

## Chapter 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Much of the time, people will not be strategically planning or self-consciously adjusting their discourse in a machiavellian fashion, but just ... stating what 'seems right' for the situation. (McKinlay, Potter & Wetherell 1993: 145)*

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter explains the theoretical framework for my exploration of the interpretative repertoires used by council members in describing the roles and functions of university governing bodies. As outlined in Chapter 1, my study aims to show how these repertoires, which are shaped by wider societal discourses, relate to theoretical governance models and inform our understanding of the 'practical politics' of governance.

Chapter 2 examined theoretical approaches to governance and a range of empirical studies on governing boards, including the small body of work on university governing bodies. Research studies of university governing bodies studies (e.g. Wood 1985; Bargh, Scott & Smith 1996) have assumed that competing governance models exist, as for example in Wood's typology of ratifying, corporate and participatory boards. However, the links between these multiple perspectives and wider strategies of legitimation or value are not explored in any depth.

My starting point was an appreciation that people use language performatively to justify certain positions and to enact their own subject identities (Goffman 1959) and therefore that language itself could form an appropriate subject for governance research. It is proposed that governing bodies might fruitfully be reconceptualised as sites of possible discursive struggles (of greater or lesser visibility) over the interests to be served or values to be supported through governance mechanisms.

I also suggested that these values expressed in discourse should be related to wider conceptions of value and to the reproduction or transformation of social institutions. That is, my theoretical framework should propose ways of linking the micro-level study of specific discursive practices of individuals to wider sociological and organisation theories of how social fields are sustained or transformed.

### ***Identification of a theoretical framework***

From the outset, I looked for an analytical approach that would engage productively with wider sociological positions on the reproduction or transformation of social structures and the contribution of discourse to these processes.

This requirement drew my attention towards to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, a major concern of which is to critique existing 'truths' (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002: 66) in order to explicate relations of domination and their ongoing reproduction in social practices. It emphatically rejects the tenets of pure objectivism (the social world as defined in structures 'out there') and pure subjectivism (the social world as solely the product of human agency), as insufficient to explain the dynamic and yet constrained nature of social practices.

Importantly for my research, significant elements of Bourdieu's sociology rely on a concept of value, expressed as various forms of 'capital'. An added attraction was the emphasis in a considerable body of Bourdieu's work on locating the role of universities in the processes of social reproduction (Bourdieu 1994) and specific pointers towards a sociological explanation of boards (Bourdieu 1991a). I decided to explore the possibility of using the logic of Bourdieu's sociological theories in conjunction with a discourse analytical method.

In considering approaches to the study of discourse, a concern for me was that earlier writers within the broad traditions of social interactionism, ethnomethodology and phenomenology (Becker 1963; Berger & Luckmann 1967; Garfinkel 1967; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Schutz 1967) for the most part downplay or dismiss the idea of a separate

existence of social structures such as organisations (Layder 1994). As a result, they are unable to adequately explain the persistence of social institutions (such as universities or of marriage) or ongoing structural differences in power (for example, differences in economic power).

Related difficulties are evident in the disciplines of organisational and management studies, where discourse analytic methods are now widely used to examine the ways in which individuals' communicative practices 'contribute to the ongoing... process of organizing' (Mumby & Clair 1997: 181) through the re-constitution of ideas and subjects (Hardy & Palmer 1998). In many of these studies, the identification of organisational 'discourses' may offer little more than traditional positivist research in 'discourse' clothes (Burman & Parker 1993a: 11), as their analyses, in Fairclough's terms, are either 'non-explanatory, or explanatory within "local" limits' (1995: 43). Such studies may be blind to the extent to which such discourses have been 'naturalised', so that they are taken for granted as norms of the field and play a part in uncritically reproducing the constraints that have shaped them. Alternatively, organisational accounts of discourse may reduce social action to the psychological and cognitive processes of individual actors, again resulting in difficulties in explaining the persistence and reproducibility of institutions within which social interaction occurs (Fairclough 1995: 44-45).

Bearing these criticisms in mind, I concluded that my research should seek out discourse analytical methods that were sensitive to the concept of institutional fields and modes of social production within and across these fields, with a view to relating these to Bourdieu's sociological framework. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offered the promise of such an orientation and, in the work of at least some writers an explicit engagement between CDA and Bourdieu's work (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; see also Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000).

Other options were suggested by the 'accounts' literature of the early 1980s (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984) and subsequent studies in the social construction of science, including actor-network theory (Latour 1999; Law & Hassard 1999), which offer methods to explore

how dominant technological narratives emerge across time and divergent groups. A further alternative presented itself in the writings of Michel Foucault on discourse and power (Foucault 1972, 1983).

