

# **Fashioning an Academic Self:**

**A study of managing  
and making do**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences  
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March 2009**

## **Certificate of Authorship/Originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Elizabeth-Anne Devonshire

March 2009

## Acknowledgments

The completion of this doctorate would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends and colleagues and the guidance of my supervisors. I would like to thank everyone who has been associated with me throughout my doctoral journey.

In particular, I want to acknowledge and thank my family and close friends who have monitored my progress over the years, always offering their support and encouragement in my study endeavours. Particular thanks to my parents and Amanda (my sister), who have been watching and supporting from the sidelines, albeit from the other side of the world. Thanks also to all my friends in England and Australia: in particular, Karen Reimer, Louise Dunne, Sher Williams, Anna Nagy, Emma Carling, Louise Ross and Karen Ward. Thank you for being there when the ‘going got tough’.

I also want to extend thanks and a special mention to my work colleagues and the research participants. Our interactions and conversations over time have helped to shape my thinking and develop my understanding about this research problematic. Thanks are extended to Grace Tague, Elizabeth Rosser, Elysebeth Leigh, Ruth Crocker, Miranda Rose, Helen Wozniak, Robyn Philip, Fran Everingham and Mary Jane Mahony.

Finally, sincere thanks to all those involved in my supervision, I have really appreciated the support and guidance provided during the completion of this doctorate. Special thanks are extended to Alison Lee and Alastair Pennycook whose collegiality, commitment and expertise have developed my understanding of the process of research supervision and the conduct of research itself. Thanks also to Cate Poyton for her editorial support in the completion of this thesis.

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## Abstract

This study investigates how academics are managing and being managed by the demands of their everyday work. Specifically, it sets out to examine how a small cohort of academics located in a former college of advanced education (CAE), now integrated as a Faculty in a traditional Australian university, negotiate the dominant discourses and power relations in this setting. It considers the role played by government policy directives in shaping this particular workplace and its inhabitants. It also explores the tactics and strategies academics employ to manoeuvre the complexities of their day-to-day work life, and how these practices of the everyday fashion academics in this setting.

To date, few studies have explored the changing nature and intensification of contemporary academic work from the perspective of academics working in a former CAE. In taking up this focus, observing the historical and cultural legacy of the institution, the study provides a situated perspective about academic work: one located in a particular workplace, at a particular point in its history. It illustrates how the academic self is fashioned through and within the disciplinary technologies and power relations operating within the workplace setting: how different types of academic performances are taken up and/or valued in this context, and how these performances are then implicated in the production of academic subjects. The research data comprised historical and institutional documentation, as well as semi-structured conversations with academics. A range of related theoretical ideas and positions are used to analyse three specific perspectives about being an academic: work(ing) policies, work(ing) narratives, work(ing) practices. Personal writing about experiences as an insider/outsider in this research study further informs the discussion, with insights about doing academic work in this (and other) workplace settings, and the role of the doctoral process in the subjectification of the academic self highlighted.

The thesis puts forward the argument that managing everyday work is a complex and (self) productive process: one situated in, and shaped by, the institutional spaces – textual, discursive and operational – within which work performances are enacted. It depicts how academics take up, negotiate and/or self-regulate their work practices within these institutional spaces. The process of managing academic work is thus



represented as an interactive yet bounded practice, subject to and subjectified through the specificities of the workplace setting and its inhabitants, and the power relations and disciplinary forces operating on and within the institution. The thesis also demonstrates the fashioning of the academic self involves a set of practices of managing and making do. These practices of the self, which are shaped by the aspirations and positioning (personally, professionally and institutionally) of academics, and the past and current circumstances of the workplace setting, highlight the mutually constitutive nature of discipline and desire in shaping academic work in an institutional context.