [a very large company]", "I manage [a lot of] people".

Frederic appears to suggest he is creative as a self-label, as Harold bemoans a truncated venture with his claim that the life of an "entrepreneur" is full of such set-backs, and Ian's claims an identity associated with doing "some angel investing".

Some participants expressed self-labelling identification in terms of the 'not'. By placing the 'not' in the listener's mind, the participant can then build an identity structure relative to a known construct. Alan does this on several occasions, as he says:

I'm actually unfit for doing sport.

I'm not interested in conflict I guess.

Similarly, Bruce claims he is not very creative or is too young to retire, and Gerald does in his assertion that he was not an accountant. Frederic's self-expression as not being a typical IT person or engineer appears to be founded and supported in his art-diploma, and the balance that creativity brings to him, as he says:

I, you know, I, I think I'm quite a um, ah, what's the term for it. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't necessarily fit the typical mould of an IT person. I'm not an engineer ... I've also got a diploma in art.

The naming and labelling of others was also done by some participants as part of an effort to contrast their own sense of self with a construction of another. For example, Gerald dismisses those who have inherited wealth as "hand-me-down-money people" effectively contrasting

himself with them, as ‘self-made’. In a similar way, Harold differentiates himself from ‘geeks’, saying:

The majority of the people out [t]here ... are at the geeky end of the software development engineering side.

The self labelling that all participants engaged in were all work-centric labels, be it in the affirmative or in the ‘not’, and some participants defined others by these or similar and equivalent labels. In self-labelling, the participants express self-constructed perception of how they see themselves, or how they wish to be seen at work.

14.3.12 Towards an Archetype of High-Achieving IT Professionals

The categorising of people, either by themselves or by others, has been discussed by previous writers on constructed identity, although differing language and terms may be used. Calhoun (1994) observed the validity of people’s claims to “strong, basic and shared identity” (Calhoun, 1994, p.17), and more recently, Cote (1996b) has speculated on the existence of archetypes when talking of the formation of “character-types” as a result of cultural pressures:

Through the socializing influence of institutions, cultures nurture certain personality characteristics and thereby encourage the development of certain character-types ... the implication is that broad “character-types” should be found that are manifestations of cultural pressures interacting with human temperaments. Accordingly, individual differences in character should be distributed around predominant or modal cultural character-types. (Cote, 1996b, p.419).

The potential for self-selecting such identity structures has emerged earlier in the discussion in Chapter 2 on identity construction, self-identity, and identity and insecurity. These ‘types’ and ‘kinds’ may not have been recognised by some commentators but have been explored by Wong (2002) in a discussion of how identity is derived from context. The participants in this study appeared to actively construct a self that incorporated aspects of an archetype and self-label, were aware of their benefiting from that, and constructed a self at work that facilitated that benefit.

The commonalities discussed in this section illustrate how participants in this investigation appear to present constructed archetypes upon which they have built aspects of their identity. Noticeable examples of this include Erika self-identifying as being from a family of a geeks, and Gerald’s self-identification as a “maths geek”. However, not all of the identifications are as overt as those expressed by the participants in self-labelling their identification. Some apparent aspects of identification come from a closer analysis of the participants’ narratives, such as the mechanistic values that permeate their discourse or the disclosure that they believe they were sought after and had valuable contributions to make to their employers. Given that

the presentation of these identity constructs was in the context of giving a narrative on high-achieving IT professionals, the assertions of Erika and Gerald would appear to support Mennel's (1994) notes on the ability for people to 'play roles', possess mutual identification around objects or concepts, and the collective 'we-image'. Support can also be seen for Down & Reveley's (2004) comments on identity being formed on interaction with colleagues. In presenting these constructions in the context that they were, the 'identity work' presented a desired identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Jorgenson, 2002; Mason-Schrock, 1996; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) is achieved.

The constructions that are presented in the context of work by these IT professionals also support Kunda's (1992) and subsequently Schein's (1996a; 1996b) 'engineering culture' and the social groups Cantor (2002) talked of, as well as Latour's (2003) computer culture identity group. Participants such as David who self-identifies with 'control-freak' and 'risk-taker', or Harold's identification with entrepreneur and Ian's self-identification with his angel investing are in turn identifications with known workplace cultural norms and values that come loaded with innuendo and double meanings as to the ramifications of the participants associating with them. Even in the negative, such as Frederic's rejection of the engineer label, is an identification seen by these participants to an archetypical identity group.

Technology professionals have been shown to indulge in manipulation of the workplace (Smits et al., 1993) as Bruce has done, exercise power and control as seen in the narratives of David and Bruce, and be status-sensitive with regards to skills, knowledge, and intellectual horsepower (Petersen, 2001) as seen in the narrative of Alan and Charles. It was noted earlier that power and consolidation in the dynamic technology industry means an individual may be aware their intellectual capital has a value (Bontis, 1999) and can be 'rented' out (Gibbons et al., 1994) to the highest bidder for 'compensation' (Eliasson et al., 1990). The individual has a natural reluctance to share (Bell & Mason, 1998; Buckman, 1998; Quinn et al., 1996), unless value in the form of reciprocity, reputation, altruism or trust (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) can be derived, as Ian demonstrated in his narrative. In such an environment, success often depends on "who shouts the loudest" (Weinberg, 1971, p.19), and has little to do with organisational charts and formal reporting lines, and all the participants were aware of and exacted their importance to the organisation in some manner. The possessor of knowledge can 'rent' the knowledge out to various bidders, employers, or clients (Gibbons et al., 1994; Walker, 1999) and this was seen most noticeably in the narrative of Gerald and Ian. The participants all appear to have benefited from their success, suggesting that the consolidation of skills and attributes stands to benefit the technologist, as technical knowledge is a

foundation of power within the organisation (Hardy & Clegg, 1996; Reed, 1996). Such a quest for recognition, power, and identity can be satiated by the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which have become a commodity (Buckman, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Eliasson, Folster, Lindberg, & Pousette, 1990; Nelson & Romer, 1996).

Alan, Gerald, Ian and David seemed particularly aware of the impact of work on family, which would appear to suggest that these high-achieving IT professionals are well aware of the social costs of being too absorbed in their work. Criticism of one's work is unpleasant for the technologist (Weinberg, 1971), as the commonality of revisioning failure attributed to. In light of this, Knights & Willmott (1999) observations that work must be meaningful and can become so absorbing or consuming that it interferes with things such as family is worth noting.

Gerald and Alan were two participants who 'sculpted' their career by building a strong occupational identity (Arthur et al., 1999). This is seen in these participants' self-labelled identification. The emphasis on resulting in high earnings, strong career growth, and protection against the decline of a specific employer, supports Adams and Marshall's (1996) second theoretical proposition of the existence of an "individual dynamic (need) ... to enhance one's sense of self as a unique and individuated person" (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p.431). This may be achieved through differentiation from others on the grounds of technical prowess and cognitive abilities. The power that flows from this can then be deployed in pursuit of prioritized 'self-goals' (Wajcman & Martin, 2002), which means a person who derives a sense of identity from the skills and attributes they possess could use those skills to their advantage, thereby reinforcing their identity through their work. For example, Ian did this with his refusal to engage with people who did not reinforce his sense of self by paying him what he thought he was worth. This results in 'new economy' motivated persons who may intensify the competitive nature of the workplace, reinforcing identities through salary and perks (Collinson, 2003).

An archetype for the high-achieving IT professional can therefore be suggested based on a mechanistic world view, where providing solutions is paramount, things exist to be overcome, and failure is to be avoided (or at least rationalised as a necessary learning experience). A close identification with role, being aware of impact on others, a sense of worth and the rewards that can be extracted also appear commonplace. The definition of self and others on the basis of education and skills and an identification with role, workplace, and experience

appear to be another feature of a high-achieving IT professional archetype. Such an archetype does not appear to be comparable with that of the stereotyped IT professional as a ‘geek’.

14.4 Identity at Work

This section discusses the way identity work is performed by the various participants. The analytical model of identity construction developed earlier is used to frame a discussion of how participants build upon the commonalities identified in the previous section to develop identity capital assets, which they then mobilised and deployed in their presentation of self to the listener. The notion of identity at work in the context of the new economy is discussed, along with the possibility of changing identity and the implications of the participants’ identity construction.

14.4.1 Presentations of the Self

Essentialist identity schemes fail to provide a complete identity, and it falls to the individual to construct and present their own identity to the listener and to do so in their own way. The participants all presented their selves in self-defined terms and tended to avoid the referencing essentialist identities. Only Charles, when being mischievous, described himself in terms of age, height, weight, religion, race, or any other essentialist frame of identity. This supports Collinson’s (2003) and other suggestions that identities are not fixed, but that the participants are free to negotiate them at will. Participants worked on and presented their own identity by self-labelling, presenting themselves as different from others, discussing a changing self, and presenting an aspirational self.

One way of presenting the self is derived from the participants’ commonality of self labelling (Wagner and Wodak, 2006) presented in Section 14.3.11, where some of the labels that participants used to present themselves, such as Gerald’s claim to being a “maths geek” or David referring to himself as a “control freak” are discussed. The presentation of the self in self-labelling by the participants does not appear to be built on essentialist identity but rather appears to be extensions of the social categories of identity discussed by Calhoun (1994), Brickson (2000b), and Somers & Gibson (1994), and the social platforms that come from that. Erika adopts and presents the “workaholic” identity and Ian associates himself with the (then) trendy and popular term “angel investor”, and Frederic does likewise in framing his identity against that of the social platform of “engineer” by saying he was not a typical one, in the same way that Knights and Willmott (1999) discuss how people may frame their perceptions

of the self differently from others perceptions of a social-identity or platform. See also Vignoles et al., (2000). Harold's self-identification with being an "entrepreneur" and Ian's similar identification with being an "angel investor" support Karreman and Alvesson's (2004) assertion that affiliation is made to certain groups as a means of identity, which allow emotional significance, and personal meaning,

The use of these social platforms with which to identity may also offer the participant a degree of security and self-esteem as Collinson (2003) and Hogg & Terry (2000b) discuss. Alan's presentation of his innate understanding of his code can be seen to give him security in his employment, as his comments about how the company would cope should he depart attest to, and the "risk-taker" that David calls himself serves to distinguish his ideal self (Barnard, 1938; Barbuto & Scholl, 1988) from his peers.

The relative significance of the participants' differing assertions of their selves, such as Alan's code or being the "next port of call", or Erika's being a "geek" and a "workaholic" is not a measure or normalisation of identity or any aspect of it. Commentators like Gergen and Gergen (1984), Calhoun (1994), Gregg (1991), Wong (2002), and Nkomo & Cox Jr, (1996), support the idea of individuals assigning their own, and differing, relative importance to any particular role or component of their identity. Indeed, Erika for example, at various stages of her narrative emphasised her 'geekiness' and work-ethic, but also her self as a mother. Similarly, Alan was at pains to present his balanced self. Such a shifting presentation of the self is not unknown (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Calhoun, 1994; Cantor et al., 2002; Giddens, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Phillips, 2002; Pierce, Dirks, & Kostova, 2001; Somers & Gibson, 1994; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), and may be performed as part of life stage changes such as Alan's progression from a Junior to a Senior or Harold's evolution from cadet to self-described mentor.

An interesting presentation of the self is Charles' presentation as a tough-guy, and in particular when he says "I'm uncontrollable". In making this claim to a desired and enacted self, Charles' actions appear to resonate with Alvesson & Willmot's (2002) suggestion of control through identity. Whereas Alvesson & Willmot suggest that control can be had over people through manipulation of their sense of self, Charles assertions creates a sense of self which is, by definition, uncontrollable.

14.4.2 Identity in the New Economy

Functioning in the new economy requires the high-achieving IT professional to be adept at anticipating change, and may result in a non-linear and non-traditional career path (Arthur et al., 1999). Indeed, all the participants involved had not had conventional linear career models, although several participants such as Harold and his cadetship or Erika's involvement in the machinations of the State as part of her education and employment in a former Soviet state started off on conventional career pathways. However, the non-conventional career pathway and the resulting career success enjoyed by the participants appear to influence the participants' perceptions of themselves, their careers, and their identities. The participants' identity at work is seen as they discuss their skills and abilities, their construction in the context of work, the shared symbolism employed, their use of the flexibility offered to them, their achievements, the way they relate to others at work.

The diverse nature of the participants' skills was a noted commonality (Section 14.3.4), as was their employers' demands for those skills (Section 14.3.8), and it appears that this provides the participants with the 'ontological security' Alvesson & Robertson (2006) discussed. Alan demonstrated this well in his retelling of being 'put on a plane' and the trust that was placed in him. His apparent confidence in his abilities was reinforced on the successful completion of this 'mission' that he doubted others could achieve. Such security in his role and abilities is echoed in, for example, Ian's conviction that inventors need his skills – and that they are worth paying for. In both these participants, and the others, their abilities and identity become enmeshed.

Watson et al. (2000) have noted the contextual basis of identity formation in the new economy, noting that a person's role and not just the organisation they belong to is a key contributor. This supports an interesting observation made around this point by Gregg (1991), who in observing that when narrative inquiry is deployed, society and the adopted roles are prevalent in the individual's identity. Indeed the primary self-labelled identifications (Section 14.3.11) of many participants are directly related to the contextual nature of the new economy, such as Bruce's pragmatism in the face of new technologies, Harold's self-perceived entrepreneurial abilities, or David's attempts to control his technological and physical environment. Indeed, Watson et al.'s (2000) avocation of a role-based context of identity as opposed to employer-based context of identity is seen in almost all participants, other than Frederic – who actually created the company he was employed by.

The contextual environment of the new economy involves learning and adapting to change (Arthur et al., 1999), and the exposure to this change and the identity derived from it are seen in many participants' narratives. Alan presents himself as always willing to learn and adapt, particularly in the way he conducts himself as he adopted the professional engineering values he observed while studying and working simultaneously, thereby constructing an idealised professional engineer to aspire to. Similarly, Gerald and Frederic made much of their self-claimed ability to stand in both the business and technical worlds, which contrasted with Charles' and Erika's rejection of any role in the business outside that of technologist and service provider. While Charles' and Erika's rejection of any non-technical role could be seen to run contrary to the dynamism expected from the new economy, a closer inspection of their narrative yields a keen desire to adapt and up-skill within the confines of the technology – for example Erika made much of her learning about the PABX and MacOS, and Charles boasted of his ability to learn new programming languages whilst simultaneously delving deeper into his existing knowledge base to move beyond competence to expertise. These personal skills and characteristics that these participants believe they have acquired appear to be used by them to reinforce their identity in the new economy, as suggested by Beyer & Hannah (2002).

Adams & Marshall (1999) note that shared values, ideologies, and norms influence the formation of identity through the communication of signs, symbols, meanings, and expectations that are found in language, discourse or communication, and environmental features. The participants' 'elite' identity as high-achieving IT professionals is moulded by their adoption of such symbols, such as the recognition of their worth to their employer, and in some cases their willingness to act on that should the appropriate symbols not be forthcoming. Several participants talked of this in financial terms with Alan automatically asking for more money when he goes contracting, Gerald freely saying he resigned and went to a competitor for more money, and Ian's expression of his self-worth. In this regard, these participants believe they have maximised their outcomes as Cote (1996b) suggests people may. Even Erika's expression of her ability to earn more at another employer should she decide to do so serves to reinforce the symbolism of this as part of her construction of her identity.

As the flexibility of the new economy has allowed these participants to negotiate their remuneration and hours of work, which acts as a sign and symbol (Adams & Marshall, 1999) of their success and importance to their employer, a strong responsibility to the employer, the client, or to the technologies used starts to pervade the narrative of some participants. Alan

related an episode where a client was sold a solution that looked as if it might not work and how he took charge; David talked of people pitching in and helping as part of a server shift operation; and Bruce relies heavily on his being sought after to solve the problems of the computer centre as part of his identity construction. These participants appear to revel in the challenges, and to identify with the enormity of the task at hand. They see it as a rewarding challenge (Locke, 1968), and the flexibility they get as part of an organisation in the new economy as a reward for their ability – and affirmation of their identity.

Dealing with the flexibility of the new economy is also seen in other parts of participants' narratives. Examples include Alan's quest for paid employment, which was met with the structured mindset of recruiters who view new employees as passive recipients ripe for socialising into an organisation's culture (Beyer & Hannah, 2002) as part of the induction process, and Gerald's exasperation at the close-minded nature of the unionists active in the organisation he was a GM in. Although Alan does not appear to see it himself, he is frustrated with those who only see traditional career models and not those of the 'new career' (Arthur et al., 1999) he has built his technical prowess and identity on. Alan rejects attempts to assimilate him and exerts his own identity as a high-achieving IT professional with a strong engineering background, while Gerald rails against what he suggests is the short-sighted vision of the unionists and how they could actually earn more money under his plan.

The dynamic flexibility of the new economy, and the participants' engagement with it in their terms discussed above, suggests that they derive identity from it and yet are apart from certain aspects of it. They are related (Sekaran, 1989). For example, Alan reinforced in his narrative that he believes his technical skills and prowess are independent of the organisational politics, while also believing that these skills are a requisite for the organisation to continue to operate. He gives the impression he is above politicking and while being aware of the hierarchy he is happy with his place in the structure of the organisation. By employing and condoning this distance from politics, he expresses his identity. The integration and expression of his identity and his role reinforces the dynamics of business operating in the new economy, which in turns leads to a discussion on the implications of Alan's identity. Similarly Ian's operation on the periphery of the commercialisation of technology until required and sought out, or Charles' freely claiming to be uncontrollable attests to the identity derived from their place in the new economy, but not an enmeshment with it.

In presenting their identities in the new economy, participants appeared to provide support for Collinson's (2003) discussing of 'workplace selves', 'civilised selves', 'achieved selves', and

‘crafted selves’. Their self-made niche in society is presented accordingly. Participants such as Alan and Charles made much of their achievements and what they had done or overcome. Participants such as Gerald, Frederic and Erika demonstrated their workplace selves as a distinct and separate entity from their other selves – whatever that may be, and how these multiple, and potentially conflicting, identities can co-exist as Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), Doolin (2003) and Thornborrow & Brown (2005) suggest. Indeed, the observations of Karreman & Alvesson’s (2004) professionals at a large corporate, and their creation of what amounts to a ‘workplace self’ is also supported.

Another interesting emergence of identity generation in and from the new economy was seen in Erika’s labelling of herself and her colleagues as “The Eastern Bloc”, Gerald’s interaction with some of the other employees in his company who he considered full of themselves and self-importance, or Bruce’s lament about nobody else giving up any power or control. These participants appear to frame themselves, and their actions and reaction in relation to these other people in their work, and they present a story (Halford, 2003) of how they are either different or the same. Such actions support Down & Reveley’s (2004) claims that identity is formed by their very interaction with their colleagues, yielding a narrative that is a product of the actor’s environment (Calhoun, 1994). Barret (2001) has observed similar environmental influences to those above with US naval aviators, who define themselves in terms of their role as pilots and warriors. It is also consistent with Beyer & Hannah’s (2002) investigation of engineers entering new work settings, and Adams & Marshall’s (1996) reference to how an individual’s personal or social-identity is partially shaped by the living systems around the individual.

14.4.3 Changing Identity

The inter-relationship of environment and identity discussed previously implies that the elapsing of time should be considered in the evolution of individual’s narratives and their identity, including how they change. Indeed, Beyer & Hannah (2002) have acknowledged this by performing a longitudinal approach to their study in their understanding of the narrative self of technically skilled individuals integrating into the context of a new workplace. Less explicitly, Doolin’s (2002; 2003) understanding of identity and change explored the dynamic environment of clinicians evolving into managers, and the resulting shifts in identity as a result of that environment over time. The changes to participants’ identities is seen in participants’ work on their identity, their evolution over time (which they are perhaps less aware of), and their deliberate presentation of a changed self.

Changing identity is evident in the identity work performed by some of the participants in this study. For example, Alan presents his identity when commencing university as an under-trying over-achieving adolescent. With a realisation that failure was the result of a lack of effort, Alan has evolved his identity into that of the high-achieving IT professional via that of the professional engineer. Likewise Charles has evolved his identity from that of bullied schoolchild to overcomer and potential bully, and Harold has evolved his identity from that of industry cadet to entrepreneur. The participants appear to have sought out one or many identities, which in turn have facilitated their being identified by others as high-achieving IT professionals by the very action of being referred to participate in this research.

Some participants' identities have evolved throughout their life and been transformed in a manner consistent with that suggested by Alvesson & Willmott (2002), Halford (2006), Kroger (2002), and Marcia (2002). From his single focus on developing his skills, Alan has realised the consequences of his single-minded approach both in himself and in his career (Arthur et al., 1999). He has developed an identity that steps outside the singular of the IT professional to that of a rounded individual in a structured manner, and incorporates amongst other identities that of partner and home-maker. Likewise, Gerald makes much of his changed identity from being a ruthless corporate axeman to a compassionate leader of men. The participants all appear to have formed a foundation of their identity (Watson et al., 2000), and consciously regulated their identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) ensuring that they are seen in a particular way by the listener. The reflections made by the participants on themselves, and how they may be seen, have changed and evolved to include the 'not-identity' Watson et al. (2000) also discuss, most noticeably in Frederic's self labelled identification as not being a typical engineer.

Charles presents another interesting facet of changing identity, both as he gave his narrative and from a longitudinal point of view. His sense of self as an addicted smoker and his claim that he consciously asserted a non-smoking self is an example of conscious and deliberate reconstructions of his self, as presented to the listener. Likewise in his presentation was a seemingly competitive one-up-man-ship in matters related to areas of identity perceived as relevant to the listener, such as weightlifting and hunting/shooting. As he became aware of the listener's interests in these, his narrative expanded and digressed into long monologues that projected a desired self, as a hunter, a shooter, and as a strongman.

14.4.4 Implications of Identity Construction

The implications and consequences of identity (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006) appear to have influenced and had implications for the participants in this research, and in some cases their partners, their colleagues and their employers. As Beyer & Hannah (2002) have noted, there is bi-directional influence between personal identity and context/environment. The participants also act upon any identity-based deficiencies they encounter in their self, their placements of themselves in the now and the future influence their actions, their focus on completed tasks is an important part of their self, and their willingness to utilise their position.

An example of the effects of the contextual environment influencing the construction of identity is seen in Alan's conviction that he knows the software inside out and the identity he draws from that. Whether his confidence is warranted is a moot point, but this belief can cause him to be somewhat flippant about industry accepted software development protocols and concepts such as documenting code, project time lines and deliverables. He is quite open about his padding of deliverables by noting that things can and often go wrong, so by doing this he does not 'over-promise and under-deliver'. When discussing other industry norms like documenting code, Alan's confidence in his abilities causes him to breach industry norms. While negative consequences such as reduced efficiency and time-to-market may have yet to be fully felt, positive consequences such as predictability and reliability have been felt: Alan is known as reliable and dependable and these actions and the subsequent knowledge appears to be a plank of his self-described identification as being 'the next port of call' for technical help.

In Alan's case his self-perceived lack of credibility from not having an IT-based qualification was implicated in his resignation and return to study for IT specific credentials to cement his place in the workforce. This appears to have been in order to achieve self-direction and greater personal responsibility in his career, as Weick & Berlinger (1989) suggest could occur. Similarly, Erika's refusal to teach was because she felt inadequate in one skill set that she felt ruled her out of sharing her other skills.

Many of the participants did not appear to consciously or actively consider the future in their narratives, such as David's not engaging with his overdue retirement, Bruce's vague gesture towards going consulting, or Erika's stated contentment in her current role. They appear to focus on the present, but with a 'feel' for the future as opposed to active planning, with it not being the destination that matters to Alan, but his journey (Nicholson & West, 1989) in the 'now'. Many of the participants' narratives provided support for Tan & Hunter's (2003)

suggestion that technology professionals will move on when they no longer feel challenged, have nothing left to contribute, or are fulfilled (Weick & Berlinger, 1989). How this affects Alan's relationship with his employer can only be surmised, but his past suggests it will be announced to his employer in a way that is preceded by cues from Alan, but may well come as a surprise to his employer.

Participants also appeared to build their identities on completed works, such as Alan's desire to see a job through and be there to the end and his self-identification with such an attitude and actions. Other examples include Gerald's mathematical modelling, Harold's integration of businesses, or Erika's network maintenance efforts. The responsibility shown to their employers and the task at hand is a component and consequence of this identity construction (Knights & Willmott, 1999) and this stand alone, stoical requirement of the job has developed symbiotically with their personal identity and the context or environment, which influence each other (Beyer & Hannah, 2002). The participants do not discuss uncompleted works.

As discussed earlier, the flexibility of the new economy has allowed these participants to negotiate their remuneration and hours of work, which double as a sign and symbol (Adams & Marshall, 1999) of their success and importance to their employer. In addition, a strong responsibility to the employer, the client, or to the technologies used starts to pervade the narrative of some participants. These participants appear to revel in the challenges, and to identify with the enormity of the task at hand. They appear to see it as a challenge with great reward (Locke, 1968), and the flexibility that they get as part of an organisation is an implication of their identity work and an affirmation of their identity. What happens when their identity is not affirmed is seen in Ian's comments about not being valued: he will disengage.

15.1 Introduction

This investigation used narrative analysis to explore the narrative identity of nine high-achieving IT professionals at work. In giving their narrative and constructing their identity, participants employed their words and stories, their location and certain artefacts associated with their location to present a desired identity to the listener. Several contributions to theory are highlighted, including in the support for existing theory, a new theoretical model of identity construction, and the suggestion of an archetypical high-achieving IT professional in the new economy. Some further contributions to method and practice are proposed, before the limitations of this research and possibilities for further research are discussed.

15.2 Contribution to Theory

This investigation did not use hypothetico-deductive reasoning or predetermined binary outcomes prior to the investigation commencing. The use of post-positivist lines of inquiry allowed the hitherto unheard voice of the high-achieving IT professional to be heard in a way that expands on Schein's (1996a, 1996b) broad definition of 'operators', 'engineers' and 'executives', with a contribution to the literature around the identity of the 'identity worker' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) and into atypical identity groups (Whitbourne et al., 2002) which they constitute members of. Support has been found for existing theory, and new theoretical contributions have been made in terms of the model used in the analysis of the participant's narratives and the proposed basis for an archetype of the high-achieving IT professional.

15.2.1 Support for Existing Theory

In attending and listening to the participants' narratives, support for a wide area of existing theory was uncovered. A non-exhaustive list of theoretical support is found in development of the identity asset model, in the roles and types that the participants presented, in the participants' use of their knowledge and skills, their presentation of multiple selves, the extra-narrative used in presenting their desired self, the use of the 'not' in working on their identity, and the ontological security they obtained.

The analytical model that was developed as part of the analysis (presented in Section 3.5.4 and discussed more in the next section), provides support for Adams and Marshall's (1996) identity propositions, Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) identity work, and Cote's (1996b) identity capital. Indeed, considerable support for Cote's (1996b, 1997) identity capital resources was found and was discussed in Section 14.2.4. In obtaining the individual identity assets by narrative analysis, support has also been found for Halford's (2003) observations that storytelling is an important way identities are constructed, and Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) suggestions that identity scripts are built through narratives.

Support for the differing roles that participants can adopt was seen, such as the observation that identity is constructed in the workplace by role, as opposed to employer (Watson et al., 2000), is seen in almost all the participants. Indeed the idea of a bi-directional influence between personal identity and context/environment (e.g. Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Hogg & Terry, 2000a; 2000b; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Stryker, 1987), and was seen in these participants, such as Alan's apparent need to be needed in his elite identity (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). This elite role was also played out by Charles as he enacted what Chmielewski & Wellman (1999) refer to as 'Geekus Unixus'. Other roles were also adopted by participants such as that presented by Ian-the-entrepreneur.

Roles can be considered types, and there was support for Schein's (1996a; 1996b) presentation of the engineering, operator and executive types. In gathering the participants for this study, people were asked for to nominate "high-achieving IT professionals", and three distinct types naturally emerged: coders, managers and entrepreneurs.

Participants expressed using their knowledge and skills to their own advantage, not only as part of their identity work but also, as Gerald and Ian so clearly demonstrate, for their own financial enrichment. Participants 'held the floor', as Riessman (1993) suggested, for significant periods of time. The expressions and identity work of participants around their skills and ability, and their awareness of the value that employers place on these, support the tradability and commodification of knowledge that Knights & Willmott (1999) and Reed (1996) amongst others (e.g. Buckman, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Eliasson, Folster, Lindberg, & Pousette, 1990; Nelson & Romer, 1996) refer to. These expressions also appear to support the 'renting' of that knowledge, as addressed by Gibbons et al. (1994) and Walker (1999).

Existing literature around the multiplicity of selves includes Gregg (1991), Somers & Gibson (1994), Collinson's (2003) differing selves at work, Thornborrow & Brown's (2005) use of

“multiple identities”, and Davies & Harre’s (1990) shifting selves. For participants like Eika who presents herself as both “geek” and “workaholic”, as well as “normal” and “mother” while in her current role, the multiple sense of self is clear. Similarly, the evolution of the self can be seen in Alan’s progression through the ranks, Charles smoking self, or Gerald’s contrasting his ‘old bastard’ self with his ‘new compassionate’ self. Such a shifting presentation of the self is not unknown (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Calhoun, 1994; Cantor et al., 2002; Giddens, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1999; Phillips, 2002; Pierce, Dirks, & Kostova, 2001; Somers & Gibson, 1994; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), and may be performed as part of life stage changes such as Alan’s progression from a junior “bum-boy” to a “Senior Software Developer”, or Harold’s evolution from cadet to self-described mentor. Indeed, the idea of multiple selves put forward by Collinson’s (2003) discussion of selves was supported in this investigation. One example was Erika’s active and aware presentation of her ‘workplace self’, the ‘civilised self’ of her escape from a homeland where one could be shot, her ‘achieved (technical) self’, and the ‘crafted self’ of her happiness at work and play.

The potential for identity formation to be founded on, and expressed with, items outside the spoken narrative exists. These items could include participants’ physical surrounds, their actions and mannerism or items they possess. Several participants used extra-narrative items as a means of constructing and expressing their identity, such as Alan’s wearing of the company T-shirt and display of his ‘on-leave’ email, Bruce’s statue of “The Thinker”, Charles’ targets, David’s map, Gerald’s resume and use of the “bunker” in which to give his narrative, and Ian’s office and suit. The display and use of these items appears to support Halford & Leonard’s (2006) talk of unspoken artefacts of identity in their investigation of workplace subjectiveness, Davies & Harre’s (1990) acknowledgement of the non-verbal in identity expression, and Riessman’s (1993) noting that attending to the experience is an important part of the analysis as is noting things that are not said.

Expressions of the not-based identity, where participants frame their sense of self according to what they are not, were seen in many participants’ narratives. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) discuss an ‘anti-identity’, and Vignoles et al. (2000) suggest that:

“I cannot have a sense of who I am without a sense of who I am not” (Vignoles et al., 2000, p.340).

Such expressions were seen in many differing aspects of the narratives, as Alan framed his self as not educated or not interested in conflict, Bruce claimed he was not creative, Charles identity work that he was not a smoker or satisfied with “just competence”, and Frederic was

not a typical engineer or micro-manager. Such expression and sense of self are placed in the context of who and what the participants are not, supporting both Sveningsson & Alvesson's (2003) and Vignoles' et al. (2000) suggestion.

The ontological security that Alvesson & Robertson (2006) discuss suggests that people have a need to have their identity reinforced to themselves. Alan's rejection of the recruiters' ideas that he was a graduate or his needing to be needed in his mutual dependency identity asset, and Ian's refusal to engage with people who did not reinforce his sense of self by paying him what he thought he was worth, support the idea of this ontological security. Such events may also offer the participant a degree of security and self esteem as Collinson (2003) and Hogg & Terry (2000b) discuss, and act to provide a reaction plate for identity work with colleagues (Down and Reveley, 2004). Alan's presentation of his innate understanding of his code can be seen to give him security in his employment, as his comments about how the company would cope should he depart attests to. Alan's actions reinforce the ideas of Karreman & Alvesson (2004) around the relationship between success and identity. The "risk-taker" that David calls himself serves to distinguish his ideal self (Barnard, 1938; Barbuto & Scholl, 1988) from his peers which as Hogg & Terry (2000b) and Karreman & Alvesson (2004) suggest, serves as a source of self-esteem and self-value.

15.2.2 A Model of Identity Capital and Construction

The analytical model of identity construction presented in Figure 14-1 consists of general sources of identity which inform individual identity assets developed and accrued by a person. The model suggests that identity work is performed as a participant moves between these identity assets that he or she has created and the performance of an enacted self presented to the listener. The validity of this model lies in Riessman's (1993) fifth methodological step, believability, in qualitative investigations.

In the model, these general sources of identity could include essentialist identity structures such as age, gender, role, and sexuality, or other identity resources related to education and work. Indeed, a comprehensive range of such roles and resources were used by the participants in this study. The identity capital assets are conceptualised as being developed and accrued by individuals, and can be identified by close attention to the identity work evident in a participant's narrative. These assets may partially overlap one another, both within a participant's narrative or across the narratives of differing participants, and stand on their own right. They are consistent with Cote's (1996b) ideas of identity capital resources and Davies & Harre's (1990) ideas of positioning and conflicting multiplicities of self. The

identity assets identified in this study could be categorised as based on social and technical skills, memberships of particular social groups, effective personal behaviours, psycho-social development, personality attributes, and individual success and achievement.

The identity work that occurs between the assets and the performance of self is akin to Watson's (2008) identity work between social-identities and self-identity. The model therefore is an integration of Cote's (1996b) identity capital model, Watson's (2008) model of managerial discourse and self-identity, and the analysis of the narratives obtained in this investigation. However, while Watson (2008) suggested that identity work was the performance and action that occurred as participants moved between social-identities, the model developed in this investigation views identity work as occurring between individually constructed and personal identity assets, which are not limited to social-identities. These identity assets of the participants are more in accordance with Cote's (1996b) suggestion of identity capital resources.

The performance of the self is achieved by the identity work of the participant in mobilising and drawing on their identity assets in everyday conversation. This identity work performed is a contextual based action that involves the listener, and may be unique to that event as the participant presents their 'workplace self' (Collinson, 2003) to the listener. The performance take the form of using story and metaphor, resources and roles, and symbolism and extra-narrative. In engaging the performance with the context and environment, the stories and symbols (for example) being told can be worked on as they unfold which in turn influences the identity assets of the participant. The performance and the identity work are a dynamic and reforming process.

Overall, it is suggested that the model of identity construction developed for this study is a useful way of conceptualising and understanding the identity work involved in performance of the self. As such, the model can be used by other identity researchers in investigating the narrative identity of research participants in other contexts. In particular, the integration of general sources of identification with a notion of reconceptualisation of Cote's notion of identity capital, and the basis of identity as narrated and performed, provides a theoretically grounded and empirically informed model for future research.

15.2.3 An Archetypical High-Achieving IT Professional

The construction of the identity of a high-achieving IT professional is a subjective one, and its argued presence in the participants' narratives infers the existence in some of an archetypical

high-achieving IT professional. That the referrers of participants had no difficulty in identifying others as being high-achieving IT professionals, and indeed uttered phrases like “oh, you have to speak to ...” also suggests that an archetypical ‘high-achieving IT professional’ exists in some form.

The existence of the ‘geek’ as a ‘type’ was explored in Section 3.2.1, and appears to form the basis of many people’s own construction of IT professionals, with high-achieving IT professionals even more so included and polarised in this construction. The social constructed ‘norm’ or ‘type’ promotes patterns of behaviour in the individual that are associated with such a norm or type (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). The potential for the existence of a particular community of identity, such as the geek, has been identified (Zaretsky, 1994), with Mennel (1994) noting the ability for people to ‘play roles’, possess mutual identification around objects or concepts, and ‘we-images’ such as presented by the participants who identified accordingly. The ‘self-knowledge’ that is created is a social construction is inseparable from claims to be known by others in specific ways (Calhoun, 1994). Examples of this include the anonymous letter to www.geek.com, the establishment of the ‘geek.nz’ internet domain (Wood, 2002), or the professed actions of Charles and Bruce in restricting access to technology by others. Indeed Chmielewski & Wellman’s (1999) investigation into self-identifying ‘Geekus-Unixus’ showed them to be young, single, white, educated males, who spend much of their time on the internet, and spurn popularist software such as that developed by Microsoft which is perceived to be of poor quality. Charles would appear to fit much of the above, but for his age and relationship status. Perhaps related to these expectation of behaviour is the perception amongst geeks that they are not taken seriously by the rest of the populace (Wood, 2002), such as Erika claimed.

However, the validity of categorising high-achieving IT professionals as geeks can be questioned. Somers & Gibson (1994) ask:

“Why should we assume that an individual or a collectivity has a particular set of interests simply because one aspect of their identity fits into one social category?”
(Somers & Gibson, 1994, p.66)

Indeed, the suggestion that high-achieving IT professionals are constructed as geeks, by the participants themselves or from the listener’s analysis of their narratives, is not supported. Even though some participants use this term as a label of their self, much of their narrative does not support the stereotyped geek mentioned previously.

Instead, the findings of this study suggest that an archetype for the high-achieving IT professional can therefore be proposed based on the common elements identified presented in the participant's narratives and the identity construction performed by them. In particular, such an archetypical high-achieving IT professional could be considered to possess a hierarchical and mechanistic world view where solutions are paramount, things exist to be overcome, and failure is to be avoided or learned from, to closely identify with their role and workplace (as opposed to their employer), to be aware of their impact on others, their worth, and the rewards they can extract, to define self and others on the basis of education and skills, the apparent desire to be needed, a keen focus on relationships (appearing to reject a technology stereotype), and the use of aspects of the new economy in constructing their sense of self. These commonalities that emerge from the participant's individual narratives are a new contribution to the knowledge of IT professionals. While other researchers have contributed common traits and behaviours (e.g. Tan & Hunter, 2003; Pettigrew, 1973) of people in IT, no known work has revealed the commonalities in narratively constructed identity assets of high-achieving IT professionals,

For example, Bruce's narrative revealed an expansion on the more generic turnover decisions of Ainspan (1999) or the more specific role-based speculation that technology professionals will move on when they no longer feel needed suggested by Tan & Hunter (2003). In the context of this needed identity asset, Bruce presented a dual aspect to his needed narrative in suggesting that he is needed not only by those who seek to obtain his services, but by those he would be leaving. This dual aspect does not emerge in the literature of turnover decisions and high achieving IT professionals.

The observations in the literature that work must be meaningful and can become so absorbing or consuming that it interferes with things such as family (e.g. Knights & Willmott, 1999) is worth noting. However, participants such as Alan, David, Erika, Frederic, Gerald, Harold, and Ian seemed particularly aware of the impact of their work on their family and the importance of their family to them, which would appear to suggest that these high-achieving IT professionals are well aware of the social costs of being too absorbed in their work. The expressions of relationships with peers and colleagues, as well as their family, suggests that these participants do not conform to any technology stereotype. That they can be considered high-achieving IT professionals by others, and also express a sense of self as family people, indicates such stereotypes lack validity in high achieving IT professionals.

The new economy, and the participants' engagement with it on their terms, has been discussed throughout the analysis of their narratives. It appears that the participants derive identity from the new economy and yet remain apart from certain aspects of it. Participants reinforced their belief that their skills and prowess are independent of the organisational politics, while also believing that these skills are a requisite for the organisation to continue to operate. They gave the impression they were above politicking and were instead result-orientated. These expressions attest to identity derived from their place in the new economy, but not an enmeshment with it.

15.3 Contribution to Method

The complexity of identity research has been noted by Kerpelman (2001) as requiring differing paths of investigation. Similarly, Schwartz's (2001) calls for different methodological approaches to identity research. More specifically, narrative investigations have been called for by commentators such as Whitty (2002). The use of a narrative methodology in this investigation heeds these calls, and has contributed an example of narrative identity analysis. Methodologically, this approach detailed grounded analysis of participant narratives with a theoretically informed model/framework for understanding identity work in practice. The application of narrative inquiry to the study the identity of high-achieving IT professionals is believed to be novel.

15.4 Contribution to Practice

The new economy allows for and creates a wide and dynamic range of contexts within which the IT professional and their employers operate. The desire for each to manage that interaction for their own outcomes has been shown to exist (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Harrison & Laberge, 2002; Orlikowski, 1993; Pettigrew, 1973; Snis, 2002). Indeed, the ethics application for this research hinted at the potential for abuse in findings for practice, and some participants were reassured while giving their narrative that the listener was only interested in listening to them, as opposed to building a 'managerial tool' for some nefarious purpose.

The dominant cultural stereotype of high-achieving IT professionals – being some type of technology obsessed, introverted and socially inept, geek – appears to have no validity: these

high-achieving IT professionals did not define themselves primarily in terms of technology and evidenced an awareness of the importance of relationships with others. Rather than being content to remain technologically defined, many of the participants took advantage of the opportunities for identity construction offered by the new economy context, and emphasised their managerial, business, and entrepreneurial abilities.

Because the context-dependent nature of one's identity means identity may be manipulated (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Brickson, 2000b) by the manipulation of knowledge and skills, and because of the potential for abuse, no contribution to practice for managers is made beyond listening and understanding of people in cooperative behaviours – as may be obtained by the study of identity (Dukerich et al., 2002). Indeed, it is the listener's strong view that people should listen to each other more, communicate more openly, and not abuse the trust that others place in them. Nevertheless, it is hoped that a more sophisticated understanding of IT professionals, as proposed by this study, can have a beneficial influence on workplace and organisational relations inside the IT industry.

15.5 Limitations of this Research

Issues that might be considered limitations in this research include the mis-application of quantitative values, the situated nature of narrative solicitation, and the lack of a gendered analysis, each of which will be addressed in turn.

Metrics for validity in quantitative research consider sample size, generalisability and possibilities for extrapolation, and representative sampling. This research involved nine participants, which is inadequate by most quantitative metrics but more than adequate in intensively analysed qualitative work. Indeed, this number of participants was sufficient to allow the emergence of commonalities across the participant narratives. Nevertheless, no attempt is made to claim that generalising or extrapolating to large populations is possible, desirable, or even a valid objective. No attempts were made to assure a representative sample, but three distinct and noticeable major industry career paths in the New Zealand IT industry did emerge and were present in the study.

The giving of a narrative is a situated event, where location, timing, participants, and past and future events influence the content and the giving of the narrative. Because of the situated nature of the narratives in extended interviews, the identity assets that emerged from the narrative analysis cannot be said to an exhaustive or absolute list. The narratives were all

given during a single recorded session during a normal business day and at the participants' place of work, it therefore it would be unreasonable to suggest that the identity assets that emerged in such a context reflected the participants as complete and whole persons. However, it is assumed that there is some validity in the presentation of self in this context reflecting the presentation of a working self to others.

A possible theme for research into technologist's identities is to adopt a gendered lens for analysis (e.g. Carroll & Mills, 2006; D'Mello, 2006). No effort was made in this investigation to factor gender into participant selection or to impose a gender balance, just as there was no effort to impose other distinctions such as age or ethnicity. While this may be a shortcoming of this research, a gendered analysis was beyond the scope of the study.

15.6 Further Research

The potential to take this research in differing directions exists. Possibilities include a longitudinal investigation of the nine participants, the development of an artificial neural network, a consideration of gender, the consideration of differing industries, and further exploration of how identity assets are developed upon general sources of identity.