However, for the purpose of exploring differing ways of valuing features of governance, I formed the view that the critical discourse studies of the social psychologists Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (Potter & Wetherell 1987, McKinlay, Potter & Wetherell 1993; Wetherell & Potter 1988, 1992) provided the most relevant and well-developed methodological basis for my particular research interests, through their use of the concept of 'interpretative repertoires'. As is argued below, the approach of 'interpretative repertoires' offers a significant degree of complementarity to Bourdieu's sociology.

The term 'interpretative repertoire' is used in critical discourse analyses to mean a knot of ideas, categories and relationships: that is, 'broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images' or '...the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992: 90). It is close to the use by other writers of terms such as 'concept' or 'discourse'.

This idea of 'interpretative repertoires', composed of calls to familiar concepts or lines of argument, appears closely related to recent work by the French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot on the 'logics of action' that speakers use in justification or evaluation, where these logics are themselves the products of extremely naturalised concepts, such as the family, civics, capitalism or democracy (Friedland & Alford 1991; Boltanski & Thévenot 1991, 1999).

The approach taken by Boltanski and Thévenot, drawing on earlier work by Livian and Herreros (1994), aims to provide a general analytical framework of 'practical political philosophies' (Wagner 1999) used in political and social disputes. Its underlying idea is that arguments about actions usually require some justification on the part of a speaker and that the modes of these justifications can be described in broad terms. Boltanski and

Thévenot identify six principle 'regimes of justification' or 'orders of worth' (*grandeur*), each forming its own 'world'. The approach is pluralistic, as 'within every social action, actors always refer to several logics, that's to say several objectives and methods of intervention that combine among themselves' (Capron 1997: 5).

The six 'regimes of justification' identified are:

- The *inspired* world or logic (transcendent values, aesthetics, art, creativity);
- The *domestic* world or logic (close and trustful ties, lasting and convivial relationships, security/health, internal citizenship, satisfaction, viability);
- The *civic* world or logic (the general interest, collective projects, respect for the environment, local citizenship, social utility, solidarity);
- The *opinion* world or logic (notoriety, public image, recognition of signs, celebrity);
- The *market* or merchant logic (conquest, ambition, willingness to take possession of others' goods, exchange relationships); and
- The *industrial* world or logic (efficiency, imperatives of organisation, measurement, standardisation, productivity, professional competency)

(drawn from Capron 1997 and Boltanski & Thévenot 1999)

These 'regimes of justification' essentially involve appeals to differing ideas of value and, in so doing, form a link between Bourdieu's forms of capital and possible interpretative repertoires. As Wetherell has indicated (1998), a specific interpretative repertoire is likely of itself to constitute a largely naturalised idea, e.g. a concept that is commonly accepted without question as 'a good thing'. One example often cited by Wetherell is that of the repertoire of 'community', which has obvious parallels with the 'civic' logic noted above.

In the sections below, a framework is established for the analysis used in my research, best described as a combination of the 'constructivist structuralism' of Bourdieu (1990b) and the constructivist discursive psychology of Wetherell and her colleagues, informed by the

work of Boltanski and Thévenot plus other insights from critical discourse analysis. My approach is a combination of theory and method, consistent with both Bourdieu's approach to social investigation (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) and the tenets of CDA. It is suggested that this combination provides a reasonably well worked account of discourses in context, although it is not without some residual theoretical concerns.

### ***Bourdieu's sociology: field and habitus***

Two major building blocks in my theoretical framework are Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus.

A field (cultural field) for Bourdieu is a series of institutions, rituals, categories and practices that collectively structure the types of action that can be taken within it (Bourdieu 1977). The internal logic of a field, which is a product of this network of activities and objects, dictates the positions of subjects and also the forms of value within it. For example, the field 'universities' structures relations between academics and students, gives value to forms of 'common currency' such as the production of scholarly journals and written texts, and involves internal rituals of validation, such as the granting of research degrees.

The concept of fields is intuitively straightforward and many sociological approaches rely on an idea of fields (known as 'organisational fields', 'sectors', and 'institutional fields') as a mid-range structuring device (e.g. Meyer & Rowan 1977; Axelrod 1984; Clegg 1989; Fligstein 1998; Wodak 2000).