The potential for a longitudinal investigation exists into the nine participants, to see how the unfolding of time impacts on their constructed sense of self and, if performed by another listener, to test the validity of the analytical model developed in this study. Beyer & Hannah (2002) have acknowledged this by performing a longitudinal approach to their study in their understanding of narrative self of technically skilled individuals integrating into the context of a new workplace. Indeed, the listener is aware of events for many participants in the years since giving their narrative, and can speculate on how these may have impacted the identity assets that emerged in the narratives they gave.

The analysis of the identity assets that was done in conjunction with the analytical model suggests that some assets inform each other. If these assets were to be conceptualised as discreet entities operating and influencing each other, growing and forming based on general sources of identity, and in light of identity work as part of the performed self, the potential for mathematical modelling using the principles of artificial neural networks exists.

The only participant to refer to gender was the only female participant, Erika, and this arose as she placed herself in the context of her work. This suggests a field of inquiry in the

possibility of gender-based identity work by both male and female technologists, as they grapple with the stereotyped gender roles of technology-based employment.

The potential for this type of investigation into the construction of identity by high-achieving professionals in contexts other than the technology industry also exists. Weick and Roberts' (1993) study of heroic pilots and Doolin's (2004) research into clinician identity are but two examples of contexts in which high-achieving professionals construct their identity in terms of their work.

The analytical model that has been developed in this study could be further developed. In particular, the processes or mechanisms by which the identity assets are informed and developed from the general sources of identity presents an area for further investigation. One possible pathway for this could be to include Eckert's (2008) dynamic fields of meanings and a more detailed micro-analysis of the language used by participants.

15.7 Summary

This investigation has used narrative analysis to explore the identity of high-achieving IT professionals at work. Nine participants gave narratives that ranged from one hour to three hours, and all chose their place of work in which to give it. In giving their narrative and constructing their identity, participants appeared to employ their words, their stories, their location, and certain artefacts to present a desired identity to the listener.

An identity-asset based model that incorporates identity work emerged from a consideration of identity theory in conjunction with narrative analysis of the data. This model suggests that general sources of identity (e.g. age, role, education, gender) are used by individuals to build identity capital assets, which are then worked on and deployed as part of giving their narrative in performing a preferred self to the listener. While previous investigators have suggested that this identity work was the performance and action that occurred as participants moved between social-identities and their performed self-identity, this suggestion was not observed or supported in this investigation. Rather, the identity work appeared to be between individually constructed and personal identity assets, which were not limited to social-identities.

Contributions to humankind's body of knowledge include support for the existing theory of identity capital (in the form of assets in the above-mentioned model), in the roles and types

that the participants presented, in the participants use of their knowledge and skills, their presentation of multiple selves, the use of extra-narrative artefacts used in presenting their desired self, the use of the 'not' in working on their identity, and the ontological security they obtained from such identity work. New theoretical contributions include the analytical model of identity construction, the commonalities that emerged from an examination of the participant's narratives, an apparent rejection of the technology or 'geek' stereotype, the use of aspects of the new economy in constructing their sense of self, and the emergence of an archetypical high-achieving IT professional.

Further directions for investigation that could build on this study include a longitudinal investigation of the nine participants, the development of an artificial neural network that may be able to simulate some aspects of this model, a consideration of gender, the consideration of high-achievers in differing industries, and an exploration of how the identity assets in the analytical model are developed upon the general sources of identity.

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Appendix I Generic Initial Email Contact

The generic text of the email used to initially contact prospective participants:

Hello [Participant],

I was speaking with [your referrer] last week, and he suggested that you might be able to help me in my quest to find potential participants for my PhD research. I had told [your referrer] that I was looking for IT professionals who are considered high-achievers and who are successful as seen by their peers, colleagues and clients, and he mentioned your name.

Accordingly, I was wondering if you could spare a few moments to meet with me, perhaps over a coffee, and we could sound each other out, and I could fill you in on the sorts of people I am seeking and what it would entail should you decide to agree to participate.

This research is being supervised by Professors Felix Tan and Bill Doolin, and entails a (recorded) discussion about ones career to date and ones views on some matters. Naturally I have ethics committee approval and all the associated documentation.

I look forward to hearing from you and meeting with you soon.

Cheers,

Adam PR Taylor
Lecturer
Auckland University of Technology

<http://www.aut.ac.nz/crism>

What is your educational background?

This question was intended to loosen up the participant, and given that it may be similar to the interviewer, build a rapport in that way Orr (1990) observed.

Please describe how you entered the industry, and why?

This question was intended to build on the above, as well as expose some motivators.

Why do you stay the industry?

This question was intended to build on the above two.

What is your role in this organisation? What have you been doing for the last 6 months?

This question was intended to obtain insights into the participant's perspectives on relationships and interactions with others, both in the short and long term,

Please describe a day in your life.

This question was also intended to obtain insights into the participant's perspectives on relationships and interactions with others.

What is a good day for you, and what is a bad day? Examples?

This question was intended to explore polar opposites and context, and the language used to define them.

Who do you work with? Describe them.

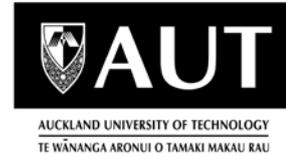
This question was also intended to obtain insights into the participant's perspectives on relationships and interactions with others. Context and status.

How would you describe yourself? How do you think others see you?

An overt question on self-identity, and a query on perception of others perception.

What are your thoughts on the sales-and-marketing people you have or do work with?

This question inquires into perspectives on status and rewards



Consent to Participation in Research

Title of Project: **The socially constructed identity of high-achieving IT professionals in the new economy**

Project Supervisor: **Prof. Felix Tan, Prof Bill Doolin**

Researcher: **Adam PR Taylor**

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet dated 10 January, 2006.)

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.

I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

I agree to take part in this research.

I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research.

Participant signature:

Participant name:

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 2 July, 2004 AUTEK Reference number 04/47

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

MEMORANDUM***Student Services Group - Academic Services***

To: Felix Tan

From: Madeline Banda

Date: 2 July 2004

Subject: 04/47 The constructed identity of alpha-geeks in the process of commercialising new technology

Dear Felix

Your application was approved for a period of two years until 30 June 2006.

You are required to submit the following to AUTEK:

- A brief annual progress report indicating compliance with the ethical approval given.
- A brief statement on the status of the project at the end of the period of approval or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner.
- A request for renewal of approval if the project has not been completed by the end of the period of approval.

Please note that the Committee grants ethical approval only. If management approval from an institution/organisation is required, it is your responsibility to obtain this.

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Please include the application number and study title in all correspondence and telephone queries.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda

Executive Secretary

AUTEK

CC: 0437997 Adam Taylor

Appendix V Adams and Marshall's (1996) Identity Propositions

The identity propositions of Adams and Marshall (1996) are categorised as follows.

Individuality and Relatedness

The socialisation process of humans appears to be a paradox between individuality and collectiveness, or the self and the other. The individual needs is a sense of uniqueness as well as a sense of belonging, and the underlying process behind enhancing one's sense of self as a unique and individuated person is the differentiation of various aspects of the self. The socialisation that facilitates differentiation results in a sense of feeling significant, or of being important, to the self as an autonomous individual. This individual will have varying, differentiated and valued self-features. They further note that the socialisation process enhances the individual's sense of belonging to others and caring about them by integrating the individual's identity out of a selection of possible faces and voices. This leads the reader to their first three identity propositions:

7. Identity Proposition Number One

The social and individual functions of socialization indicate that there is an underlying need for identity that is part of being human. The individual dynamic is the need to be individuated, unique or special. The social dynamic is the need to belong, to be connected, to have union and fellowship with others. Both dynamics serve psychological and social well-being through feelings and self-perceptions of mattering to oneself and to others.

8. Identity Proposition Number Two

The individual dynamic (need) is to enhance one's sense of self as a unique and individuated person. Intrapersonally, this centres on the differentiation of various aspects of the self. Interpersonal processes focus on the emergence of an autonomous self from that of others. Socialization that facilitates the individual dynamic will result in a sense of mattering to the self as an autonomous individual with varying differentiated and valued self features.

9. Identity Proposition Number Three

The social dynamic (need) is to enhance one's sense of belonging and mattering to significant others. The intrapersonal processes focuses on the construction of the self within many socially possible faces or voices. Interpersonal processes centre on communion and connectedness with others. Socialization processes that facilitate this need result in a sense of mattering to others in the form of a social (collective, role, interpersonal, or group) identity.

Adams and Marshall have built on Erikson (1963; 1968) and others in observing that if the differentiation is of a high degree, an extreme uniqueness results, and that there is likely to be a lack of acceptance by others. This reduced integration can lead to a degree of

marginalisation, with the individual occupying a place on the periphery of the social grouping, and the conclusion from this is that community will be found amongst the other marginalised persons, who interact with and on each other. This shaping and being shaped by ones environment leads to Adams and Marshall's fourth identity proposition:

10. Identity Proposition Number Four

An individual's personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual, but the individual's identity can shape and change the nature of these living systems.

This flow of logic is taken one step further, by claiming that the differentiation of individuals allows for unique contributions to the group, which when interacted with every member of the group can threaten the uniqueness of the individual. A paradox emerges where the unique contribute something new, and then the new is adopted by the many and ceases to be unique. A balance is struck in which the system may disintegrate if the uniqueness and the differentiation between members is too high, or the system fails to hold if the uniqueness and the differentiation between members is too low. This provides for the fifth proposition:

11. Identity Proposition Number Five

Differentiation and integration serve to shape the identity of life systems. Thus, identity is a necessary part of human social groups in that it contributes to the structural characteristics of permeability, continuity, and coherence of each life system. Permeability is the adaptive nature of the system in its relationship to other systems. Continuity and coherence give the structure identifiable features over time.

The Nature of Selfhood

In generating the next collection of identity propositions, Adams and Marshall (1996) have drawn from the likes of Marcia (1993), Erikson (1963; 1968), Berzonsky (1990; 1993), and Waterman (1985) to simplify and state the following four identity propositions:

12. Identity Proposition Number Six

Identity is a social-psychological construct that reflects social influences through imitation and identification processes and active self-construction in the creation of what is important to the self and to others.

13. Identity Proposition Number Seven

The active self-constructive aspects of identity is founded upon cognitive (or ego) operations that organize, structure, and construct/reconstruct knowledge of the self.

14. Identity Proposition Number Eight

Identity, as a psychological structure, is a self-regulatory system which functions to direct attention, filter or process information, manage impressions, and select appropriate behaviours.

15. Identity Proposition Number Nine

Like all social-psychological constructs, identity has its own functional purpose. The five most commonly documented functions of identity include: providing the structure for understanding who one is; providing meaning and direction through commitments, values, and goals; providing a sense of personal control and free will; striving for consistency, coherence, and harmony between values, beliefs, and commitments; enabling the recognition of potential through a sense of future, possibilities, and alternative choices.

Process of Growth and Development

Adams and Marshall (1996) have noted the existence in the literature of (western) identity being selected from a variety of sources, and can be developed from imitation, conflict resolution, and idealisation. Self-awareness is presented as a key contributor is a desire to change, as in distress, incompatibility, inconsistency and a sense of incompleteness. All of these may take place in a dielectric process, and are followed by a desire to change. They note that social settings are a source of influence, and that society may provide institutionalised situations that can facilitate imitation, inspirational, and aspirational models for people to use in the process of growth and development. In drawing from Erikson (1963; 1968) and Parks et al. (1998), Adams and Marshall present propositions ten to twelve.

16. Identity Proposition Number Ten

Identity is an ongoing process. It can be altered through processes of (a) identification and imitation and/or, (b) when self-awareness, self-focusing, or self-consciousness is heightened or incongruity exists between the self-as-known (real self) and the self that could be (ideal self).

17. Identity Proposition Number Eleven

Identity can be assigned or selected. In most modern technologically complex societies it is selected. What is selected is a set of psychological and interpersonal goals based on the values of individuation (feeling unique), self-determination (freedom to act), social approval (to be valued by others), belonging (to be with and cared for by others), social responsibility (keeping ideological and interpersonal commitments), equity (fairness and justice), and caring for or about others.

18. Identity Proposition Number Twelve

Each society has sensitive points in the life cycle where rites, rituals, institutional expectations, or regulations heighten self-focusing behaviours and identity formation. These sensitive points are often referred to as life stages or phases (e.g. adolescence, midlife crisis, etc.). Each sensitive point has certain socially recognized (and often informally stated) social expectations that a maturing individual is

expected to address through experience, thought, individual choices, and self-transformations.

Person in Context

This section of Adams and Marshall's (1996) work is founded on similar observations to those discussed in Section 2.3.4, namely that the context is an important contribution in the construction of identity. The final three propositions, below, are founded on accepting the premise that all knowledge is created and shared in a relational context, and that all social experiences have relationships and context. In reading these final three propositions, it should be noted here that these propositions are mis-numbered in some printings of Adams and Marshall's (1996) work:

19. Identity Proposition Number Thirteen

Like all personal knowledge, the self is constructed in a relational context. Thus, identity is constructed through a person-in-context.

20. Identity Proposition Number Fourteen

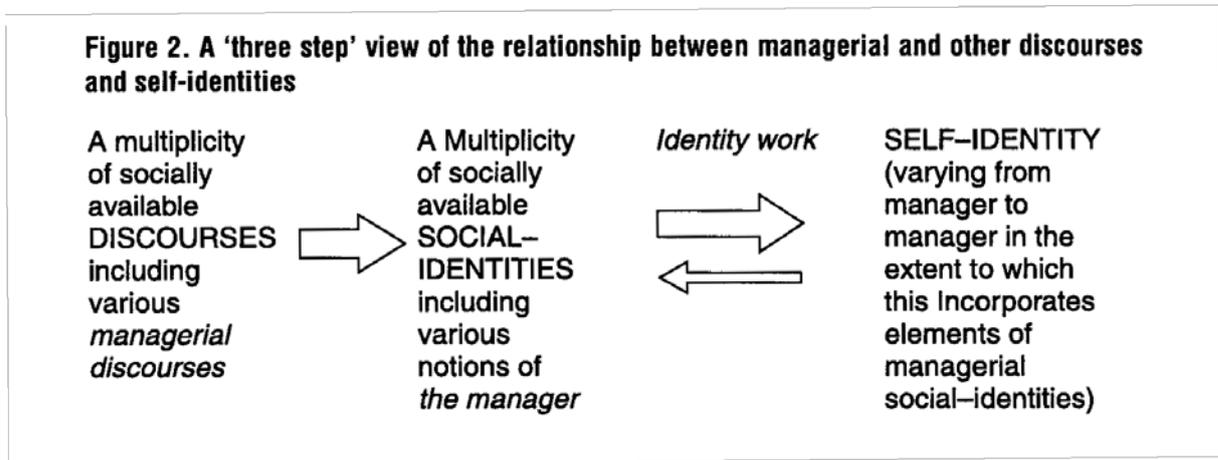
Relational influences include macro-environmental features of culture, economics, population demographics, politics, institutional values, physical environments, social class or caste, race or ethnic membership and micro-level features such as interpersonal communication, conversation, written word, media, and common or routine daily interactions.

21. Identity Proposition Number Fifteen

The macro- and micro-environmental features influence identity formation through the shared values, ideologies, or norms that are socially constructed and communicated through signs, symbols, meanings, and expectations that are found in language, discourse or communication.

Appendix VI Watson's (2008) model of Identity Work

Watson's (2008) model of Identity Work as Figure 2 on page 128 of "*Managing Identity: Identity Work, Personal Predicaments and Structural Circumstances*", and is reproduced below:



Watson (2008) suggests that:

The small arrow in Figure 2 recognizes that individuals themselves make inputs into social-identities: they have scope to interpret or even modify the role given to them in the 'script' of any given social-identity. And the fact that the model refers to multiplicities of discourse and social-identity and to a variety of managerial discourses and 'notions of the manager' is a recognition of the stress which previous empirical research has increasingly put upon the plurality of often competing discursive influences ... The use of identity-making resources varies from person to person, from occupational group to occupational group. For some people who work as managers, doctors or academics, being a manager, doctor or academic is relatively central to who they take themselves to be. For others it is peripheral. And for perhaps the majority of people, their occupational identification is just one part of their life and their notion of self ... recognize that identity work projects 'outwardly' as well as 'inwardly', we conceptualize identity work as follows: Identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives. (Watson, 2008, p129)

By the end of that job I was starting to think "I don't really want to be here anymore"

Flitting about all over the world, and all over hemisphere.

Exactly, yeah

Staring at [large inanimate objects being controlled]?

Exactly, it's yeah, basically your life goes on hold and that's the big thing about the industry. Um, and one of the senior programmers had actually left at the end of the previous year and gone back to restudy basically software programming, um she'd been in the industry about 20 by that point and knew PLCs and SCADA systems inside out but hadn't really got into actual programming application type of programming, so she went back to study for that. Um, she got to the point where she was completely fed up with the industry as well in that she had been on site a heck of a lot of her life, um, and her husband was actually in the Navy and he was on boats quite a lot of his life so they often were away at the same time, but sometimes you know didn't actually get the overlap as well so they were used to life and he'd just retired so she was thinking about it as well, deciding 'nah, its not the way to go anymore', and that's always in the back of your mind when somebody has essentially been your mentor and senior and teaching you how to go decides to make a U-turn in the career, you start to think, "Uh, is this kinda where you want to be", so it basically been in the background and by the end of that year essentially I was starting to think 'nah I don't really want to get to that point in my career' where it's basically you get to a point where you go "How did I get here". Um, start thinking about it and I decided that I was very much interested in programming, very much interested in computers, but this industry wasn't the way to go so I started looking around as to what else can you get into programming wise, and there's obviously application programming, business applications, um anything like that where basically in the office you're based in one country generally, unless you're getting into more sales side of things, which didn't interest me. Um, so I started looking around at what sort of things I could get into, and probably round about the point of when I started that job in Singapore, at the end of that year I was looking around, I'd decided rather than get a job in the application programming straightaway, um, I didn't really know enough about that sort of programming, so I wanted to go back and retrain. So I was basically looking at [one university] or [another university] which it had just become, and decided on the [the other university] as being more applied type of programming and, um, it was pretty much a new course at that time. So at the end of that year I handed in my resignation, um a month before the end of the [overseas] job, um having already applied and been accepted for [the other university]. Um, finished off that job and as kind of probably seems pretty usual for me I was last to leave the building on my last day, just finishing tidying up the job and doing the final email and back up and that sort of thing, so of course I was also IT admin side of things on and off as well so, generally when you leave a building it's all security and that sort of thing, they take the key off you as you leave but it like "Oh, OK, I'll lock the door behind me, better come in next week and actually hand in all everything" 'cause I knew exactly what I had to, 'cause I'd got to hand over to quite a few people all the time, um, so I always find that quite amusing that you're the last one to leave on your last day [laughs]. Um, so anyway, had I think it was one week off in the end before starting Uni so end of

January, I think it was when that started, because of having done the degree and the work experience I got to cross credit basically a year's work of work, so it went from three to two years plus one paper, so I had to do an extra one in one of the years, and those sort of papers would be like statistics, um communications, you know all the non actual programming papers which anybody with any experience generally doesn't need anyway, especially having done that sort of stuff in engineering already. Um, so I basically got to concentrate.

They're not exactly hard anyway, are they?

No [laugh] but tedious if you have to go through it. So I was very happy I got to avoid those. Um, there's basically all the programming papers so there's a couple I could have avoided but I chose not to, um, just to make sure I didn't miss any grounding. Um, say for example there was Programming I and Programming II, Programming I is Introduction to Programming in General, Programming II is Object-Orientated onwards type of stuff. I actually did those at the same time. They weren't too happy about that sort of thing.

Programming I would be a prerequisite for Programming II.

Exactly.

All stuff about how to execute files and compile them and all that sort of stuff.

Exactly. You know all the real simple stuff and what an "If" is and what a "While" is what a ...

How to do a 'For loop' and all that sort of stuff.

Yeah, all the simple stuff and then getting into a bit of designing, what they call transition diagrams, and you know you need a bloc here if an "if" you need a bloc here for a "while", out it all flows and that sort of stuff, and actually throughout the degree there's a few prerequisites of what to do at the same time which was reasonably unusual to allow anybody to do that.

Did you, how did you talk him on to that?

Um.

Did you just plonk your CV on the desk in front of him or something?

I basically did a CV as such for the course, basically an application plus a CV of what I'd done and experience. And went to see the er, forget what his title was, but basically the guy in charge of the degree, went to see him directly and um talked to him about, because I've done general application I also talked to him about how I could cross credit sort of thing. What sort of path I could actually take, and did it in the two years without breaks I actually had to do some of those things at the same time, and some of it he wasn't too happy about, but, um, like the Programming I and II, I proved that you know I really wasn't a problem so from then on it was kind of like, well you can achieve this so its not too bad.

When you get your grades back, when you 'Ace' it or something

Basically Programming I, was quite a funny story 'cause with that, um I actually digress slightly. In the Engineering degree I basically sat back and did essentially nothing. Didn't get to know the lecturers, you know big lecture theatres anyway, um, had a group of friends sort of thing but wasn't particularly interactive in the lectures or anything at all, and one of the things I decided going back for this degree, first of all I wanted to do it, second of all I want to be good marks.

So, wanted to do it as opposed to just did it 'cause you didn't have anything else to do?

Exactly [tape change] OK, so at [the other university], um, it was two hours lecture time a week, two hours tutorial time which is basically in the computer lab, um, 30 people at the most with the tutor going through all your different problems that you had to do in tutorials, so you got to know your lecturers quite well, plus, um, I decided to sit within the front two or three rows, always.

That was a conscious decision?

Definitely. Um, pretty much when I was like at school, high school and that sort of thing, I wasn't particularly outgoing or anything, and um didn't like really talking to new people sort of thing, so it was very much a conscious decision that 'yes I would actually get in there, be involved'. Um, sat in the front rows um some times I couldn't quite make it in big lectures but as time went on I was always in the front. Asked questions if I wasn't sure about anything, um, generally got to know the lecturers, er that sort of thing, but, like, doing two papers.

First Extract:

You know, there was some who would take it to another level, you know, for example can't have an argument with my partners daughter that split infinitives are wrong so I continued to split my infinitives cheerfully.

Yeah, I wouldn't even know what a split infinitive was.

When using the verb 'to'. To be absolutely sure, is not a split infinitive because the adverb 'absolutely' has not become come between the 'to' and the verb 'be'. Right? Whereas if you say, um, 'to slowly go' that's a split infinitive. You are saying 'to go', that's the verb, 'to go slowly' is correct, or 'slowly to go', but 'to go slowly' or 'to slowly go' is a split infinitive. Now some say that a split infinitive is wrong. I've chased that one up through, um what I regard as the Definitive Book for English Grammar, which is Fowler from Oxford University. And Fowler says, use split infinitives where they make sense, 'cause trying to avoid a split infinitive all the time leads to some quite awkward statements, 'up with this I will not put' for example. 'I will not put up with this'. 'I will not put up with this', 'up with which I will not put'.

Yeah 'I will not put up with this', um to me seems

'Which I will not put up with'

Yeah

Mmm. But that's, that's, that's the two case of clarity in language, and that's what Fowler says, and there are some constructions, see there's another one, everyone talks about 'construct' not. You construct something or you deconstruct it, or you don't construct it, but something that has been constructed is a construction.

Yeah, the word 'construct' has become a noun.

Well it's a verb

It's become a noun

No, it's American. In English it's a construction. [Laugh] So there are some cases where, with the partner's daughter we agree, some cases where we disagree!

[Guffaw]

Ok, anyway, let's get on with this.

Second Extract:

And that was amusing. Went on to the 6th form, um I was accredited UE but I played, I played in the 6th form it wasn't at all challenging. I had a couple of teachers that I regarded as dried cardboard, and so, cardboard cutouts, that I didn't do much work for them.

What subjects were they?

Um, oh English, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Applied Maths. I...

What was, what teachers were the cardboard cutouts?

Oh, that was the English one mostly, Chemistry, English and Physics I think, can't remember who I had for Physics but it didn't do much for me. English and Chemistry were great, English was a, no English was great it was um, one teacher who was someone who I prefer to forget, can't remember his name, which was probably just as well. He and I got along really well, I sat up, I sat up at the front of the classroom, right under his nose and 'doodled'. He couldn't stand it, but he also made sure I was doing, made sure we were, I was right up on the work that we were doing, and, er, 'cause my father was an English teacher so I had an advantage over the other kids. I had an enormous library to go through at home. And I did, I read it voraciously. I learnt to read when I was four and have been a voracious reader ever since. I'll even read advertising if there's nothing else to read, simply for something to read, and, er so I read all the stuff. We were doing 'Joan of Arc' and, George Bernard Shaw's 'Joan of Arc', I think it was Shaw, doesn't matter anyway, play was 'Joan of Arc' and, um he suddenly threw a tantrum, raced over to the far corner of the classroom and, er, sort of, er asked me what on earth have you been talking about, so I told him, and went on with the rest of what he was going to talk about and expanded on it and filled it in with, in a bit, with some of my opinions about what was going on, had the class in fits of laughter on the floor and then went redder and redder and redder in the back of the classroom. And then I finally stopped and said, "Is that enough sir?" ... So, er I had some fun with him. It's like you get a yoyo on your finger and you just play it through. And, er the Chemistry teacher was also neat. Um, and I'd had some interesting encounters with staff when I first got to school and college. I was the third of our family to go there, the second one of the family had been top of the class all the way through and was heading to be dux of the school. I arrived in the 3rd form and they thought, oh good here's some more potential, and they started pushing me quote 'just like [my brother]'. Well, of course, ah to be compared to my older brother and try to be pushed to go in his direction was like, um.

This guy's

Holding a swam of wasps in front of the nose of a bull, the bull's going to dig in and go into reverse. As strong and powerfully as he can 'cause he knows that wasps are not pleasant to investigate. So, it was like, so I was like a bulldozer in reverse. At that point, and er I set out to try and establish my identity by being 'me', and there was practical jokes being performed around the school, none of them, none of the stuff I got into was every destructive, except of staff members reputations, and the way in which the school will look at them. You know, I had a ball at that, and by the time I was in the 5th form I was starting to do caricatures, drawing, and I'd developed, started looking in staff members and development, and then when I got into the 6th form I thought, well, ah yer, that's, 4th form I'd really been kicking up, and my academic was of course dropped from very high to average because of the

wonderful encouragement I'd been getting from staff, yes. And, er I was just losing interest in everything. So, they demoted me to 4B to try and wake me up and...

You'd previously been in the 4A or something

Oh, the A stream yeah, which was quite challenging. I went through school with Judge [named] of the Employment Court, he's done well for himself, in a different way. But, um and others like that, bright, bright people. Um, they put me down to 4B, well I just about died of boredom in those classes. The ways in which the teachers handled everything there, instead of having the discourse with the students and getting us involved in the learning, er was just pure dictation, dictation was what I shall, how, with my hand tied behind my back, I just wanted to get on and do things. In the end they'd get, they'd set us some work to do, I'd have it done in 5 seconds and spend the rest of the class just staring out the window. Well, I was bored to tears. Appar-, I didn't know at the time, but at the end of that year, my mother went up to school and baled the head master up in his office and gave him, went up one side of him and down the other as well as giving him separate pieces of her mind about how they were destroying her third son. And, er now I get back to school in the 5th form year to find I'm start back in 4A, I've got some good teachers, got some better teachers this time rather than the ones that were bullying me, like the other ones. By the time I was in the 5th form I was getting ready to hit out. Um, because I'd been the youngest in the class up to then all the time, and when you are a child being the youngest in the class means you're also physically the weakest, and there's not much you can do against those who are older, 'cause they just had so much extra strength, but this time I had to go, I had that go earlier on in the year with that bully, and that really set my confidence right I went into the 5th form year boiling a bit, I was ready to lash out and set myself, set, set, you know, enforce my, um independence as it were, right to be an individual. But the good thing was I got good teachers and the subjects, by that time, had some material in them that was worth learning, so I applied myself and I did pretty well for School C. 6th form year, well things went down again, um the teacher material wasn't too bad. I was still in the 'A' stream and still had some good teachers, and I did alright for them, but was spending a lot of time, in class, surreptitiously drawing teachers, and coming up, figuring out caricatures that emphasized, the personality, rather than the, just doing a picture of the staff member, where people would look at and see the personality and say, yes that's that teacher, and yet lampoon it at the same time. I did a lot of this stuff until the end of the 6th form year I started posting the pictures up on the walls around the school. Um,

I can imagine how that went down.

Well, the, school themselves, the school kids, thought they were fantastic, and, sort of, a bit of a cult following started to develop from those, amongst the, amongst the rest of the students but nobody knew who was doing it. Not the staff, because I didn't sign it

Ah Ok, I got yer.

And I, er, continued this in the 7th form. Now in the 7th form there were, [that] was the name of that English teacher, er bit of a wooden brain guy ... He went from [my high school] to, er, um [another], they were welcome to him, poor buggers. No sense of humour, that guy, absolutely dead, you could, you could talk to him with your tongue planted firmly in your mouth and he took you absolutely seriously. Seriously. You could flatter the guy. He wouldn't pick it up. So, er got to the 7th

form. I enrolled to do scholarship. Um, had some good teachers in the 7th form, in fact I thoroughly enjoyed the 7th form year. I actually loved, I actually put, put, my ears back and did some work, and I enjoyed it, and the teachers were good. Looking back I should have just done a little bit more and then I might have got a scholarship. Er, as it turned out I was 45 marks in aggregate off the bottom end of the last scholarship awarded, and I remember I was also well up in the A bursaries. I was absolutely fucking annoyed by that. That. Really. Got. Up. My. Nose! So if I'd just done a little bit more work I would have got the schol, and that was worth quite a bit of money. So, but anyway, um, I did university for a year, I was 17

Were you, 'cause you were a year up right?

Yeah, I was a year ahead of myself, I was 17 when I went to university.

Third Extract:

I'm also doing weight training for my shooting, I started that recently.

Do you shoot?

Oh yes.

What do you shoot?

Targets. Not people [laughs] Too tempting

Clay bird?

No, I've done, I've done some clay bird shooting, I enjoy training, I've had one go at skeet had an, had amazing amount of fun at that, but I've never really gone back for it. Nah, it's just paper targets at 25 yards, indoor range, .22 long rifle. Made the mistake of getting good at it

Yeah. So, um, another reason I do, I do a lot of hunting myself.

Yeah, well I've done some hunting it's. Got sick of being, got sick of being shot at by turkeys who didn't know what they were doing. I'd say, after two occasions down [a mountain range], idiots, growing that weed tobacco ...Used to go shooting goats up there in the high, high meadows. Wild goat, 'cause it was neat to take the dogs up, take the .22, take the .303. The um, Forestry Service would drop by and inspect your rifles, you left the .22s under the sleeping bag so they didn't see them. And you showed them the .303s and all, and a little bit of the .303 ammunition you brought along, and they'd drive off happy, and you'd pull out the .22, don't use a .303 for shooting a goat. Does too much fucking damage to it.

I was always hard working, quite conscientious and I, and I, I mean, I like work, but, and I'm a bit of a workaholic I guess, in all the main subjects, not just ...

And then, once you graduated, what was your first job?

So er, once I graduated, that was another interesting thing, that when you graduated you, then you would have three years of um, not sure how to translate it. You would go wherever they sent you, well you had some [cough], some choices, but most of the time these choices were not in the big cities and the, I was raised and born in the capital of [my birth-country]. There was no way graduating from any university that you would get a job in this city or any other big cities of the country. Most, usually they were in the countryside or in smaller cities and you would have to just pack your bag and go for three years there, and then, and you've got this er, period which was called, how I would translate it, stagery years, would there be such a, stagery, like,

It sounds more like a, an internship or something?

Something like that. That would be right. So, anyway I chose, ah, some IT um, centre away from [the capital] um, but er, I managed to get to the um, higher level so there was the Ministry of Chemistry and then there was another centre below, the lower level was er, in other area of the chemical industry which was coolants and fertiliser, this lower level. Er, it's hard to translate in English because these words come to me in [the language of my birth country], it's really hard. So the organizational unit was in [the capital] so I managed to transfer myself to [the capital] quite easily and to work in their IT centre, and I started there doing Cobol and Fortran programming ... It was good, I, I liked it, I liked it more than Cobol anyway. So I carried on with Fortran a lot, I felt, on all sorts of things until the last thing I did before I left [my birth country] was Fortran 77 on PC. My last Fortran thing, and um, following that I started in Oracle. So while still in [my birth country] my son was born in '89 and um, at that point I was er, in between um, Fortran and Oracle had already gone onto this Oracle part and I carried on Oracle after I left [my birth country] and South Africa and here."

Why South Africa?

Er, South Africa because um, so, we wanted to get out of there anyway, both my husband and myself, and we

And er, an interruption, how did you meet your husband?

Er, we met at, well at school actually on a, on a trip er, we graduated from the same school, he's one year older but we'd known each other so we friends, and er [pause] So we decided we wanted to go, he's a mechanical engineer, by the way, so um [pause] Er, well I, he had some ideas of trying to get out before '89 and for some good reason he decided not to try because the chances were that he would be, could be, shot or put in prison or whatever, and, because we were together and that kind of thing. That was good, because in '89 things had changed and we had a lot of hopes and that things really improve in er, Eastern Europe, and when we decided that they wouldn't improve in our lifetime and we already had the kid, we decided now we would pack our bags and go. So he left for South Africa and I stayed behind

because, and [my son], our son was only, one, was two and a half when we left, and um, he just left um, without any proper arrangements so he just left with a large um, suitcase [laugh], a large lump of money on a tourist visa, and he got there and he had some tough times, but he managed to get his first job and, and he got er, another job and er, when he felt secure enough he got us over there, and as soon as I got there he said, "well ma (?) I think, what do you think about going to New Zealand?" [laugh] Um, er yeah, South Africa is a very, you have nothing to South Africa I don't know if a good time, if it will ever be a good time to go back there, but it is a beautiful country.

I've got some friends -

It's very nice there.

Yeah, got some South African friends, and they're great, and -

Yeah. It is really a shame what's happening over there and what's happening, so I wish that they will find their way out of what's happening and get decent lives [pause] over there and um. But yes, as I said, violence and er, your life was really no value at all to a lot of people so it's just amazing how life has got no value. You could be killed for absolutely nothing, no reason at all. So [pause] why New Zealand? Um, because [pause] it's far away from all the rest of the world and it's not, things are going to be good and I think they will carry on to be. [laugh]. As far as the rest of the world as possible, because it's got a lot of water and we've always liked water and er, water sports and um, swimming and sailing and everything. Er, because we knew it was very nice and we like outdoors and picnics at the weekend. We didn't know much about the people and that came as a nice er, really surprised when we got here on the people were very nice. So we always thought since we came here that we made the right choice. The only problem we had was my husband trying to get work here. So because he worked in [my birth country]and with the big industrial contracts [cough] there was nothing like that for him to do here. So guess what? He had to retrain and what he retrain to? IT as well! So no use working in IT as well. And my son, his brain, he's also working in um, very IT structured way as well. We are family of geeks! Which is very frustrating for me, it's really frustrating yes. I'm probably the most balanced one because I've been in the area for longer, and [pause] I know where to draw the line and um [pause], and um, so yeah, that's -

I don't, I, I, yeah. [pause] I mean if your husband's a mechanical engineer then yeah making the jump over he'd certainly be smart enough, that wouldn't have been a problem.

Yeah, he's got, I mean he's got this technical mind.

We did have the source code and stuff for Unix running on our PDP 11, but some companies like, [pause] who, they developed a version of Unix to run on the old 68-oh-9, the Motorola architecture, and actually that was our first, here, and that was our first network, computing was based on an old 6809 with, um, 20 dumb terminals connected to this single centralized CPU which was running a thing called Flex which was a derivative of Unix back then. Oh, we learned a whole lot about Unix, and a lot of, our guys went on to do, you know, become managers and the like in a lot of computer centers and that around the country, and went off shore with some of the bigger companies. They did very well out of it, um, from those beginnings, so we learnt a lot about Unix-type operating systems back then too. But I think Novell network stuff became the local area networking thing back then in here. Well [pause] they actually picked up [pause] a file server and a whole lot of [pause] NEC PCs at an auction, er [pause] and that was our first, um, DOS based distributed network we put in here was Novell version 2.1 I think it was. Er, they had Novell, we got, got involved with Novell 1.1 I think it was they were using in the Computer Centre, um and various departments around here started to get their own Novell file servers, er version, probably version 2, 2.1, and we had (cluck, cluck, phew) a dozen, [pause] as many as 20, file servers with local area networks attached, scattered around here, well, the place. Every department had their own, [laugh] because the central [laugh]

[laugh] This is building to a real disaster isn't it?

Oh was it ever, it was chaos. And that's how this whole industry grew, the local area networking and distributing computing, grew from there. I mean they had the old data centers which was traditional, with your big mainframes and, er, dumb terminals and stuff, and you'd have your Linux work stations, and that was the typical environment. We didn't have that, er.

Each department sort of building their own little Novell network

Exactly, because it became affordable each department was building their own little 'thingy'. And it was getting out of control. I guess, what, I can't remember, the Internet had taken off, well the Internet had been around for years but it came to New Zealand through Waikato University, um from the Tuia-net, um we, who used to work in the Computer Centre here, he was [pause] right into it as was I. It was a passion, was a passion for us, we lived [pause] slept computers. I'd work all night on a computer at home then come in here and [pause] work on them. It was our,

The stuff you were doing at home, was it work-work or was it interest-work?

It was just my personal interest [laugh] It became my life, my hobby, my work, you name it, it was a passion, and my mate was the same, over here in the computer center and, er well, it was a great time for learning stuff, and you learnt it by doing it because nobody's teaching it, it was so new it wasn't being taught anywhere, er [pause] not that forefront stuff, sort of that's how, and that always worked behind what's going on anyway. So, not leading edge stuff at all, so we [pause] learnt a lot personally and then bring it to work [pause] amongst our family. But he of course, he knew a lot more about it 'cause I didn't work so much with it during the day, but it was his daytime job and his hobby at night. It was mainly my hobby at night and I'd just do bits of it during the day. Er he [pause] had the foresight to buy Class B

licence, ah, Internet address for this place back then, and I think, aw I might have been [pause] the sixth person here to get an access to the Internet, and it was before the web we used to use, um Telnet and FTPs, and you had to know where to go to get stuff, but, er, some of [pause] the manufacturers and things that, you know, of the equipment that we had would have information about their equipment on line, you'd get the Telnet address from them and could go in there and get surface information and that about their test equipment and stuff we were looking after, and that was quite good, and we started evolving the ARCNet to Ethernet probably about then as well, 'cause Ethernet was very expensive when it came out. The chips, well they didn't have chips for it, it was done with [pause] a lot of electronics, and the, I think our first Ethernet network was using Thicknet I don't know if you've ever seen the size of coaxial cable

The size of your thumb.

From the heavy stuff, and you used to have to bolt on connectors to it to pierce the cable and you put a terminator on it, and that's how you connected to the cable roll, that was our first Ethernet, but within, nar I think the server, the card in the server, we had a Phillips I think it was, Unibus server running Unix over the er, the Ethernet card for that server cost, I think, \$23,000, you know, and that was just the Ethernet card?!?

Oh, when was this.

Now you're asking questions, but that would be [pause] 20 years ago [pause], um it might have been a bit more than that but, um, and then.

[laugh] that's multiples of the salary I was on then, about 20 years ago I was just about to start with the Post Office and you got paid about five grand a year or something, you know.

That's right, they were bloody expensive I can tell you that much. Um, but within [pause] 18 months of that, [pause] somebody, Intel or somebody, had developed a chip set to do Ethernet stuff, and the price just went pfeww, and became affordable and that's the way it all went. Er, so, and there's, I went to the Thin-net and all of that stuff, and er we started. Ah, I think that's when Novell started bringing out their file servers with their Ethernet cards and then we started building a network, well, the departments had their local network, they'd have the server connected to a bunch of computers, but they were all isolated, so we started to plan to join them all together so we could use, share the Internet.

Try and build a WAN?

So, yeah, that's basically what we got was a, a WAN, but everybody wanted to keep control of their own servers and it was chaos. Er, so, but we did try to allocate the address space so, [pause] well he allocated addresses for them so they could connect to the Internet. Um, but, [pause] yeah, they all had their own computer technicians and all that sort of stuff, very inefficient but it works, it got us all going. [pause] Um [pause], then over time, no, even when I moved down here in 94, there was still some departments that had their own servers but what we demonstrated to them was that we could do it, well, what was more effectively than what they could do it, and, um they wouldn't have to worry about the operational side of it, so, since then I guess we've inherited them all centrally and very few are kept out in the department. Well back in the days when I was still there of course, we had a

server and we had all our own file servers in there and we ran our own local computer centre there, um [pause] pfew, 'cause it suited us.

[laugh]

Er, and that, you know, I guess er I employed him and he was a programmer back then, to do some programming work for us, and he's been there ever since. Um, [pause] but, yeah he, while the computer centre the centralized one, er (pew) well there's a lot of politics too, of course [they], eh, was of the opinion that they owned the Computer Centre, and we could never get scheduled time or anything, so that's really why we did our own thing here, and I suspect that's why the other departments did their own thing as well. Um, but I guess over time they became pretty common place stuff and, while everybody retained their own, they were connected to central managed file servers and, 'cause everybody ended up doing the same thing ... But, nah, they wouldn't wear that, everybody wanted to do their own thing 'cause in those days, well, I suppose it's still true today. Which is all very interesting stuff if it works, um yeah. So, we've been involved with that right from day one, sort of computing, um networking, now we're getting into the advanced network. Um, yeah, what else do you really want, that's more a history of this place or computing at this place.

So you said you came over from?

Yeah. Well OK, how that happened is, you know, I'd [pause] done everything there and I'd been there, I think, um, 15 years or somethink, um I was getting a bit stagnant and restless anyway, and thinking about, yeah, moving on, things like that, and in the Computer Centre there's all sorts of stuff going on here and it was a department full of 'techies' that pull stuff to bits and, you know, get amongst it, and they weren't service oriented at all, um, and we got a new General Manager, and the Computer Centre manager had a run with him and there was a lot about the system at that time, because back then, there was a thing called Sears which was developed in house as well, well sort of, er but the programmers that were doing the work on Sears worked in the Computer Centre [pause] way back then, and, um, the Computer Centre manager didn't see eye-to-eye with anybody, and they used to be constantly fighting about the development of the programme that managed everything, and the new General Manager sort of, allowed, the programmers to be moved from the Computer Centre, and [pause] she lost control of that side of things, and she wasn't so interested in the, er distributed computing or the LAN stuff that was left to a mate who I mentioned before, but because he was, well the nature of him and the technicians that he had employed at the time, they weren't, focused on service at all, it was the technology, it was pretty chaotic. Anyway, over a shortish period of time all the best staff sort of left, moved on to other jobs, and the Computer Centre manager just sort of, said, "Bugger it, I'm out of here", and she just quit, and the place was in chaos, all their best staff was gone and it was really falling to pieces round their ears, and, for some reason, I'm not, aw that's right, the staff that were left here actually asked for a meeting with me and of course they knew me from over there 'cause I used to fix a lot of the hard problems for them, ah, so they had a meeting with me and asked if I'd come down and take care of the place while things were sorting out. And I thought, "Aw yeah, this might be a bit more interesting than what I'm doing", so I talked my boss ... about it at the time and he said, "yeah as long as you come back", sort of thing, so I came down here just, you know, on loan if you like, to look after the place while they decided what it should look like and they advertise the position and that sort of stuff. Then six months later they finally got round to, um, after a lot of workshops and all that sort

of stuff, they decided what the new manager should look like, and they advertised that and then got, what, 22-odd applicants and that was fine, good, and back up there any day soon, but, um most of the applicants when they found out where it was withdrew their application, 'cause they came from industry and didn't want to get into this mess. Yep, we've always,

Ah, so they

Yeah, so, we couldn't, you know, the candidates while they were interested in the job when it was advertised by an employment agency it was, when they discovered it was in this industry a lot of them withdrew, but [pause] they got down to one or two in the end and the director [pause] that we were reporting to, sort of, asked if I would be interested in applying for it 'cause I hadn't applied for it, and I said, "Well yeah, I might be". And I sent this in an email and apparently that turned into an application itself [laughs]. So, there came down to two of us, the external person and myself, and somehow I ended up with the short straw. Um, [pause] I think it might have pissed [my boss] off at the time, but, er it gave me a [pause] new challenge, and er, my first, I think, the first thing I did when I came here was lock the technicians out of the server room and said, "Right, you're not allowed in the server room", 'cause you know one of their practices was to go into the server room and while "This bloody server's doing something funny we'll take it down", 'peeuu', right in the middle of something and you'd have bloody people on the 'phone, abusing the crap out of you. Cause the technicians had to get the server fixed, you see. They care about the bloody,

Annoying bloody buggers, bah!

And they'd just come, unplanned changes and stuff, and so the first thing was, lock them out of the server room. The bloody reliability or availability, if you like, went up [pause] just like that overnight, sort of thing, and we would only allow a few people in there, er finally we just improved out of sight. Um, and we got more service focused, if you like, rather than worrying about the technology, and over time, er we outsourced the nuts and bolts stuff [pause] with our supplying arrangement from Cyclone Computers for example, which includes on site parts and labour warranty, and they do the work not our guys, so we don't fix them [tape change] Right, so, you know, we set about getting the back end stuff, rationalized, and reliable, and [pause] that took a while, but we also, well [pause] I was an advocate for not owning techno stuff and I worked with our purchasing department to lease all our technology, rather than purchase it, because what was happening, er, the departments that had bought a lot of kit still had it and they had very old stuff and they wanted the computer techs to keep it going, and we were, you know, it was consuming a lot of time getting old 286s and then keeping them bloody going and we're saying, "we don't support this", so we came up with the, well, in the early days what we called the Charter, which was an IT Charter and in the end we, my opening phrase in that was something about, this is the, it's not a service level agreement it was, I have, [laugh] I have an opinion about them-, er, anyway, it is a statement of service levels we can deliver with the budget we're given.

The building we've got now is um, that's an interesting story I suppose. We started off down on the other campus really, 'cause this was just a field up here ... That was fairly early on, so, 84, 85, there were three of us and that, only three of us right through 'till [pause] the end of 89 I suppose, yes. Right up to the 90s we, there were only three of us ... I was in an office on the second floor, my colleague was next door and the, and the technician was along the corridor ... And downstairs were the Oracle programmers, and there was an interesting phenomenon if you like, and that is that anything that happened with the hardware, because the technician and my colleague and I were on the same floor, we all knew that, instantly. If there was a problem with the programmers or they're, or what they wanted, it was always a drama by the time I got to know about it. The first I knew, they'd be sitting in my office saying, "We've really got a problem", and, "How long have you had it?" "Well, it started last week" and, you know, it's well, "Why the bloody hell didn't you tell me last week?". You know, and, and so it got into my head right from the start that the only way you'd run an IT department is if you're all together, you could be all together. So we then moved, as we got a bit bigger, during the 90s, we moved down to the bottom of [a building], the, all together then, we were all together. And that was one of my things, you know, we wanted to be together, and, "I need some more space, will you get-", "There's a room up-", "No I don't want a room up there", you know. So we finished up getting cramped, but all together. And then we outgrew that, we started to outgrow that, not only did we start to outgrow but we were sitting in some real prime real estate on the bottom, on the ground floor of the admin building, you know, and some of, "We want to move in [another department]", "Well, we're in the way" ... So um, we needed to, some new premises, and I scoured the whole site, both sites. I finished up with, I found [pause] this place, which then was a diesel workshop, and it wasn't anything like this, it was a barn, OK. It's hard for you to see um, it's not actually, I've got a picture [pause with rattles] of, um, [mumble, mumble] um, er [long pause] no, this one, it's was there. So if you, if you take this building, there was, that area down there [pause] was just one huge open diesel work, I've got pictures of it

I assumed this building was all purpose built, when we

No, no, it was a diesel workshop. Well, yes, it has now 'cause they bowled it

When I went upstairs there was one

It used to be a DSIR laboratory, because DSIR used to be in that building there, and we took it on, and nobody wants us to come here. They said, ah, you know, I mean even my own people, I remember coming up there and we stood up on some little stairs that were there then, looked at this and it was er, a vinyl floor swimming in diesel, with a bits of engines were all over the place. It was open, it was a, I mean it was just a barn, there was nothing else there, and I said, "We're gonna move into here", and they said, "You're joking?" I said, "No, I'm not, trust me, it'll be fine". 'Cause I knew the, the facilities management people very well, and I, just works in, you know? And I, and we had a very good relationship, and I said, "It'll be fine, we'll fix it up," and the boss didn't want to, the [executive], didn't want us because, he said, "You'll be forever asking for the thing to be modified", and I said, "Well maybe", and so he said, "No, you can't go in". But that was just before he left. And so [laugh] so, we planned quietly without him getting involved, so that when the new guy came he

Could just sign off on it! ...

It's all, it's all set up, so, I mean, you could do exactly the same in this place, you could, but that's another story. And so we moved in, and I did, I determined it better for us to be in this big barny place, all together, than be split up. So there is this big workshop here and, if you take this office for instance, this is part [pause] of the original building. I mean since the upgrade the windows have been changed, they ripped all the guts out and then at one point it was just a pile of framing and whatever, but it is part of the original structure, this office, and when we came in, there was a door here and you looked up a long corridor that went up the whole length of the building, and if you look the corridor's still there, there... And there was a wall along there, and this was an office, and there was some wall here, and this was another office, OK? Little pigeon-hole offices, do you, can you see.

I mean, until recently, they'd basically forged themselves a market in that real pragmatism, you know, if you look at the technology adoption life cycle, you know, users of technology and the companies and there's, you know, you know, once you get into that mainstream portion you work with, with a pragmatist in mainstream stuff, and for a lot of those people they'd established, and sort of seen [them] as the leader in providing those services, and they'd just quietly got and used them. You didn't, they didn't, [they] didn't need the kind of marketing promotion that a lot of technology companies do that try to hype and create momentum in the earlier part of innovation. I mean I always looked at the organisation that I work for and, kind of, and ask myself the question, would I use that organisation to do work for myself if I worked on the other side of the fence, if I was the customer, and at [there] I would have said 'no', too expensive and you didn't get the value. But [over there] I would, for the right project.

How long were you [there] for?

Four years, [pause] which is quite a while ... Considering my comment.

Yeah, it was.

Um, well there, there was growth in the role so I took on more manager responsibility, given teams to run and that, that provided a lot of growth in the role.

"When you say, growth in the role, you are talking about

Being given responsibility um, learning to manage larger teams of people er, learning to run my own P&L, learning some new accounting cycle, and that's really why I had gone to [them] to learn why they had been so successful. You know, for a New Zealand company to be 1300 people, pretty good. Australia is growing at a huge rate of knots, in the Asia-Pac region as well. Wouldn't surprise me, you know, they're probably up around 1600 to 1700 people now, and they do about \$360 million a year turnover, so they'll be, the next financial year they'll be pushing half a billion dollars revenue, so they've done phenomenally well. And there's a reason they do well.

They deliver.

And, but it's more than that. It's also how you structure a business and disciplines you put in place, the principles that run the business so, and, and how you measure things and how you don't, don't get carried away, on certain other things or chase fads, or those sorts of. So, so that's what I went there to learn, is that, the commercial of how to run a software business, that was important to me.

You had, you hadn't got that [there]?

No, definitely not. [They], [they] taught me about some of the quality aspects about process um, but also the limitations of it. Process alone doesn't do anything, so you can actually establish a strong brand, you can establish, you know, but having strong emphasis on quality you, you know, customers would perceive that they're getting a really high quality deliverable, but the issue with that is, that it could cost too much

and take too long, and it's not a differentiator. Not enough of a differentiator anyway.

It's a bit hard to measure quality: the number of bugfixes is required and,

Yeah, well there's that sort of thing and, but there was also quality in terms of presentation er, in terms of um, simple things like, if any documents had got to go to a customer um, getting your peers to review it from, you know, from business perspective, and the textbook perspective, to make the proposal make sense, and then before it gets released it has a quality release check where somebody that's really good on grammar and formatting, all of that stuff, goes over it and polishes it, and, with the view that when the customer receives a document the perception is that, you know, they receive something that is immaculate, there's not a single comma in the wrong place, and it's got virtually, you know er, it's got the er, the professional in it of a published document, you know, a book and so they don't question the price tag 'cause they know these guys are so professional.

Rather than just a spiral bound print out of A4.

Yeah. The problem is you can have a lot of very professional, well people that come across very professionally and can present very well, communicate really well, but can't add value to a business, short of following a process and, you know, a PMI program manager that can tick the boxes, write beautiful status reports, doesn't change the fact that your project's going to crash and fail and it's doomed because nobody looked at it pragmatically and saw the obvious issues with it, or had the experience to do that.

For instance, it's just jumped into my mind, from a book that I read when I was about 9 years old. There's a, there's a kid standing on a wharf with his two boats and some old salt comes up and pointed out the flash one, and the old salt just goes, "paint and putty".

Yeah, yeah, so the Asians have got a phrase which is, "looks good, no good to eat". You know, so to me that was [them]: looks good, no good to eat, you know um. With [them] they were almost the opposite end of the spectrum um, they, doesn't matter too much how you format it, you know, things got spelling mistakes, they, the formatting looks terrible but look at the core concept of what, what you're producing. You know, like doesn't make sense, you know, if you do that, if you get the, if you get the framework right then the rest of it will be successful, get the platform right.

Would you say [they] was an engineer's company?

Yeah. The um, so which one's right, actually you need both, you know, you need the professionalism and the quality, within the cost, if you need the core, the pragmatism the ability to add value.

So for four years you were [there], and then here?

Yeah.

Talk me through that.

Um, probably about 6 months ago I started to feel a little bit bored, [there]. I felt that, I had, you know, that I wasn't utilising all my skills um, and also there was no

emotional, I'd never really established emotional bond with the company. Um, there were very competent people working there um, so I'm not taking anything away from the, but there was, I dunno, maybe a certain lack of personality and that it would bug me all the way through, through the tenure and um, so I started looking around at other opportunities and got to a point where um, I, I just wasn't motivated. Ah, you know, you'd wake up in the morning and you'd think, you know, I wasn't excited about going to work and I'd always been really excited, I'd always enjoyed working in the IT industry. So I started kind of tentatively looking around and um, I'd actually turned down a number of roles that had been offered, you know, I'd been tapped on the shoulder. I was getting calls from agencies about once every three to six months all the time I was [there], and I'd either, the role either hadn't appealed or the um, or I, I was, I had either taken on a new role [there] which I felt that I needed to show some commitment to, so the timing was wrong and um, I got rung up again about um, a role [here]. I got rung up about the role [here], so a particular agency, I was actually, the agency had rung me about a role at [another company] which I didn't, I said, didn't fit my criteria and didn't interest me.

What, the perception of [the other company] is that its not too far from [them]

Yeah, not, not that far removed um, um, so I turned that role down and the agency called me up about a month later and um, and told me about the role [here] and there were a whole lot of things that appealed. You know, you mentioned earlier about um, there were a whole lot of things that I felt that had been good about [them] that seemed to fit, that were similar. There was a bit more of a focus on the product um, which with [them] and [them] it had always been about the spoke, um, so, and also, there was the [founding entrepreneur] factor. So, I mentioned earlier that I had enjoyed, I respected [the founder's first company] in the industry er, and [his second company] also had achieved quite a high profile in the industry and um, there was an opportunity to work with one of the people that had helped establish that. Um, the, I was, you know, there was also another side to that story which was the visionary aspect of it, somebody can be very visionary but it means they don't necessarily have, have the business skills to run the organisation and um, the enquiries I made about the organisation [pause] kind of indicated that they had some challenges.

In terms of processes, basic mechanics

"The actual processes, in terms of some of the business fundamentals. So um, that actually appealed, 'cause I thought, well it's a good opportunity to maybe bring what I'd learnt from [there] and places, and try and help, more of an opportunity to make an impact in a small place, unlike going to a [there], you know, thinking you can change a large place which, you know, didn't need changing. A lot of things were very successful, but um, so the, you know, it was kind of again a bit shift, a big pendulum swing, new challenges, new environment.

So, with [them] you were a shareholder, with [them] there was that transition from shareholder to employee?

No, no, they gave me shares.

Ah, OK, at [there],

Yes, but they offered to give me shares, the only issue with that is the investment period with [them] is 7 years, and they were offering that after two years, so they, I

mean, they promised them for, for a couple of years and finally said they would um, issue shares to me, and I figured there was not way I was going to work for that organisation for 9 years, so there was no point.

And then here at [here]

Um, I've got some shareholding um, and also options to buy more shares if I choose to.

So you've been here for about 5 months or so?

Three months.

Three months, oh good, OK.

Mid May, basically. Probably done 6 months work in three months.

[Guffaw –tape change]

I, you know, I, I think I'm quite a um, ah, what's the term for it. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't necessarily fit the typical mould of an IT person. I'm not an engineer.

This jumps back to the conversation we had when we first met, when you made that, that comment there about distinction yet similarity, so that's an interesting comment.

Mmm the um, I mean, I've also got a diploma in art, so I kind of...

It was all very, you know um, it was leading edge stuff, it was great fun. So you got to work on a lot of those things but the important part wasn't the technology it was the concept. It was like, "Wow could this really work, would people really buy their groceries on line", and that's, and that the models changed and the distribution models changed, but it's still going on, it's still out there and it's still working, and you can still buy your [product] online. Um, and people use it. We use it, we're gonna use it again shortly when we have another child, it would be, you know, because it's just easier to get [it] delivered than having to [out] during those sort of periods. Um, and, so yeah, it's er, you've got lots of really neat things, really, really good. The, the fact for me though was I started um, and this is a good and bad thing, I started getting pretty ambitious and, you know, on reflection, I would have been 27-28, and I was used to dealing with CEOs and group general managers and GMs and hey I wanted to be one, but not in 10 years time, I want to be one now. [Laugh] So, you know, you get pretty, you get pretty ambitious.

Yeah

So I left um, [there] and um, joined a small consultancy firm um, and er, helped set up that business, and that didn't actually, it didn't go that well um, and it didn't go that well probably because again my ambition um. Firstly, I grew it too quickly just in terms of staff numbers and selling of services, secondly, I had a big conflict with the owners because, how my remuneration was structured all around delivering results and the more sales you make the more money you earn, the more consultants you employ the more money you earn, software development etc etc, and I kept earning more than anybody else in the company including the owners. And, um, they didn't like that [laugh]. Lesson learnt! I don't mind paying my sales guys as much as, you know, they want to earn as long as they're delivering the profitability it shouldn't actually matter um, it really shouldn't. These guys couldn't get that. Um, so, after, it was only a year and we were poaching a lot of work out of [large consultancies]. One of the [large consultancies] partners just rang me up and said, "Aw you've just stolen some more work off of us". Er, I think it was [some company] they were called at the time um, you know, "We've been in there for years and now you've just come and undercut us and won all this work that was traditionally ours". "Er, yeah that's right". "So, how much did you make?" Er, can't remember what it was, [a lot]. They said, "Well come and work for us and we'll pay you [almost twice]". Well I went like er, by this stage I was probably 28-29 or so. "Yeah, sounds pretty good, when do I start?" [Laugh] Gone! Just like that. "See you later guys!" [Laugh] "I got a better offer down the road!" Um, and these guys knew what they were doing, 'cause I brought business with me um, and what they always found incredible was said, your ability to relate, and this is some of the key things we talked about the other day, ability to relate to all walks of life and all people within organisations. So I could go in and sell, as a 28 year old to a seasoned CEO, or talking to somebody down in IT about their business, the issues that they were facing, and that was just unique for some of the partners [at the large consultancy] was good, because some of them were getting on in years and they couldn't do both, and they only knew how to sell at the CEO level. Um, so, and, and the fact that at the time management consulting had turned more into IT consulting than anything else, it wasn't really management consulting anymore, it was IT consulting and I, I quickly picked up on that. Um, so went to [the large consultancy], had a lot of fun. Er, um, but again I was then approached by [a large corporate] and this sort of gets to be a repetitive record um, not really of having to apply for jobs anymore.

Yeah, as I was going to say, so far you hadn't actually put a job application in?

No

You're talking about, what now you're in your late 20s pushing 30 and you still hadn't actually applied for a job.

No, no, and now 35 and I'm actually now going through the first experience of applying for jobs and it's kind of odd, I'll get to that. Um, so [at this large corporate], I would have been 28, 28-29 I think it was, late 28 and a half um, needed a strategy manager for their [product] Division and why was it, why was I a good bet for them. Um, [the product] had a helluva lot of science behind it, particularly it has a lot of mathematics, and they had all of these black boxes developed by [product managers] over the years, and a lot of them had retired and they had no idea what was actually going on, and how their business was. Actually, the economic decisions they had been making were based off numbers but out from black boxes, and no-one had any idea if they were correct or not. So, so I came in um, I was in charge of IT, I was in charge of strategy, I was in charge of um, which strategy in [the division] is like strategy over 60 years, in charge of [everything].

I mean the one thing I guess that characterises my career is, you know, all of the roles that I've had I used have been in high growth roles so even though, you know, [they] were big corporates I ultimately moved on because they were big corporates when bureaucracy came through. If you really analyse the underlying strategy of those companies, they were start ups. You know in [one corporate] I wasn't the first CEO in New Zealand I was the second CEO so the company had been started off so, we're talking companies that were going through major transition, major product phases um, you know, which required strong er, strong, you know, strategic view and um, and, and execution around that strategy. So, I mean, there's that common thread and then ultimately the frustration of er, you know, in the case of [other corporates], the frustration of dealing with bureaucracy, you know, won through. Um, you know, in, in moving on into the sort of, the more entrepreneurial aspects of, [a venture company] was a public company but, you know, there was, the major investors and shareholders um, were, were entrepreneurs who were prepared, you know, to take risks and look at ways to rapidly grow their, the, the value of their investments. Um, so, I mean, there are some, there are some real strong common threads there er, even though at first glance they might appear quite different. Um, with um, my wife actually got quite ill while we were, or had been getting progressively ill, she'd been, she ended up being diagnosed with a very, a very serious illness so we came back to New Zealand about five years ago now, and she's had er, I spent a year looking after her um,

A year out of work, or,

Yeah, pretty much. I did sort of a little bit of contracting work and got, pretty much a year out of work, a year where I, you know, the number one purpose was looking, was looking after her, getting her through a fairly difficult illness. Um, um, and then was approached by [another venture company] to become involved in um, in a start up. They'd recently invested in a company called [unpronounceable] um,

Sorry what was the name?

[unpronounceable], a network security company so I spent pretty much, pretty much close to three years as CEO of [unpronounceable]. I'd taken it through a series of fund raising rounds, successfully um, do a then commercial product, entering the Asian marketplace er, and I handed that company on at the beginning of this year to a US based CEO, the investors were anxious to pursue a US growth strategy to get to US exit and as a board we decided that, a US based CEO was, was um, a US based CEO who was well connected telco, and I was the wrong person for that er, so I, so I, so over the period of the last five years I've been back in New Zealand I've developed a portfolio of interests in technology companies um, er, [one] where I've been a mentor to the company since it spun out of [an incubator] to this, to this day where I'm now er, not a large shareholder but a shareholder and, and, and chairman of the company. Um, [another], search engine technology, a company in [New Zealand] which I sit on the board of um, [yet another] which I, as I came out of [yet another] earlier this year I invested in [yet another] and in, and acting as CEO. Then as we go through the early phases of commercialisation, capital raising um, chair of [an advisory/advocacy group] which is a major initiative to help exporters in key industry sectors grow more quickly as they enter offshore markets. So um, I guess that, you know, as, as my career's developed I er, look for ways to develop a range of interests which, you know, once again all um, typically in and around intellectual

property, technology um, taking investment positions or board seats, but at the same time I still enjoy building teams and building companies so um, so always maintaining an executive role at, at, at, you know, each one of the companies that I'm involved with.

Do you find um, maintaining that executive role, taking the board position um, enables you to do the team building and to steer the place, steer in the direction you want, or is it that something you take on as a, for another reason?

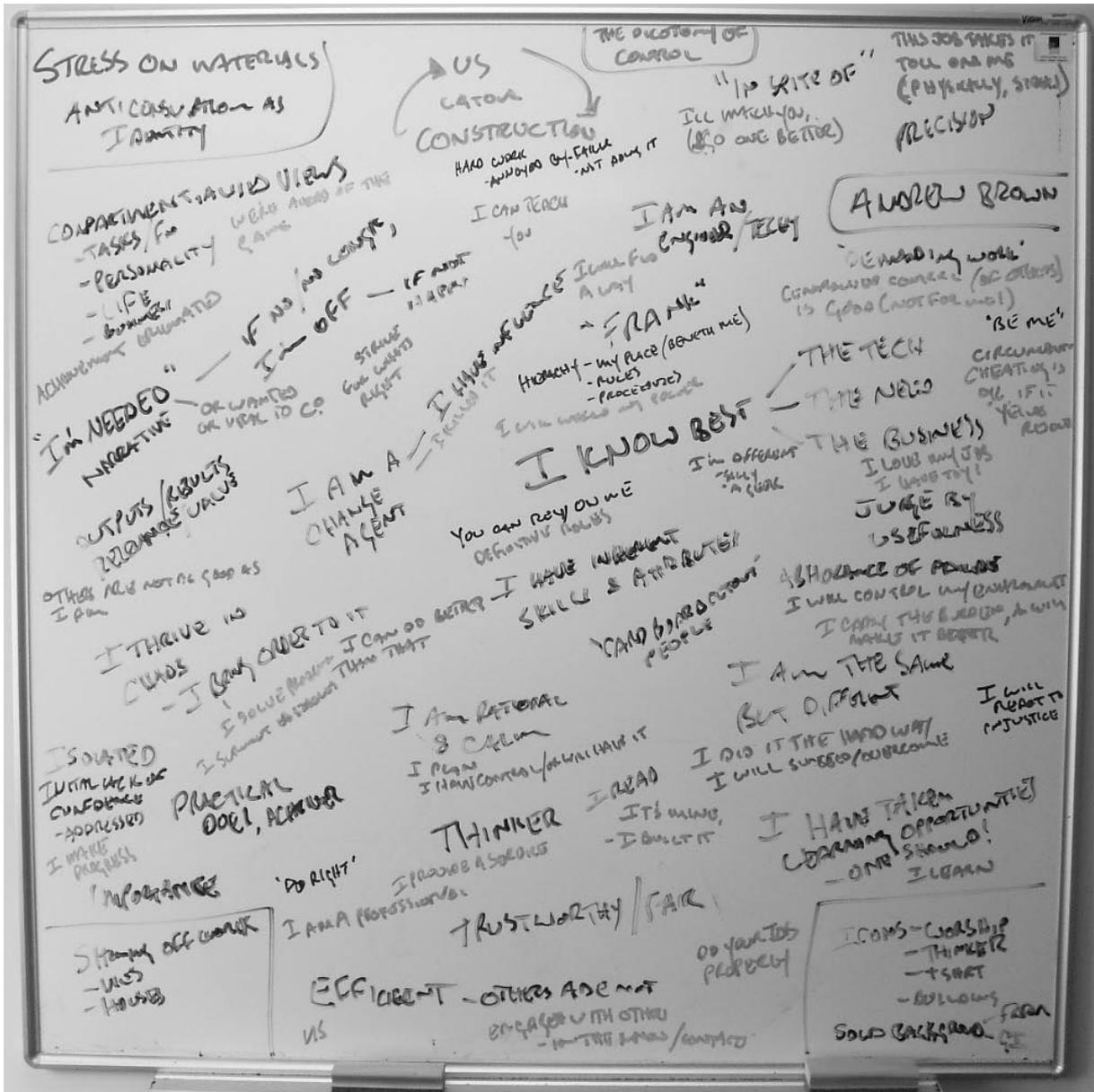
Nah, the, the, I mean I used to um, I guess there are, I mean, a number of drivers being one er, when you've had the experiences and development skills that I have um, you want to find help for as many different companies as you possibly can. Er, which is something I actively engage in terms of my, my own portfolio companies and trying to help wherever I can. So, I mean, the [advisory/advocacy group] I do a lot of work with [an incubator] looking at been working with companies and working, one of the key things that, one of the things that's most important to me is helping people grow and develop, the kick I get out of businesses, you know, not, you know, not out of the technology but actually building teams of people and giving the people in those teams the opportunity to grow and develop, it, it's, as you said it goes right back to where the experiences at [my mentors company], with [my mentor] because, I mean, I was very fortunate to have someone do that for me, so it's something I, you know, you know, I've always enjoyed it and I, and I take very seriously as a responsibility in putting things back. So, um, you know, I um, I limit the number of things I get hands on involved in um, to, you know, at any point in time I have probably four, four or five companies in my portfolio or, you know, board seats or advisory roles, 'cause there is a limit to what you can physically do. Um, you can, you know, but you, you know, within that portfolio I quite clearly have different roles and different responsibilities which is, you know, very important to realise that, you know, when you're, you know, if you're the CEO of any company you have one set of responsibilities, if you're a shareholder you have a different set of responsibilities. Likewise if you're um, a, a director er, of a company and, you know, that's it, you know, that means you may get different types of contributions to organisations. I mean for me, I mean other than the development of the company and the entry of the people, you know, I think the core skill I have to offer is, is, is, is around um, strategy um, and the way in which strategy creates value um, for companies so um, that's been something that I've developed through my experience.

So in the end I sold to [a large company] who were looking to get into the business of information technology. They set up the division, brought back a guy from financial services from [overseas] to head it up. Mine was the first of about 20 companies they acquired and I went in there with a mandate to look after my old business, it was supervisory rather than an active management role, and also to head up the sales and marketing for this bigger beast that was being established by [them] called [the company], and er, I did that. The reality is that the um, oversight of the company that I'd left didn't work that well, because they put people on to the board who knew nothing about the IT game, and one of the decisions, which I protested vehemently about at an earlier meeting, was the decision to get rid of the software from this little company ... which wasn't really gonna go far because [large vendor] was going to rule the world. So the [small] agency was actually given away to a fella ... who, for a number of years, run, ran a distribution company here ... and did very well out of it. So um, I for the next several years er, headed up the er, er, the online contract with er, [the company] their sales and marketing activity, which took me outside New Zealand for an extensive part of my time because we were looking at acquisitions in Australia with some defined segments, and then we went to the UK and we started in the UK with a business with 500 people up there. A lot of that driven around two key areas, financial services and accounting systems, and those were accounting systems primarily for professional accountants, and then we set up and did a bit of business in Canada as well. Um, in the end um, [the company] kind of, the, the 87 crash came along, heard of it, we had plans to list and we didn't, instead we sold a piece of the business to [a big vendor], that wasn't a particularly happy transaction and I elected to move on and um, just, thinking about the chronology of this but I think I then, what did I do at that stage? Yeah, that was the point at which um, I was asked by, yeah, I then was asked to go and join [another vendor], because [the other vendor] at that point was establishing a business here in it's own right, and because I'd got historic connections they called up, and I went and, got involved with the start up team and put the sales and marketing infrastructure in place for the subsidiary. We did very well, we grew it up to a [very big] business, you know, we really gave the opposition caning because we had the resources to do that and um, after a couple of years I moved on to [a telco], where I'd been asked by one of the executives there to look at ways that [they] could leverage their telecommunications assets into ICT um, and do a piece of work, looked at a few initiatives and decided that they needed to get into what's now called the [technology] business. So built the plan er, for [the business] and er, sold that into the [telco] executive which was a very difficult job because it was by no means intuitively obvious in those days that you build [the technology] around internet, and there was no understanding at all by [the telco] executive what was, or what sort of implication it might have for them as a Telco. It was an incredibly frustrating and difficult experience, but we got there and we set [the business] up and um, I think time, has demonstrated that it was a very successful business, it has been a very successful business and at the point at that became er, an operational business I had absolutely no desire to stay with [the telco]. I moved on again and did a business with some colleagues of mine from Wellington ... which was a high-end web-application development shop, and we were unashamedly Microsoft er, our secret was we went out and we targeted corporates and we did pretty well, again built that to about 100 people, and then I packaged that up and sold it to [yet another consulting company], which was looking for a, acquisitions. They paid plenty for it, screwed up the integration of that business with other businesses

which they had acquired at the time, so eight months later we bought it back from them [cough] for about half what they'd paid us.

[Laugh]

And rebranded it, and it's still active in the market as the biggest web application developer in New Zealand. Um, I'm no longer involved with it, nor is a colleague that I was intimately involved with ... who's well known as in IT. Um, so we did that and then I got involved in the, in deal-based area. I was looking to develop my interests in working with small tech businesses and er, was looking at ways in which we could help grow. I had some IT knowledge, I had some commercial skills, certainly quite a bit of experience in operating the ICT game offshore. So brought all that together and we, we helped a number of businesses by putting money into them, some of that was through some tax structuring which started to get difficult. Um, so we then said, "well how do we get more money", this is by then at a time when dot.com was starting to, to rage, so I bought a low market cap public company and er, it had a couple of million bucks in it and er, why I said I sold the asset on, and then I went up and raised 20 million bucks in the market here and um, and we then turned ourselves into a technology VC and er, with the benefit of hindsight public listing model wasn't the way to go, but at the time in California there was some examples which were going gang-busters. We thought we could do just as well. But, but the market that we were in just melted down all around us and it got very very difficult, and unfortunately one of the things I've done is bought a guy as a cornerstone shareholder and gone in the market with [him] and that proved to be very difficult because early on his brand was positive, as time passed his brand became very negative, and it made it very very difficult, and basically people wouldn't touch us, and institutions wouldn't touch us, we couldn't get the follow on capital. So I ended up disassembling that. Um, we were main board listed and I sold all the assets and then I used that shell to buy another tech business ... and er, I chaired that for a, for a while then stepped down and it's now listed on NZAX market. And then more recently I've got involved again helping er, younger businesses and this is basically what I do today, that have got a technology bias to what they're doing. I provide growth services, it's all about getting their strategy right, helping them grow, helping them go offshore, helping them get their product story right, it might involve the raising of capital. And I'm also doing some mergers and acquisitions work, putting together some young businesses, particularly in the ICT area because we've got too many sub scale businesses, small guys, and I also, as part of what I do, I help [incubators], sit on their private beachhead board, and I work er, [another incubator] which has a regional focus in helping ICT companies. So I'm doing that sort of stuff today, so that's the sort of ten minute chronology of when I started in accounting to where I've been to date, is lending some knowledge of technology and some commercial skills to basically someone who is running virtual technology investment banking operation.





Appendix XVIII Identity Assets of Charles' Narrative

The identity assets that emerge from the analysis of Charles' narrative are what appears to be his belief in his detailed and expert knowledge (including his belief he is right and the pedantry he demonstrates), the bullying he was subjected to and his tough-guy status. Charles' narrative is laced throughout with references to his overcoming all obstacles including his addictions and obsessions in times gone by, his self-taught learning and the subsequent achievements. Charles believes he is needed and has brought exceptional skills to his employers.

Appendix XVIII.a. Expert Knowledge

One identity asset that is extensive and significant in Charles narrative, and that permeates almost every story that he tells, is that of his expert knowledge. This asset comes through in the opening expression of his narrative with his lecture on split infinitives, the sign on display on his office door, his passion for Linux, and the story he told of showing up a teacher while at school. Charles also presents his expert knowledge to the listener in quite a blunt way by suggesting he is always right. Further examples are seen as he talks of using .22 rim-fire rifles on Crown land, his tale of the USS Westmoreland being stranded due to running Windows software, and his binary numbers party trick he uses to win a wager.

Charles' presentation of his expert knowledge was prominent in the opening exchange in his narrative where he corrected the grammar in the participant information sheet (Section 6.2, and the first extract in Appendix VIII). After making his point and further expressing his precision and correctness, his reaction to the listeners comment that the listener does not recall receiving specific instruction at school in grammar, was to accentuate that he did, before commencing a grammar lesson. In doing so, Charles reinforces to the listener that his own level of expert knowledge in the subject matter at hand is much greater than the listener's level of knowledge, and he asserts this claim in an appeal to a higher authority represented by an Oxford University text on grammar. Subsequent to the grammar lesson is a series of assertions and a clear distinction between 'construct' as a verb or noun and whether it was the US or English use of the word. As he does so, he reinforces his level of technical knowledge, and indeed even places himself central to the example he gives. After making his point, Charles then progresses the narrative and simultaneously reinforces his rebellious nature by noting his partner's daughter's disagreement, before seeming to dismiss his previous comments by minimising them now that his point has been made, and suggesting that things should be moved along.

This asset is also played out in the sign attached to his office door proclaiming “Welcome to the world of Charles’ Useless Facts”. Charles pointed out that he did not initiate that sign, but rather it was put on his door by a colleague and then he himself affixed it more permanently. In keeping this sign, Charles appears to identify with the implication of wisdom residing behind his door, yet also that that wisdom has little use or value but merely exists. He identifies with the difference that others have labelled him with, and the separation and distinction that such a sign signifies. In this way, the possessor of the wisdom that Charles suggests that he is again demonstrates his willingness to be ‘one-up’ on others, as well as being seen as a rebel and an outsider – something supported by his own windowless office from the others in their shared office environment. That the sign may have been put there in a facetious tone appears to have eluded Charles, and the listener left his office with the feeling that his physical isolation from his colleagues and proximity to the technology he consulted on was desired by both Charles and his colleagues.

The presentation of his expert knowledge is also seen elsewhere in his narrative, as he discusses his Linux operating system:

Don’t touch [my Linux computer] Over my dead body ... LINUX software is so reliable there is virtually no maintenance. So I’ve, I’ve got plenty of time there to maintain that machine. I just don’t do it. Doesn’t need it. Doesn’t require it. Whereas my colleagues round here have the new machines re-imaged²⁵, two or three times a year, they’re sitting there smiling away while the tech’s working on their machine. “Gee, poor things”.

I liked the logs that [my Linux system] kept and with no firewalling on the box I’d be, I’d sit tight, shut off the Internet and then sit there for an hour or so and read the logs. It was highly entertaining, no, nobody had broken into that box, yet you put a Windows box in the Internet now and it’s done in three minutes, and it’s all done by an automatic script.

Charles has identified with his Linux-based machine as being superior to other machines and their users or operators, to the point of calling up clichés about “touch[ing it] over my dead body” and how “nobody had broken into that box”. These two extracts reinforce to the listener the way Charles wore his t-shirt in the initial meeting, and suggest that he is actively creating this identity for himself based on reliability and expert knowledge. As Linux machines are considered carrier-class²⁶ and are contrasted with the consumer-class Windows

²⁵ ‘Reimaging’ is a computer network administrator’s cure-all for a problem machine: the hard drive is re-formatted and all the software is reloaded onto the machine. Network Administrators of Microsoft Windows-based networks often carry a CD with a pre-prepared ‘image’ to be loaded onto troublesome machines as an effective yet blunt ‘ultimate reboot’.

²⁶ ‘Carrier-class’ vs ‘consumer-class’ are two technology descriptive terms used for indicating reliability and quality. A ‘carrier-class’ item would have a lower failure rate, more robust construction, better fault diagnosis

machines, Charles' use of these in his narrative suggests an identification with the expertly maintained machined of better quality. The superiority that appears to exist in Charles' identification with Linux systems is also based on his apparently greater technological understanding. His talk of reading the logs demonstrates to the listener his expert knowledge and elite identity (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). It is also seen in his actions with his use of computing environment as an extension of himself. Charles has made the distinction between those who are 'in the know' and technically capable, and others who are not, and this distinction appears to have meaning for him. Indeed, he claimed "I've always been, um, technically inclined". He goes further, claiming to enjoy the experience, and again justifies his belief with assertion that a computer running Windows would be "picked open" with a simple unintelligent predefined script. He appears to firmly place himself in the former camp by discussing the utility he employs and how he was familiar with the logs that were generated from this utility.

This superiority and expert knowledge is again suggested in Charles recollection of his academic studies, which concluded with "and then I finally stopped and said, 'Is that enough, Sir?'". He suggests he was bored and unchallenged and uninspired in class, as someone who was above the mere drudgery of the schooling of the time, and which, in his opinion, was clearly beneath his abilities. This sense of academic superiority to his peers and to his teachers is justified in his next breath – in this case by retelling of his mothers allegedly unknown actions in accosting the teaching staff. This superiority and perceived expert knowledge over his peers is reinforced with references to his father's library and his having commenced reading before starting school. Charles' point is rammed home to the listener by his retelling of how he says he answered the question that he believed was meant to make a fool of him, and then he says he proceeded to over-answer it, and in turn make a fool of the teacher. By alleging a loss of control in his teacher, in contrast to his faux-innocent question at the end of the above extract, Charles demonstrates his perceived superiority and his identification with his expert knowledge.

The identity work that Charles does is quite overt in his claims to expert knowledge, as when he brazenly states to the listener that:

"I'm not satisfied with just competence; I've got to be an expert in the subject. I develop myself to that level."

capabilities, and warranties, whereas 'consumer-class' equipment is disparagingly referred to by networking engineers as being picked up in a street stall.

In claiming to have ‘developed himself to that level’, Charles identifies with his advanced degree of technical knowledge (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). At another point in his narrative, Charles says:

I’m always right, except when I’m wrong. [Laugh] But I don’t always recognize when I’m wrong [long pause] ... like to think I am prepared to admit my mistakes, and I (long pause) I say that because I haven’t had to admit many [pause]. Once I like to think I can. If people, if people, if I’m wrong and people correct me and they can prove that they’re right, I stand corrected, there’s no ill feeling about that at all. Ah there have been times when I have misapprehended something and um, I’ve been corrected.

In offering this extract, Charles presented the technologist’s logical statement of ‘ $A=A$ unless $A \neq A$ ’,²⁷ to the listener in a way that reinforces his perceptions of himself, and how he would like to be perceived. He then qualifies this statement with what appears to be a pre-emptive excuse for some of the objectionable behaviour he has retold that he has exhibited, and is presented in other parts of this analysis of his narrative. After a very long pause and a digression in his narrative, Charles reluctantly acknowledges he has been in error on occasion and to the listener this sounds as if it was very gracious of him to acknowledge such an occurrence, which he does so in a very precise manner. In saying that “I haven’t had to admit many” mistakes or errors, he again asserts his level of expert knowledge.

Charles’ insistence that he is right extends to the illegal actions he claims to have participated in in the past, namely the use of rim-fire firearms on Crown land:

Forestry Service would drop by and inspect your rifles, you left the .22s under the sleeping bag so they didn’t see them. And you showed them the .303s and all, and a little bit of the .303 ammunition you brought along, and they’d drive off happy, and you’d pull out the .22, don’t use a .303 for shooting a goat does too much fucking damage to it. That’s right, that’s right, you’d shoot them through the heart and shoulder, and takes one of the shoulders off, so we used to go after the goats with the .22s just in the back of the neck, just behind the head, just drops them, pole-axed.

In this extract, Charles not only asserts his better knowledge of which calibres to shoot goats with, but details the precise reasons and techniques by which his technique and methods are justified. He shows no insight into the reasons .22 rim-fires are illegal on Crown land²⁸, but simply asserts that his methodology is correct. He presents himself as a skilled hunter with expert knowledge who preferred using the smaller calibre .22 commonly used for rabbits, as opposed to the ubiquitous ex-WWII .303 then used for larger game by people of his generation. By doing so, Charles further reinforces his expert knowledge to the listener in the

²⁷ ‘A equals A’ unless ‘A does not equal A’

²⁸ Namely the .22’s use as a “poachers gun” and the difficulty of obtaining a clean kill on a large animal with such a small calibre and small projectile.

unstated inference that it is quite difficult to humanely kill larger animals with a .22, yet Charles implies he was capable of doing so.

Charles' presentation of his expert knowledge is also seen in his refusal to engage with internet banking on Microsoft Servers, before launching into a story about the alleged events on the USS Westmoreland²⁹ which he claims also ran Microsoft Servers:

I will not use Internet banking while anybody's running a Microsoft server on it. [Pause] Windows 2000 was only more reliable than NT4 because the Secretary for the United States Navy went and saw Billy Gates and apparently reminded Billy that um, the US Navy was a three billion dollar customer of Microsoft's and the reliability of the software left a lot to be desired, and that if Billy Gates was not prepared to do something about this pretty quickly the United States Navy may be forced to look elsewhere for its software. And er, he laid it out for Billy, the trials and tribulations of the USS Westmoreland which in 1997 was the latest and greatest cruise missile destroyer, and it was built on an internal computer network that took care of everything from 'identification friend and foe' through to the throttles and steering of the ship, and on the way, of course, they also took care of ranging and gun um, gun aiming and manoeuvring and steering the boat ... it was all based on Windows NT4. The boat sailed, 4 hours out of harbour the network crashed, there's the Westmoreland dead in the water. If anyone went, if anyone flew with a helicopter you could stand in the doorway of the helicopter and piss on the boat. And they wouldn't be able to do a damn thing about it. They couldn't even tell you to go away except by sig-, a man on, standing on the deck waving his flag, saying F. U. C. K. O. F. F. [Laugh].

Charles' repetition of assertions and claims to being right appear important to him, and the associated over-explanation shown above projects his subject matter expertise onto the listener. As an IT professional he appears to suggest that his beliefs carry more currency, and he identifies with this precision and knowledge around his role. This story of the Westmoreland that Charles presented to the listener is one of him in the role of knowing inside stories. This insider's role and holder of expert knowledge is accentuated by his familiar use of Bill Gate's name, and his claiming and understanding of the ramifications of using 'inferior' products in critical applications. In these aspects of the story, Charles is suggesting to the listener that he has expert knowledge about these situations, and his stance on internet banking is therefore justified.

In another part of his extract, Charles was again at pains to demonstrate his expert knowledge, telling of a 'party trick' of his:

²⁹ In reading this extract of Charles narrative it is noteworthy that the only USS Westmoreland was a WWII transport ship: <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/w6/westmoreland-i.htm>. The ship Charles refers to was not the latest "Cruise Missile Destroyer", but was the USS Yorktown (CG-48) which was a *Ticonderoga*-class cruiser launched in 1984. The Yorktown was retrofitted with NT4.0 as part of the US Navy testing 'smart ship' technology in 1996, and was immobilised for 2 hours and 45 minutes during trials in 1997: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Yorktown_%28CG-48%29

What is the largest number you count up on your fingers on? ... 65,534, ah 35³⁰
One of my party jokes, make a lot of money out of that. You get everybody nicely oiled to the point where they don't think straight but they're still reasonably sober, and you lay a bet with them, make sure you collect the money in, its important, then you demonstrate, they go away feeling chastened and poor and wiser ... Binary gets you the biggest numbering system, yeah, base (?) 5 would one that most people would think of first ... But digits have two positions, folded up and extended. Everyone, everyone knows, everyone knows number 4 [gives 'the finger'] Yeah, two for 10 minus one.

This extract shows Charles giving a story of him holding court in a social setting, and demonstrating his expert knowledge while asserting himself as being correct even though his assertion it is at odds with his later evidence. In doing so, he again separates himself from the "oiled" masses who can't think straight and fall for his clever in-joke that only a technologist or mathematician would be aware of, and again he over-explains to the listener whom he knows is technologically conversant and that can appreciate his ruse. The demonstration of his power over others is relevant to the next identity asset in his narrative discussed.

Appendix XVIII.b. Bullying

Bullying is another significant identity asset in Charles' narrative. This asset is integrated with the use of power over others, and the exercising of such power through violence was perhaps the most disturbing aspect for the listener of Charles' narrative, and the hardest to analyse. The bullying in his narrative was done to him and arguably by him at school, later in life, and as he raises his concerns about himself becoming a bully.

Charles' recollections of being bullied appears to be a formative experience, and feature in the first sentence of his response to the first question put to him to initiate the elicitation of his narrative, where he said:

[I] was the youngest and smallest in the class so really alienated by savage bullying. Very quickly learned to defend myself.

Verbally or physically?

Physically, you pick up piece of a 6 foot waterpipe and threaten to beat the crap out of the bully, and he shits his pants and runs away.

This is one of many explicit references to his being bullying at school, and Charles appears to present this bullying experience as a lesson on physical size, prowess, and power, which he

³⁰ Charles is again in error. His assumption and explanation uses the binary numbering system, in which the maximum number is $2^n - 1$ for n-counters: in this case 10 fingers meaning $2^{10} - 1 = 1023$. Charles' number is based on 16 counting 'fingers', $2^{16} - 1 = 65,535$. This 65,535 is commonly referred to as 64k and is a commonly used number in computation, being the number of individual identifiers in two bytes of information and a natural expansion of logical binary incrementation from powers of two.

quickly turns to explicit violence. He internalises the bullying as he “was the youngest and smallest” and so “very quickly learned to defend myself”. It appears that he associates a size and power differential as automatically equating to bullying and violence. This suggested reaction to bullying is almost immediately placed in the context of his experience and his reactions of “threaten[ing] to beat the crap out of the bully, [who] shits his pants”. Charles location of himself in this extract as bullied and his identification with his role is clear.

As a means for justifying his suggestion to injure the bully, Charles presents an example of where he says this is exactly what happened, and the consequences of his suggestion where successful: the bullying from the alleged perpetrators ceased. He says:

There was, there was one boy who was about, two boys, one of them was quite a bit taller than I was, he lived down the road from me, he just made an arsehole of himself, so he’s the one I threatened with the bit of waterpipe ... and the other one, er I didn’t see him again until I was 20 years old and I’d just come out of the Army, three months basic training and trade training and I, was feeling pretty good. Next thing I know here is, hear this slouch roundly abusing me and I looked round and it was him. Yeah, I took one look and he was, big red across there and up there, advanced symptoms of alcoholism ... he was obviously viewing, living his life and viewing life from the inside of a vodka bottle, and, er looked at, took one look at him and thought, if I hit him he’s gonna burst.

Here Charles’ story has him turning his being bullied into his overcoming those who bullied, and this ‘overcoming’ is another identity asset recognised in his narrative. In doing so, he demonstrates his belief that he is superior to the bully who has degenerated to the point of alcoholism – addiction is also an identity asset of Charles’ narrative. His location in this story is also clear, as “he’s the one I threatened” and “I’d just come out of the Army”. Charles takes this bullying and presents it in a way which removes him from the role of victim and presents him in the role of avenging warrior³¹. His role and adopted identity of violent responder is reinforced to the listener when Charles retells how a simple playground misunderstanding was transformed into a life-or death struggle, next.

After reinforcing to the listener that he had matured at school and “discovered that all of a sudden I’d got strong [and] hit my adult strength”:

I joined the game and someone put up a long shot right at the back of, and I back pedalled hard for it and stretched out to get it and didn’t quite meet it, hit my wrist and then I thought, ‘oh-oh’ and of course it hit one of the school bullies smack in the face ... So next thing I’m surrounded by three people, one of whom was throwing punches at me, and I, er don’t really remember what happened next, this, this red curtain just came down, and, apparently, I was trying to kill him. I came to being held by five husky seventeen-year-old prefects [laugh], I’m trying to tear myself out

³¹ The presentation of Charles as an avenging warrior is in stark contrast to his physical condition.

of their grasp, and I'm just saying over and over again, "I'm gonna kill you, I'll kill you, I'll kill you", and he was on the ground going purple.

The consequences of his self-described self-defensive rage are presented by Charles as vindication and peace, as he claims the 'school bully' needed an emergency trachea surgery.

Charles continues his story and claims the repercussions were:

The boy was away from school for three weeks, and, er I figured that I had sufficient lead on him by this time psychologically that the moment I saw him, if I stepped up to him, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I haven't finished with you yet", we'd get some interesting results ... they were a lot better than I expected, 'cause when I did that he took one look at me, went white, ran, and we never saw him at school again. [I was] dragged up before the headmaster, yeah, he wanted to, um know why I was fighting. I just said, "Well I was attacked" ... I think it's because half the school prefects were in that volleyball game they saw the whole thing from start to finish, and that's probably what saved me.

In presenting this altercation this way, as innocent victim finding his strength in combat, overcoming the bully, and vindication in front of authority, Charles presents his views of himself as superior, in the right, and also as a rebel who overcomes. Charles sees himself central to the story he tells, as "moment I saw him", that "I haven't finished with you yet" and "that's probably what saved me". The bullying and the resulting violence he perpetrates on the alleged bully have been rationalised and embedded into his view of who he is and his identity. His bullying as an identity asset has been turned around, as he now defends himself against it.

Charles self-perceptions about his physical power and the violence could have wrought on others is also presented at another stage in his narrative where he says:

I was at that point then where anybody who had a go, I was ready to have a go at anybody who wanted to have a go at me, and they tried to do it physically. If someone tried to take me off to the staff room cane me I'd try and beat the crap out of him. I was only in the fifth form. I was just the, angry ... I had the adrenalin, I was a raging bull at that point. I'd just come into my strength and I was good, as it turned out. So, yeah, that did my confidence a lot of good. Certainly no harm.

I was getting ready to hit out ... I was ready to lash out and set myself, set, set, you know, enforce my, um independence as it were, right to be an individual.

Here Charles identifies with the "raging bull", and "beating the crap" out of people, and his perception of himself is such that he draws his confidence from his perceived physicality.

Charles returns to this point at several times throughout his narrative and in doing so he makes the specific link himself between his perceptions about himself and his individuality.

Arguably Charles is becoming a bully himself, but he has not yet realised it.

Indeed, the treatment of bullying in Charles' narrative does not limit itself to Charles as the victim. In later parts of his narrative he refers to himself bullying and readily acknowledges how he got his current role:

I bullied [the person who hired me].

The prospect of Charles bullying others extends to him being worried that he would manifest some of the behaviours on others that he was subjected to. He uses bullying as a reason why he has never sought to move beyond consulting to a managerial position, saying:

I've never, ever, applied for management and don't want to do it. I'm too afraid of being a bully.

In making this claim, Charles identifies with bullying – be it as a victim of it or a perpetrator. The levels of violence he believes he is capable of are such that he feels he must check his behaviours and his career path, although from other comments suggest that any stifling in his career may not have been deliberate or at his initiative. Accordingly, Charles has adopted and internalises all these various aspects of bullying in his identity. The possibility exists that Charles uses what he claims as a fear of being a bully to excuse what he sees as a lack of progression through any hierarchy he sees as existing.

It is obvious to the observer that Charles is no longer physically capable of successfully carrying through on the threats of violence that he alluded to from his youth. His repeated and consistent references back to this stage in his life show that he identified strongly with what he appears to see as the halcyon days of his physical masculinity. However, while he may not be capable of this any longer, his identification with it is not lessened, and he frames his values and thoughts along these better times. The bullying and violence asset explored here melds into the next asset identified in Charles' narrative where he identifies with a belief he overcomes such things. He is a 'tough-guy'.

Appendix XVIII.c. Tough Guy

Charles rebellion is enmeshed with the identity asset of him being a 'tough-guy'. While this identity asset could initially be considered to be part of the bullying and use of power in the previous asset, those were more actions he identified with and this asset is more about his self perception and the identity he draws from that. Charles demonstrates to the listener just how tough he is as he comments on his lack of diplomacy, his rebellion at school, and his assertion that he is uncontrollable. He reinforces these assertions in presenting stories of his motorcycling days and an artillery bombardment he directed.

In showing just how tough he is, Charles made the unprompted assertion:

I'm not very diplomatic. I call, I call a fucking shovel a digger.

This short extract presents the listener with the assertion that Charles' lack of diplomacy is a rebellion against the social norms of today involving considering others in one's own actions. He places himself centrally in this, with "I'm not" and "I call". He then immediately makes recourse to a common expression for added impact in this identity assertion, along with a gratuitous profanity. The impression the listener is left with in this utterance is that Charles is keen to project his independence of view and thought from the norm of society, and he will rebel using whatever mechanisms will make his point to the listener.

This 'tough guy' rebellion of Charles is expressed throughout his narrative and extends back to his views on his education as given from his narrative where he discusses comparisons with his brother. There, Charles presented himself as part of a family dynasty, with large shoes to fill. He explicitly frames his actions as a rebellion to the expectations of his teachers, and calls on the strong, stubborn and powerful metaphor of bulls and bulldozer in reverse to illustrate his depth of conviction. He presents himself as a tough rebel, struggling against the powerful dynasty of family and school for the very sake of rebellion, and his explicit reference to himself "being me". This reference represents overt identity work, as he actively creates and projects his sense of rebellious tough-guy self to the listener.

This self-identification of Charles a tough-guy is also seen when he says:

I'm uncontrollable.

In making this claim, Charles labels himself (Wagner and Wodak, 2006) and asserts to the listener an identity construct he has and wishes to be seen with (Nicholson & West, 1989). The listener is struck by an air of unaffected confidence from Charles as he makes this claim, as if it is something to be proud of and a pinnacle of human achievement. Associations are made in the listener's mind with Alvesson & Willmott's (2002) work on controlling people through their identity, and how Charles – for whom his uncontrollableness appears to be an identity asset – would be managed and controlled.

Charles' presentation of his self as a tough guy is also seen as he draws on the stereotyped tough guy, as a motorcyclist:

In my youth, I'd been a motorcyclist, I was, for about 17, 18 years motorcycle was my main form of transport. For ten of those years I ran a Laverda 750cc, twin, and been all over New Zealand on that bike many times. It had two throttle positions, one open and shut, and I used to cruise everywhere on the open road, 130, 140 k's,

... very comfortable, very comfortable riding speed, and of course you could pass the cars so fast, put on the right hand indicator and, blink, you passed. So that wasn't a problem, and ah, I used to get my kicks on the bike because being an Italian machine um, windy roads were forte, absolute forte. I enjoyed windy roads, I used to do windy roads as fast as I could and er, the only thing I didn't like about windy roads was coming across Japanese motorcycles on long windy roads, 'cause they kept doing unpredictable things, like falling over, or going off the road, gee that was worse. And um, and cars well they weren't a problem, usually I'd scare the shit out of the driver by just going past at full throttle. Knock-knock, I was, coming up.

Charles uses his motorcycling past to demonstrate how tough he is, as he rode with “two throttle positions, one open and shut, and I used to cruise everywhere on the open road, 130, 140 k's,” and how “I used to do windy roads as fast as I could” resulting in him “scar[ing] the shit out of the driver by just going past at full throttle”. Just how tough Charles wishes to be seen is seen as he asserts it was all “very comfortable, very comfortable”, which indicates his nonchalant self in this story despite saying it was how “I used to get my kicks”. His active identification with being a motorcyclist in an age when motorcycling was not an everyday activity and was considered antisocial by many is clear.

The tough-guy actions of Charles are continued and given with relish when he expresses a story that many readers may consider distasteful, as he tells of his role as ‘spotter’ for Army artillery. In Charles’ story he says he was:

About five miles away from the, where the, where the er, shells splash and you're about six or seven miles away from the gun, or ten miles away from the guns, and you're sitting there with binoculars and you're trying to pick out a target that would be entertaining. “Ah, look, there's a hollow in the ground over there”, so you pull out the maps and work out the position, do a bit of triangulation ... Then the battery gets in, gets in touch, “Number One gun ready” [pause] and they, you don't say anything you just say “Roger” ... Then you get “Shot”, that means number one guns fired. “Roger”. Then so you time of flight, 22 seconds, yeah it takes that long for a shell to travel down... so you're watching the target, then you get another, the next one comes in, “Splash”, that's always sent two seconds before the shell is to hit ... If you're on target you just send back, “Fire”. All 6 guns go. Boy that's destructive. 105 lbs of highly explos-, explosive in each shell, 6 shells coming down and you're doing 6 rounds per gun, that's fun. The only problem was in that particular hollow was there were wild horses [laugh].

In retelling this experience, Charles includes extreme levels of detail trimmed from the above extract for brevity, fully informing the listener of the protocols of engagement and the mathematics involved in the calculations of the timings and trajectories. He places himself in the role of instigator and coordinator of the group action (Cantor et al., 2002), whereas the artillery troops were merely following his instructions on where to fire. In do so, his toughness is exerted and demonstrated to the listener. By using specifics of Army language and the coded insider-speak of ‘splash’, ‘shot’, and ‘roger’ to a listener with no military

background, Charles claims and identifies with a military identity that he had previously mentioned. His over-explanation of detail serves to not only identify himself with the military, but to convey expertise and achievements to the listener.

Appendix XVIII.d. Overcoming

In his narrative, Charles often paints himself as the underdog and describes how he overcomes of obstacles that are placed in his way. Overcoming in his narrative is seen in his talk of an overseas posting he was on, the struggles he has with obtaining his trade qualifications, and his surgeries.

Charles displays the importance of his overcoming when he reflects on obtaining his trade qualifications:

The first year was a bit rugged because I was working, some weeks we were working rotating shift work at the computer centre here, which meant that I would go to [the polytechnic] at eight o'clock in the morning, I would finish there at eight o'clock at night, and it's a long day ... And then I'd go to work and I'd finish at six o'clock the next morning, after having worked from six o'clock to six a.m. the night before ... I made it though.

By detailing the hours of his endurance event of working and studying for 22 hour stretches for days on end, Charles presents to the listener a chronology of his ability to overcome an obstacle he appears to believe another person could not. He then lets these facts speak for themselves to the listener, and closes this extract with the survivor's line "I made it through". His claim that "I made it through" is another way of saying 'I overcame'.

Sometime after completing his trade qualifications, Charles was sent on an overseas deployment, where he says:

I was seconded by the bank to a development project [overseas], which was a case of me going over there, having been an assembler programmer on the, er, um Olivetti banking terminals programme, and a programming language similar to, cross, like a cross between BASIC and C on the Phillips, um, terminals software, and I was sent over there to deal, work on Unix C programming. "Oops, haven't met Unix before." Just in the process of teaching myself C, and I landed this one "Bugger, well I'm working with [these foreigners], and I'm a Kiwi" [laugh] ... I'm not gonna let my country down. So I put in the professional hours. I bought books round the corner, at a bookshop round the corner where we were [overseas], and, er, computer books. I learnt Unix the hard way. I bought the books, I read the books, I hammered on the system, and I worked out how it worked and went back to the books and confirmed it, and worked with it, started programming with it.

In this extract, Charles asserts his status as an assembly language programmer and being placed in a figuratively and literally foreign environment. He places himself central to the story as "I was seconded" and "I landed this one", and his overcoming is seen as he says "I

learnt Unix the hard way”. Charles presents the listener with obstacles to be overcome while simultaneously expressing a belief that if he can teach himself the ‘C’ language he is capable of teaching himself the Unix operating system – and the scripting languages that another technologist knows goes along with it (Orr, 1990). Thus it is as a ‘technical overcomer’ that he sees and presents himself, as indeed elsewhere he claimed to always have been technically inclined. Further to overcoming the obstacles of Unix and its scripting languages, Charles also presents the listener with a belief that his endeavour is a matter of nationalistic and patriotic pride, as if he is the sole representative of his nation about to do mighty battle with an old and bitter foe, and in doing so he adopts the identity of national representative (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004). He identifies with previous tales of professionalism by claiming to adopt “the professional hours”, as well as asserting that he did it “the hard way”: by himself with books he had brought as opposed to the un-stated soft-option of a course (Orr, 1990). The identification Charles has with the perceived slog of professionalism and the appeal to nationalistic duty may have imprinted significantly on him, for it is this event which appears to have been his first exposure to the Unix operating system, referenced in the “Linux Terrorist” T-shirt he wore to the first meeting.

Charles continues with his ‘overcoming’ and ‘making it through’ in retelling one of his many health issues. Charles recalls the surgeon:

Gave me this local and set to work with a scalpel, and hearing the scalpel going hack, hack, hack up here by your ear’s quite an interesting experience as you can hear everything going on. He said, “I don’t wanna go down too deep here there’s a nerve running under there”. I said, “Where’s the nerve going to?” He said, “Aw, it’s one of the major ones that control your jaw”. I said, “You be careful then”. He said, “Well stop talking!” So, yeah, he cut that out, stitched it all up, bandaged it up and I went away.

In this extract where Charles retells of his surgeries, he disassociates himself from the human fear of death and again presents his aloof ‘tough guy’ self. The bravado of not knowing or caring that his head is being cut open and a slip of the scalpel could render him dead or disfigured is clear and he retells this event as a normalising storyline and by doing so actually accentuates the morbid and the critical nature of it. However, it is the repetitive nature of his surgeries that indicate that the identity asset involved is not his simply being tough, but that it is overcoming the ongoing and repetitive nature of these many surgeries. In trivialising the conversation he retells, Charles actually bolsters his role in overcoming the reason for the surgery, and this is accentuated when he then tells the listener that it returned and had to be cut out – thrice. The language Charles uses is very similar to his description of the first

surgery, and in doing so Charles reinforces to the listener that he will ‘make it through’ and that he will overcome a disease that kills others.

Appendix XVIII.e. Addiction

Charles battles with his addictions form a significant part of his narrative, and the listener is left with the impression that he identifies with the battles themselves, as well as the overcoming of them – the identity asset of the previous section. While the overcoming of the addiction is significant, Charles identifies with his addictions themselves – and the effects his addictions, have had on his health. The subject of his smoking is the primary vehicle for his addictions played out over several of the following paragraphs, with a secondary role reserved for his shooting.

Charles brings up his smoking in a particularly long extract from his narrative which has been broken up here. He gives a very long story and says:

Then I, my health failed ... I was getting by on about five hours sleep a night. [I was smoking a pack a day] I'd been trying to give up 'cause er, I'd lie in bed at night and I, I'd be breathing and I could hear the bubbling in the lungs and that didn't sound very pleasant. Sometimes I'd smoke cigarettes most of the time I smoked a pipe, I'd go through two ounces of pipe tobacco in two days. That's, er, quite a bit of consumption. Well, I listened to my lungs and I thought, "gotta do something about this" so I tried to give up. Er, that was, that was back in 1989. [Pause] I lasted three days. Came back on to cigarettes the third time, not, I didn't go straight back on to the pipe. Er, feeling as though I had my tail thoroughly kicked, three days.

In this extract to date, Charles has again presented himself has battling odds that many others would not, by mentioning that he “was getting by on about five hours sleep a night” and his large tobacco consumption. While this appears to be an extension of the asset of overcoming, it is the following part of the extract that places this in the context of his identification with his addiction, for here Charles asserts his consumption and identifies with it as he says “that’s, er, quite a bit of consumption”. In asserting that his smoke-free status lasted only three days, Charles appears to effectively declare himself an addicted smoker, who was beaten by his addiction.

At the above point in his narrative, Charles wrestles with his overcoming self failing to better his addicted self, and he continues:

“Ah, I can do better than that”. “Um, hang on, those three days didn't feel very good”, “Doesn't matter, I can do better than that”. And this argument went on for nearly two years. I decided to give up again. This time I lasted three weeks, because I was prepared for what hit me in the first three days. And after three weeks I thought, yeah I have this conquered. I wasn't sure how it happened but I

ended up smoking again, I think someone offered me one and without thinking I took it, and of course saw me back on. Bugger.

His use of pantomimed dialog accentuates the battle between the two multiple selves as Somers and Gibson (1994) discussed that are being waged by Charles. He still weaves the asset of overcoming through this extract of his narrative, but he also places himself in the passive role of smoker when he says he ended up smoking again. In using this terminology, Charles again identifies with not only the battle he fights, but also the role in that battle – his role an addict. His acceptance of his addicted self is seen as he depersonalises and externalises his failure as “This time I lasted three weeks”, “I wasn’t sure how it happened but I ended up smoking again”, and his resigned “bugger”.

His battle rages on, and Charles deploys his analytical skills and uses combat terminology to frame himself in the battle, saying:

So went for another, fought and argued with myself and analysed what had happened on the previous two occasions, and did give up on the third occasion. At this time um, the nicotine patches came out so thought, “Right I’m gonna give up this time, this time I’ll get these things”, coz the third time it was the nicotine addiction which had gotten to me. So went on the patches, and this time I lasted three months. Walked into a shop one day, dairy, bought something, bought a packet of cigarettes, felt, felt around in my pocket, no lighter, bought a lighter, went out of the shop, lit the cigarette, thought, “What the fuck have I done!”, and this addiction came roaring out of the back, got me by the throat and said, “Gottcha!!!”

Again, the story of all of Charles plans having failed to come to fruition due to what he implies was an oversight. He finds himself back where “the nicotine addiction which had gotten to me” and he recognises this as he explicitly uses the language of addiction. In using that very descriptive and precise term of ‘addict’, Charles states his view of himself. His failures to date result in Charles saying that he was even more precise and prepared in his planning, and of presenting himself as being even more pedantic in his planning, spending 20 minutes of his narrative saying that he spent the next two years planning and testing his smoking cessation plan. In retelling the two years of his planning and plotting, Charles not only reinforces to the listener the asset of his expert knowledge in his identity, but also confirms his views of himself as an addicted person.

Charles begins to approach his addiction in a methodological and mechanical manner befitting his expert knowledge (discusses previously) and the learning (discussed later) he identifies with:

I was waking up every day and I was saying, “Right I’m not going to have anything to smoke today because I don’t smoke”. I never thought about tomorrow, I just said “not today”. The other thing that hadn’t happened over the two years between last

time I gave up and this time that I've also had prepared myself with, was that I stopped smoking in certain areas.

He has incorporated visualisation techniques and methodology, namely 'I am not a smoker' and developing non-smoking zones in his house. The battle between his multiple selves (Somers and Gibson, 1994) continues, despite his visualisation, the context is that of an addict: the "I am not a smoker" argument is still framed in the context of smoking. While he actively works on his non-smoking self, he frames his self in light of smoking. In some regards, Charles' battles with his addiction supports Benwell & Stokoe's (2006) reiteration of Crossley's argument that such illnesses constitute an 'ontological assault' on one's perception of who they are.

Charles' view of himself as an addict is not only limited to his smoking, but he expressly uses the word addict to refer to other experiences (Nicholson & West, 1989) such as with his shooting, saying of the Army that:

They introduced me to shooting competitively which has become addictive.

Charles' obsession with shooting and his self-described addiction to it extended to the very detailed description he gave of finding the best ammunition that he could for his .22 rifles, along with the detailed account of which ammunition he has found is better suited to which firearm he owns, and how the combinations perform and group³². In presenting his being addicted to shooting, Charles both works on his identity as a person with expert knowledge on shooting, as well as moves his identity asset of addiction beyond just that of his smoking.

Appendix XVIII.f. Self-Learning

The self-learning that Charles has done is contrasted to education: Charles never obtained a university degree, and much of his identity seems to be drawn from his teaching himself, from his doing, and from his experience. His foray into formal tertiary education at university was truncated by failure (which he attributed to his youth) as he left university part way through repeating his first year before commencing trade qualifications. Learning as an identity asset is seen in the way he talks of trying to get his trade qualifications, his self-learning, and the superiority that this self-learning gives him over others.

Charles describes his attempts at completing these trade qualifications as:

³² 'Grouping' is a measure of accuracy and refers to the spread of rounds at a given target over a given distance. For example, an "inch-group" usually refers to three rounds within an inch diameter at 100m with a hunting-calibre firearm.

I wanted to get off and go into, well to complete my NZCE 'cause while I was working with [my employer] I was down to just needing just three more papers to complete it, but the work at [my employer] was so intense and so much of it, and doing so much, that I'd end up enrolling in the, to do the subjects and then having to pull out of it because of work commitments. And this went on for four years until finally I got fed up with it and I thought I'd managed to negotiate with my managers some proper release, but it didn't turn out that way, so I was owned by [my employer].

Charles presents this stifled attempt at completing his trade qualifications as a result of his “intense” employment where he was so crucial to the operation of the company to be spared. Charles expressly uses the term “fed-up” to describe how he sees these events – and how they have impacted on his life and how he views himself. He presents his learning as being important enough to him for him to continually re-enrol and “this went on for four years” and “I thought I'd managed to negotiate with my managers some proper release”. For Charles, who thought he had negotiated time off for his study on commencing his term of employment finds that his understanding was not that of his employer, and his plans have been frustrated and he must now teach himself.

Charles has taught himself many things and takes identity from this self-learning. One example is a long and drawn out discussion of how he taught himself ACL scripting by surreptitiously copying the scripts of his colleagues:

“Yeah right! Well fuck, how I'm gonna do this?”, and I thought “Oh, well, the other guys have all done ACL script and learned how to use it, I'll look at some of their scripts and see what I can learn from that”. The system wouldn't let me get at it. There was actually little bit of system security starting to come in. So I wrote this ACL script called Print. I found that with ACL I could get round the security so I wrote this one called Print. You could give it any file name and it would find it on that file on the system, not only would it find the file on the system, it would identify whether or not the file was a printable file, and if was a printable file it would send it to the line printer. [Pause] But getting round the system security to be able to go anywhere, to be able to find that file and identify it as a printable file, all this done in, yeah, as an ACL script. I learnt an enormous [amount] about that system and before long I was running it as the system administrator. Because I knew more about it than anybody else ... In the end my print programme would print off their scripts, anything else, all the source code, anything else you wanted, as long as it was a printable file. It could determine whether it was a binary- I worked out how to tell the difference between a text and a binary file with that programme. Um, at the time that was quite an achievement ... I later found out that when I looked at their scripts anyway as the system administrator that mine was streaks ahead of theirs. I learnt so much about ACL, that if anybody wanted something done they always tossed it my way. “Yeah, do you think you could have a look at this and see if you can do this one”. Five minutes later I'd say to him, “Done!”.

For Charles, there is vindication in what another could call intellectual theft. His learning is presented as part of his self, as he role-plays “see[ing] what I can learn from that”. He

presents himself as someone with the ability to crack the security of the system and rummage around inside it without being detected by the then System Administrator. His identity work here is tied up with his obvious achievement, as he says “I learnt an enormous [amount] about that system and before long I was running it as the system administrator”. His belief of his ability extends to a detailed description which was trimmed from the extract on how the script could identify printable files from binary or data files³³, and then claims to have been running the system before long and been elevated to a point where his superior skill and ability meant that the people he initially sought to copy off now come to him for his wisdom. In giving this extract, Charles clearly sees himself as some sort of superior guru for his colleagues to seek out, and for him to dismissively aid should he be so inclined. All this is based on his self-learning. The time-based context of this event is worth noting too, for Charles qualifies this event with how it was a considerable achievement for its time. The implication is that nowadays such an achievement is not significant, and therefore Charles presents his superiority in a rarefied context which cannot be evaluated by today’s norms.

A notable example of this superiority through his self-teaching and self learning is his description of his time assembling and fault-finding printed circuit boards for an electronics manufacturer early in his career, saying:

I was bored to tears by that work because I’d been building my own radio equipment and, um, radio, radio receivers and electronic gear at home, for years.

Here Charles disassociates himself with what he presents as mundane and mediocre work that was beneath him as “I was bored to tears”. He conjures up an image of a brilliant mind being bragged down into the mediocrity of turning boards over and looking for obvious physical faults such as a solder connection between two components should not be there. His identity work is seen in his presenting himself as a designer and builder of radio gear³⁴ in an age where ham-radio-operating was the preserve of the elite technologist. By summoning the image of the pre-computer ham radio operator who has taught himself, Charles elevates his self learning even higher and as something that he has achieved.

³³ Attempting to print binary or data files would likely result in illegible gibberish.

³⁴ Radio equipment operates at significantly higher radio frequencies (RF) than audio frequency (AF) equipment, and it is in the RF part of the spectrum that the laws of physics conspire to make things not what they seem to the novice eye. A device might operate in one way at AF, but at RF it is quite a different beast. Accordingly, RF equipment is seen by some as a superior, mystic and artful area of electronics that the lower audio frequency equipment.

Appendix XVIII.g. Achievement

The achievements that Charles has made are presented to the listener in both an active and passive manner, where Charles will assert that he achieved or merely implied there was something in the event that he considers important to him. These are seen in some of his previous events like his programming and his shooting, in applying for jobs, and in his quest for 400 consecutive uptime computing days.

Several of the examples of his achievement as a significant part of his identity construction can be seen in places like his teaching himself to program in some languages, and in his shooting, which he mentions in the third extract in Appendix VIII, with the observation that it was something he was good at. Another is seen in his writing the ACL scripts discussed previously. In these examples, Charles presents them as part of another identity asset, but they are also implicated in the obvious importance achievement has to him. He achieved learning the ACL scripting, as he says “five minutes later I’d say to him, ‘Done!’”, which serves to personalise his achievement from when “if anybody wanted something done they always tossed it my way”.

His achievement when applying for jobs is seen in several places, such as when:

I moved on to [a large employer] and went through the aptitude test, and then I sat round kicking my heels while they interviewed all the rest of the people, and I was interviewed last and they said, “We really want you”, they said, “You came top in the, you got, scored the highest marks in the aptitude test”.

I qualified for [NZ Army] officer training twice.

In both of these extracts, Charles has laid claim to an achievement of some sort. In the first, this achievement is his aptitude test and interview, and in the second it is qualifying for officer training. His achievement is in being interviews last, and he personalises and internalises this as he says these prospective employers “said, “We really want you”, they said, “You came top in the, you got, scored the highest marks in the aptitude test”.”

The issue of his achievement is integrated with his beloved Linux systems as he had:

Just updated my Linux machine beginning of 1998, the new version of Linux on it and the hardware was new and I thought well, I turned it on 16th January and that’s it, sat there and used it all year, and then, the end of 1998 I went home, um, forgot to turn it off, and on 16th, 17th January 1999 there it was still running, and I looked at it and said, “Ooohh, it’s 365 days of uptime”. Magic number in those days was to try and get 400, so, try to get 400, 365 and what, another 16 days in January it was, yeah, 16 days, and we were up to 7, 8, 381 days. And then with another week in February it was 388 days. And we had the second week in February and we were up 395 days and it’s only a week away and the lights went out, [click fingers] “Bugger!”

395 days of uptime, was five days away from 400 and some bugger had to stick it through the last cable to come out [the] Road, ahh dear, right. At that point I was ready to kill that digger-driver.

For Charles, the catastrophe in this story was not the power network being stretched to breaking point resulting the city being without power for days on end, nor that generators had to be brought in, emergency lines be built, and a public witch-hunt launched against the planners and accountants that had allegedly run down the infrastructure. The catastrophe was that his achievement of his 400-day uptime benchmark not being met. For Charles, he was thwarted not by any choices he made in technology, but by ‘a digger driver on [the] Road’. His identification with this is shown as he counts down to the 400th day, and then when it does not happen his disappointment in this is apparent with his utterance of “Bugger!” and homicidal utterances about the digger operator. For Charles, who identifies so closely with Unix/Linux systems, to have a stability milestone compromised by a non-computer interruption like a city-wide power failure for several days that made the national news was galling, and it affected his achievements.

Appendix XVIII.h. Needed

The asset of being needed is one that emerges through Charles’ narrative, and has been suggested by Tan (2003) as being important in the turnover decisions of IT professionals. For Charles, being needed is something that he injects throughout his narrative in relation to his work, and there is no appearance of the needed identity asset in his personal life. His being needed is apparent in his narrative as he talks of his early career.

For Charles, his employers could not survive without him, and with meaning he recalls what happened when he did his initial Territorial Army training, saying:

I went back to [my employer], and on the Monday walked in, next thing I know everyone’s cheering, well, pleased to see me ... “Fuck, what’s going on here?” And that’s when the, er, they were, er, glad to get me back because production had taken a nose dive ... When I left because I had worked well and efficiently and effectively, and the quality control guys were really glad to see me back because they had been tearing their hair out with the main technicians trying to keep the quality up and going, and I’d been fixing stuff so fast and so effect-, efficiently that, you know, they were really keen to get me back.

In this extract, Charles claims to have been cheered on his return and paints a picture of himself as the unknowing saviour of the organisation, and draws identity from his perception of the group’s views of him. He says “the quality control guys were really glad to see me back because they had been tearing their hair out” and “they were really keen to get me back”. He asserts that production targets once again being met was due to his abilities to build

printed circuit boards and fault-find others boards, and identifies with being “efficiently and effectively” “fast”, and this forms part of his identity asset of being needed.

In making these assertions, Charles continues in another part of his narrative to relate the same experience but in a slightly different manner and with more precision and detail, saying:

I was working away at this and we'd do twenty new boards a day, plus we'd do, rejects, and my reject rack was always full. Didn't sort of worry about it was always full, you know find it, fix it, after about six months, three months of this I realised “This one's one of my boards”, put that through, fixed it, pulled another one out of the rack, “This one's one of [my colleagues] boards what's it doing here?”, and then I noticed it had been back to him twice, not back to him once, back to him twice, and it hadn't been fixed. So I set it up, tested it, and thought, “It's obvious”, fix it, pass it down the line, it didn't come back. So, I thought no more of this, I just thought I getting a few of the harder ones coming back, but, um what I didn't know, I found out some time later, which is well, was of the four technicians on the line I had by far the least number of faults going down and, so consequently I never saw many of my own boards come back to me. I was getting the other three guys' boards, after they had gone back to the other three guys and still not been successfully fixed, I was getting, I was getting them. By the time they left me they'd just go straight through quality control without any problem ... I went back to [my employer, after the Army training], and on the Monday walked in, next thing I know everyone's cheering, well, pleased to see me.

In the second telling of this event, Charles embellishes his story with considerably more detail, and his telling of the story now ends with him being applauded and cheered. In both variations of the same story, Charles paints himself as the naïve novice of skill, who finds himself in a situation not of his making and where the company as a whole depends on him and the quality control people depend on him to solve the faults that other board assemblers cannot find. In this role, he also sets himself apart from others again by demonstrating his superiority amongst the four board assembly technicians, and asserts his being needed identity asset.

Charles' conveyance of the asset of being needed occurs again in his retelling of another aspect of his early technical career, such as when another company he had discussed employment with prior to his Army training contacted him on his return, claiming that:

I'd been back for about 6 weeks when [another company] rang me up and said, 'do you want that job as a computer engineer?'

Her Charles again presents himself as sought after and needed, but this time not by his current employer and colleagues as the preceding extracts would indicate, but by prospective employers. What is interesting to the listener is that this asset of being needed appears early in his technical career and is absent from later aspects of his professional life. The only reference to his belief that he is needed later in his career is a vague reference to still having

obligations when he retold how he had to reduce his hours of work due to his poor health. While being needed appears to form a significant part of Charles identity, it appears to be founded on a retrospective revisioning and embellishing of his life stories, as the second version of his printed circuit board story suggests.

Appendix XIX Identity Assets of Erika's Narrative

Erika's narrative could be characterised as the narrative of an immigrant, filled with talk of survival and coping, of being lucky and taking opportunities, of working hard and of the inherent merit of some people. Running concurrently with the 'immigrant's narrative' is an awareness of lost opportunities and wastage, and the importance of relationships and a distaste for organisational politics that interfere with the delivery of the business. The listener was left with an impression of a woman who had survived, stayed true to herself, and found a peace at last, all the while being pragmatic and realistic. The identity assets that were identified in Erika's narrative were the immigrant, her technical proficiency, conscientiousness, being professional, and being of IT.

Appendix XIX.a. The Immigrant

Erika's emigration from her birth country and her experience of being a 'stranger in a strange land' forms a dominant identity asset that emerges in her narrative. An important part of her narrated identity revolves around her struggle against adversity and active escape to a better life, including taking opportunities when they present themselves. Her immigrant identity reveals itself in the importance of place in her narrative, such as the compulsory placements she undertook after training in her birth country, or the way that she chooses to remain in her current employment. She also presents herself as the odd-one-out, either by her gender in a male-dominated industry or by her language and accent. Her identification with the immigrant is complete with her referring to her immediate colleagues, who all work in the same wing within the organisation, referred to as "the Eastern Bloc".

In commencing her story of immigrating for a better life, Erika describes the difficulties she faced in leaving her birth-country:

Before that we couldn't come, we didn't even have passports ... So it was difficult. I did travel with my sister a couple of times once to Germany and er, because we had some relatives there and some aunties there, and once the Russian, but even that was difficult. The [pause] they just wouldn't let you go, just wouldn't. Unless you were um, er, high ranks in the party or you had a proper [pause] function in the party or you had some connections with the party [laugh], which I didn't, and I didn't want it. [Pause] They made it very difficult for us.

Fascinating.

Well, yeah in this very, really very hard to understand, unless you live [pause] that life.

The sadness in Erika's narrative is evident to the listener, as she tells of separated families and of the control wielded by the State. She matter-of-factly states the situation, and the double-

standards that existed, and asserts her independence of those by saying she wanted nothing to do with the Communist Party. Her description of herself in this context emphasises being held and not being let go, not being able to escape. The pauses in her speech appeared to be moments of reflection, and her laugh appeared a bitter one, before Erika again tells of how she survived this oppressive life. In doing so, she presents an identity based on the wider societal ideas and discourse of her country of birth and its contrast with the society she now lives in (Wagner & Wodak, 2006). In closing the extract, Erika stresses the difference between herself and the listener, the ‘other’ who cannot understand her life there without having lived it. This emphasises her experience as an immigrant, and now a foreigner in a new country.

In continuing with her narrated escape from her birth country, Erika continues with the theme of survival, and introduces real life or death possibilities into it as she discussed the probabilities of getting shot in the extended extract (in Appendix IX). The narrative of immigration and the difficulties faced often involves the taking of opportunities as they occur. Although she often portrays herself as “lucky”, it is clear that she and her husband were active agents of their own destiny. The political reforms of 1989 finally provided an opportunity for her husband to leave for South Africa, which as a couple they deliberately took, although she was required to stay behind with her young child until her husband had established himself in a new country and she could follow.

Actively taking opportunities that have presented themselves also runs through earlier parts of Erika’s narrative. At one point, she discusses the school she was sent to, which provided her with the “lucky” opportunity to learn English:

In our third year, so that would be year three in school anyway, we studied for ten years and er, we have been very lucky to [pause]. There was a lot of Russian taught in schools in those days OK, so we had been very lucky not to have any Russian taught, and on top of that er, being the school which was called a Special English School and we had er, more hours of English than normal, so it was a, a great help, and we, the second language was French so that was good as well.

Erika is explicit in her use of the word ‘luck’ in this extract. Quite how or why she was sent to what is she says is called a “Special English School” is not said, but she appears to consider it lucky that she was learning English and French, and not Russian, and where the English instruction is extensive. There is an implication that it was a school for the elite which she attended and identifies with (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006) which enhances her role as an outsider, one of few who were taught English as opposed to Russian.

Erika's active role in making the most of her opportunities can also be seen when she describes how she became interested in IT after leaving school:

I just happened to talk to someone that was working in er, in er, IT then, and, he was a friend of ours and he advised me that, and he took me to this IT centre ... Well, anyway, I thought it was a good idea so that's how I got into things. So I just decided.

On graduation from university, Erika was required to serve some form of cadetship. In her narrative she relates how there was in effect very little choice of the destination, which was invariably in the countryside rather than the capital city where she came from:

When you graduated you, then you would have three years of um, not sure how to translate it. You would go wherever they sent you, well you had some [cough], some choices, but most of the time these choices were not in the big cities and the, I was raised and born in the capital of [my birth country]. There was no way graduating from any university that you would get a job in this city or any other big cities of the country. Most, usually they were in the countryside or in smaller cities and you would have to just pack your bag and go for three years there.

For Erika, having minimal choice and the sense of loss of control and being sent wherever it was decreed appears to the listener as a being quite painful for her. In noting that she had "some choices", she coughed and her tone shifted to contain an element of sarcasm, conveying that "some choices" meant to her "no choice". The mental image that Erika conjures up of having to "just pack your bags and go" is reminiscent of her description of deciding to "pack our bags and go" as an immigrant discussed above. Her sense of isolation and being out of place in her own country portrays her as an 'internal' immigrant and reinforces to the listener the immigrant aspect of her identity.

Nevertheless, Erika was soon able to arrange a transfer back to her home city, which provided her with the opportunity to program in Fortran and Cobol. While she does not divulge how she "managed" to achieve the transfer, it is another narrated example of her taking an active role in her life:

So, anyway I chose, ah, some IT um, centre away from [the capital] um, but er, I managed to get to the um, higher level ... Ministry ... The organizational unit was in [the capital] so I managed to transfer myself to [the capital] quite easily and to work in their IT centre, and I started there doing Cobol and Fortran programming

Analysis of Erika's narrative reveals the importance to her of a nice working environment, job security, and good relationships with colleagues. This seems to reflect her received work environment prior to immigration, and arguably a desire for stability and security:

I'm still here twelve years later, because it's a very nice environment to work in, um. I had been offered other things in this time and I never thought it was worth while [pause] going to somewhere else, even for more money, if it's a bit more money,

but the atmosphere and the people that I work with, I think that's probably more important than another ten thousand or twenty thousand [dollars] a year which, after tax, will be a lot less. So, until such time as things are continuing as they are I don't see any reason to leave. And I had, I had a very nice um, work place before I left [my birth-country] I'd been always thinking that if I hadn't left [my birth-country] I may well be in the same place, because again it was a very nice team, very nice people that I worked with. I appreciate that company more than other people, I guess, here, and I think it's very important that you come to work and you like what you do.

In the extract above, she offers an explanation of why she has remained with the same employer for so long that is grounded in this need for a “nice environment to work in” and “the people that I work with”. By drawing boundaries and limits on reasons for staying or leaving an employer, even going so far as to say that she doubted that she would have left her previous employer if she had not left the country, Erika can control aspects of her life and place herself where she chooses to be. Now that she has now found that “nice” place, she has no desire to leave what she has sought so hard. At the end of the extract, she highlights a difference between her and “other people” in terms of valuing relationships and environment over money, an example of sense making or identity work using the immigrant asset part of her identity capital.

Erika's sense of difference is also evident in her use of the English language. Although she appeared proud of her proficient English language skills, she would express difficulty in translation in the words and feelings she experienced:

Er, it's hard to translate in English because these words come to me in [my birth-language], it's really hard.

Then, and you've got this er, period which was called, how I would translate it.

This difficulty in translation suggests that Erika thinks and feels in the language of her country of birth, despite being in New Zealand for over a decade. By making this distinction, she again presents the theme of being out of place, an immigrant and foreigner. This was reinforced to the listener when in a relaxed and humorous frame of mind Erika categorised herself and her immediate colleagues in terms of their immigrant status, saying:

We've got our Eastern bloc over there [laugh] and we've got Croatian, Romanian, Russian and Bulgarian [laugh]. All ... of us, they've isolated us, stuck us up there, and there's not even a fire exit over there! [Laugh] In the event of a fire we are the first ones to go!

Erika's placement of herself in the ‘Eastern Bloc’ of her employers offices reflects a common identity with the “us” of her colleagues from former Eastern Europe, and is further reinforced by their co-locations in an apparently isolated part of the office.

Even with her fellow immigrant colleagues, Erika is different in other ways as a relatively rare woman in the IT industry and the only woman working in IT in her organisation:

I've been working with er, in a male environment for so many years, or maybe they got used to me so, I guess I don't have any problems anymore. ... I am the only female here, and er, I've been working in a male environment pretty much since, it was not like this in [my birth-country]. I mean in, there we were pretty much 50/50 er, but I find it in, in New Zealand that er, a proportion of er, females in IT is very low.

Erika does not comment on the nature of the gendered politics, other than to state that she does not believe her gender is a problem or disadvantage in her work elsewhere in her narrative. Her actual experience of working in a predominantly male work environment reinforces the sense of difference that forms a significant part of her narrative, whether front-stage or back-stage.

Appendix XIX.b. Her Technical Proficiency

Erika's technical proficiency appears to be a significant identity asset. It is mentioned by her throughout her narrative, beginning with her description of her education, which was technical and scientific in nature. She also emphasised the technical skills she has acquired in her career, as well as the skill bases she expects of others.

Erika's description of her education early in her narrative emphasises her technical ability:

We were about four to one place, so you would have four candidates for every single available place. Of course you had to pass some exams er, entry exams, in um, three subjects we had. We had mathematics, and we had economics and I chose the third one was optional. In that, what they were recommending was er, economics stu- um, economic and political studies, but you could also have geography or physics, so I chose physics because I always like mathematics and physics and this kind of er, um, scientific subjects. So [cough] I had decided that this was what I wanted to do and er, I prepared for university and um, got in.

In this extract, Erika mentions actively choosing the two subjects that modern students find the hardest and many seek to avoid, maths and physics³⁵, and presents them as willingly taken. She labels them as “scientific”, and in doing so loads her narrative with the implications of intellectual toil which many avoid but she embraces. The cough serves to give pause and emphasis to what she has said, and to cement it in the listener's mind. The following sentence then takes that toil and places it in the context of preparation for entry into a prestigious and sought after university. This simple expression of “got in” serves to

³⁵ The explicit reference to physics is interesting in that in addition to Mathematics, Physics and other ‘hard’ science subjects are deemed to be of higher academic merit by many technologists. Such claims are reinforced in geek-comics such as xkcd.com (<http://xkcd.com/435> is a noticeable case in point) or TV programs like “Big bang Theory”.

underplay the success she has previously subtly raised, while also presenting her work and preparation as justified and rewarded. Her reflection on her skills and their linkage to her new job in extracts such as this presents to the listener her self-conception (Beyer & Hannah, 2002) as technically proficient. The use of her proficiencies and abilities as an identity asset are further demonstrated with her claims that she has been headhunted on several occasions, but chooses to stay with her employer because of the social networks she has formed there, as well as the new challenges that evolving technology brings.

At various places in her narrative, Erika highlights the collection of a variety of technical skills. References to these technical skills occur throughout her narrative, often used to benchmark significant events in her life such as the birth of her only child as previously mentioned. The acquisition of new technical skills appears to provide a source of stimulation and interest for her, as illustrated in the following extract where she is discussing being asked to take on an additional responsibility at work:

[One] department is using Macs and the technician that was er, supporting them ... left and I think they were left a bit um, in limbo. So, um IT here decided to take them over because by then MacOS was Unix-based and um, since we've know Unix we thought we, can take care of them. So I was asked if I as interested in um, in um, working with them, and I thought, "Why not?" So that gave an, an extra dimension to my job. So I'm doing quite a lot of things. And I find it very, very nice and very good because I'm doing a lot of things ... I still enjoy everything I'm doing and I still find all the work that I'm doing with the Macs and everything quite um, satisfying and challenging, and there are new things that come all the, all the time, so that keeps it interesting.

In the extended extract of Erika's narrative provided in Appendix IX, she referenced being from a "family of geeks". Her use of this common stereotype at that point emphasised the "technical mind" and "structured way" of working Erika associates with being in the IT field. She refers to other IT professionals she admires or values in a similar way, for example in describing a former colleague:

He was a very good er, analyst and er, an analytic mind in everything.

In another part of her narrative, in which she describes battling with uninformed users at her work, Erika expresses frustration at her ongoing efforts to up-skill these people in her organisation:

I've been trying to get um, to get them to understand how things were ... It's hard to understand, to get the full picture of the complexity of the things that er, we have to deal with right now. But we've been doing this for three years, and I would think that by now they should, really, understand.

You've whipped them into shape?

Mmm, ah no, not at all. I've been trying but it's difficult. Sometimes I wonder if they're still there and they just, or it's just a black hole.

It is worth noting that Erika only condemns their apparent technological ineptitude after she points out that they have not taken the opportunities she has presented to them, and that she believes it is all really quite simple. The evident contrast between her own abilities and those of her seemingly technically inept users reinforces her use of her technical proficiency as an identity asset. In a similar way, Erika goes on to describe her frustration at someone who fails to show what she considers to be a requisite degree of technical proficiency:

He's supposed to be the IT person over there. I was supposed to be just supporting the server over there, and I ended up imaging all the machines on the lab because, I do that because otherwise I wouldn't be sure what was on those machines. Providing the image, is doing everything pretty much, all I need from him is just interact with [users] and um, pretty much, funnel all the information... to me rather than get a hundred calls OK, that's what I expect from him, and I expect him to have, after three years of working together, some understanding of what, how things work. And I build tools for him to, to help him understand it. Web pages too, to make him query LDAP to understand how things work, and just, you dunno, sometimes, but anyway.

Appendix XIX.c. Being Conscientious

In addition to the emphasis Erika places on technical proficiency, her narrative reveals an apparent identity built around being conscientious. This identity asset is implicated across many facets of her life as presented to the listener, and is reflected in her use of language about being hardworking, a workaholic, conscientious, of providing a service, and of striving for perfection. Erika often explicitly references aspects associated with competency and conscientiousness, and uses these to label herself as in the following example:

I was always hard working, quite conscientious and I, and I, I mean, I like work, but, and I'm a bit of a workaholic I guess.

The term 'workaholic' is loaded with connotations of diligence and perseverance, and by labelling herself as such, Erika applies and reinforces the stereotypical behaviour of IT professionals as task-orientated people working long hours and focused on the technology to the exclusion of all else.

A clear example of identity work around being conscientious is seen in her description of her work role, including how she arrives at work early and gets ready for the day by checking that her systems "work fine":

It's always a good idea to start early before the users are coming, they start arriving about half past eightish, nine o'clock, so it's, it always gives you that one hour, half hour, that you can do something before they start, that's a very good time ... You do something overnight and you come early in the morning to make sure that it works

fine, and if it hasn't you've got a bit of time to fix it or do something about it. So ah, I don't think it's possible for a system administrator to start at um, nine o'clock really. Unless, [pause] I dunno, unless he comes some days early and sometimes late when he knows that he hasn't changed absolutely anything and there's nothing that depends on his systems er, it's likely to fall over. Or there's a very good back up, or people back up in place.

In this extract, Erika depicts conscientious as the behaviour that she feels is appropriate for someone in her role as an IT professional. The performance of that role is presented to the listener in some detail, and she then switches to using a generalised 'he' to outline her perceptions of the needs associated with someone performing the role. At the end of the extract, the reference to "very good back up" emphasises the reliance and dependence placed on someone in her role and the importance of competency and conscientiousness in performing it.

Erika's conscientiousness extends to the anticipation of and preparation for problems, as in the following extract from her narrative where she discusses her worry about what would happen if a database server crashed:

If, say, the Oracle data base server would crash and er, my er, colleague ... wasn't here, so my whole Oracle back up and restore strategy relies on these things, OK. So, if, say he were not here and I had this problem on my Oracle, the data would be there, and if I had a problem maybe with the Sun attached to my server, then that would give me heartache. Because er, if he wasn't here ... I'd really be worried who would be able to solve the problem. So from Oracle point of view I wouldn't have any problem, but because it's the Sun attached to my server then I would have a problem. So, I have this thought last week and I came to work today to start to test my procedures and have a chat with the guy and er, maybe yeah, make it er, more—

Robust?

Well it is robust but it er, it's only him that er [laugh] or at least that's what he's telling me.

This extract is interesting because of the detail with which Erika engages in describing the potential 'calamity' and the level of planning and preparation it reveals. Erika talked for many minutes on 'what-if' scenarios in related stories, which are not presented here, delving into the possibilities and probabilities of her colleagues being away on various recreational activities. She summarised this with where and when a possible problem could occur, before discussing the vast amount of preparation, thought, consultation, coding and testing that she was performing in order to deal with those possibilities, and still had to do. This conscientious attention to detail and the effort put into anticipating and preparing for all contingencies is reinforced by her final remark in the above extract, where she seems cautious about relying on her colleague's assessment of the system's robustness.

Erika's conscientiousness even extends to speculating on the impact of her untimely demise:

At the end of the day, me getting hit by the bus and the system falling over in, in the same morning, is probably not likely, OK, so that would give them time to sort out er, some back up. As far as the other things are concerned, I er, things are pretty much scripted and the, the scripts are written, again I have, we have comments and pretty easy to read by anyone and got um, a team of Unix people that can find out what's happening and look at the script and understand what's happening, and, yes, documentation is there.

Here she initially qualifies the possibilities of such an event happening, before again demonstrating the preparation seen previously, preparation Erika obviously considers as being a proper thing to do as it allows the organisation to continue operating. By discussing the commenting and documentation of her code, Erika makes clear to the listener that her job of coding has been done properly and to a level where any other technically competent person could read what she has done, understand it, and carry on without her.

Erika makes continued references to perfection and the proper ways of doing things in her narrative, which she judges herself against. Conscientiousness and doing things properly is apparent in her discussion of a previous teaching role she had in her birth country, followed by the opportunity to teach a class in New Zealand:

Now teaching, I did a bit of teaching in my er, last job in um, in [her birth country] ... I was invited to, to take some courses and um, and taught Pascal [laugh]. Yeah it was funny, I had er, no experience in Pascal [laugh] yeah, to teach it ...

Did you, did you enjoy teaching?

Yeah, yeah I did actually. And um, even, even here I was er, I was er, asked if I wanted to teach, but I was not confident in my English, so I thought, well I don't really want to go to teach in front of this English speaking people, never mind that three thirds of them are not English speaking anyway [laugh] ... But I didn't think it was fair, I thought that they should really have someone that speaks perfect English in front of them ... You should, you should be impeccable in front of your class on some points of view, you should know what you are saying and you should say it properly, you shouldn't make er, grammar mistakes and you should be able to write correctly and yeah, a lot of things really, if you are an educator.

In this example of Erika's evaluation of herself, she reveals her a degree of discomfort at being required to teach a programming language that she was not very experienced with. This sense of impropriety is exacerbated when she is asked to teach in English (even to a class in which most students would not speak English as their first language). While she professes enjoying teaching, and despite the pride in her ability to speak English that she evidenced elsewhere in her narrative, her inability to deliver what she believes is the proper standard of English language use prevents her from taking advantage of this opportunity.

Appendix XIX.d. Being Professional

Part of Erika's reluctance to compromise her competencies and her conscientiousness stems from her identity as a professional. In analysing Erika's narrative, it is apparent that being professional is an important part of who she is, and is also related to her use of her technical proficiency as a source of identification. She presents her professionalism in two main ways, by defining herself as a professional rather than a manager, and in the professional boundaries she creates with her "work-face".

At one point in her narrative, Erika discusses her future career options in the IT industry, and in particular the possibility of moving into management:

The other thing would be management, but I don't really enjoy that, so [it] doesn't attract me. And I'm professional rather than a, I don't know if I would really [like] to manage people or manage other things, probably not people. No, I'm the kind that does probably tend to do the thing by, by, herself rather than delegate to someone.

You don't think that you'd make a very good manager?

Um, I don't know. I think a manager has to delegate and, and needs to know how to delegate and I don't think I'm very good at that. So I'm, most of the time I'm very happy with the way I do things, and I'm not very happy with the way my husband does things, so, if I extrapolate er, what happens in my family [laugh] I'm not sure I would be a good manager!

In this extract, Erika draws a distinction between professionals and managers, which she applies to herself in claiming an identity as "a professional". In doing so, she makes the assertion that a managerial role is not suitable for her and gives various self-perceived reasons for this, appearing to distance herself from the attributes that she perceives managers should possess. In particular, her conscientiousness and drive for perfection seem to influence her conclusion that her perceived inability to delegate would render her a poor manager. She ports an example from her personal life into her work life to demonstrate to the listener that her self-perceptions have validity.

At a later stage in her narrative, Erika makes a series of statements about herself that represent how she sees herself in the context of work. This perception of herself in relation to how others see her seems to reflect the importance of professionalism to her identity:

Actually, I, I, I know how other people see me. They tell me how they see me, OK? I know I've got, I can tell you that, and sometimes I don't really agree with them ... I don't know what the truth is, the way they see me of the way I see myself. It may be that it's er, er, um, something that I um, reflect um, and it's maybe a face that I'm trying to present other people and er, in fact I don't think that's really me, I dunno. I'm definitely behaving differently at work, to what I'm behaving when I'm

outside work, so I do understand, and I realise that I've got a specific er, behaviour at work than I do outside work.

S what's your work face?

I, I think I'm more restrained, well more restrained [laugh] "Is this is restrained? I wonder what she does in her part" [laugh] Um, um, well we haven't had these kinds of chats amongst us. Um, I dunno um, I, yeah, I guess it is more restrained. I don't, I think I'm a private person, I don't er, go telling people what's happening outside work in general.

Erika freely acknowledges the existence of her 'work-face', the rather restrained way she presented to others at work. In doing so, she actively draws the distinction between herself in the workplace and herself outside of the workplace, the latter perhaps what she feels is "really me". The different 'faces' she presents at work and out of the work context maintain a distance between the public and private domains, and seem to reflect a persona that she adopts at work in order to maintain her professional aloofness. This adoption of the external 'work-face' is supported by the way she appears to have dropped it for the giving of her narrative – a point she makes in this extract by noting that she has not had "these kinds of chats" with her colleagues despite being employed there for over a decade. The separation of her private life from her public and professional life is an example of Collinson's (2003) 'workplace selves', and is further illustrated in an example she subsequently provides:

It has been like this, er, not only here in New Zealand, it's been like this all around, my work, my personal [pause] ... It's just the way I feel it should be, I have no idea, I dunno. It's just the way I feel it should be. [Pause] To give you one example, which, I dunno, may sound a bit silly, but when I was pregnant with my, my son, I didn't tell the people at work until um, I came back from my holiday and I was in the sixth or seventh month, and then they noticed pretty quick, [laugh] so, that's the kind. Why didn't I tell them? I have no idea, I just didn't feel like it.

The readiness with which Erika produces this example suggest that she has pondered this matter prior to giving her narrative, and the pauses evident in her speech further suggest she continues to ponder it even while giving her narrative.

Appendix XIX.e. Of IT

While Erika placed herself outside of the norm in her immigration story, she locates herself inside a technological community, that of IT, a source of identification that provides her with an identity asset. She does this through the language she uses to describe herself, or suggest how others see her, as a geek, a nerd, or as a weirdo. She also frames people according to their technical abilities and manages her discourse accordingly, even suggesting that technologists and non-technologists could be considered by some as different species.

In the extended extract presented in Appendix IX, Erika discusses how her husband has retrained and also moved into the IT industry. Noting that even your young son's brain seems to work in a "very IT structured way", with degree of exasperation, exclaims:

We are a family of geeks!

Expressions such as these are often appended with an expression of her normality and balance. For example, after her comment above, Erika noted that it was frustrating for her, adding:

I'm probably the most balanced one because I've been in the area for longer, and I know where to draw the line.

This appendage appears to temper the previous comment, as if to place a softer human face on her assertion of a strong IT identity. It also acts to indicate an awareness of the possible limitations of such an identity in non-work life.

The way Erika appears to categorise and define people in relation to technology is evident in her narrative in her designation of people as technically competent 'me/us' or technically inept 'them'. This was very obvious to the listener early in her narrative when, after a very long and detailed technical description, Erika asked suddenly and without pause asked what the listener's background was (Section 7.2). Seeing the obvious relaxation that occurred when the listener explained his technical training and experience, it was apparent to the listener that Erika had categorised the listener into an 'us' and 'of IT' category which then allowed her to talk more freely and expand on matters using the technical language she used on a day to day basis.

This sort of categorisation is seen again in Erika's description of the discomfort and confusion that she often experiences from the perceived reactions of non-IT people she interacts with in her organisation:

I think that there may be a perception that I can't, it's very hard to er, confirm or deny this er, er, function, that people out there perceive us the ITS is um, er, I don't even know how to say it um, so [pause] some nerds, or some weirdos.

You see from those users some kind of hostility, hostility, you know, it's just er, and it's not against the person, it's against maybe the system or the idea of IT. I've always won-, sometimes wonder if it's against the idea of IT. If it's a rejection from some people against everything IT related.

In speculating on the reason for the hostility that she perceives, Erika depersonalises the negativity, attributing it instead to the technology or field that she works in. This deflects the threat to her self-identity but also reinforces a sense of difference arising from her close

identification with IT. This difference is emphasised again elsewhere in her narrative when she says in relation to a particular group of users:

I mean I'm, I'm trying to be understanding during the, I'm just, what I'm thinking is that probably we're from such different worlds that one could even say that we are a different species, me and all the ITS people, and it's probably just some incompatibility.

Here Erika's joking speculation on the taxonomic standing of IT people (including herself) both reinforces the IT social-identity and provides an explanation for any gap in understanding between her and non-IT.

Appendix XX Identity Assets of Bruce's Narrative

The identity assets that emerge in Bruce's narrative are his presentation of himself as a practical person and as technologist – and the two are not the same – as well as a first mover and a thinker in the technological revolution of New Zealand. Control and power emerge from Bruce's narrative as a distinct identity them as he wields them both, and in doing so he positions himself as a change agent within his employment. Bruce believes he is needed and is focused on providing a service to his users, and he believes himself to be just and fair in his dealings with others.

Appendix XX.a. The Technologist

A significant identity asset asserted by Bruce are his claims suggesting he is a technologist. He makes these claims in many forms, and in repeated manners, and they are seen in reflections throughout his career such as when he reconstructs his early life as always being interested in technology, and some of his mid-career technological achievements. In the extended narrative in Appendix X he makes the straightforward claims that he has always been interested in the technology, which he calls his “passion” and his “life”, and claims to having “done everything”. He also makes these claims to his status as a technologist in his reflection on his early life.

His identity work as a technologist began in his narrative many decades ago:

Right from when I left school, was always interested in technology, [pause] um [pause] and [pause], oh I don't, in the early years my girlfriend, now my wife, she worked with the [university] in the computer centre there, and I used to hang around a lot in the computer centre [there] and I learnt a lot from IBMs and Burrows technicians and people like that about computers, [pause] way back in the 70s, and that was probably where I started getting most interested in computing [pause] or computers. It was electronics back then.

Was it a fact that your girlfriend, now wife, was there that drew you into computers or the fact the computers there drew you into, or was it just a coincidence?

I think it was just a lucky coincidence. I was into technology, so I like, na, I think [pause] for all my life even from when I was [pause] a kid I've been interested in technology, anythink that I can pull stuff to bits and I seemed to have a bit of affinity for it. Um, the practical side of anythink and I can pick up these things very quickly.

Bruce asserts technology as part of his identity and back-dates this to when he left school.

The technology is related to his personal life and placed in the context of his wife, or his wife in the context of the technology, and he therefore presents both as long time aspects of who he is. When asked which way this was, Bruce again reasserts being part of the technology as he

says “I was into technology” and “for all my life even from when I was [pause] a kid I’ve been interested in technology”. The apparent contradiction in this extract, as he initially says his interest in technology was “from when I left school” and then later “even from when I was [pause] a kid”, does not appear to be significant, as the dominant asset is his identification with technology as such for a very long period of time.

His demonstration of his technological identity is further enhanced over time as Bruce’s suggests that he initially stayed with one employer for 26 years because of the technology he got to engage with:

In those early days I guess, because of, my interest in microprocessing [my boss] was dead keen to have one in the office, [he] allowed us to build one for his office. We put together the Z80 computer with eight-inch floppy disc drives in it, um [pause] and there it was running CPM which was the operating system in those days, and machine called Word Star was the word processor on the thing ... you turn it into a printer, we used to have Dot Matrix printers which was pretty crappy print, so that there’s this electronic interface connect to the old IBM’s electric typewriter, you plug it into the computer and it would type it out for you, um relatively slowly by today’s standards, very slowly, damned noisy ... But it was fun. That was the first desktop computer [here] nobody else had one at that stage ... so we built him a second one, er, no, yeah, by this stage we [pause] could get affordable Winchester drives, hard disc drives, I think a five meg hard drive, eight -inch hard drive, cost [pause] ten grand. Anyway, we got one of them for them up there.

Bruce fondly recalls being part of the construction of the first desktop computer for his employer, and discussed this at length. He has again asserted that technology us part of his self as he says playing with was “my interest” and “fun”. He discusses in detail the technology employed and in doing so the listener could hear the glee in his voice. For Bruce, the self-directed learning and playing that occurred in this environment forms a significant part of his narrative and his identity, as he often returns to this period in his life at other stages of his narrative to mention and frame his current views or what he is discussing. By working on this part of his identity, he reforms the identity capital he has as a player with technology. He explicitly mentions the fun and joy he had working, noting elsewhere in his narrative that computers were his hobby and his job, and that he was being paid to play with his hobby.

In the extended extract in Appendix X, Bruce claimed he had “done everything” in his old role as a senior technician, that his work was a “passion”, and that “I’d work all night on a computer at home then come in here and [pause] work on them”. These expressions of interest in technology serve to place Bruce in a central position to the listener. They act to cement in the listener mind the status of Bruce as a technologist with a heavy investment in technology as part of who he is as shown by technology occupying his day and night. By

claiming to work on computers at home, Bruce suggests that it is not simply his job, but that it is an important part of who he is. Indeed, he even says “it became my life”.

In reflecting on these times, Bruce bemoans some of the changes as he says:

I think in the old days tech-, you played with technology for technology's sake ... we're not allowed to play with technology for technology's sake anymore, and that works very interesting 'cause I've got some good ideas of stuff to do with technology, but, um then I'm trying to find somewhere, slot some of these things, and we'll put them on paper and we've come up with some ideas of how we could, and it could actually save [this place] some money. But whether they're prepared to, er allow us to commit some resource to developing it is another, er [pause] challenge at the moment.

This extract reveals more interesting aspects of Bruce's identity and his views on his place within the organisation today, as he again suggests that he finds the technology enjoyable. While he is in charge of IT in his organisation he claims he is “not allowed to play with technology for technology's sake anymore” as he used to be. Quite who or what prevents him from doing is not said, and it could be that it is his perception of his role that prevents him rather than an external pressure or the requirements of his role. Bruce's play is not limited to the practical and physical play with the technology, but extends to his mental play and constructions of his self, saying

I've got some good ideas of stuff to do with technology.

But being the engineering type I'm saying, “well I'm not going to...”

As such, his role as technologist is not confined to the practical hands-on technologist, but extends to being the thinking technologist. By claiming these ideas cannot be pursued, Bruce appears to frame his thoughts as being frustrated, and his status as a change agent (Appendix XX.f) has been thwarted. The thwarting he raises does not appear to affect his view of himself as a technologist though, and so the identity capital he has built is maintained. Again it is not clear who Bruce attributes this thwarting to other than a collective ‘they’, and again Bruce is diplomatic and polite in the closing part of this extract, but his narrative is rich with his desire for technical play and his advocating a belief in his thought. It is worth noting at this stage that this ‘playing with technology’ environment that Bruce recalls so fondly and identifies with is an environment that he does not appear to foster with his own staff. In essence, his focus on delivering a service (Appendix XX.h), and the control and power (Appendix XX.e) assets prevents another Bruce from emerging from the play that could occur in his organisation. The theme of technical play exists in Bruce's narrative for himself, but is not allowed in Bruce's narrative for others.

Appendix XX.b. Practical

Bruce's narrative is laden with ongoing expressions of his identity assets of both doing and thinking (discussed in part in Appendix XX.d). On some occasions Bruce distinguishes these as personal characteristics of achievers versus "flappers", and at others as practical versus academic. He advocates an education where a person can problem solve, but is critical of over-analysis and excessive 'book-learning', and claims that an academic education will get somebody their first job but from that point on it is matter of their success and outputs. His views of his self as being practical are seen as he claims he is not creative but can fix things, on getting on with the job at hand, on the over-educated who can't do anything, and as he relates his practical staff to himself. He also appears to revise his view of practical being not just about doing things, but doing them efficiently as he suggests he does.

Bruce suggests that he enjoys:

The logical side of things. I'm not very creative but I [pause] can build stuff and put stuff together and understand concepts very quickly. I think that's what [pause] enabled me to be as successful as I have been.

He has identified with the technology as discussed in the previous section, and here he asserts the identity claim that he can "build stuff and put stuff together". His extending of this claim of fact into an aspect of his identity is seen as he correlates this work with "stuff" and his success and achievement. His role as a technologist is further accentuated to the listener with the not-state of saying "I'm not very creative". This use of the not-state serves to push the listener's perception of Bruce away from creative and towards practical on a continuum of the two, and so Bruce presents an image of his desired self to the listener.

In examining the following extract, it is worth recalling that Bruce has no tertiary education and has achieved what he has from self-directed learning:

A well educated person can pick stuff up more easily than an uneducated person, and you know my working life I've trained , I don't know, a lot of people and I've found some sorts of things that have, as you say, um, higher educated people are easy, can more easily pick it up, but they are more, [pause], they will debate stuff you know, that's critical thinking and the like, so they will debate stuff a lot more than ah, [pause] a practical person who will probably, if they're self motivated, will just get on with the job.

Bruce's belief that well educated person can pick things up easier may appear to be a truism to many technologists of today, but here it is placed in the context of his personal experience and self. He asserts that he has trained these people to take them from the academic that they are to the practical and useful person that he is. While he is critical of the academically

educated for debating things, it appears that he sees them as being capable of achieving the outcomes he values provided he is in agreement with it. The listener is left with the belief that he thinks these people come to him as clay, ready to be moulded into someone who can produce a practical output; as if with Bruce's benign influence they will be made better and bridge that gap between thinkers and doers. The impact of education and work experiences on the way technical people are assimilated that Beyer & Hannah (2002) note is seen in Bruce's narrative as he imposes his practicality on them.

In the following story that Bruce tells, there exists a scorn of the non-practical academic, or an idea he does not agree with:

I can remember doing years ago with my old, [old] boss which is, he's an engineering graduate ... um, him and a few other, people, that worked for him who were, graduates, as well, they'd sit down and try and analyse it, you know, from the theory side of stuff, circuit diagrams out, try and, [pause] analyse it on paper, and you know, symptoms and this that and the other thing, and I'd go along and I'd fix the frigging thing while they're talking about it ... 'Cause I used the experience that I acquired, then I'd come along and say, well that there was, that there resistor had gone high as in, "oh yeah, aw" and then they'd spend the rest of the bloody day debating what did cause this problem. Ah ... So using your experience [sigh] phew ... Often short circuits a lot of stuff.

Similar sentiments are repeated throughout Bruce's narrative, with one another case being a PhD holder who used to summon Bruce for help, and how he knew various tricks-of-the-trade which helped solve problems. In these extracts, Bruce again exerts his role as problem solver and achiever of outcomes as others could not, as he says "I'd go along and I'd fix the frigging thing while they're talking about it" and how "I'd come along and say, well that there was, that there resistor had gone high". He has located himself in the centre of this story, where his practical self is need by others and differentiates him from them, and does so in a manner that distinguishes him from his educated peers and employers with an elite identity (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006) in a manner Beyer & Hannah (2002) appear to have missed.

In related excerpts, Bruce acknowledges the academic thinker who can also 'do' and be practical, and appears to view them as people who have come up to his level of achievement. Indeed, his judgement of the technologist is seen in another extract where he says:

I guess having worked here for so long, er the people that work for me er, I won't say like me, but they're influenced by any other choice of the persons influenced by me, and what they do is, you know, we can influence, what they do, so the guys that work within the Technology Department here, say, are practical people that, um, get on with the job, they're (sigh), and they're good guys, they have good knowledge of what they do, they will work when they have to to get stuff done and they're not clock watchers or anything like that, they're good practical pragmatic type people that, a lot of them again are very enthusiastic about the tech-, the

technologies and stuff and they, you know, it's their hobby as well as their job. And yet you can see, I guess, my influence in them because I've had something to do with employing them and all that sort of stuff, and er training them. Phew, so [pause] I guess in, and it's an observation I've made, I think that the managers tend to employ people that are very similar to themselves.

Bruce has identified his employees as products of himself, and has declared them – and therefore himself – as practical people with knowledge and enthusiasm for technology. While he says he “won't say [they are] like me” this very negating of the suggestion serves to reinforce it, especially as he almost immediately says that they are “influenced by me” and that they are “practical people”, that “they're good guys” and “good practical pragmatic type people”. His explicit linkages between these practical people technologists and himself in the extracts closing words serves to reinforce to the listener that Bruce's perception of his self as his practical nature as a key identity asset.

Bruce's focus on practical achievement, and the place of thinkers or doers in that achieving, appears to be founded in doing so efficiently. This is an interesting twist on the scorn he pours on academic engineers as opposed to the practical one as he says:

Most people have got to know when to get a step back from wasting time, dicking around in here, and look at the paperwork, or, which is another thing a lot of [these people] have a problem with, is while not admitting but stepping back saying, “You have a look” ... , their egos get in the way, “I'm gonna fix this come hell or high water”, and they spend weeks on the frigging thing. ... Whereas if they'd given it to somebody else who's got different experience it would be fixed in half an hour, and egos do get in the way a lot.

Here Bruce suggests the ‘thinker’ over-thinks a problem and does not know when to either call for help or walk away and therefore lack a practicality that he implies that he has, even if this is only used as a learning experience. Their achievement may be sullied as they have not done so efficiently, and so Bruce introduces a limited form of qualified practicality – that of achieving in a manner acceptable to him. Bruce appears to have shifted his identity position (Jorgenson, 2002) a little to have reconciled this theme of efficient achievement by doers with another asset that emerges from his narrative and has run through his life, has enabled him to get to where he is today: pioneering.

Appendix XX.c. The Pioneer

Pioneering emerges from Bruce's narrative as an identity asset, and is one that he often presents and has recourse to throughout his narrative. This occurs in his claims that he occupied key positions in the development of technologies for his current employer and has spent thirty to forty years on the cutting edge of new and emerging technologies. Specifically,

pioneering as an identity asset is seen as he reconstructs his past and as he tells stories of his early internet adventures. He presents himself as one of the first to build data bases, and makes explicit references to frontiers and forging his own destiny in relation to the emerging IT industry.

Bruce's involvement in technology has been constant companion and plank in his life. He even works this theme into his story about dating the woman who would become his wife (as previously discussed). There, Bruce stamped his authority credentials on his narrative, as he asserted his contact and involvement with some of the very first computing resources deployed in NZ. He painted himself as a young and keen neophyte, presented with an opportunity for professional and personal growth at the dawning of a new industry . He continued his identity work by reinforcing the technology of that time as the foundations for the technology today, and how one required skill, knowledge, tenacity, and personal contacts to obtain the information sought.

The extended extract in Appendix X shows Bruce presenting an emplotted story (Somers and Gibson, 1994) of his pioneering new technology, and this was expanded as he presented the Class B internet address. The technically astute listener is struck with the backstage narrative (Bryant, 2005) of what is implied and not said by Bruce. He laboured to reinforce the difficulty of navigating FTP servers with torturous command line connectivity between various FTP servers, whereas a person today would merely 'Google' the information sought. In saying and not saying these things, the listener is left with the impression that Bruce feels a degree of superiority to modern computer users that comes from his intimate knowledge of the workings of the internet that was learnt and built up the hard way, server by server, cable by cable. In presenting this historical lesson, Bruce suggests to the listener that he was involved in pioneering the internet in New Zealand.

The building of the organisation's infrastructure he used, and that others that would follow him would use, reinforces the 'first mover' theme that Bruce presents in his narrative construction:

That was our first administrative database was on that, we had all the staff ... it was 194 or 96 or something like that ... and we had a database of them on this thing so the [boss] could you know look at salary costs and all sorts of stuff. But that was, yeah, the beginning of desktop computing.

Bruce continues on the asset of pioneering technology in New Zealand as he relates his role in developing the first desktop computing environment for his employer. This extract is interesting for the continued assertion about being present at the beginning of the

technological revolution in desktop computing and was quite separate from the previous field of networking and servers. This revolution is couched in technical terms for Bruce, but he embeds himself into it and identifies with it.

The extended extract in Appendix X reveals Bruce's assertion that he was so far ahead of others in technological uptake that he was involved in the deployment and making use of technologies before they reached teaching programmes at Universities and Polytechnics. Again he has constructed the technology as part of his self, and Bruce brings this passion for technology from his past into his current framework of himself. Here he presented an integration of his life, his work, his technology and his belief of himself as a 'first mover': indeed he uses the pioneering identity assets in his overt use of language associated with pioneering stereotypes and mental images, such as "frontier":

In the early days it was a frontier.

Yep, that's why you got,

Exciting, in that it was a frontier and you could control your own destiny and all that sort of stuff, it was good fun, immersion and all that sort of stuff. Today it's getting a bit [pause] tedious I guess, and it is really getting bogged down with, the business these days.

As he reflects on his pioneering in a technology frontier, Bruce makes himself an active participant the events of the time, saying "you could control your own destiny".

Appendix XX.d. The Thinker

Bruce's presentation of himself as a thinker is seen both his in discourse and in his actions. In his narrative he used the word "think" 105 times in its various forms³⁶, personalising it with "I think" on 84 occasions. His narrative presentation of his self as a thinker is also seen in the way he points out to the listener the copy of Rodin's 'Thinker' on his desk, as he discusses thinking itself and thinking as part of learning.

In response to a question posed to him about how others see him, Bruce paused, and said that they probably get a bit annoyed with him sometimes because he thinks about things and will not hurry into action or be overcommitted:

Well my counterparts on the IT Management Board as we call ourselves, most, or some of them are directors, yeah the personalities are directors, they like to tell people what to do, some of them are promoters, ie tell people what we can do, whereas I'm the only one that comes out as a thinker.

³⁶ e.g. "I was thinking", "I think", "a thinker", "not think".

And they call you 'thinker'?

Yeah.

OK.

And they've actually given me a carving of a naked dude sitting like this and it's called "The thinker". But that's how they see me as the sort of the thinker, and so if there's a problem to solve or financial stuff to sort out and that stuff, then they'll come to me with those challenges, but if they want something done in a hurry they probably won't come to me, because I will think about it before I'll commit to it. But, er, yeah, I think [pause] I know that they appreciate my, what will we say, my understanding of technology and they will generally accept, my recommendations about technology, um without too much of a bother. So I think they trust me.

Bruce has brought to the attention of the listener an artefact on his desk. As his desk is centrally located, placing Bruce in the middle of his department, this statuette is clearly visible. Bruce's reflective tone of voice, his prominent display of 'The Thinker' and reference to it, and his desire to be seen and in the middle of all events speak to his identity of thinking that he has constructed for himself. He uses it to present his perceived self to others, as he tells of how he has been called a 'thinker' by those in a group he identifies with (Cantor et al., 2002), and his reference to the statue both labels himself and reinforces to himself who others think he is and who he thinks he is. In doing so, he operates from and he identifies with it and part of an elite identity (Alvesson and Robertson (2006).

The importance of reflecting and learning in Bruce's narrative is seen in where he says of his work with his employees:

That is something we try very hard to get the guys to understand, you know, it's not an indictment on them, in fact they should learn from it because, you know, they've gone this far but give it to somebody who knows a bit more or something different, and they should observe what that person does: "Oh yeah, I can learn something here" or something.

So it's not just a straight hand over but actually use it as the learning experience.

Well that's what I tell them. Learn from it, don't just walk away from it.

Bruce has advocated the thinking and learning in his narrative, suggesting that his employees and juniors learn from situations and think about it – as he suggests he has done. He does this he says "we try very hard to get the guys to understand" and "that's what I tell them" as he exhorts them to think about things and learn from them. By suggesting that he has done this, he places himself in the position of a learned person, who has thought about these things, and now willing to pass on his wisdom.

Appendix XX.e. Control

Bruce is fully conversant about the exercise of control and power in his organisation, and the control and power that he wields by virtue of his position in it. In his narrative, he often interweaves his strongly held views on power and control into his reflection on himself, and his keen to present himself in a position of authority. He exercises power and control in his actions in taking over leadership of the computer department, and he also recognises the wielding of control and power by others.

Bruce's willingness to exercise his power and his control is aptly demonstrated in the extended narrative in Appendix X when he described his early experiences in his new role and manager of the computer centre by banning technicians from the server room. In saying "the first thing I did when I came here was lock the technicians out of the server room" Bruce both places himself central to the power and control inherent in the role he has taken, and provides a dramatic example of him actually exerting that power and control. His actions can be seen in light of his saying earlier in the extended extract above that he was asked to come and look after the department by the staff. Bruce presents all facets of power and control: because he was asked it is personal, because of his role he was authorised to, and because of his action and subsequent re-telling of this story he has incorporated it into his self. Indeed, Bruce makes light of others and himself when commenting on control and power:

It's not that simple! [laugh] nobody lets go of control around this place [laugh].

By making light of it, Bruce appears to justify some of his actions he has taken in imposing his will throughout his reign. He appears to suggest his actions are part of the norm in the organisation he identifies with and the people he interacts with. He seems to portray the exercising of power and control as a normal and everyday action, and has normalised his own actions accordingly. The aspect of power and control extends from the jocular – above – and into the operational, and he rationalises this by presenting his control as the logical and correct solution that others will eventually see.

In reflecting on starting in his current role and the difficulty he had bringing all computing under his watch, Bruce noted:

Everybody wanted to keep control of their own servers and it was chaos ... we demonstrated to them was that we could do it, well, what was more effectively than what they could do it, and, um they wouldn't have to worry about the operational side of it, so, since then I guess we've inherited them all centrally and very few are kept out in the department.

In this extract, Bruce again justifies his actions on the grounds of efficiency and pragmatism just as he has justified many of his actions in the past in his narrative. He then presents the centralisation of the technology under his control (Knights & Willmott, 1999) as a natural consequence of the only logical solution to the power play. In doing so, Bruce consolidates his power in a non-threatening and subtle manner that is coherent with the fairness asset discussed later. As he says later, and discussed next, people don't like giving up anything. By winning on this matter, Bruce has cemented his status as controller and his possessive language in the above extract reinforces this to the listener.

The logical and correct solution that Bruce suggests justifies his reasons and actions can be seen as he says:

And that's why I want to go on to service level agreements, is, is that to do that you need to be able to retain that surplus and be able to scale your resources to meet the growth, or the other way, er, downscale if growth negative, but [the CFO] still wants to do bottom line budgeting, 'cause it makes her job easier.

Bruce has accepted he has not (yet) succeeded in his efforts to introduce service level agreements, and that he excuses this as being because of what amounts to the same reasons he wants to: namely rationalisation and simplification. He asserts what he wants, and he justifies it, and he acknowledges the conflict. However, the listener is left with the impression that Bruce has not given up on his objectives, and that for Bruce his own definition rationalisation and simplification is more important than the CFO's definition.

The sort of justification that Bruce uses is seen in his belief that he has managed to deliver a low-cost and efficient solution for his employer, and claims:

Our spend, IT spend per [network user] is lower than any [in our industry]. Um, [pause] so it's very cost effective ... But I think the quality of the service we provide is very high as well, and if you, [pause] people I know who have gone to other [places] often come back and said, "Jesus you guys are organised" sort of thing. Um, ... Well I think that's what we did, yeah. (long pause) I think it's because, why certainly in the early days, we were able to um, make natural changes without consulting many people [laughs].

In the above extract, Bruce uses an anonymous reference to add credence to his beliefs and his actions, and he places his perceived success at the foot of his ability to generate the services he believes he does. He associates his power and control with a lower IT spend than others, whilst still delivering services as he sees them. This appears to the listener as Bruce justifying his position and his use of his power and control: he has been 'shown' to be right. He has internalised the power and control as he says "I think the quality of the service we provide is very high as well", "people I know who have gone to other [places] often come back and said,

‘Jesus you guys are organised’” and his closing comments about imposing his will on others and the resulting benefits he believes the organisation received. By justifying his actions in exerting a centralised control structure that facilitated non-consulted changes that he imposes on others, Bruce touches on the next asset to emerge in his narrative: himself as a change agent.

Appendix XX.f. The Change Agent

With examples such as the above imposition of his values on others, the identity asset of Bruce as a change agent emerges. Bruce’s perception of himself at the forefront of technology, and the identification he has with his position, is heard in listening to his narrative, where the flow periodically changes from a reflective and contemplatory tone to a forceful and assertive one for a short period of time. These changes correlate to Bruce asserting himself in the workplace, and he does not appear to shy away from such interactions. Bruce as a change agent is seen as he talks of his first managerial role, what he has done since as a manager, and how he has built the departments to be like himself.

When, in the extended narrative in Appendix X, Bruce recalls how he took on the role that evolved into his current one, he gives the story of locking the technicians out of the server room. In reading that part of the extract and considering Bruce’s role as a change agent, it is worth recalling that Bruce claims he was asked by both the technicians and the management to come in take over running this department. The agency he acquires is one of change, as he says “the first thing I did when I came here was lock the technicians out of the server room”. From this belief, Bruce appears to be empowered by both the respect given to him by his skill, and the position he now holds. He appears to accept his positional power and well as the personal power that comes from being asked to take on these responsibilities and draws his identity from this. His previous assertion that he did not actively seek this role could lend weight to the belief that he is not too concerned about the consequences, and he will inflict change for the better as he sees fit. Immediately after presenting himself to the listener as a change agent, Bruce justifies this by noting that his decision and course of action was the best one, as the server reliability improved considerably.

The exertion of his authority to facilitate change, and the immediate justification of that action, is again seen in another extract of Bruce’s narrative as his role has evolved to being more managerial than supervisory:

We knew how much it cost to do the job we were doing. Now I started to redistribute that cost back to the users based on the activities that loosely [pause]

associated to 'activity based cost management', er, so there's an activity of supporting this PC so, you know, we lumped the costs of supporting all PCs and divided by the number of PCs and come up with a new price, so I redistributed the budget based on the activities that were going on, and that, narrowed the expectation to deliverables now we were better aligned. Er, people understood, or started to understand that looking after a PC did actually cost some money, and if I get some more of these it's going to cost me some more money, and that's worked very well for us.

Now he is not only responsible for the technologies but for a multi-million dollar budget as well. He inflicts change as he decided to "redistribute that cost back to the users" and he presents his role as an active one when he says "I redistributed the budget based on the activities that were going on". In exerting his dominance in such a manner and willing to be identified with by relating it in his narrative so, Bruce demonstrates his willingness to enforce change on others when he believes he knows best. Bruce has presented a sanitised version of the trauma he inflicted on other budget-holders by imposing a change in accounting procedures on them, and in doing so he has revised his perceptions of himself and worked on his identity and how he chooses to be perceived. He does not apologise for making these changes and identifies with them, by repeatedly saying that he did it, that they understood his actions, and again immediately justifies his actions with a simple assertion that it has all worked out well.

Bruce not only presents himself as a change agent in terms of imposing technology and business models on others as just discussed, but he explicitly presents himself as a change agent who influences the lives of others. He demonstrates tact and diplomacy by saying "they're influenced by any other choice of the persons influenced by me, and what they do is, you know, we can influence, what they do" in the extract presented in Appendix XX.b. In that extract, Bruce opens with an appeal to his longevity and the pioneering first-mover status discussed previously. He then asserts his belief he "influences" on his subordinates while praising them, and then he identifies with them. By praising them and identifying so closely with them and claiming they are similar to them, he praises himself and his influence of them and the capital he creates for himself. Bruce assigns the attributes to his subordinates that emerge in the analysis of his narrative, such as practical technologists who are service orientated. The change he has been an agent for in his "influence" is reflected back on himself. For Bruce, the values that he sees in these people, and praises while identifying with them, are needed by the organisation, and that is the next asset to emerge in an analysis of Bruce's narrative.

Appendix XX.g. Needed

The needed asset that emerges from Bruce's narrative is one that has been observed in IT professionals elsewhere in the context of turnover decisions (Tan & Hunter 2003), where the employee will move on if they feel they are no longer needed. Bruce employs the identity asset of his being needed as he discusses getting and keeping the role that he currently holds.

In the extended extract from Bruce's narrative (in Appendix X), he says he had done everything there was to do in his old department – and by implication was no longer needed – whereas he was asked for and needed in the computer centre. He built on the pioneering asset discussed in Section 9.3.3 before expressing a frustration of the status quo and a belief that he was needed elsewhere. In creating his needed identity asset, Bruce builds on his competence and ability to achieve a successful outcome where his predecessor “just sort of, said, “Bugger it, I'm out of here”, and she just quit”. His belief he was needed not only extends to the role he has been summoned to, but also extends to the role he is leaving, claiming that his old boss did not wish him to leave and “said, “yeah as long as you come back”, sort of thing”. He locates himself as needed by the department he was to join, saying “they had a meeting with me and asked if I'd come down and take care of the place while things were sorting out”. This amounts to a double-helping of the needed asset, and this double-helping does not emerge in Tan & Hunter's (2003) speculations.

Immediately after the extract of 'needed narrative' above, Bruce goes on to cement his position in his new role, by discussing his 'application' and how it was solicited from him as an email turned into an application. He appears to be consolidating by his inference that other potential applicants were not up to the role for any number of reasons, and that he again is shoulder-tapped to come and solve the problems of his employer and turn the computer centre around. To the listener, he makes light of his not applying for the job as if it would only be natural for him to be expected to do so, and plays down his assent to be considered as an application, and reinforces his elite identity (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006) he has of himself. By expressing that narrative of his being confirmed into the role of manager of the computer centre, Bruce again demonstrates that he is needed to generate the desirable outcomes and this can be interpreted as an active construction in his identity and it is to the asset of the services he provides that this analysis now turns.

Appendix XX.h. Outcomes and Service

Bruce's speech is laden with explicit and implicit references to outcomes, success, and achievement, and these references occur independent of tense. In many of the examples he is

providing a service – as well as whatever else he may be doing like enjoying himself. Bruce’s incorporation of outcomes and service into aspects of his self are seen as he talks of how his current role has evolved, how some of his hiring decisions have unfolded, and how others act in crises situation as opposed to how he suggests that he reacts. This identity asset is also seen as he talks about the problems business faces, his legacy as he contemplates leaving, and the obstacles he has overcome in his time at his employers.

Bruce has suggested that his role has evolved from a pure technical one to that of a technology visionary, and he says he enjoys the interaction of his technical and organisational knowledge to deliver a better service. He says he:

Did a lot of that sort of stuff to make it [pause] cost-efficient, obviously, so by centralizing staff and doing things like leasing of the technology, well today we lease [million’s of] dollars worth of IT equipment [here] we don’t own any of it. Um, on a 36 or a 60 month, you know, core network gives us er five year lease, but most other stuff is a three year lease. Um, it means we get the opportunity to refresh this technology, regularly, and, as I’ve shown over the years, that you can either replace the technology with similar stuff with the same functionality for less cost, about the only, well it’s actually electronics, but, it’s the only products that get cheaper. It’s electronics and IT stuff gets cheaper over time, so if you want the same functionality and get it for less money, or if you want increased functionality, you can get it at the same cost. As I said to [the CFO] years ago, “Look just continue giving us [a lot of money] a year, we’ll ensure the technology meets [our] needs. We don’t need more money”, you know, this is, “Everybody wants more money every year”, I said, “No we can buy more technology with the same money for the type of pipeline growth” I mean steep growth is another thing altogether, but the pipeline growth of [ongoing service level commitments] coming through and the, “If you give us the fixed budget we can just buy more technology with that fixed budget to meet the growth, incremental growth and all that sort of stuff”. And that’s well, what, pretty well a [lot] a year now because of the steps we’ve had.

This extract shows Bruce’s ongoing integration of himself into the narrative of success and outcomes that “I’ve shown over the years”. He starts this extract by posing it as an efficiency issue which he as a change-agent – discussed previously – is uniquely able to address, and that he is needed – also discussed previously. Bruce then presents his superior knowledge and ability to deliver if he can manage the department as he sees fit, namely moving to a leasing model and not a purchasing model, and by doing so the CFO will in turn look good to the CEO. In this section of his narrative, Bruce appears to be saying that his unique abilities as a change-agent when combined with his knowledge will allow outcomes to be met if he has his way, making others look good and for the betterment of the organisation. He has provided a service, and his positioning of himself as an active actor in this discourse affirms the identity that he takes from it.

Bruce has had to hire many people as the organisation has grown, and he declares he has been battered by hiring decisions, meaning he has evolved his hiring processes:

The ones that come through from HR through the Admin or paper are typically less useful. Um, [pause] but what we have done in IT for a long time is that we do have a knowledge test, er so depending on the position we have, you know, ten questions and we put them in a room and “Here, answer that lot”, and they have got to do better than 80% before we can think about, you know, consider them. So, what we have found over the years is it’s a damned good way of weeding out the kite-flyers.

Bruce’s perceptions around delivering a service and ability are firmly held to the point of being openly expressed and put into action in his hiring technique – if a prospective employee does not demonstrate that they are immediately capable of achieving an outcome and delivering the services that Bruce believes is expected of them, then they will not pass his first hurdle, irrespective of any potential they might have and is not shown in Bruce’s ‘test’. This is especially poignant when the listener considers that Bruce claims his staff reflect on him and are like him. His dismissal of “kite-flyers” reinforces to the listener that Bruce values service, performance, and outcomes from those that would be close to him. These values that Bruce presents in his narrative reinforce his wish to be seen as unflappable and outcome-orientated.

Bruce also purports to scorn superfluous actions and dramatics, and he does so in a lyrical manner:

When there’s a crisis we have, a lot of people that [pause] you know, flap around, all over the place ... And they, they stop thinking ... And then they just panic. Er, one of the things ... we have enough of those people. And one of the things that I’ve, I’ve been able to, I don’t get excited very easily, it’s hard to get me excited about these sorts of things, well, not in that way, um I’ll sit back and I’ll just observe, and then I’ll say, “Fuck, I know what the answer is”, just fix it. Um, getting involved in those situations is what, it’s really good fun.

Here Bruce constructs the image of ‘headless chickens’ in the listener’s mind with his use of a common descriptor for a decapitated chicken, suggesting they are people who “stop thinking” and “panic” without a head. He makes his observation and states his belief in the context of outcomes and self-discipline as part of his elite identity (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006), and immediately distances himself from the straw-man he has created as he says “I don’t get excited” and “I’ll sit back and I’ll just observe”. He asserts himself as the solver in this technical scenario he presents, and delivers of the desired outcome as he “just fix[es] it” and he identifies with these values as he does so.

Bruce’s contrasting of the “flappers” above with how he considers his own actions and delivery of service is seen when he says of himself that:

I guess I'm, you know, the slow plodding type of a person rather than a frantic racing around all over the place type person, and I like to think that, you know, er I will achieve what I say, I will achieve when I commit to someone I will deliver, um as I like to believe that I'm honest and frank about things once I've made that decision. Sometimes it's hard to get me to agree to do it, but, um, once I do I make sure that I deliver if you like. So I guess I like to believe that I'm frank and honest about those sorts of things.

The identity work that Bruce performs in the above extract is clear, as he describes and locates his view of himself as “slow” and “plodding” who will “achieve” and “deliver”. More identity work that applies to the asset of service and delivery is seen as he says he is “honest and frank about things once I've made that decision” and will “commit to someone”.

In speculating on the problems of business in general, Bruce summons the language of productivity, outcomes, and service:

I think this is a big challenge in a lot of industries is that they want productivity, so they want workers that will come and get on with the job rather than academics who can come in and look at the job, and say, “Well it could be done better or differently” or, “Why are we doing it this way and you can probably streamline stuff and improve stuff”. Um, because today most manufacturing and the likes are looking at the output rather than, well, you know, immediate outputs rather than building the business for a future.

The words he uses here echo those he used previously in this section on his views around hiring people. These people should be immediately capable of generating an output to be “productive” and Bruce goes so far as to imply that hiring too many “academics” is counterproductive as they don't “get on with the job”. He appears to not value any ideas that not his as he dismisses hypothetical suggestion for increases to efficiency, advocating simply “immediate outputs” and in doing so he advances these as being important to him. It is perhaps worthwhile recalling at his stage that Bruce built his technological prowess from a self-driven and practical approach as a way of seeing how Bruce locates himself relative to the contributions of others.

An approach that Bruce has, where immediate outcomes are a requisite and value is added for a greater outcome, is apparent when he reflects on his time with his current employer:

I guess I've passed on that mantle if you like, others know [pause] that the culture is now here, it is something that I implemented when I first came here is that sort of culture, if you like, now that er, the other guys carry, well they do carry it on, 'cause I've moved on and do it on from that if you like, strategic plan or something now to do with, well, that is about that is matters, opportunities of, you know, saving money I guess, but how to introduce, or if any technologies would help us in any way shape or form, sort of thing.

In this extract, Bruce places himself in a central role as he says “I’ve passed on that mantle” and “something that I implemented when I first came here” that should “carry on” his legacy. His incorporation of outcomes and service into his self is seen in his language of how “technologies would help us” as “I’ve moved on”. The culture Bruce suggests that he has brought to the organisation and his achievements are couched in the context of outcomes and the services he has provided, as he talks of saving money, efficiencies and introducing new technology. He sees his journey as nearing its completion.

The closing point to be made in Bruce’s identity asset of outcomes and service is his frustration with obstacles that prevent him from achieving these. Bruce appears to actively resent the intrusion of human interactions into his world of outcomes, when he says:

Today politics gets in the frigging way of it all, and I think that’s one of the things that made me a bit unpopular on occasions, is that I would implement stuff, er without [pause] consulting too much, you know, er in [this place] everybody loves to have their say, and you learn this over time, but, going to all these committee meetings and meetings, and meetings, and meetings, just prolonged getting anything done. You know it would take two years before, or something before to get a, [pause] an agreement to make a change, what I learnt in the early days was, look if you come up with a good idea test them on a few people and say, “Yeah, right, now let’s do it”, and then you’d worry about performing it later. They’d get over it, and that’s what I learnt a long time ago, that generally they get over the shock of the change and then they start, “Oh you know it’s not so bad after all”. But if you do it the other way round and try and get everybody’s buy-in into things, everything, especially the technology’s moved on a whole heap, and what you’ve been trying to do has become unnecessary, superseded by something else.

In this extract Bruce again paints himself as an achiever and an over-comer of obstacles as he knows best as “I would implement stuff”. He does so in spite of the interjections of people who he appears to believe do not know any better and would rather be constrained by “all these committee meetings and meetings, and meetings, and meetings, just prolonged getting anything done”. Bruce succinctly states “they’d get over it” and as he does so he reinforces to the listener his focus on his delivering outcomes that he thinks are for the best. His suggestion that getting consensus involves delaying until the technology is superseded serves to suggest that Bruce equates service and outcomes with the technology, and his desire to get his own way with implementing means they are enmeshed. This extract that mentions consulting, cooperation and popularity leads into the next asset to emerge from Bruce’s narrative, being diplomacy and his desire to be seen as fair and just.

Appendix XX.i. Just, Fair, and Reasonable

The last extract from Bruce above, contains a declaration from Bruce that he is not popular because of some of the decisions he has made. By hearing this in his own words, the listener

is struck by a sense of regret and disappointment in Bruce, and that this is not as he would like it. The listener is left with the feeling that Bruce would like to be liked and to be popular, but his focus on outcomes and his perception of himself as a change agent has necessitated this unfortunate situation. Bruce's stated perception about his lack of popularity is an interesting foil to his language and description of others, and he is happy to be seen as both distant and diplomatic. This self-belief that he has about being just, fair, and reasonable is seen as he evaluates the competencies of others, and when he discusses some employment issues he has faced as a manager.

Bruce actively checks his speech for criticism and the listener felt this was so he was always seen to be fair, such as when discussing the merits of various people he sees, noting:

Oh-um, I have [pause] varying, [pause] you know, opinions about this. I think some people will just never get it whether they do training or education, it's just they don't have what, I guess, an affinity or whatever to these things, er because [pause] they become, you know, they're more like a natural, they have a natural [pause] talent if you like, to some things.

Rather simply say somebody was thick, lazy, or not suitable, Bruce checks his language with considered pauses and appears at pain to show that the person had every opportunity to achieve the outcomes he values so highly values. Instead of expressing himself in the precise language he uses to describe a machine, when a human is involved Bruce still judges and discards, but he does so in a diplomatic manner that does not identify the person and immediately justifies his actions and views, and simultaneously appeals for fairness. He is polite as he says "I think some people will just never get it" or "it's just they don't have what, I guess, an affinity" rather than simply dismiss their inability. Bruce's desire to be seen as reasonable causes him to manufacture discourse of reasonableness, while the unexpressed backstage narrative appears to the listener as the contrary: Bruce is judging and discarding people based on their ability to deliver an outcome, but he is keen to be seen as being diplomatic and fair in his judgments.

This degree of polite understatement comes through when Bruce reflects on a project that ran over time and over budget due to scope-creep:

I think [pause] not, [pause] I guess not [pause] um, [pause] two of the failures were people that were, had a disability, and I think it affected them psychologically which I guess we didn't understand at the time, but er, we learnt that these sorts of people probably have a chip on their shoulder and they often, well, you know, the CV and their knowledge and everything's fine but they've got another problem, and it doesn't come out until later, and I guess that's one sort of not understanding the psychological side of people I guess. And that, I suppose the other one was similar,

she probably more or less had a breakdown. [pause] Ah, [pause] but then she tried it behind a language barrier, phew, and that got real messy.

In this extract, Bruce carefully picks his words at first before relaxing into a reflective flow of words. His pauses and reflections can be attributed to his actively working on his identity as a fair person while giving his narrative, and it is qualified with “I think” and many pauses as he struggles to be seen as being fair. Special mention is made of a disability of sorts and that these people were hired on the competencies expressed in their CV and, in doing so, Bruce appears to assert his open-mindedness around equal opportunities. His mention of a breakdown and psychological issues is done in a context that strikes the listener as deliberately non-judgemental, and he closes with a resigned sigh and utterance about things getting messy. Again, the listener is struck with Bruce’s backstage narrative consisting of judgement about the person’s ability to perform, and his keenness to be seen as being fair of his assessment of the person irrespective of the disabilities of psychological issues they have. He notes simply that it “took a while” and those involved got “a bit carried away, but that is fair enough”. This snippet reveals Bruce’s reluctance to criticise a person who can be identified, and also reinforces his identification with those who embrace their technology as he has done. In reflection on two ‘failed hires’ that he has made, Bruce chooses his words very carefully, and as he is aware of the power he wields over others, what matters is that it appears he is very keen to be seen to be fair.

Appendix XXI Identity Assets of Frederic's Narrative

The sources of identity that Frederic appears to engage with and construct his identity as part of who he is appear to include his artistic and non-typical engineering self, as already touched on and presented in his extended narrative presented in Appendix XII. His immigration to New Zealand and his movement through his entrepreneurial and corporate phases contribute to his ability to adapt and change to his environment, and each of these form identity capital assets in their own right. The vision he demonstrates in performing those acts is another asset that emerges from his narrative, along with the people he knows and the networks he has that have facilitated that. In addition, his learning and reflection on these things form another asset in his narrative: his learning and reflection, which in turn takes the listener back to the sensitive artist he appears to believe he is.

Appendix XXI.a. The Artist

The identity asset of Frederic's artistry is not confined to his mention of his Art diploma and a claim to not being a typical engineer or IT person at the end of the extended extract presented in Appendix XII. He discusses an ability to draw and links this to his role in IT, claiming a balance of left and right brain thinking abilities. He talks of seeing more than just the technology, of how it interfaces with life, and of the need for emotional integration that he needs in his work and his life.

Frederic actively seeks the role of artist, and comes back to his Art diploma and his drawing ability time and again throughout his narrative. For example, at one point he links his "ability to draw" with the multimedia aspect of computing that attracted him to the IT industry:

I've always had kind of this um, ability to draw and so, so in the IT industry, I mean one thing that drew me to computing was multimedia, so ... except I probably didn't get the right sort of exposure or training um, like, you know, 'cause back in the, back in the late 80s there was no such thing as multimedia schools and things like that, you know, it was so um, it was probably, probably a little bit too early in my education.

Frederic begins to present his perceived artistic self by asserting a drawing ability he believes he possesses, and in exerting this ability Frederic appears to suggest that other stereotypical IT people may not have the same ability that he does: something he expanded on in other parts of his narrative. This differentiates him from these others, and as is an assertion of a unique identity asset. His current employer's business is graphical applications, and Frederic presents this as a natural consequence of a skill that he has, and as such suggest that his current employment is proof of his artistic ability. He closes this extract with another reference to his learning (Appendix XXI.c) which reinforces to the listener that his achievements have been

made without the aid of a complete multimedia education, and takes his identification with his education beyond that which Beyer & Hannah (2002) suggested as being founded on the education itself. The suggestion here is that his drawing ability is such that he achieved this in spite of not having an easier pathway through a formal education in multimedia, which reinforces this identity asset.

His assertion of his artistic nature emerges from his narrative as he talks about balance:

I tend to be a bit left and right brain, so I've learnt the left brain thing through necessity, through having to be structured and organised, but naturally I'm probably more a creative type person. Um, so I tend to get on with people that either are similar to me in terms of, you know, do both or more than right brained people, people that aren't too academic, too structured, not lateral enough in their thinking, I sometimes struggle a little bit with, but having learned that skill I often know how to relate to them as well, but my natural infinity would be the people that are, kind of, more adaptable, more, you know, more creative types.

This extract provides the listener with an insight into the way Frederic frames his thoughts, values, his shortcomings, and how he has addressed any deficiencies he identified. He places his 'artistic balance' in the hemispheres of the brain, which needs to be learnt and manipulated, and can be constructed and analysed. He uses this 'balanced' model of humanity and himself to frame his values of his self with regards to others. This metaphor of artistic balance and the hemispheres of the brain serves to present Frederic with a technologist's way of looking at shortcomings of the technologist. He is able to "struggle" and "relate" to the problem as the stereotyped artist is suggested to do, and therefore present balance to himself as not only as a technology-art dichotomy but as a pseudo-biological metaphor that explains the concepts as well as categorises the people who are dominant in either sphere. Frederic has taken his assertion of difference in this extract, and made it into a justification and reasoning for his career to date. By asserting his perceived skills and the shortcomings the education system and technology then, Frederic feeds this back into his presentation of being balanced, of being 'left-' and 'right-brained' and creative. This expansion serves to reinforce to the listener Frederic's own perceptions and the perceptions that he desires the listener to have of his artistic creativity and his difference from the 'engineer' that he says he is not.

Frederic goes further in rejecting the label of the engineer³⁷ as he rejects the modernist value system of technology curing all man's ills, and he argues a middle road on the benefits of

³⁷ It is worth recalling that the use of the term 'engineer' was initiated by Frederic and is not contained in any material presented to him as part of soliciting his narrative.

technology which he weaves into an assertion of his “personal mission”. He offers up the statement:

I’ve sort of come to the conclusion that everything has, can be used good or bad, you know. You can use a scalpel to, you know, to operate and help you ... Or you can use it as a weapon in a sense also. Um, so without um, without getting too cliché or deep about the whole thing, I mean, if you leave, you know, technology is encroaching a lot of areas of life that people wouldn’t have thought it would, so that the issue for me is no longer about the technology, about multimedia making things look pretty, it’s about helping influence. You know, if I have got a personal mission it’s about helping influence, how technology’s used, you know, and the effect it has on people in particular um, and how you, you know, it’s not a matter of, you know, technology has its place so that people that are anti-technology, you know, against it, aren’t, aren’t necessarily any better than people that believe that technology is going to be a panacea.

I would argue that both camps are blinkered

Correct.

The artistic balance that Frederic appears to believe he has is expressed by him in explicitly rejecting aspects of the stereotypical IT persona that involve technology as a panacea for society. While the stereotypical IT persona is not discussed or explored in any depth during the giving of his narrative, Frederic nevertheless rejects that label and appears to centre himself in the role of the artistic and balanced man. This perception of his own need for artistic balance appears to be a plank in Frederic’s interpretation of his career to date, and his integration of this balanced non-engineering stance with his “mission”, Frederic presents himself to the listener as a sensitive man of thought and reason, for whom consideration and natural justice are important.

Frederic uses this sense of balance to justify his decision to change jobs based on a lack of emotional integration with his immediately past employer and his decision to take on his current role, saying:

Um, probably about 6 months ago I started to feel a little bit bored, at [my previous employer]. I felt that, I had, you know, that I wasn’t utilising all my skills um, and also there was no emotional, I’d never really established emotional bond with the company. Um, there were very competent people working there um, so I’m not taking anything away from the, but there was, I dunno, maybe a certain lack of personality.

Again in this extract multiple threads of artistic balance emerge for the listener. Firstly is the obvious boredom with routine, but secondly is the more subtle balance of skill deployment. For Frederic, being aware of his skills and not using them appears to present an unbalanced situation which he does not like, perhaps like a pianist without a piano, which is echoed in the lack of emotional involvement in the company: his is both technically and managerially

involved, but not emotionally and therefore Frederic perceives an imbalance. He presents this as a justification for his decision, thereby lending credence to it as a part of who he thinks he is. He closes this extract with an attempt to further balance it by reinforcing to the listener that his feelings were not critical of the people there or an assault on their technical prowess, but that the imbalance was intangible as opposed to a more tangible shortcoming on behalf of the company. In suggesting that he sensed an imbalance in his work and acting on it, Frederic's accepting of invitations from head-hunters and seeking more change is the basis of the next asset to emerge from his narrative.

Appendix XXI.b. Change and Adaptability

The change that Frederic presents in his narrative arises from his experience as an immigrant to New Zealand and attesting to fit in, as well as his changing face in his journey through his career (Nicholson & West, 1989). He emphasises his adaptability as an immigrant at several points in his narrative, such as discussing how he has tried to adapt his accent to New Zealand and the differing academic standards in the two countries. The theme of change is also apparent in his discussion of the fast changing technology used in projects he was involved with and in how the business he established was required to change and adapt.

In presenting his identity, Frederic is aware of his self-perceived difference from others as an accented immigrant, saying:

There are certain words which I still you know, if I say "can't" you know people go "oh you must be, South African or" you know I think it's all, basically if you live somewhere you, it makes sense to integrate and um, and I mean, it kind of surprised you know, the particular um, cultures that seem to retain their accent you know, particularly Scottish people um, also northern English people you know.

Yeah, again I'm not just so, yeah while you're saying this I'm just thinking of my er, my ex's mother which you know, she's been out here for 40 years and still, well had been here for 40 years when I was seeing her, I still only understood every third word she said.

Yeah, yeah. I think it's probably the motivation that um, if the place you are in has a negative view of the place you've come from you gonner, you know, it motivates you to to change, to change your accent pretty quickly. But I don't, but I mean, I never, because I hadn't, I wasn't born there, I didn't have family there I didn't feel any strong link to, to that culture so with, so I guess it was easy to distance myself ... I think there was, there was quite a big adjustment for me in terms of [my] university. I think the er, Form VI matriculation in South Africa wasn't quite up to standard of some of the sixth and seventh form schooling er, in New Zealand. So I felt I had to do a bit of a catch up.

While this extract could give the reader the impressions that Frederic has attempted to assimilate into the dominant culture of his new country, a closer reading reveals an identity

construct built on his difference and change. While he has attempted to assimilate externally with things such as his accent his incomplete success is in fact a plank of his identity as it reinforces to him how far he has come, and that he has still some work to do. The identity asset of change is present as a transition point: he is not South African and nor is he a New Zealander; rather he sees himself as being betwixt the two, and in a state of adaptation.

With respect to technology, Frederic appears to be have been always looking for new things to do, and identifying with those. In one part of his narrative, he contrasts the staid image of an employer with what was actually happening in the company, noting that the company's decor was:

A grey-blue with brown, and um, while some of the work, some of the things we were doing for customers was fantastic, you know, they achieved some awesome things er, while I was there, you know, I shifted [a large client's] business across, helped them shift it. We ended up taking on all the e-commerce, on line [tape change] Um, so yeah um, basically there was some very exciting projects that we were involved, nice budget projects and they did all [another large client] systems, the biggest project in the country um, the biggest Java system in the country um, probably had 30 or 40 people working on it at any one time um, so pulled off some incredible coups.

Frederic's identification with the technology is present, but it is the excitement of the change and magnitude of what he was doing that he presents as significant and which forms part of his identification with what occurred. His placement of himself in these events is evident. His contrasting comment about the austerity of the work environment is suggested to the listener to belie the existing things they did, and acts as an interesting foil to the current offices he occupies.

Adapting to change is also seen in his narrative where he suggests that he did not set out to be successful in business, and that success came as part of a series of other events that he adapted to:

I'd always started [my company] to, you know, I never intended for it to be er, my own company. I'd done it out of the, you know, the terms of the conceptual um. Having a place where you worked with like-minded people, um, that, with frame of mind, that did some interesting things with emerging technology. Um, we um, um, over the course of time we ended up having to buy out a number of business partners. So there were three business partners initially and um, there was always a conflict over one of them that was pretty much a silent partner er, and the third business partner typically would, would have an issue over the ownership of the company and would want to buy up the other business partner, the third business partner. So, after two failed attempts at having a third business partner in, we ended up buying them out and it was just myself and the silent partner. So I ended up, I was running [it] and I hadn't gone into business to be on my own and to be, you know, taking on that sort of responsibility ... it was pretty early on, you know,

there was a lot of on the job learning about how to run a company you know, you learn very quickly about um, you know the, that having good ideas about products doesn't mean you can necessarily run a business. Um, there are a lot of things about running a business that you come up to speed with pretty quickly. And then there were other things about how you structure the company and how you take it forward, the types of people you um, hire the proportion of sales, admin, technology people you end up with define where your company's going to go with that particular type of people. So um, basically I had taken on too many technical people and not enough business people and um, in order to, I could go through a big restructure ended up taking on different types of people and shift the business into a different mode, um, or I could integrate with another company and so my view was um, become part of, small part of something bigger than a big part of something smaller.

Here Frederic retells the hiccups of his company in a way that suggest that he did not do it for the money, and that the growing pains of the company were something that were to be expected for a novice entrepreneur (Appendix XXI.f) such as he. He constructs his narrative in the language of business and personal needs, presenting the company that he started (and later sold) to do software development as an aside to his fulltime job (also as a software developer). In doing so, he talks of adapting to demands placed him by employing others to write the code he was employed to do. Frederic talks of partners, and it not working out and his adapting to this, and the resulting change that occurred, again placing himself in a central role, as he says he was running things and it was not what he had envisaged. His claim to not envisage these events and the subsequent actions further serve to demonstrate the change he find himself in and how he adapts, and his presentation of his place in this reinforces these as identity assets to the listener. The multiple failed attempts are dealt with his adapting and learning (which is another identity asset in his narrative, in Appendix XXI.c), before his commercial manager self (Appendix XXI.d). He presents the problems that he faced with his staffing and the need to fund not-immediately-productive-overheads the selling of his company, and the change that went with selling the company - which was an action he appeared rueful about, as a natural consequence and to be expected. In doing so, he presents the facade of the businessman, when the listener suspects that the selling of his business was not something that happened or was a course taken lightly, and who has learnt from this experience.

Appendix XXI.c. Learning

The learning that Frederic does, and which appears to be so important to him is a process of personal experience and development. He talks of learning business skills from both running companies and those who employed him, of learning personal lessons, and he suggests that what he has learnt has become a part of who he is.

Frederic says in the last extract of the previous section that there was a lot of on-the-job learning about how to run a company when he established his consulting firm. Frederic was explicit about his learning and uses that language of learning to convey his naivety, thereby linking the asset of his learning to his self. The listener is also made to suspect that the naivety of Frederic is being put forward as a reason why his business had to either be severely restructured, partnered, or sold, and by doing so, Frederic can attribute this crisis to the asset in his narrative of learning. He therefore reframes what may be considered a failure into a learning experience from which he has come through the other side of as a better person. Specifically, this extract of Frederic's presents him as not only a learner, but as a fast learner who was being compelled to do so due to the pace and needs of a business in the new economy, but also the evolution of technology. Part of the learning process is reflection, and Frederic does this when he explains the problem of having too many technical people and not enough sales staff, and of reflecting on his options, which he does and further embeds learning as an identity asset for him.

In discussing his business experience and growth, Frederic often points out and suggests that it has been a period of learning from past employers in various forms, saying in one explicit case that:

[A previous employer] taught me about some of the quality aspects about process um, but also the limitations of it. Process alone doesn't do anything, so you can actually establish a strong brand, you can establish, you know, but having strong emphasis on quality you, you know, customers would perceive that they're getting a really high quality deliverable, but the issue with that is, that it could cost too much and take too long, and it's not a differentiator. Not enough of a differentiator anyway.

In this extract, Frederic appeals to the authority of this employer, who was a large and well respected professional consulting business, and in doing so presents himself as a product of their training and education. He therefore identifies with being a product of his employer (Nicholson & West, 1989) of the time and of the adoption of the values and lessons that this large and respected business had to offer. He cements this linkage by referring to the aspects of the business that he appears to think are important in the development for the product and where he sees himself in the business.

In his previous use of the language of identification and role, Frederic imparts his wisdom and transitions his role from that of learner to teacher as he reflects on his own learning, which emerges in another extract where he says:

You, you know, I quickly noted that performance was linked with emotional state. You know, so if you were really enjoying something you're passionate about it you'd

quickly fit in and you do well. If there's demotivating factors, you tune out then you're not going to do so well.

Now that Frederic has moved from student to teacher in his narrative, he also moves back again in pointing out what he has learnt and under who he has learnt it, such as various mentors he has had and people he has worked for. He has placed himself in the context of learner and teacher. His learning has aided his professional growth and employment options, and one extract shows how his perceptions of his on-the-job learning has aided him, saying:

There was growth in the role so I took on more manager responsibility, given teams to run and that, that provided a lot of growth in the role ... Being given responsibility um, learning to manage larger teams of people er, learning to run my own P&L, learning some new accounting cycle, and that's really why I had gone to [this company] to learn why they had been so successful.

Here Frederic has taken his learning, and the consequences of greater responsibilities that have come with that, and presents this to the listener as a means and as an end. He claims an ownership of the outcomes of these leanings and consequences, such as the profit and loss account he was responsible for, and talks of how he was responsible for various things. In doing so, he both stakes a claim in these things, and has them stake a claim in him thereby identifying with them.

Frederic's experience and learning has placed him in a position where he believes others can learn from him, such as when he retells how he was compelled to hire someone he thought was unsuitable for a role, and was proven to be right:

I tried to be open minded about, you know I, I tried to set the questions around how they felt they would adapt from the in-house kind of role to a commercial ... in front of the other senior managers ... they seemed to get quite a plausible answer, but rather than, than listening to a plausible answer you need to kind of go, well they, they don't have the track record of experience so, you know, they're not necessarily going to be successful in that role.

In and around this extract, Frederic acknowledged his biases and perceptions, but stands by them. His opening sentence is overt identity work and serves to attest to a belief he is open minded and willing to listen and learn, or a desire to be seen as such, but he proceeds to frame the interview questions in a way to undermine and expose the shortcomings of the candidate, which in his mind was the case and was warranted. He seemed a little exasperated that the senior managers did not see through the 'management speak' that he says posed as plausible answers that Frederic has seen through, thereby suggesting he has learnt but they will not. Frederic then appeals to his knowledge that comes from running his own software development team to suggest that his learning to date gives him an insight that the senior managers appeared to lack. Frederic's views and learning appear to have been vindicated

later in his extract when he claims that the person who he was compelled to hire did in fact “fail” to perform, and suggest that this is presented to the listener to validate Frederic’ learning as opposed to the other managers no learning.

Appendix XXI.d. Commercial Manager

Frederic stresses the importance of business fundamentals in giving his narrative, and observes that it is not just about the technology. He suggesting a prolific output from doing six months work in three months, a professionalism in his documentation, and of professional integrity. He projects his commercial management self to the listener as he talks of hiring-and-firing, the difficulties he has faced and the decisions he has had to make, his self-belief, and liberal use of management-speak.

Frederic presents himself as a commercial manager who works hard, such as in the extended extract in Appendix XII where he refers to having done six months work in three months. This comment from another person could be interpreted as that person being bitter about being overworked, but with Frederic it strikes the listener as an assertion of his professional identity that he believes he has over-delivered to his employer, was capable of doing so, and will continue to do so. By implying that he has delivered twice what could have been expected of others, Frederic presents his values around professionalism and diligence to the listener in a way that identifies them to him.

Likewise, is his concern about the professionalism of presentation in the opening extended narrative, where he talks about the quality of immaculate published documents. In doing so, Frederic appears to place a great deal on not only the appearance of professionalism in the products and services that he may be involved in, but also in the content of these items. It is through this professionalism that Frederic suggests that other things can be achieved, such as clients not questioning the bill. Elsewhere in his narrative Frederic also suggested that the professional exterior allows latitude in methods and achievement, with the implication that professionalism is something to be adopted and that will be satisfying. By making these linkages, Frederic demonstrates that professionalism in himself as a commercial manager is more than just a persona, platitude or a tick-box, but is an integral part of his narrative and how he sees himself. However, in delivering on this polished and professional exterior, Frederic is not oblivious to gloss masking failure, saying:

The problem is you can have a lot of very professional, well people that come across very professionally and can present very well, communicate really well, but can’t add value to a business, short of following a process and, you know, a PMI program manager that can tick the boxes, write beautiful status reports.

Here Frederic notes the potential for a façade and the perception that another may erroneously have of them. He suggests superficial criteria for professionalism such as presenting and communicating well, but severely comments on substance. By cutting through the veneer of their façade, Frederic identifies that they are superficial and therefore do not add the asset of value to his commercial enterprise, making similar comments elsewhere in his narrative such as when he commented:

The Asians have got a phrase which is, “looks good, no good to eat”.

This quest for professionalism and accountability extends to his comments as his narrative came to a close, saying he could only spare five more minutes, before noting he was unsure if what he had said was “on track”. In making this comment, Frederic presents the impression of a professional man with obligations to others who he cannot let down. However, it is worth noting that he continued talking for much more than five minutes. His subsequent comment also projects professional values by seeking to align the listener’s expectations with what he has delivered and he uses a mechanistic metaphor to convey this. In seeking to qualify if those expectations have been met, Frederic allows himself the option to correct or amend as required.

Inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour in others that will impact on the commercial success of the venture is frowned upon by Frederic, as he indicates in telling of his departure from a company, saying:

The general manager, in order to performance manage [a salesman who was under-delivering on his own sales targets], ended up making, putting him in charge of the Auckland sales people and at the time I was one of them, and so he became the sales manager and he, basically, told the general manager that he could actually solve a lot of the issues by becoming the sales manager, ok, so he actually engineered himself into this role by under performing. But now it doesn’t finish there. The general manager thought this was a great idea, ‘cause he then held him accountable for the whole sales programme. When he didn’t perform, again, the general manager tried to get rid of him but didn’t follow due process. Basically sent an email saying, “you and me don’t get on how about you piss off” [this escalated] by which stage I had lost complete respect for the executive management, heh.

Around and as part of this extract, Frederic presented background information and the intricacies of these events, and expressed a mixture of bitterness, disgust and dismay that this person was continually promoted by under-performing. He presents the person as unprofessional and lacking basic competencies, and the General Manager as well meaning but also inept in his dealings. While both the person and the General Manager are presented as unprofessional in this extract, Frederic later presented himself as delivering on his goals and as a professional in his approach, and in this favourable comparison with others projects a

desired identity to the listener. Frederic contrasts his own thoughts and values around the role of a commercial manager with those of the general manager in this organisation, and finds the organisation and the general manager lacking. Not being up to his expectations, he tenders his resignation, which according to Frederic was met with conciliatory comments and a desire for him to stay.

In creating his commercial manager persona, Frederic is careful to make special note that he is flexible and adaptable and not a controller, which the listener suspects would place him in too much conflict with his inner artist identity asset. In projecting his manager self he says:

I'll look for somebody that's got generalist, they might have a few strengths and then look, and then look at role, which, which way are they going to lean, you know, what are their affinities um, which people they are going to end up working well um, what technologies they like working with, with, in their industry, you know, so what's their background, is there natural progression um, and then based on, you know, when they come to the organisation now they'll be a natural fit with the people um, and, you know, so there's, so I like to not define the role too tightly and anybody that's going, that wants a really tight job description and that wants um, hard rules and definitions around what they do and isn't willing to be flexible and adapt well I find that I can't really work with them.

He considers and expects people to share in his values and says he will place them in such a position where their professional actions will reward both the person and the organisation. By doing so Frederic presents a set of values to the listener that he has imposed on the organisation he manages and is responsible for. He claims he demands integrity, and is not easily fooled or pushed around. What he appears to value in himself and his employers extends to the expectations he has of others who he hires. Rather than tightly defining a role and hiring a person to perform prescribed duties as one might expect from purely commercial controller, Frederic appears to advocate a more modern and professional model advocated in the new economy of hiring good people and letting them find their niche (Arthur et al., 1999).

The imposition of his values on to the organisation and his desire for well-rounded people should not be taken by the reader as a sign of weakness in Frederic, as he is clear about what happens when people let the team down or do not perform. His role as a commercial manager is reinforced to the listener when he responds to a leading question designed to identify conflict:

Visualise someone here that you don't get on with.

Um, they've gone [laugh].

Tell me about, what is it you didn't get on about them.

Um, there's a particular person which, who basically had no integrity um, they had had a pivotal role in the organisation and hadn't delivered. Over-promised. They hadn't represented their team properly, or well.

They hadn't represented the [company] team or internally?

No, no, even internally. So you got developers basically saying certain things couldn't be done, and we managers asked how the project was going. That person had said, "it's going great guns, we're on track". Now I believe in backing yourself in a challenging team, but, but if you're not their advocate, you know, I mean, why are you there as a manager. Um, so basically er, you know, they were also in a contract role, they were highly paid, the quality of their work wasn't right because they hadn't been successful the role was then sort of shifted into a slightly different role which wasn't their strength. Um, they were charging me for a whole lot of things which weren't billable, which didn't add value to the organisation, certainly not from the cost of charging, billing, you know, over \$100 an hour, internal. Um, so there was actually no point in having them there. The biggest issue I had with the person was they had no integrity. They didn't, when they opened their mouth

Can't trust 'em?

Yeah, it was just, yeah - "How stupid do you think I am?"

I'm not paying you a hundred, a hundred plus bucks an hour bullshitting.

Yeah.

So, obviously this person reported to, you just turned around and?

Um, I just um, squeezed him down to only billable hours, [before forcing him out]

Here Frederic does not conform to the niceties of employment legislation in his dealings with a person who he has no respect for and thinks is milking the company. His initial response is a simple, emphatic and non-judgemental "they've gone" to which he then laughs before explaining the nature of their departure, which serves to reinforce his power to the listener (Knights & Willmott, 1999). Frederic evaluates the person alongside a series of his own, presented, metrics around adding value and honesty, and finds the person wanting. Rather than performance-manage the person to try and improve the level of their contribution, Frederic opts to move them on. To this end, Frederic relentlessly scrutinises the billable hours the person charges for, to the point where the person is compelled to leave. In identifying what Frederic sees as untrustworthy actions, Frederic demonstrates to the listener his desired self as being commercially hard and that he not a fool and not to be taken lightly. His circumvention of employment law niceties indicates that he was prepared to come to a fast and rapid solution for the best for the company – even if it could have meant he exposes himself to a penalty through the employment court, the implication appears to be that it would have been (financially) worthwhile.

Frederic's backing of himself and presenting of himself as a manager driven by commercial realities is also seen when some businesses he has been involved with have encountered difficulties of some sort. Frederic had described having to buy out other business partners when issues arose around the direction of the company, although the reasons for the buying out of these partners were not clear. What is significant though is the matter of fact nature of which Frederic presents this 'need' to buy them out in the opening parts of this extract, and the way that he has backed himself to be the active partner in running the firm and buying out the third partner.

His backing of himself in these commercial enterprises is presented matter-of-factly, such as in a summation that Frederic gave of his advancement in one company he worked for, saying:

I think after about a year I kind of, I'd, I'd been quite successful in the business development role so I started focusing predominantly on business development um, and they hired some people to run the ops from the technical perspective and um, after about another year of that I ended up taking over the, becoming 'Principal of Technology' and run um, the technology team as well as doing some of the business development.

Frederic's backing of himself is presented in this extract as a success to which he understates as "quite successful", meaning others had to be hired to take over the sorts of things he had been doing while he concentrated on the things that others could not – developing the business. In placing himself in this role, he appears to back himself in the integration of a business development role and a technical role into what he refers to as 'principal of technology'. His success in this matter is presented to the listener in his role, and job title, and as such he draws identity from it (eg Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Marcia, 2002; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Collinson, 2003; Raskin, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

In presenting his identity as a commercial manager, Frederic has adopted the language of commerce and deliverables and the discourse of the 'manager', which is what his job description is. Much of the occupational aspects of his narrative is laced with management-speak³⁸ or business platitudes. An example of this is when Frederic says:

You know it seemed to be forging new grounds taking on [the incumbent].

The poles are when you have too much work on, and your team is full you are in danger, because you get more demand, you can't respond to it. When you don't

³⁸ Management-speak is a term used to describe seemingly out of place words used in a bureaucratic or financial environment, and may be unnecessarily long and/or complicated, or have excessive use of abbreviations and/or acronyms. Use of this jargon places the speaker in a good or 'informed' light and garners a degree of authority. See "Management Speak: The Live Oratory of Management Gurus" (2005), by David Greatbatch and Timothy Clark.

have enough work on your team is empty then you're in trouble because you've got no revenue.

If you've got the principles then you come to the crossroads and make your decision you can relate it to, to one of your principles, OK. And the key thing is that those principles are aligned. Now by having something like understanding where you are on the road um, helps you make the right decision, so actually you can't see what's over the hill, over the next hill.

Just because there's no right or wrong pole when you are on a pole you're wrong, you know what I mean. It's when you play in the grey spaces and understanding where you are in terms of those poles which way you'd lean, yeah, you know you're in the right space.

In using discourse such as this, Frederic appears to place himself in the role of a businessman who can not only walk-the-walk but who can talk-the-talk. His use of the language of management serves to reinforce to himself and the listener that he is a man who is a 'manager', and who is managing the business that he has been head-hunted to run. He also liberally quotes management-gurus, such as when he says:

Well that whole thing particularly in kind of merging markets is, you kind of look at some of the Geoffrey Morre principles, in terms "crossing the chasm", "inside the tornado". That range of what again gives you frame and form for technology adoption and, and what are the strategies you use around that, and that's kind of become like the, the de facto manual for small technology firms um, and um, his point is that beyond the earlier adopters and innovators there's a 'chasm' and, so in order to 'cross the chasm' the only way to do it is by focusing your resources on a particular product and a particular vertical segment, and that's what helps you get 'across the chasm'.

Um, at [my previous employer] there was a book all managers were asked to read which was called "Good to Great". Kind of ironic in a way um, but a lot of the principles in that book, it was a Jim Collins book, are around, you know, that the true leaders in an organisation don't promote themselves and they're not always seeking media attention, and things like that, they're understated, even austere. Sounding familiar? Um, that um, one of the first principles is that you get the right people on the bus and you get the wrong people off the bus, and you also have your 'hedgehog concept' which is, watch your bread and butter when you're really good so the hedgehog is really good at curling up into a ball when it's attacked.

In quoting management gurus, Frederic appears to imply to the listener that his management skills and abilities have not only been self-taught, but have some academic standing and merit. He places his standing and status as a commercial manager not only on his experience, but alludes to a perceived credibility which the listener felt was expected to be acknowledged given that Frederic was aware this investigation was being conducted through a Business School.

Appendix XXI.e. Visionary

Frederic presents his predictions of future events, as he talks of his perceptions of others, and he presents a view of his self that related to a mission that he has adopted which is based on adapting technology to people. Frederic's vision an identity asset is a forerunner to his entrepreneurial identity, which is explored next in Appendix XXI.f. He introduced chronology into his vision for the future as he presents his past predictions and how he foresaw existing events, and then extrapolates current events into the future.

Many aspects of Frederic's narrative are laced with expressions that he uses to convey that he understands what will happen and that he can see opportunities as they arise, such as:

[It] doesn't change the fact that your project's going to crash and fail.

I also had some issues with, where the company was heading at that stage.

In making these comments, Frederic is presenting a perception of his ability to not only evaluate the current situation, but to extrapolate into the future. In verbalising such thoughts and judgements, he places himself in a position where he could be judged on his evaluation and therefore exposes himself to criticism on his professional abilities as a manager to add value. In uttering these statements and their emergence as the asset of vision, he also re-presents his role as general manager and steward of the company as he claims an understanding of the present and a vision for the future.

In being a steward of the company, Frederic presents the asset of vision elsewhere in his narrative, such as when he comments on other managers by saying

They never had any real definition of what they were, you know, the *raison d'être* wasn't there, you know. Basically [the manager], when asked what [the company] was there for ... he basically said well, their aim was to help their employees be successful, and it was like, 'successful at what?' Well, just to succeed, you know, create the environment for them to succeed. You know it was really glib, it was real um, it was real cliché, there was, there was no, there was no, you know it was very difficult to hang your hat off him and go, well 'we do this'.

To the listener, Frederic sounds disillusioned with this manager, and his inability to articulate a vision for the organisation that could be worked towards. Because this person could not articulating a simple vision, in Frederic's eyes this person appears to not understand the business they are in, and therefore fails in his role as manager. Frederic has framed this person according to his perceptions of his own self, as he viewed their input as "really glib, it was real um, it was real cliché". He judging this person as lacking what he has, and thinks is necessary. His presentation of his ability to see the shortcomings of this manager support the

notion that Frederic believes he has a vision that others do not, and other parts of his narrative reveal that he has lost respect for this manager, and this evaluation of that manager is in contrast with Frederic's own comments about himself.

Frederic presents his perception of his own self, and the role vision plays in creating his own self, when he says:

If I have got a personal mission it's about helping influence, how technology's used, you know, and the effect it has on people.

By making comments such as these, Frederic imparts to the listener a belief in what it is he is seeking to achieve in the industry. He has variously talked about his mission, grasp of technology and people and where they want to go, and suggests in one of the extracts above that he has always known about multimedia and the potential that it has. In making these claims, Frederic has the effect of impressing on the listener that his understanding of the current, and his deduction of the future, have validity and are part of his abilities as a manager. The importance of his own vision as part of his own self are impressed on the listener in part by the contrast that he places against the former manager.

Frederic also presents his vision of the now, based on the past, in examples such as those below, when he says:

Technology is encroaching a lot of areas of life that people wouldn't have thought it would, so that the issue for me is no longer about the technology, about multimedia making things look pretty, it's about helping influence.

Even when I was at school back in the early 80s I was jumping on Macs and using them to do animation and things like that and um, so I always kind of, in the back of my mind, wanted to set up a multimedia business here even before I knew what multimedia was.

In both of these extracts, Frederic presents a status quo and a future – technology versus influence and himself sensing multi-media in some way – and in doing so suggests a means of validating his vision. In the first extract, he presents a truism, and then places himself in the truism by noting his place as he sees it and speculating on the banal as he tries to drive the technology to “influence” a currently-undefined situation. Frederic's placement of himself in this central asset suggest that he is attempting to place himself on the forefront of the next technological evolution – which he foresees in a vague way. The vagueness that he sees coming suggested in the second extract has already happened once, when he suggests he wanted to set up a multimedia business before he new what multimedia was, and this serves as evidence for the accuracy of his visions as he suggests when he claimes “animation and things like that and um, so I always kind of, in the back of my mind”.

In evaluating the current and the future, Frederic also encourages the acceptance of his views by the listener when he says:

There's, there's too much hanging on the outcomes um, it's got phenomenal opportunity um, the issue is what's the exit strategy for the company and at what point does it make sense to be acquired, you know, it's definitely a strategy for the owners. Um, but the question's over what period of time, you know, there's always the chance that um, some channel is going to pick up the technology and really run with it, something really huge will happen with it, and there's also the chance that, you know, you could get eclipsed by somebody else ... whereas a lot of other people in the industry wouldn't understand how to position the company for a trade sale or how to get more investment in, or the right kind of government grants and things like that to help you sustain it.

In this extract, Frederic's use of the discourse of vision which appears to the listener to approach the evangelical. He places himself firmly at the centre of the organisation's future, suggesting that many others would not be able to see the events as they unfold and what the consequences of these events could be. In doing so, his identity work is clear to the listener. He details some possibilities of what these events could be, while placing these events in the future context, and suggesting options for the way ahead. Frederic therefore demonstrates that he has put considerable thought into this, and is engaged with it, which in turn demonstrates his identification with his vision.

Appendix XXI.f. Entrepreneur

Analysis of Frederic's narrative suggests that a significant identity asset for him is as an entrepreneur. This comes through from his vision as previously discussed, as well as his discourse around going contracting and then forming his own company, and the equity stakes he takes in his employers business. He talks of his attraction to working with high-tech start-ups, and appears to consider being asked to stay on and write his own job description as a sign of his uniqueness and ability to add value to the organisation.

He says of when he established his own consultancy company as a result of being sought after by his old employers to do more and more software developing, that:

I had to make a choice whether I'd stay [with my new employer] or do some of the separate work. Um, and, there was, there was too much work to actually moonlight or do it as a part-time contract, so I had to make a call as to whether to split off. So that's what I did, ended up getting a contract. Initially it was contracting um, and very quickly established that I needed some people to help me as there was too much work so ended up forming um, a company.

Here Frederic presents himself as valued by his current employer as by those seeking his services to do some contracts to such an extent that he was overwhelmed and had to establish

his company. He feels needed by his employer (Tan & Hunter, 2003), and the need that is apparent to him serves as an opportunity, and it influences his career decisions. This asset of capitalising on entrepreneurial opportunities continues throughout his narrative as it build to an identity asset, such as when he describes another product he was asked to work on.

Frederic as an entrepreneur is also presented to the listener when he talks of the options around working for cash-poor clients. Rather than work for a purely hourly rate as most software developing consultancies do, Frederic describes it as being:

For the first product which was a psychometric tool, they actually um, paid me to build it, and the next tool they wanted was a survey tool, and it was going to cost quite a bit more, and so we offered to subsidise it if they gave us some ownership. Paid us license fees, royalties um, so we sent up the vehicle to actually hold intellectual property and the ownerships and trademarks of the um, of the software and the tools.

Here Frederic appears to assert he has delivered on his promises in a professional manner, and the client has sought his help again. It is worth noting that Frederic places himself in the centre of this event, referring to “me” as opposed to the collection of consultant he had hired. He notes a common refrain of technology start-ups: the client is cash-poor and the product will be expensive, so Frederic suggests to the listener that he sees an entrepreneurial opportunity for an equity stake rather than simply being paid consultancy fees. This will yield an on-going revenue stream if he is successful, and Frederic has already presented himself to be an astute commercial manager whose vision tells him that will be the case. By building part of his business on such a commercial model, he demonstrates his entrepreneurial nature, as opposed to a trading nature, to the listener.

The recognition of value from a standpoint of more than just consultancy fees is also apparent in another extract of Frederic’s, where he evaluates the potential rewards against the value of his time and career, saying:

They offered to give me shares, the only issue with that is the investment period with [them] is 7 years, and they were offering that after two years, so they, I mean, they promised them for, for a couple of years and finally said they would um, issue shares to me, and I figured there was not way I was going to work for that organisation for 9 years, so there was no point.

In this extract, Frederic looks at the financial benefits of becoming a shareholder in the company in question, but suggests that the value to him of the shares does not match the value he places on his obligation – nine years of service – and so he finds no value in the arrangement and declines it. His suggestion is that he has an eye for entrepreneurial activity, and he identifies himself with that by placing himself in the centre of these events and

judgments. In the final extract above, he appears to believe that it will be more lucrative for him to use his networks and knowledge of people to move on in his career journey.

Appendix XXI.g. People and Networks

Frederic refers to his networks for finding jobs, and places a heavy influence in his narrative on people. He often repeats that he has always sought to hire and work with the best people, with like-minded people, and those he can learn from. He suggests that he was shoulder-tapped and hired through his network, and that he shows concern for others and the relationships he has.

Frederic says of his hiring philosophy that has sought to hire the right people with a well rounded balance of skills: picking them for them and not a job. He says of his hiring that:

I was looking for people to be lead managers and um, you need, again you need people to be really well rounded in terms of technical background, commercial business skills, people skills, communication, you know, sales skills, there's a need to balance those elements and I spent, I would have spent, 12 to 18 months not finding the right people.

The most interesting part of this extract is not that he sees the need for balance in others but that to his eye Frederic found it difficult to find balanced people in the IT industry.

Accordingly, to Frederic's standards and views and his discourse around the previously mentioned left-brain and right-brain thinking, he appears to think that he is balanced but that many others he could find in the IT industry were not. His judgement of the merits and shortcomings of others are clear. This aspect of his identity work, where he has previously suggested that he was balanced and now suggests that very few others in his industry are serves to set Frederic apart from others and cements his identity in the context of his relationship identity asset. Such is his belief in the scarcity of balanced people in IT that Frederic subsequently said that this required him to restructure the departments to reduce the need for the balanced people he had sought. This expression further reinforces to the listener that Frederic considers his balance and his ability to understand other people to be an important part of who he is, and his location with regards to others.

In locating himself with regards to other people, Frederic observed of when he was looking for work that:

I put my CV out to an agency and I started getting chased.

I was getting calls from agencies about once every three to six months all the time I was [with my employer], and I'd either, the role either hadn't appealed or the um, or I, I was, I had either taken on [new duties there] ... I got rung up again about um,

a role [here], so a particular agency, I was actually, the agency had rung me about a role [with yet another company] which I didn't, I said, didn't fit my criteria and didn't interest me ... so I turned that role down and the agency called me up about a month later and um, and told me about the role [here] and there were a whole lot of things that appealed.

These two extracts are of differing lengths but both present the same idea of Frederic being valued by others and being sought after, and he appears to suggest by giving them that he knows this, and being sought after is part of how he thinks other view him. He relies on his networks and the people that he knows to get jobs, and considers these important. In presenting these to the listener, Frederic appears to add weight to their significance as he uses his dismissal of jobs that come to him as validating his value to those in his network to still continue to seek him. He appears to identify with his desired status (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). In the second, Frederic quantifies the contacts that he has with corporate personal agencies, which shows the value he thinks the agencies place in him. By dismissing the roles the agencies have to offer for whatever reason, Frederic shows that he does not value the roles as others do, and that they are not up to his expectations. By continuing to reject roles, Frederic may serve to increase his value to the agencies, to the point where he is finally put forward as a candidate for the General Manager's role with his current employer. In looking at this role and saying it "appealed", Frederic values both himself and role, and appears to conclude that there is a match worthy of his interest: his network and the people in it have served him well.

His concern for the people he will be working with appears regularly throughout his narrative, saying things like:

So that's my style of, you know, I'm not a, I'm not a micro manager, I'm not a control freak, so I need people to see where I'm coming from and take some initiative.

I was running [my company] and I hadn't gone into business to be on my own and to be, you know, taking on that sort of responsibility.

I was, I was pretty, let's say um [pause] how to explain it. I, I guess I was always in the top class er, depending on my motivation that year, I'd either be near the top or near the bottom, depended whether I liked the teachers or not.

In judging and evaluating himself like this, Frederic labels himself (Wagner & Wodak, 2006) and places himself in a position relative to his peers (Cantor et al., 2002). This placement then appears to be used to either distance or associate himself with the metric being evaluated against, and from that informed place. In all three of the above extracts, Frederic performs some overt expressions of identity related to people and networks as an identity asset. In the

first extract he emphasizes his own humanity to the listener, and identifies with a not-role that is personable, and goes so far as to suggesting that he needs an acceptance of this aspect of his identity in some way from the people that he engages with. The responsibility that comes from these opportunities is presented as not sitting well on his shoulders – and yet he has sought it out – and he equates success with personal factors in the final extract. The second extract places Frederic in the place of seeking company, companionship, and support of some undermined kind as he comments on the then. Finding himself alone in some way, he seeks people and a network of some kind to frame and support his self. The final extract suggests that Frederic is motivated by his relationship with others, in this case his teachers. By presenting this example, Frederic suggests that it is not the extrinsic goals that motivate him, but by the intrinsic feeling and respect that he has for the people he has around him.

Appendix XXII Identity Assets of Harold's Narrative

The identity assets that appear in Harold's narrative and seem important to him in constructing his self are founded on his pioneering experience including his foundation myth, and the business skills he has acquired. As part of these skills, Harold has become connected and will use first-names as a means of conveying this. He strongly believes he is an entrepreneur, who is in demand because he believes he is right, successful and ambitious, and that he has much to contribute back as his original mentor did for him.

Appendix XXII.a. Pioneering experience

The identity asset of Harold's pioneering experience emerged periodically throughout his narrative, and often in the context of other assets such as his success (Appendix XXII.g). It was seen as he talked of his foundation myth in the integration of his mentor's business with computing, the setting up of distribution channels, and his involvement in the dot-com boom.

Harold's initial presentation of his pioneering experience occurs at the beginning of his narrative in response to the first real question put by the listener about how his education. Harold's response was to acknowledge that he had not completed his undergraduate degree, but started in industry as a cadet:

I mean the cadet programme gave me great exposure to some um, some brilliant managers and mentors um, and frankly the um, the level of excitement and enthusiasm and passion I had for the, you know, the hands on nature of the training I was getting um, to be perfectly blunt I quickly lost sight of the benefits of, of a university schooling.

Harold has placed front-and-centre in his narrative his experience with his "mentor", before observing that the benefits of a formal education were of little value to him. He suggests that experience circumvents his lack of completed education. In doing so, Harold suggests that his decision to forgo an education for real-world experience was a unique event. He uses this decision as a grounding for his foundation myth, being one of the first to integrate business and technology. What is then presented to the listener is an extended discourse on his experiences in integrating his mentor's technology with the business in the environment of scientists in white coats and their lack of understanding about the business. Harold's response to the question posed is an example of his identity work in action, as he takes a common plank of identity that he was deficient in and immediately turns the point to an identity asset that he has worked on and his comfortable with: his pioneering experiences integrating computing with business.

Harold continues to present his pioneering experiences in technology and business as being a fundamental part of his past and who he is, saying:

When you've had the experiences and development skills that I have um, you want to find help for as many different companies as you possibly can.

He uses this identity asset to help other companies when talks of going off-shore to establish means of sell New Zealand software overseas, where he was:

Travelling all over Europe setting up distribution channels so it was, was close to a year. Um, at that point in time we now, we were now on to the um, late 80s er, and er, our hardware platform like many of the um, many computer vendors were starting to have problems and [a large hardware vendor] actually filed for Chapter Eleven. We needed to um, quickly pulled our application off their proprietary platform onto a more open standard platform so we're talking, these were the early days of Unix and PC based service, servers, and so our strategic direction in um, became um, migrating our product from um, migrating our platform to a Unix platform using [the vendor's competitor] and the early [competitor's] Unix servers and [another competitors] Unix servers. So, as a result of that process er, we needed to raise capital, further capital to fund the business. In those days the, the venture capital industry in the US was in a relatively early stage as well um, so I was part of um, that whole process.

This extract is interesting for Harold's pioneering experience in integrating his technical experience with his business experience as he has laid down initially in his foundation myth. By telling of his travelling to new countries to establish distribution channels for a new industry, pre-packaged software, Harold is presenting himself as doing something new. He claims involvement with the new and emerging open source software environment and the use of multi-platform integrations and migrations, and also points out the newness of what he was doing by discussing the status of the US venture capital industry, before closing the extract with the assertion that he was involved in the entire situation. His identity work, in associating the "we" of his company and the "early days of Unix and PC based service" is clear in the pioneering they did with emerging technologies, and he even date-stamps the events which adds authenticity to his claims. More work is done on his identity asset of pioneering when he refers to "in those days" and his association of his self as part of the process.

More recently in Harold's career-as-journey narrative, the same asset appears but in a new context – the internet – where he says:

The, the whole internet era and the internet craziness kicked in at that point in time um, not that we, we invested huge sums of money in fanciful ideas er, but it was an opportunity to er, to raise very cheap capital um, 'cause people were valuing technology stocks very highly at that point in time so um, er, with what [a venture capitalists] and I raised, I spend a lot of time in the US understanding the internet

era. We saw the opportunity to raise capital to accelerate growth er, and we were very successful in doing, in doing that. I can remember at the time it was so crazy. I mean I can remember meeting in um, one of [another venture capitalist's] fund managers and, you know, raising, raising [a lot] of capital, new capital for [our] work over breakfast um, so um, so it was a crazy time.

Not only does Harold place himself front-and-centre of the emergence of the internet in terms of his business dealings, he does so using well-known people and referring to them by their given name and he indicates a significant amount of familiarity. He places himself central to the story and identifies with it with expressions such as repeated variations of “I can remember” and “it was a crazy time”. His narrative was given in a time of significant economic growth in technology stocks, and his recalling of “crazy” times beforehand serves to remind the listener that Harold has seen this before, several times, and it does not faze him or surprise him as he has experienced it all before, and indeed pioneering some of the realities he now lives. By phrasing it in such a way, Harold serves to use the identity asset of his pioneering experience to underpin and validate other identity assets by implying he is a safe pair of highly skilled (Appendix XXII.b) hands, who can successfully (Appendix XXII.g) negotiate these times as he has lived it before and indeed helped manufacture the reality in which he now lives.

Appendix XXII.b. Business Skills

Harold emphasises his business skills to the listener at regular intervals in his narrative, and specifically refers to his skills in building teams of people, his strategic views, and his business developments roles. The importance that he places on his skills suggest that this is an important identity asset for him, and is seen as he talks of what he has to offer, the successes that he has had in overcoming poor decisions, and his belief around his strategic contributions.

Specifically, Harold links the identity asset of his business skills to that of his pioneering experience to form a significant plank of engagement with his self, and he actively identifies with these, such as at the end of the extended extract presented in Appendix XIV where he talks of the core skills he has to offer. There, Harold not only presents his repertoire of business skills, but he does so in the context of his experience – the asset previously discussed. Harold personalises and internalises his thoughts and this identity asset by saying it was his own feeling, and closely identifying with his core skill. He makes this skill central to what he has to offer, and by extension it is central to his self.

Harold's belief in his business skills are also seen as he battles to overcome what he suggests is a poor business plan to launch a new business unit:

Frankly we, if we continued to, to, against the original plan um, you know, then the business would never have worked. Um, er, in, in fighting those, you know, in getting, getting and fighting for corporate and getting them to approve um, what we called "The big Kiwi plan" um, which was rolling out a nationwide ubiquitous network to, to match [a competitors] um, um, you, clearly we made a lot of political enemies back in [head office]. Um, we did, we did in fact, we launched a network um, to their schedule um, er, we, some of the marketing work we did there was some of the best marketing work I, you know, I was ever involved in.

The declaration that Harold makes about the flawed nature of the business plan from global-HQ for New Zealand is clear, as it is statement of his abilities. He identifies with the success "we" had in meeting what he suggests was an unrealistic business plan, and presents a picture of 'them' in head office and 'us' in New Zealand. His location in this story is confirmed with the closing comments about "the marketing work we did there was some of the best marketing work I, you know, I was ever involved in" which places him in the story and the story as part of his self.

His skill in overcoming obstacles and objections is seen again as Harold suggests that rejection is par for the course and to be expected, and that to be successful one must overcome that, saying:

When you're building businesses you get a lot of "No's", you get a lot more "No's" than "Yes's" so, you know, you have to learn that um, to handle that rejection and not take that and not take that negatively, and that just because somebody said "no" it just means that there's somebody out there who, who's not smart enough to, to entertain your point of view. So, I mean, and that, that's fine to, that's fine.

Harold has suggested that others might disagree with him, but that it would be a shortcoming of their understanding and intelligence and not a shortcoming of his skills. His identity assertion is that he sees their disagreement as a lack of recognition in his skills, and in doing so he again frames his identity in the context of his skills even if it is through the negative perception of them.

Harold has now placed himself in an advisory role to the listener, teaching and speaking from his experience. He talks of what others must learn, as he has learnt, and therefore he makes himself part of the lesson that he is giving which is based on his skills. Harold suggestion that others may not be smart enough to see his view appears to associate the 'no-sayers' with the ignorant and the foolish, by saying that a smart person would agree with him. This claim supports another of his identity assets: Being right.

Appendix XXII.c. Being Right

The identity asset of Harold's being right emerges from Harold's narrative as he suggests on several occasions that he knew something all along, and is usually right. Aspects of this asset emerge in his narrative when he talks about business opportunities he has identified, and business plans he was expected to implement.

An example of this is his retrospective prediction of the internet boom, as he says:

“I mean that strategically I saw a huge overlap between the adoption rate of [one technology] and the adoption rate of, and the adoptions of er, and the adoption rates of um, of, of the internet so, you know, a big overlap in terms of customer base.”

In this extract, the individual points of people, technology, and business converge in his discourse on adoption rates and the customer base that he was responsible for. By phrasing this extract as he has, Harold appears to imply that he saw the internet boom coming where many others did not. He takes ownership in his observations as he says “strategically I saw” what the possibilities were, and the subject matter of his prediction being internet-based is presented as validation of it. His use of the term “strategic” to qualify his observation emphasises its importance and business significance. In effect he appears to be saying that he was right in his prediction and that others were wrong at the time.

Harold extends this ‘retrospective-rightness’ to the business opportunity previously discussed with the flawed business plan that he managed to launch one time, saying of it:

“The technology just wasn’t up to, to, to, to the marketing. Um, we were forced to launch um, on the date that we did um, and um, and it took, and [my employer] would mean, you know, probably never really recovered from um, the screwed-up business plan that they had, that they originally entered the market on to, and even though they committed to funding the business um, really never committed to doing, you know, never really committed to the international market strategically and, you know, it became, you know, after I mean, four or five years subsequent to that [my employer] they actually ended up divesting all its international, the vast majority was an international um, network investments in [several countries].”

At the beginning of this extract, Harold makes a reference to being forced to launch when not ready. This same event was used elsewhere in his narrative he had said that he was successful in doing and took credit for. Now he is presenting this same incident in a different light, where he was acting against his belief about what he best course of action was to be. He externalises all fault, saying it was his employer's plan and implying the he, a senior executive, had no control over, and that they lacked commitment to the market. The individual points come together as he suggests that he was opposed to the idea as the

technology was not up to what they were promising. He even goes so far as to call the business plan “screwed up”. The rest of the extract then shows how his reservations were proven to be right, and that the employer eventually had to sell out of the business. By presenting the failure of his employer in this extract of how he was right all along, Harold serves to reinforce to the listener that he was right, and the consequences of not listening to him were as dire as they could be in the new economy: failure of the business.

Appendix XXII.d. My Connections

Harold’s status as ‘connected’ is evident in listening to him and hearing the names of the people that he knows and ‘drops’ into his narrative. This implied connection with ‘movers and shakers’, places and technologies forms a distinctive identity asset for Harold

A significant example of Harold’s use of his connections with an influential personal as an identity asset occurs in the foundation myth discussed earlier, where he talks of his cadetship “under one of New Zealand’s leading manufacturing entrepreneurs in exports, [named him]”. He not only names this person who ran the company, but expresses the esteem in which he holds him, and by extension implies that the listener should recognise the name and hold him in the same esteem (Nicholson & West, 1989). At several other stages of the narrative, he refers to the relationship that he had with this person as being “like a son”, suggesting a relationship closer than the norm to the listener, and one laden with meaning. By building up this mentor of his and describing him as he does, Harold’s identity is accentuated by the connection. By noting that he was exposed to all facets of running a manufacturing business, Harold implies to the listener that he obtained some of his employer’s knowledge and wisdom, and therefore can be viewed in a similar way to the employer he expects the listener to know.

A similar weight is placed on other names³⁹ that Harold dropped into his narrative, such as those in the extended extract presented in Appendix XIV, where he talks of fund managers and venture capitalists, or in other places where he says things like:

During my time [as an executive with that employer] we had [a major product] launch, which was the first really big consumer launch er, we had a number of visits by [the founder and global CEO] and [his CTO] to New Zealand.

I was at er, [that employer] for two years, loved the first part of it worked for, probably the best boss I ever worked with, a guy called [named him], one of the smartest guys I’ve, I’ve ever come across.

³⁹ The names and businesses mentioned were all recognisable to the listener, and the reader probably would too but for the sanitisation of the narrative to protect the name of the participants and who he is connected to.

In these extracts and the relevant parts of the extended extract, Harold adds weight and credence to the names he mentions such as when he refers to the person in the quote above as “smart”, and inviting the listener to do so too. These names, positions, and attributes were not requisites for telling the story in a factual manner, but they are necessary for Harold’s identity work in conveying the sense of connectedness that reflects this identity asset. By praising them Harold implies that he knows them personally – and from other aspects of his narrative and his job titles, it could be inferred that he did – but this is not necessary for a conveyance of fact. Rather, the praise for these people does for his connected identity asset what it does for his relationship with his mentor: it builds up their status, his relationship with them, and by extension, himself.

The asset of connectedness in Harold’s narrative extends beyond the people he drops into the narrative. It includes being connected to other people, to technologists, to businesses, to clients and to other entrepreneurs. He describes how his day starting out, saying:

That [I] have operations in different parts of the world, means you are working across time zones that, I mean, a couple of times a week I’ll have conference calls at 7-8 o’clock in the morning um, to, to pick up the east coast of the US or the UK. Er, um, the rest of the, I mean, a good part of, the, the morning will, I mean I’ll try and get most of my meetings, you know, and contact done in the morning. Er, er, you know, you know it’s, it’s a good time to catch up with people um, yeah, understand the issues or problems, challenges that need to be dealt with um, and usually try and keep the afternoons free where possible er, to, to focus on, you know, some of the more strategic challenges. Um, um, obviously meeting with customers, you know, if you’re capital raising, prospective investors, those sorts of meetings can go at any time of the day ... the advent of the, the internet literally can take, you know, you can virtually work from anywhere so um, I have an office at home, I have, I have an office here um, and um, you know, I like to spend my time, work between the two depending on um, you know, where I’ve got meetings and where, where I’m catching up with people. We live very centrally.

This is a long extract, but it is one that contains a vast array of differing ways in which Harold is connected, and the many things he is connected to. Not only does he mention email, but he goes into the detail of who he emails and why email is such a good medium, namely connecting him to people on different countries and in different time zones. Harold goes on to justify his connections as being necessary to gaining an understanding of any problems or the people operating in his sphere of influence. Towards the end of the extract, Harold explicitly mentions the internet as a means of connecting with other people, and his mention of maintaining multiple offices and the ability to work at either, and as he refers to it “catching up” with people. His placement of himself in this web of communication and the maintenance of multiple offices means he is always being able to ‘catch up’. In this way,

Harold further reinforces to the listener that he is central to, and connected to, people, technology and the businesses that he operates in.

Harold's connections are not always as subtle as the above ones that incorporate individual things like technologists, businesses, clients and entrepreneurs. In his narrative he was occasionally rather clear and explicit about his level of connectedness with non-individuals, presenting things like his involvement with the US venture capital scene discussed earlier:

The executive role I have with [a current company I have invested in] um, that's an international team I'm dealing with, we've got, working with people and partners from [a list of countries in New Zealand and overseas]. I think at, at this point in time we don't have er, any critical mass in a single location so, you know, that, that's, some interesting challenges in, you know, in managing and keeping across all of that.

This extract illustrates how Harold places himself in a connected environment such as the venture capital industry, together with the enmeshed actions that are associated with pitching business plans and raising capital. In addition, the above extract shows Harold's connectedness with the executive team through his noting of his position in the team, and that he is also connected by his status as an investor. He continues the asset of connectedness by listing a diverse range of cities and countries in which the business he is involved in operates, and therefore identifying with this connected state, and then closes the extract by reinforcing the connectedness to the listener by saying that he manages it all and is informed of all that happens. In noting that he is connected to those he engages with, Harold often alludes to the nature of that connection: he is an entrepreneur.

Appendix XXII.e. Entrepreneur

Harold-the-entrepreneur emerges from his narrative in the way he relates having been presented with opportunities and having taken them up as they have entered his life. Taking advantage of these opportunities that appear is a constant aspect in his description of professional life, and forms important an identity asset evident in his narrative. The first opportunity he describes is getting his initial job as a cadet with the employer that he lionised in his foundation myth. In addition, Harold uses the language of the entrepreneur in the stories he tells. For example, the refrain of 'taking product off shore' and 'facilitating business' comes through regularly, and he refers to himself as an entrepreneur by association with some of his actions.

Harold frequently talks of past business involvements as entrepreneurial ‘opportunities’, and he presents these as his positioning himself in that nexus between technology and the business, emphasising that he is:

... always looking for, for um, business ideas and business opportunities that you can create value around.

The times that Harold is referring to in the above extract represent defined career roles in the structured economy, and this sets Harold apart as an early adopter of the principles of the new economy. While talk of opportunity is almost standard discourse for the new economy (e.g. Arthur et al., 1999), Harold’s presentation of his actions thirty years ago serve to place him in the entrepreneurial space before many people were applying the entrepreneurialism label.

As noted, Harold also presents his foundation myth as an entrepreneurial opportunity. He stipulates the status of the employer who hired him, saying that he was an innovator who was operating on the leading edge of technology. By working alongside his mentor while he attempted to implement a step-change in technology, Harold has benefited from the opportunity to obtain skills that few other people were able to obtain. He presents his mentor as a man of vision, and himself as a man of action who achieved this feat, as he integrates his technical understanding into an understanding of the entire business. The suggestion is that he not only obtained a crucial technical step ahead of his peers in the quest for new knowledge, but he also has the opportunity to integrate his new technical knowledge into a growing knowledge of the business, giving him a first-mover leading advantage. The closing aspects of this story – that the ‘boffins’ were unable to make the system work for his mentor’s business, further reinforces to the listener the nature of this opportunity and its unique nature. Because Harold had an appreciation of the business as well as the technology, he was able to harness the opportunity the boffin’s failure presented him, and thus advance his own prowess. This example appears to have formed a catalyst in Harold’s life, for he has moved away from the technology and now considers and presents himself as a person with the entrepreneurial ability to integrate business and technology.

The extension of his entrepreneurial abilities beyond the technology is also apparent when Harold talks of his next career move, where the vendor of the computer system at Harold’s mentor’s business recruited Harold on the basis of his success there. Harold says of the vendor’s approach to him that:

The potential for the computer industry um, so it was an opportunity to be in, you know, the forefront of, you know, the development of a, of, you know, what at that

stage was a very basic industry. So um, I think the second thing was the opportunity to work internationally.

Again Harold is explicit in his language, referring to the opportunity to place himself at the forefront of the computer industry. In suggesting to the listener that this opportunity had the potential to help define the entire industry, Harold imparts the magnitude of the entrepreneurial opportunity he sees before him. The assertion that this opportunity would also allow him to travel internationally serves to reinforce this point further, and has the added benefit of placing Harold on the world stage, and not just the much smaller stage that is New Zealand.

Harold again speaks of his entrepreneurial identity in an extract presented in Appendix XXII.a where he talks of the “craziness kick[ing] in” whilst still continuing to drop names for added emphasis. This reinforces to the listener the magnitude of the opportunities that he has had in front of him. He partially quantifies that magnitude of the opportunity with a financial reference and by using the name of the venture capitalist, before closing the extract with another reference to his success (Appendix XXII.g). In Harold’s representation of his early involvement in the commercialisation of the internet, he appears to have again moved beyond the technology and is now focussing on capitalising on the business opportunities that are presented to him.

Harold not only presents examples of entrepreneurial activity throughout his career, but he also explicitly refers to himself as an entrepreneur. For example, in several places in his narrative, where first he describes a failed venture and second he refers to another opportunity that he grasped, he uses that term:

The whole project was put on, put on hold and um, and subsequently killed. So um, um, um, um, you know, life of an entrepreneur - a great idea.

Not everything works out the way you, you, you’d like it to. Um, and the, you know, working as an entrepreneur I, I’ve had some wins and I’ve had some, some, some failures um, so that’s, that’s life.

They, they, they’d offered me a couple of um, a couple of different roles so on the third occasion I, I accepted their, their offer and I ended up working as an entrepreneur in residence for them [overseas] and taking over for the subsequent 18 months.

In the first extract above, Harold has failed to successfully launch a business, and he takes this in good stride, dismissing it as one of those things that happen in his life: the life on an entrepreneur. He has therefore personally identified with entrepreneurship, and he does so again in noting that ‘entrepreneur’ was actually part of the job description for a position he

was hired for in the second extract. This second extract is all the more interesting for his noting that not only was he an entrepreneur in job title, but that what he did was inherently entrepreneurial in that he took the company over and ran it for the next year and a half. This last extract also presents Harold as being approached several times before he accepted the role as entrepreneur in residence: he is in demand, and that is the next asset in his narrative to be discussed.

Appendix XXII.f. Being in Demand

In the various places in his narrative where he discusses being wanted and how people need him, Harold appears to be utilising an identity asset of being in demand. The early experiences he tells of with his first employer and the subsequent approach by the company's vendor are presented by him as examples of being in demand. His presentation of being approached for new business opportunities can be interpreted in a similar way. Harold also suggests to the listener that he is in demand both as a manager, as an advisor or mentor, and perhaps even as an asset that is bought with the company.

Harold's foundation myth, in which he is summoned by his mentor and asked to help integrate the computer technology with the business, has been discussed previously. In doing so, Harold places his mentor in the role of the one in need, and himself in the role of the sought-after-expert. In telling this story like he does, Harold demonstrates the degree of need that his employer had, and therefore the degree of faith in him, emphasising that all his other duties were suspended. After this endeavour is built up in his story, it is then downplayed with the seemingly flippant comment of 'setting about' doing it, as if to say that it was really no big deal and well within his skill-set (Appendix XXII.b). As such, Harold's identity work is compounded as he reinforces his identity asset as skilled, and as needed. His subsequent claims that he was approached by the overseas-based vendor of the computer system to work for them aids his story, as it magnifies the significance of the need placed in him, moving it from a New Zealand to a global context.

This asset of being in demand also presents itself when Harold talks about his involvement with new ventures or emerging opportunities, such as:

I was asked to get involved in um, er, by [the person] who runs the [organisation].

Then [I] was approached by another organisation] to become involved in um, in a start up. They'd recently invested in a company ... pretty much close to three years as CEO of [that company]. I'd taken it through a series of fund raising rounds, successfully um, do a then commercial product, entering the [overseas] marketplace er, and I handed that company on at the beginning of this year to a US-based CEO.

A couple of times I'd been offered roles by [a head-hunter] based in er, [overseas] and in the end, venture capital firm, to do a, a trans, a fairly large transaction with [a company]. They, they, they'd offered me a couple of um, a couple of different roles so on the third occasion I, I accepted their, their offer.

A commonality in these excerpts from Harold's narrative is that he presents these events as him being approached and sought out, as opposed to him seeking these positions himself. In the second extract, Harold emphasises the way that he was approached, as if to imply it was an unsolicited event that occurred as a function of his success (Appendix XXII.g), before 'ending up' as the CEO. By phrasing it this way, Harold appears to imply that he got the role because no other person was capable of doing what he did, and he details a range of entrepreneurial activities including raising capital and launching a commercial product onto the market. He closes out this extract with a reference to 'passing on the baton' to another, suggesting that he had done the difficult work, and now that the organisation was stable it was time to hand the organisation over to a operational CEO. The implication is that Harold brought a unique set of skills that were needed by the organisation, even if they did not know themselves, and by extension he was needed.

The last extract above expands on these ideas of him being sought out, by specifically mentioning the number of times that he was sought by the head-hunter. Again, Harold named the head-hunter, with the implication that it should mean something to the listener⁴⁰, before he appears to imply that he relented and bowed to their request by 'accepting their offer'. The implication of multiple offers extends further than simply seeking him out, and suggests to the listener that the head-hunter was so taken with the unique skills and attributes of Harold that they had made multiple offers, and crafted the offers and role to suit the unique skills and abilities that Harold has.

Harold also presents himself as being needed as a manager of existing organisations in several places in his narrative. For example:

I was offered a position um, as 2IC in the, the launch of [a new company] ... to take up a GM role, um, um where I was responsible for sales, marketing.

I moved on to [another company] um, and was involved in er, er, initially what was, what was a substantial turn around. Um, um, as a, as a um, as the company was losing a lot of money, we restructured the company, got it back to profitability um, er, er so I came into [this company] about the same time [a well known successful businessman] became a major shareholder in the company er, and um, we then set about growing the company through acquisitions ... we, we took a lot of the risks out of the company so er, and that, so we acquired a number of businesses that gave us a very strong export revenue base, and we shifted our, we grew the

⁴⁰ The name of head-hunter did not mean anything to the listener.

company, we doubled the size of the company um, by through, through two acquisitions ... [which] is now enjoying some very very solid growth.

In both these extracts, Harold's version of his story is that he was sought out and approached to deliver something that was needed. In the first extract it was a technology company where his sales and marketing experience was needed, and in the second it was to "turn around" a company. Note how he also emphasises his consequent connection with a well known businessman (Appendix XXII.d). Harold places himself in both these organisations, by either role as 'second in command' or 'General Manager', or by action, as "I came into" and "we restructured", "we took" and "we grew". In the second extract, Harold validates his identity asset of being needed by relating the success that the company enjoyed, saying "we doubled the size... [which] is now enjoying some very very solid growth".

The need that Harold appears to suggest that others have of him extends into his current role as Chairman in a new technology start-up company, saying:

I got involved in, as, as a mentor and advising to these, these [technologists] and over the last four years we've built, you know, a company which is now, you know, which will do um, over er, would be close to [a lot] of revenue this year ... we raised a million dollars of angel funding last year to help underpin the, the growth of the business ... so I remain, so I remain as chairman of that business, so strategically I think this is a business with a huge amount of opportunity and value going forward.

Here Harold emphasises his 'in demand' status through his mentoring and advisory role to the people involved in the start-up. Harold's use of use of and stumbling over the words "these [technologists]" appears to infer to the listener that Harold does not see himself in their league any more. The implication here is that Harold is needed for his abilities and his experiences, but not for any technical prowess that he may have or have had as previously commented. Harold seems to consider that he has moved on from the technology, and apparently recognises that in himself.

Harold's opinions of his abilities are clear, and in the following extract his suggestion that he is needed extends to positioning himself as an integral part of a business, almost bordering on being an asset on the balance sheet:

We ended up selling the company to [an overseas company], as part of that sale process I ended up er, living in Toronto for the next two years under contract as part of the sales and purchase agreement, er, er, and my role was director of marketing for [the purchasers].

The claim that he was contracted as part of the sale to serve for a further two years gives the impression that Harold considers that it was not just the company that was bought, but also himself, given his importance to the business and the need for his services and abilities.

Appendix XXII.g. Successful

The demand is which Harold presents himself is also enmeshed with aspects of other assets that have emerged from his narrative, particularly the identity asset of his success. Harold's success is a significant asset in his narrative, and permeates much of what he talks about. He often frames himself in light of his success and appears to identify closely with his successes. While success is a common asset that could be expected to be found in the narrative of many high-achievers, in Harold's case, success is closely bound up with who he is. He acts out his success for the listener as he discusses his successful investment portfolio, the roles he has held such as CEO, his achievements in raising capital, and turning around of poorly performing companies. His reactions to the occasions when he is not being successful also reinforce success as an identity asset for him.

In the extended extract presented in Appendix XIV, Harold describes to the listener examples of his investment portfolio as symbols of his success. He talks of being "a shareholder", of 'coming out of companies', and "taking investment positions". These matter of fact assertions suggest to the listener that the successes that Harold is projecting and identifying with are implicit in his work and career. As a habitual shareholder and investor, he would not be able to continually exit some companies and re-invest in new companies if he was failing. His simple assertions therefore present the listener with a simple fact, laden with identity connotations.

In addition and related to his investment positions are the executive roles that Harold has had, such as being a CEO or director, which he presents as a sign of his success. He says "I wasn't the first CEO in New Zealand I was the second CEO" and "I spent pretty much, pretty much close to three years as CEO" in the extended extract. In doing so, he places himself centrally in the role of successful businessman. The repetition of these assertions throughout his narrative lends weight to the status of success as an identity asset for Harold. In a similar frame, Harold talks in the extended extract of taking a company through fund-raising rounds and handing over to a US CEO. His personalisation of his involvement and the active act of 'handing over' mean that Harold has put himself central to the story, and presents himself as an active participant in these events. The raising of capital is presented by Harold as an important part of his success, and by extension of himself. Similarly, in an extract presented in the pioneering identity asset discussed earlier (Appendix XXII.a) Harold talked of meeting fund managers and raising significant amounts of capital. In re-telling these events, Harold names people and amounts of money involved. Rather than just say 'a fund manager', he

details who the fund manager was and the amounts involved, in order to add significance to the events and therefore his place in them.

Harold also presents his success in turning companies around and growing them, such as in one of the extracts in the previous section where he talked of “the company was losing a lot of money, we restructured the company, got it back to profitability”. Harold presents the company as a separate ailing entity, and himself coming in to address these problems. His success is seen at the end of the extract, when Harold mentions that the company is “is now enjoying some very very solid growth”. His growing of businesses is also seen when Harold describes how:

We were very very successful and, you know, over the first 12 months in, in getting a number of [product] manufacturers on board um, and using our technology ... these were companies in, very much focused on er, these companies were very much focused on their own western market places ... so we started to get, win, win quite a few deals um, as a result of, I um, I then moved on to spend some time in, in Europe setting up channel distribution er, for um, for [them] in Europe. I spent nearly a year living in Stutgarten travelling all over Europe setting up ... travelling all over Europe setting up distribution channels so it was, was close to a year.

Here, Harold spells out his success using terminology that closely identifies him with the organisation, and his use of collective terms like “we” serve to bind him with the organisation’s success. While the details of these successes have been edited from the extract above, they form the foundation for his subsequent travels. These travels are a significant part of Harold’s success narrative as well as his narrative on himself. They are intertwined and inseparable in his narrative, and his use of “I” places him central to these events. Harold appears to recognise in himself that he integrates himself into the successes he experiences, but in doing so he does not appear to perceive himself as a passive passenger as he works towards those things he values in his own self.

An interesting observation of Harold’s presentation of his self occurs when he is not successful, and approaches something that the listener could interpret as revisionism. Some extracts manage to show both Harold’s success and failure, such as when he says:

Everything I’ve actually focused on, done, are either, they are opportunities I’ve created myself or I’ve been shoulder tapped for ... , I’ve certainly applied for jobs I haven’t got and, you know, when I think back and er, in hindsight, I probably never really wanted them anyway.

Here Harold has reflected on his achievements and successes while also drawing on opportunities or has been needed by using the phrase ‘shoulder-tapped’. He further reflects on the situations where he was not successful, and dismisses these situations as being not

really wanted or desired enough. In doing so, it appears to the listener that Harold may well have wanted those jobs, but is reconstructing his failure and avoiding them. He has used a lack of success to reframe his perception of his self, while disassociating his self from not-success.

Appendix XXIII Identity Assets of Ian's Narrative

The first identity asset to emerge in Ian's narrative is that of his experience in both the early stages of the IT industry and the establishment of businesses operating in the IT sphere. His experience appears to be symbiotic with his reflective presentation of his pioneering foresight, and these two assets contribute to the other identity asset, being an entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur, Ian suggests he has delivered value to those he engages with, and has been successful in his ventures. Whether he has been successful or not, the identity asset of his regular and oft-repeated moving on to new challenges is consistent in his narrative, as well as the hindsight that this experience brings.

Appendix XXIII.a. Experience

Ian's involvement with IT since the formative stages of the industry constitutes an important identity asset in his narrative performance of identity. His experience as an identity asset is not restricted to that of a technologist, but expands into his self-presented role as an investor in new and emerging technologies. Ian presents his experience as he philosophises about wins and losses, his comfortableness in talking about business, and in noting the deficiencies in others relative to himself. His desire to mentor start-up companies and the judgements he makes of others appear to be founded on his experience.

Ian places himself in the context of the events that he describes as going on around him. This is seen in some of his assertions and longer parts of his narrative, such as when he says:

And I've, I've had some ups and I've had some downs but the thing I've learnt is that you learn from that experience but if you never actually make any money well then really, you know, you've just got to keep going, you've got to be able to pick yourself up and er, the experience with the ...

I was looking to develop my interests in working with small tech businesses and er, was looking at ways in which we could help grow. I had some IT knowledge, I had some commercial skills, certainly quite a bit of experience in operating the ICT game offshore. So brought all that together and we, we helped a number of businesses by putting money into them.

Ian presents himself as a benevolent and experienced person who has made money and lost money and learnt from the experience. He suggests he has 'been there', and is ready to lend money, time and experience for the betterment of the company and the product. The experience that Ian suggests that he has is expanded on in the second abstract and amplified to the listener with his reference to taking technologies offshore, which he also suggests elsewhere in his narrative is the primary means of growth and expansion available to New Zealand technology stocks who wish to raise significant capital or achieve significant growth.

In this second extract, Ian elaborates more openly on the nature of the experience that he has and also acknowledges that there is some payback in this for him, either explicitly as it interests him, or by implying a financial return on the monies he invests. He emphasises this latter point in other parts of narrative, saying for example:

I'm adding some value because of the experience and knowledge or skill that I can bring.

I've got relevant experience but I don't provide my services for nothing and, and don't see why I should.

The experience that Ian believes he has, and his ability to invest more than just money into an organisation, comes through strongly when he says:

I'm normally pretty comfortable when someone walks into this room and says "we've got something new", that the product's probably pretty good, and that you could almost guarantee will be very naïve of view of how they would take it to market. They probably under capitalise and the experience needed would probably be found wanting, and you'll probably be a reluctance as well, it's probably not part of the Kiwi psyche, to actually take on board outside expertise.

Here Ian alludes to his experience both in what is needed but also in portraying his ability to evaluate the person as they "walk in" and his comfortableness in doing that. In claiming "I'm normally pretty comfortable" he asserts a perception of his self relative to the situation, and in the next sentence explicitly refers to experience as being one of the reasons he is more comfortable with the situation than the other person. His experience is further presented in his evaluation of the innovating ability of the New Zealand populace, and his assertion that they may well be right in their belief – based on his experience. Another thread of Ian's experience that exists in this extract is his prediction of their resources, ability, intention, and reluctances in the commercialising process, where he details three areas they will be deficient, possibly as a result of not having the benefit of his experience.

The deficiencies he perceives in others are a starting point and foundation for an exploration of Ian's experience in other parts of his narrative as well, such as when he says:

You don't know what you don't know so often, but you can make, you know, rational judgements based on some good analysis. And I think a lot of the businesses I see they don't have much strategic thinking capability. The people have developed the widget, the technology, they've done it in a very insular way, they've done it because they've got a particular passion about that piece of technology, rarely do they actually first think as to whether or not there is a market need, which is often quite a good idea. Um, so they, they, they come and suggest to you that, clearly this thing is gonna go, we've got no idea who the competitors are er, how they're gonna get into marketing and all that stuff. But I, by comparison I um, a more mature business person's gonna be able to come in and they would have thought that through, they will know what the market niche is, they know what the value

proposition is, they can actually describe their business within a couple of simple English sentences. A lot of people can't even do that, and unless you've actually got your head around that sort of stuff you're just never gonna make it.

In this extract Ian appeals to his experience to suggest that others lack the experience to even be aware of what they are ignorant of, before criticising their business acumen via their strategy – or lack of it – based on his experience. He then comments on their innovation ability, before again suggesting that they have no idea what the commercialisation of their product will entail and this criticism is again based on his experience. In making these observations about his clients and potential clients, Ian sets himself apart from them and contrasts his experienced self to their inexperienced self. By making the gulf wide, Ian enhances his experience in the ears of the listener. This evaluation and contrast is even made by Ian half way through the extract, where he explicitly states his maturity as a businessman and therefore imposes the perception of experience on the listener. He contrasts his focus and understanding on markets, value and an 'elevator pitch'⁴¹ with the technology focus of many of his clients, and in doing so again amplifies his experience and ability to invest in the business.

The magnitude of Ian's experience and ability to invest in the business is another component of this asset, and it is one that occurs as Ian discusses his current interests, saying:

More recently I've got involved again helping er, younger businesses and this is basically what I do today, that have got a technology bias to what they're doing. I provide growth services, it's all about getting their strategy right, helping them grow, helping them go offshore, helping them get their product story right, it might involve the raising of capital. And I'm also doing some mergers and acquisitions work, putting together some young businesses, particularly in the ICT area because we've got too many sub scale businesses, small guys, and I also, as part of what I do, I help [some NGO's]. So I'm doing that sort of stuff today ... lending some knowledge of technology and some commercial skills to basically someone who is running [a technology] operation.

The magnitude of Ian's self-perceived experiences and ability to invest in the business is seen in this extract in his initial reference to his repetitive involvement. By noting that he has done this before, he alludes to his experience and presents it as a differentiator of his self from others. His reference to helping these people appeals to the possible construct of Ian as a benefactor as well as a contractor who may also be a stakeholder. His reference to the NGO and panel work, which is appended to the end of the commentary on what he does for others,

⁴¹ An 'elevator-pitch' is a succinct summary of the investment, suitable for 'pitching' to a potential investor cornered in an elevator. A belief in entrepreneurial circles is that a good 'elevator-pitch' could win an investor in such a crucial, fortuitous, and brief meeting, and a bad 'elevator-pitch' is symptomatic of an inadequate idea or inadequate people.

appears to be designed to further cement his authority as an experienced professional who consults and is capable.

This experience in and ability to invest in the business extends to a rather summary judgement of others, saying of one client that:

Kiwis are actually um, they're very naïve in their approach to dilution⁴². Um, a lot of our problem is sitting here like this, thinking they might have a good idea but they think they're going to be able to commercialise it worldwide um, as a solo act and that never ever happens. So they just have to accept the reality that um, if they're going to make it happen they've got to get people on board um, probably outside investors, and they're gonna have to divert off them to extent higher than they would prefer. But you are much better to get a deal done and move on and actually build something than um, sit around and er, and, and, and just say you're not going to give up equity, and I, I've met several clients in that situation now. One business that really comes to mind right now, they're actually got a fundamentally good business. They've got two issues, the engineer that runs it isn't a CEO, thinks he is but he isn't ...

Ian is critical of those who lack his experience and believe that they can achieve what he has without him and his experience. For him to recognise that someone might be able to achieve such a thing as globalisation of a product on their own would be contrary to the identity assets of his success and recognising that value that he believes he brings to an organization. In doing so, Ian lays the groundwork for his financial return as an investor in these companies by implying to the listener that his way is the only way of increasing the size of the business. Ian closes this extract with another criticism, but this time of an unnamed client. This person appears to have established a business that Ian is involved with, and given himself the title of CEO. However, Ian believes that this person lacks the experience and operational focus that would make him an adequate CEO. In suggesting this, Ian implies that he knows best because of his experience in these matters, and that he should be listened to.

Appendix XXIII.b. Pioneering Foresight

Ian's pioneering foresight is an identity asset that appears to stem from his experience, and is presented in situations such as his claiming to have predicted the transitions from mainframe computing to PC computing, his involvement with early technology companies, and his early work in establishing a technology business. He discusses the latter in the extended extract presented in Appendix XV, and uses that account to emphasise his foresight in seeing the possibilities of the internet for telecommunications companies. Presented here are examples and discussion of where his predictions that a small technology company at the beginning of

⁴² Dilution: diluting their portion of equity in a business by issuing more shares to others – in this case Ian and other investors for professional services.

the computing industry would grow into an international player and how nobody would listen to him, and how other people focus on the small issues and not the big picture. He also notes that other people have unreal expectations of the future and that his expectation and predictions have some validity.

One significant example of Ian's presentation of himself as being a pioneer with foresight in the IT industry is his description of how he identified and pursued a relationship with "the little company" he mentioned in the extended extract presented in Appendix XV. As shown there, Ian uses quite clear language to convey his feelings and thoughts about what happened, and how he was overruled in the decision to maintain the relationship. He presents the situation as him knowing what was best and what was about to happen in the IT industry, and that he disagreed with the common consensus on who the major industry players would be. As part of this, Ian bemoaned the 'giving away' of the agency, and suggests to the listener that he was right all along and that the person who took it over reaps what should have been his: if they had listened to him, the outcome would have been better. That this person succeeded in generating significant wealth from this company reinforces that he was right, and that his foresight should have been listened to at the time.

This perceived lack of vision in others extends beyond those in the board room. For some of the people involved in his current business interests, or the type of people that will be involved, Ian sees flaws in their worldview, such as when he says:

I notice that some of the engineers who come in are very fixated on product. A lot of them are, are very inclined to micro-manage so they can't pick themselves up out of the detail and see things strategically, so you'll talk about marketplace issues and they keep coming down talking about product features and things like that so you can never actually move them on.

In this extract, Ian appears to suggest that he knows either more or better than these people at several stages and on several levels. His active placement in the story and his comments about their "fixation" and how they "keep coming down" suggest that Ian believes he sees a bigger picture than these people, and that as a result he knows better than they do about the challenges that the business or product will face. In specifically mentioning things like strategy and the market in a discussion on people he suggests are blinkered engineers, Ian appears to suggest that he has the strategic vision necessary to take a technology to market, and in business in general. Further, in suggesting that there is a place beyond which they are currently at building the business, Ian emphasises his knowledge and understanding of the market.

The references to the relative lack of knowledge of the people Ian works with could be seen on a superficial level as reflecting his frustration, but in recounting this in his narrative Ian reinforces his own knowledge to the listener, such as when he says of one person he was working with that:

The fact is um, he needs a [lot of money] and he thinks he's gonna have to um, what will only want to give away about 10 or 15% of the company, whereas he's probably gotta give away um, 20 to 30% ... you see all of those ridiculous valuations. A pre-revenue tech business in New Zealand, or even a business, in this case it's got a better revenue, they just aren't worth those sorts of valuations.

Here, Ian expresses his frustration about an unrealistic client. However a closer analysis suggests that Ian is using the contrast between this person's expectations of the stake required to be relinquished in exchange for capital investment and his own to highlight his superior knowledge of the market and the nature of their business environment. His qualification of the required percentages adds plausibility to his claims.

Ian's foresight and judgement extends to suggesting that he can predict people and projects that will be successful and those that will not. For example:

So you get the opportunity to see lots of very innovative ideas, how the business is at an early stage and um, I think it's quite stimulating to be able to work businesses at that stage in the development ... you get the odd win, but there's a very significant number of things you see where people believe passionately in what they are doing, but they're simply not going to make it.

In this extract, Ian appeals to his history and experience in the IT industry to underpin his judgement in predicting success and failure based on the people involved. The listener is left with the impression that Ian believes these people should either quit or sell out, as they lack the necessary skills and experience he has to achieve, and he predicts that they will not make it. If these people would listen to him, Ian appears to suggest, he would save them some of the worry that they will endure. This may appear a little harsh, but is consistent with the next identity asset identified in his narrative – his entrepreneurship.

Appendix XXIII.c. Entrepreneur

A key aspect of Ian's performed self is that way that he presents himself as an entrepreneur in his narrative. To do so, he describes entrepreneurial action, uses language related to entrepreneurship, and tells stories that show him in the role of entrepreneur. These may involve his capitalising on opportunities that present themselves, and which others may or may not.

The use of active language in portraying his entrepreneurial behaviour in recognising and taking opportunities, as well as using his initiative, reinforce his self-identification as an entrepreneur, such as when he observes:

I saw an opportunity.

I grabbed the opportunity.

[It] was my own initiative.

Indeed, the strength and use Ian makes of this entrepreneurial identity asset is reflected in the extent to which much of his narrative is couched in terms of one ‘opportunity’ or another. At one point in his narrative, Ian notes that:

[They] gave the agency away to another entrepreneur.

By referring to “another entrepreneur”, Ian labels himself as an entrepreneur by association. Ian also actively presents himself as the entrepreneur in his description of his business achievements, such as when he says:

So that gave me my first early taste of taking Kiwi software off shore, and along the way saw that there were interesting generic products coming along.

Similarly:

I watched what [a company] had done [with their product] and went up to see their key competitor which, at that time, was quite a small company, and that was the time when you could actually go up and talk to [the CEO⁴³] directly as I did. He would have 40 or 50 people and I picked up the New Zealand rights for his product line and brought that down here and launched [it] and, you might say, well, you know, it was a really insightful thing to do, but the reality was that he only had a relatively um, well it wasn't a terribly practical pipeline, we had to work pretty hard.

Part of the entrepreneurial identity is the cultural myth of the go-it-alone, left-school-at-fifteen, and the hard-work makes-up-for-no-education discourse, and Ian had used his incomplete education as a means of reinforcing this entrepreneurial identity that he seeks to present to the listener. While Ian spends little time discussing uncompleted undergraduate degree, he seeks to play up his success at business and his professional/vocational studies in order to present himself as a rounded entrepreneurial contributor to the external organisations that hire him. There appears to be a suggestion that it was through these actions, of “taking Kiwi software off shore” and the “really insightful thing to do”, that his education was complete and he had arrived at his desired self as entrepreneur. In the second extract, Ian constructs his actions as entrepreneurial in seeing and taking an opportunity to replicate an overseas business model in New Zealand. The closing part of this extract, where Ian modestly

⁴³ The name of the CEO and the company that was the competitor was given. It was known to the listener.

suggests that it was “insightful” (itself a reference to his pioneering foresight discussed in the previous section), conveys to the listener that the opportunity he saw and acted on was highly successful, and in doing so he confirms his ownership of it and the identity drawn from it

In the following extract, Ian talks of an early venture:

We ended up writing those systems in accord with some fairly general parameters for a variety of different machine targets because there were no generic operating systems. And then, as the generic operating systems came along so we developed our ability to mass produce these products, and we developed um, a lot of er, modules, about 15 or 20 modules, and became the dominant provider quite early on, and we worked with the hardware companies who had distribution channels they had managed to establish over the years which we didn't. We had software which they all needed, so it was quite a good symbiotic relationship, and we prospered on the back of that strategy.

This extract contains several points of entrepreneurial opportunity for Ian, with the first being his writing the code that got him started in this industry. Ian presents this as being a result of the absence of an off-the shelf product creating an opportunity for him to get into the IT field. Once others had come up to an equivalent level of competence, Ian advanced his competencies and those of the organisation by leveraging off the existing skill-base and moving into mass production, becoming what he refers to as “the dominant provider”. In effect, Ian speaks of the entrepreneurial opportunity to move into an unoccupied space and the opportunity to apply existing skills to advance himself and the organisation. This led to them having a product that was needed by the exiting business and hardware providers, which in turn created the entrepreneurial opportunity to prosper.

In another example, Ian refers to a competitor as ‘losing the plot’, saying:

A company like [them] was one that comes to mind that sold accounting machines and they just totally dominated the market, but they just lost the plot and never effected the satisfactory transaction, transition, as PCs came in. So we saw all sorts of vendors in New Zealand given the opportunity to resell boxes from off shore principals without really knowing how to do it, and without having a real value proposition they could put in front of customers. So I grabbed the opportunity and developed accounting software [to sell with these].

Ian presents this extract by suggesting that the competitor made a critical error or simply lacked the competencies to initiate what he thinks should have been done in response to the transition to PCs. The entrepreneurial opportunity that existed for Ian was one of leveraging off the hardware sellers, who would sell his product for him, and at no cost or risk to him. Again, he places himself central to this story as “I grabbed the opportunity”, and identifies with the success from this entrepreneurial activity. By packaging their ‘boxes’ with his

software, the hardware seller could create a valued-added proposition, and Ian profited from that opportunity.

Appendix XXIII.d. Delivering his Value

Analysis of Ian's narrative suggests that having something of value to offer, others recognising that a value, and his delivering that value, are aspects of an important asset in his identity capital. The rewards he receives for delivering his value means each time he is paid this identity asset is reinforced. This asset appears in his narrative in the way that he claims all his work comes through his network and how he adds value to the organisations he is involved with. His being rewarded is mentioned repeatedly by Ian, as is his belief about what happens when others do not agree with him about the value that he adds.

The importance of having his identity reinforced externally and through the workplace is presented to the listener in the way he positions himself as a needed contributor in his network of contacts. Part of Ian's presentation is that the centrality of this network to his generation of work, and the implication is that value delivery to constituents of his network is necessary for this work to continue:

For me, I get nearly all my work on my network. My next meeting is with a law firm a big one that's called me out to say, "[Ian], we've got this guy who's developed some really neat IP um, he's brought it, he's got distribution set up in a few countries um, that he just doesn't know how to grow the company to the next step, can you come and have a talk. We're providing some legal guides but he needs some commercial stuff as well". I get two or three calls like that every week.

The way Ian says he gets his work in the above extract exposes the recognition of his value in several places. First is the inclusion of a large law firm in his 'network'. By explicitly saying that the law firm is a large law firm, Ian appears to appeal to the authority of size, and implies that the personal network of people who recognise his value is not just limited to small entrepreneurs that he has helped, but extends to large partnerships, consultancies, and corporate organisations. The detail in the extract around the inventor having the intellectual property but no ability or nous to take the organisation beyond the existing level conveys the impression that Ian can add value with respect to "commercial stuff" and "grow[ing] the company". Another way the above extract presents the Ian's delivering value as an identity asset of the recognition of his value is the manner in which he presents the legal contact as being a normal part of his working week. By simply stating that he gets several such calls every week, Ian conveys to the listener the impression that he believes his work is valued and recognised by many others who seek him out for his input and guidance on such matters.

Extracts such as those discussed above suggest that Ian believes he can add value to the organisations that he mentors and invests in. Much of what he says in his narrative serves to reinforce this to the listener, such as when he says:

I think because of my natural inclinations I actually enjoy days where I'm dealing with people and I'm dealing with um, deals and transactions and I'm adding some value because of the experience and knowledge or skill that I can bring. So I enjoy that more than I do sitting down and dealing with some of the detailed delivery stuff. But that has to be done as well, so sometimes it can be quite rewarding if you've got a restructuring, which I've just finished off, for someone this morning, of a business. I've brought some new shareholders in, I've had to prepare all the paperwork, write up new agreements, get it all signed, but now it's satisfactorily structured. The company would have been an absolute basket case if this hadn't have been done.

Here, Ian associates his contributions and “adding some value” with enjoyment, using an example that obviously took place just prior to his interview. Ian relates exactly what it is that he has achieved in this situation, dealing with the introduction of shareholders, the restructuring involved, and the paperwork required. His comments to the listener that these things could not have been achieved without his input, and that failure to take his input on board would have resulted in a “basket-case” of a company reinforce the value that he delivers. Because he brings these skills, contacts and knowledge as part of his engagement, they are part of him and the value he adds comes from his self.

The valuing of his efforts and abilities is given a financial metric when he comments on the remuneration he expects, such as says in the following three extracts:

I wouldn't expect to walk into [a large legal firm] or [another large legal firm] or someone like that and er, suck a whole lot of IP out of them and not pay. So they, they just need to be reminded about that themselves.

I make money out of, out of using my time effectively in a variety of ways.

I'm pretty up front about the need to get commercially rewarded um, ... I've got relevant experience but I don't provide my services for nothing and, and don't see why I should. Notwithstanding that there are a lot of guys who'll walk in and expect you to do just that.

These extracts show Ian recognises that he can add value to an organisation, and his belief that his value should be recognised else he will move on as Tan & Hunter (2003) have observed IT professionals will do if they don't feel they can be of assistance. He again appeals to the authority of size to equate his services with that of a consultancy that operates on hiring out consulting skill and experience in referencing two large law firms by name. Ian also explicitly says he has the skills and ability that should be paid for, and invokes a biological and parasitic metaphor that establishes him as the host and the client as a ‘sucker’.

Such language suggests to the listener that the client would extract from him what they could if he did not stand his ground and compel recognition of his abilities into the client. The above extracts end with a reference to others sometimes not recognising that magnitude and the fiscal consequences of Ian's abilities and skills, and his stated belief that they should do so – to the point of needing reminding on occasion. In enforcing this 'reminding' on others, Ian emphasises this aspect of his identity work based upon delivering value and being appropriately compensated for it. In many ways, the nature of Ian's consultant-style work reinforces his identity to himself and on others.

The listener therefore suspects that a failure to recognise Ian's abilities and skills in an appropriate manner would result in Ian withdrawing his services and him seeking that validation of his identity elsewhere. Indeed, Ian appears to have little time for those who do not recognise the value that he believes he brings. When he encounters such a belief he says that it is:

Just not worth listening ... you tell them. And if they don't want to listen, and a lot don't, you, you just pick that they're not going to be coachable and you just move on. Life's too short.

People who are just kicking tyres and wasting they're time who don't actually want to do anything [lead to] frustrating days. In a way we, you're dealing with people who come in and sometimes they can be clients and you give them the benefit of your advice, and then you suggest that they might wanna do something and then they completely ignore that advice and just get on and do whatever it was they were gonna do before they came and talked to you.

Ian's dismissal of those who do not recognise his self-perceived value, either by not wanting to pay or not listening, is shown above, where he abandons them in the first extract and is exasperated in the second. He explicitly links such events to being "frustrating", and after the second of the above extracts, Ian proceeded to talk about the others' lack of vision. Because they don't recognise his perceived ability to add value, Ian suggests that they are at fault. In doing so, Ian maintains his understanding of self based on this particular identity asset.

Appendix XXIII.e. Success

Ian has had success in delivering the value discussed above, but success has also appears in his narrative as a separate identity asset in its own right. In particular, he presents his success as being a result of his diligence, and suggests that his previous successes work to recommend him for more work. For example:

I ... did a business with some colleagues of mine from Wellington ... our secret was we went out and we targeted corporates and we did pretty well, again built that to about 100 people, and then I packaged that up and sold it to [another company],

which was looking for a, acquisitions. They paid plenty for it, screwed up the integration of that business with other businesses which they had acquired at the time, so eight months later we bought it back from them [cough] for about half what they'd paid us.

The success that Ian suggests he has achieved in the above extract appears to be presented as being a result of his diligence and toil. His ownership is clear as he says “I ... did a business”, “We did pretty well”, and “I packaged that up and sold it”, with the last part of the extract implying a degree of financial success. He uses mechanistic terms to construct a matter-of-fact account of how he achieved success, saying that they “targeted” and “built” the organisation, before “packaged” it up and “sold it” on. In this extract, the metric for success for Ian appears to be technical and financial. In selling the organisation, Ian capitalises on the value of what he has built, value that others have seen and are prepared to pay for. That the purchasers could not subsequently integrate their acquisition, meaning Ian was able to buy the business back at a significant discount highlights Ian’s previous success in developing and selling the business and adds further success through the shrewd buy-back deal he achieved. In other words, Ian has not only succeeded in building this organisation, but he has succeeded in selling it, and again in buying it back after others failed.

The success that Ian has had is also represented in the way that others seek him out for advice or work. He appears to present his interpretation of others’ actions in this way as a natural consequence of his own success, such as in one of the stories he tells in the extended extract presented in Appendix XV when he talks of establishing a new value-added business. There, Ian presents his being sought after by another executive as recognition of the success he had previously had in growing existing businesses by adding to or better employing the technology they possess. The suggestion to the listener is that Ian was getting a reputation for this kind of work, hence this unnamed executive shoulder-tapping him for his input and advice. In the story, Ian positions himself with a central role in implementing what he suggests was a monumental shift in business focus of his employer. To do so, Ian has to overcome the obstacle of the company executive’s ignorance of the way forward in the burgeoning new economy, which appears in contrast to his own understanding of the possibilities. Importantly, Ian is able to point out that “time has demonstrated that it was a very successful business”. In this short story of his work, Ian also reinforces his ability to deliver value based on his experience and foresight, the latter particularly in suggesting the move into “what’s now called the [industry] business”. These are examples of the identity assets in Ian’s narrative discussed earlier, and his references in the extract to “I moved on” reflect a further identity asset, discussed in the next section.

Appendix XXIII.f. Moving on

Ian's narrative includes numerous references, both implicit and explicit, to 'moving on'. This concept is a characteristic feature of his discourse and serves as a metaphor for his career journey, encompassing the setbacks he has experienced and has overcome as well as his successful and failed entrepreneurial activities. Literal references to "moved on" or "move on" appear at least ten times in Ian's narrative, and are used to punctuate changes of circumstances or the cutting of losses. Examples can be seen in the extended extract in Appendix XV and below:

And er, if you do make a few mistakes, you learn from them, you recalibrate what you're doing and you move on. Um, sometimes that can be pretty fatal, we all accept that, the company can go belly up.

I'd rather pull the plug and move on rather than just persist with something that's going to be um, inevitably unsuccessful because of the people.

Those are always very tough decisions to make, but the sooner you make them the better and move on.

These extracts show Ian uses "moving on" as a means of avoiding failure, minimising risk, and as an action after learning. He personalises "moving on" as an action that he performs, as he stays ahead of disaster and avoids things that are "inevitably unsuccessful". Whereas others may have an attachment or another reason for staying involved with a floundering organisations, the nature of Ian's identity construction is that he will not. Rather than staying, Ian identifies with recognising the need to make "very tough decisions", "sooner rather than later in order to move on". Ian attempts to explain his reasons for doing so in another part of his narrative:

In that case I, I resigned because I was chairman and he ended up um, he was the majority shareholder and [I] was an independent chairman with virtually no shares and you're running a public company you're impotent, and you're also in a very exposed position. So um, I moved on which was fine. And that happens from time to time, I think it's just one of the things that you have to do, just, again you have to keep moving because you can, in a situation like that is it starts to deteriorate. All you can do is do your very best to effect change, but there will become some point in time you say, "Shit I'm not gonna be able to do this", so what's the point in beating yourself to death, move on.

In this extract, Ian presents himself as a contributor to this organisation in his role as Chairman, and defines the limits and boundaries of his contribution within a formalised control structure and sphere of influence. He portrays his inability to influence events and be appreciated to the level he desires as a reason for his departure from the company. In this story, and others, Ian actively chooses to move on to another environment and place where his

abilities are recognised and he is able to deliver the value he believes can bring to an organisation. 'Moving on' is both a rationalisation for his actions and an important part of his identity construction as pragmatic professional.

The 'moving on' identity asset is also presented less explicitly in other parts of Ian's narrative, such as when he says:

I have acquired substantial assets um, from time to time I've done alright and then I've burned it up again. So, so, so, so the reality is I, I need to continue to work.

I've had some ups and I've had some downs but the thing I've learnt is that you learn from that experience but if you never actually make any money well then really, you know, you've just got to keep going, you've got to be able to pick yourself up and er, the experience with the VC, I lost a lot of money over that ... I lost a lot of money and, you know, I just had to come out of that.

In these two extracts, Ian describes setback in the form of losing money in investments that have not gone as well as he may have hoped. In both cases, his stated reaction has been a form of toil, where he has 'worked' or 'come out of it' as a matter of necessity. He has moved on from these setbacks, and variously "continue[d] to work" and "come out of that". These extracts speak to what appears to be Ian's identity construct of taking the setbacks in ones stride, and moving on through them to success elsewhere.

Ian describes another example of overcoming a in the extended extract presented in in Appendix XV. In that case the obstacles that Ian presents are economic conditions in the form of a melt-down in the market and the negative reputation of a key shareholder. In overcoming the combinations of these two obstacles, Ian tells of deconstructing the company and shedding its assets before what amounts to starting the company again. The success he has in doing this, and therefore in overcoming these obstacles, is presented to the listener in the re-listing of the company in a stock market and therefore having it subject to the rigours and control of a publically-listed and tradeable company.

Whereas Ian's identity asset based on his 'moving on' represents an active role that he takes in his narrative, the next, and final, identity asset discussed, hindsight and rationalising, is a reflective one.

Appendix XXIII.g. Hindsight and Rationalising

The reflective identity asset of Ian's hindsight and the pragmatism that Ian expresses in many of his comments is seen in the rationalising that he does in parts of his narrative. He does this as he reconstructs and represents the past to present a more desirable presentation of his self.

As others have made mistakes it is only natural that he might have too. These mistakes and shortcomings are then put in the context of other things, like the national economy.

Ian appears to reflect on past events and construct and present these to the listener in a manner that serves to imply that it was for the best, or the only practical outcomes that could be achieved, such as when he says of some of the losses that he has suffered:

Those are always very tough decisions to make, but the sooner you make them the better and move on ... I think as you get a bit older um, it's easier to make and I think I've got better at making those tough calls, but I never like writing dollars off.

The situation that Ian is rationalising here is an investment that did not work out. The failure of this investment and the loss of a significant amount of capital by Ian is rationalised as a learning experience both in terms of making the investment and the learning of how to abandon the investment. Ian's identification is with the positive of the situation, as he rationalises the "tough decision" to being a learning experience. The hindsight is interwoven with this in the nature of his reflection on the past in order to develop the learning and the rationalising.

The losses that Ian has made are also rationalised and reflected on in the terms of his gains and the opportunity cost of not investing in other vehicles for pecuniary gain, such as when he says:

I think probably, if I'm honest, the other thing I should have done is that every time I've invested in a bit of IT and made a few bucks rather than putting it back into IT, which I tended to do, given what's happened in the New Zealand economy, I am sure I would make more money out of property.

The losses that Ian has experienced and are touched on in the first extract presented in this section have been expanded on in this second extract to the point where Ian sees in hindsight that his gains should have been realised and placed in another investment vehicle, namely property. His hindsight is presented as part of his self as he says "if I'm honest" and "I am sure I would make more money out of property" and in the reflective tone in this extract. The rationalising of his losses is again presented as a personal learning experience to himself and the listener.

There is further rationalising of his mistakes in his commentary, namely how others make mistakes and therefore he can be excused for making them as well. He says that:

I think we have a er, a mind set in New Zealand to judge people far too harshly on mistakes because I, I think if you, if you don't make some mistakes it demonstrates that you're probably not trying hard enough. And er, if you do make a few mistakes, you learn from them, you recalibrate what you're doing and you move on. Um,

sometimes that can be pretty fatal, we all accept that, the company can go belly up. Hell I've been in more than a few businesses which er, haven't gone well and, in fact, I'm involved in one right now, but why I've decided to do that, you know, it owes me [a lot of money] is um, rather than just pump more money into it I've just come to the conclusion that the people that I've decided to back aren't gonna make it er, I still think the idea was sound but there's no execution capability. I'd rather pull the plug and move on rather than just persist with something that's going to be um, inevitably unsuccessful because of the people.

In this extract, Ian makes several interesting points about the mistakes of others, rationalising them as a sign of perseverance and extending oneself to achieve the best possible outcomes in a manner that engenders success. The listener is also made aware of the relationship between trying hard and making mistakes in this extract. After suggesting to the listener that the mistakes are a natural function of trying to achieve at the highest levels and fully extending oneself, Ian immediately lays claim to that ground by saying that he has made many mistakes. In saying that he has made these many mistakes, Ian not only rationalises them as being a result of his high-achieving and extending himself, but he also identifies with them and makes them part of himself. Thus, the otherwise unpleasant aspect to a high-achieving IT professional of failure is made acceptable – his failures are because he is so good. Further, in the above extract Ian details one such failure as it unfolds for him now. He rationalises this loss and presents it as an opportunity to demonstrate his experience and ability to overcome setbacks.

The nature of these losses that Ian has had and that others have shared with him are seen more explicitly in his narrative when he says:

As [the person who suggested Ian as a participant] might tell you, I've put quite a bit of money into [a business he and I were both involved in], I know it's always been a very painful experience for him as well. You know I lost a bunch of money over that along the way too ... I pumped the first money into it, together with other colleagues we put [a lot of money] into it.

Here, Ian rationalises his loss not as being a result of his extending himself, but as being a normal thing that any other competent and informed investor might have had happen to them. This appeal to the normality of losing large amounts of money is made by Ian noting that many other investors and colleagues of his lost money, and as such they were all in it together. He therefore appears to rationalise the event as being one that was out of his control.

Other events that may be considered a shortcoming by some people are also rationalised and explained away, such as when he says:

I think that um, I'm pretty highly motivated individual. Um, I wanna make money um, which is always difficult in a small economy like New Zealand er I could have made a lot of money if I'd moved offshore, but I've chosen to live in New Zealand and I like living here. So for me my family's very important and er, you know, I've placed a real premium on educating my kids as well as I can and providing a stable um, home environment for them. So for me those have been more priorities and um, in terms of material acquisition of assets that might have had it's cost, but you don't regret that for a moment. So um, those are the things that I, I guess I respond by saying um, and I, I generally enjoy what I do, mm.

After claiming an identity as a “highly motivated individual” who aspires to financial success, Ian rationalises any shortcomings in achieving this by qualifying his motivation with comments about how difficult it is to generate wealth in New Zealand. In doing so, he has provided a pathway to justify any business ventures that do not work out. While noting that he could have avoided the situation he suggests New Zealand imposes on him by moving offshore, he appears to excuse his lack of action by saying he likes other aspects of New Zealand and the quality of life compensates for the difficulties in wealth generation. Ian even appears to use a financial term in discussing this, referring to the “premium” he associates with providing for his children. The shortcomings that he may feel he has experienced, or that he suspects the listener might see, are excused further when he downplays the acquisition of wealth which is in stark contrast to much of the rest of his narrative where he leans heavily on wealth generation as a key plank to convey assets emerging in his narrative.

Appendix XXIV PACIS Abstract

Taylor, A. P. R. (2004). "The Construction of 'Alpha-Geek' Identity in the Technology Commercialisation Process" Paper presented at the Pacific-Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS) Doctoral Consortium, Shanghai, China, 8-11 July, 2004.

This paper purports a course of study and research into the socially constructed identity of the 'alpha-geek' – a person who uses their technical prowess as a tool, and derives a measure of self-worth from their skills and the power they provide– in the environment of the commercialisation process, with the construction of their identity a key drivers in their actions.

The need for personal identity strong (Giddens 1991) and the move towards a knowledge economy has resulted in challenges to organisational structures and a waning of the influence of the organisation on employees identities (Giddens 1991). A person who uses their technical prowess as a tool, and derives a measure of self-worth from their skills and the power they provide often achieves a degree of status within an organisation. As control is important to management (Snis 2002), the observation that those with technical skills in demand have usurped managerial power and reporting lines because of their specialist knowledge (Harrison et al. 2002; Pettigrew 1973) may be of potential concern to functionalists. This phenomenon lays the foundation for the alpha-geek, and some commentators are beginning to see the potential for their existence (Snis 2002). It is for these reasons that today's managers should be interested in this study as understanding of participation in cooperative behaviours may be obtained by the study of identity (Dukerich et al. 2002). It is the need for identity that enables managerial control (Alvesson et al. 2002), and they call for an investigation of the 'identity worker' and Orlikowski (1993) sees a need for managerial understanding of the social context of 'key players'. Alvesson & Willmott (2002) propose identity regulation, identity work, and self-identity are interrelated.

Some work has been performed on identity construction, but is overwhelmingly objectivist and fails to put forward the voice of the participants. Kerpelman (2001) notes a need for identity research travels many paths, as:

"Identity-related constructs and processes have the potential to inform our understanding of organizational behavior" (Hogg et al. 2000, p.135).

This proposed investigations supposes that the concept of identity outside of context is meaningless, a concept that is supported by Brickson (2000) and Brewer & Gardner (1996).

Consequently the proposed investigation is placed in the context of commercialising new technology.

The overwhelming majority of the work in identity through work that has been discussed above has been performed using positivist and objectivist paradigms with a quantitative analysis that oversimplifies identity investigations (Phillips 2002). A need has been noted for variations on method from the objectivist, researcher-defined absolute discrete variables so often found in identity research (Schwartz 2001; Whitty 2002) and multi-disciplinary approaches (Raskin 2002). The construction of identity that uses researcher-defined categorisations has been performed (Deaux et al. 1995), and therefore suppresses the voice of the 'subject', while the participants own constructs not considered by many researchers (Hogg et al. 2000). Vignoles et al. (2000) claim:

“The relation between the social value of distinctiveness and its force as a principle underlying identity processes remains to be demonstrated” (Vignoles et al. 2000, p. 339).

No specific work in identity or identity construction has been uncovered to date that deals with a person who can be differentiated from the norm by using their technical prowess as a tool, who derives a measure of self-worth from their skills and the power they provide in the environment of the commercialisation process. A call exists to look at identity of the 'identity worker' (Alvesson et al. 2002) and into atypical identity groups (Whitbourne et al. 2002).

Appendix XXV IJTDE Abstract

Taylor, A. P. R. (2007). "Programming for the Internet and experiential learning: A new approach incorporating a constructed world" *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*. Volume 17, Number 2, May 2007, pp. 217-229

This paper reports on a novel approach taken by the author to the teaching of an Internet programming course targeted at final year diploma and second year degree students. The uniqueness of engineers and their identity is discussed, as is the self-constructed world and ways of knowing in which humankind operates. The novel approach to teaching a software-coding course, and this course's underlying philosophies of learning, the approach taken in class-contact time, and the methods of interaction with the students are presented, along with the conventional structure, quantitative measures, outline, and assessment of the course. The effects and observations of approaches employed are discussed, and the quantitative outputs achieved are presented alongside the unquantifiable impressions, comments and positive feedback.

Appendix XXVI NZDC (07) Abstract

Taylor, A. P. R. (2007). "The Socially Constructed Identity of a High-Achieving IT Professional" Paper presented at the NZ Discourse Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 6-8 December, 2007.

This paper will present the analysis of the socially constructed identity obtained from the narrative of a single high-achieving IT professional in the new economy, and forms a part of the authors PhD research into the socially constructed identity of nine high-achieving IT professionals which is intended to be submitted and defend in 2008.

Narrative analysis was employed with Alan, a New Zealand born male of British-European decent in his early thirties, and from a modest background where he attended a generic coeducational state school in a large city. At the time of narrative solicitation, Alan was had been working for four years as a 'Senior Software Developer' for an export-focused company that designs, builds and sells complex tooling and manufacturing machines. The narrative Alan presented strikes the listener in several ways due to an avoidance of any reference to failure and a continual reference to some form of hierarchy, mechanisation, or formalisation.

This research is founded in the social construction of reality and identity, and the pillars for the analysis in this presentation will be the logical sequence of identity resources and roles, identity work and identity capital, Alan's identity in the new economy, and the implications of Alan's identity in his friends, partner and colleagues. Alan's changing identity will also be presented.

The resources and roles in Alan's identity construction will draw on Beyer & Hannah (2002), while the identity work that Alan does will be looked at through the lens of Alvesson & Willmott's 2002 publication on 'identity work'. The identity capital that Alan builds will be viewed in light of Cote's 1996 and 1997 work in 'identity capital'.

The analysis of Alan's identity in the new economy will draw on Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle (1999), Alvesson & Robertson (2006), Adams & Marshall (1996), Beyer & Hannah (2002), Somers & Gibson (1994), while the implications of Alan's identity will mainly draw on Alvesson and Robertson (2006), Knights & Willmott (1999), Karreman & Alvesson (2004), and Wagner & Wodak (2006). Alan's changing identity will be viewed through these same lenses.

Appendix XXVII NZDC (09) Abstract

Taylor, A. P. R., & Doolin, B. (2009). "Narrative Analysis of High-Achieving IT Professionals: An Identity Capital Model" Paper presented at the NZ Discourse Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 18-20 November, 2009.

This paper presents a model of identity work based upon Côté's (1996) notion of 'identity capital'. The model is the result of the analysis of individual and cross-participant narratives of 'high-achieving' IT professionals following a hermeneutic process involving theoretical awareness, narrative analysis, and model development. The model is premised on the link between culture and identity, and therefore subscribes to an interpretation of identity as socially and discursively constructed in context. It demonstrates the socializing influence of institutions and their cultures, and the development of individual resources for identity construction.

Côté's development of 'identity capital' builds on Riesman's (1950) character types, Becker's (1964) 'human capital' and Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) 'cultural capital'. Côté defines identity capital as "what individuals 'invest' in 'who they are'" (1996, p. 425). He suggests that it represents various resources and capacities that an individual accrues and uses to understand and negotiate the global, economic and political challenges of late-modern life. According to Côté, identity capital comprises relatively tangible or "socially visible" sociological components and more intangible, internal psychological components.

Extended narratives about work and career were collected from nine IT professionals considered to be "high-achieving" by their peers and colleagues. An inductive discourse analysis of the participants' narratives produced a range of themes surrounding their identity work in the performance of self in the interview context. Examination of these themes suggests that the participants were drawing on and mobilising a range of individual identity capital 'assets' in order to negotiate a stable and secure sense of self in relation to their work and career. Their individual identity capital assets derived from a number of generally available 'sources of identification', such as social and technical skills, occupational roles and relations, education and behavioural repertoires (cf. Côté, 1996).