Bourdieu's concept of a 'field' is broadly consistent with the 'new institutionalism' of DiMaggio and Powell (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Powell & DiMaggio 1991), which aims to explain how organisations come to resemble each other in terms of structures and language use through the analysis of isomorphic pressures within fields. DiMaggio and Powell identify three main types of 'pressure' that contribute to the tendency of organisations within a field to resemble each other in various practices. These are coercive, mimetic and normative pressures and, as the authors illustrate, they tend to

reinforce each other while simultaneously offering the possibility of appropriation of practices from outside or inside the field. Normative and mimetic pressures can be seen in the ways in which new players in a field adopt the practices, including the discursive practices, within established organisations to reinforce their legitimacy. As Bourdieu (1998) observes, the activities of universities themselves, with rules of practice that facilitate the world-wide circulation of people, knowledge and new discursive practices, contribute significantly to normative reproduction through professionalisation of practices and mimetic change through innovation.

On this view of institutional fields, language use by organisational members is not solely a product of the free play of ideas within the head of individuals but is conditioned by its context, by the interactions with others in and across fields and by wider shared meanings. University governing bodies seem self-evidently to be at the boundary of one field (universities) and therefore permeable to influences from other fields.

However, a field in Bourdieu's sense should not be seen as a rigid and objective structure but rather as a network of interactions that operate in a dynamic way and which are shaped from within and without by changing practices. It is in this sense the idea of fields has been reconceptualised as 'actor-networks' (Callon & Latour 1981; Law 1994; Law & Hassard 1999). Bourdieu also refers to a field as a space where certain types of game are able to take place and where actors compete to accumulate valued forms of capital (Moi 1991).

If the concept of field serves as one key social structuring device for Bourdieu, then the concept of 'habitus' provides the element of agency, expressed through individual practices. The habitus is described as:

...a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions, and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks thanks to transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly structured problems.  
(Bourdieu 1977: 82-83)

However, habitus possesses its own structural features - in this sense, the social is 'doubly inscribed' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 116), in habitus as well as in field: the dispositions of the habitus are both structured and structuring.

Habitus works through and in people as an inbuilt sense of the 'rules of the game' that facilitates social action within relevant fields. Habitus is acquired and modified throughout an individual's life but is closely connected to the circumstances in which the person finds themselves, in ways that reflect a class orientation. Bourdieu has persuasively shown, for example, that children of higher social class families are habituated at home to ways of thinking and sources of cultural capital that facilitate their performance in schools and universities where similar access to cultural capital is also rewarded (Bourdieu 1994). Within universities, many career academics are more likely to share features of their habitus, in broad terms, with other academics, especially those in the same discipline, than with, say, the maintenance staff. Traditionally, if not currently, administrative managers may have had a better feel for the 'rules of the game' in terms of internal funding negotiations than many academics.

Actors are comfortable in fields where they more or less automatically practice the rules of the game but they are also able to move across and between fields with varying degrees of comfort. Moreover, Bourdieu makes it clear that the habitus is not merely a sense of structure and a series of resources in individuals' minds but rather is inscribed in the body and manifested in even humdrum actions, such as walking to school. It thus possesses both a conscious and an unconscious aspect.

On the other hand, while habitus relies on a large accumulation of largely unconscious - even reflex - behaviours, Bourdieu emphasises that it is by no means only a passive repository of past experiences but provides the impetus for the ongoing 'making' of society. In many ways, the 'shaping' facet of habitus is similar to those employed by other constructionist writers working with concepts of 'sensemaking' (Weick 1995) or 'skilled social actors' (Fligstein 1998, 2000) or the sociolinguistic idea of individuals as possessing 'knowledge schemas' (Tannen & Wallat 1987).

In this regard, Bourdieu also identifies a specific linguistic habitus, which is that portion of the habitus instantiated in language and infused with the resources speakers are able to draw on. Such resources could include, for example, the flexible ability to speak 'appropriately' in specific situations, access to a wide range of performative options (irony, jokes, oratory), and a wide range of contexts and discourses on which to draw. However, Bourdieu's concern with the linguistic habitus appears to lie less with these capabilities and resources than with the extent to which agents are able to tap into increasingly standardised dominant languages (Bourdieu 1991a).

Where habitus and field match, individuals are likely to be less aware of dissonances between the resources available to them and accepted social practices. That is, 'objective and subjective distinctions correspond precisely because agents reproduce in their practices existing divisions' (Bourdieu 1990a: 12). Thus, the habitus also serves as a significant force for the reproduction of social institutions, even as such institutions undergo change.

One form of reproduction is found in the commitment individuals give to 'playing the game', believing that the playing is worth the effort and that its stakes are worth pursuing (Bourdieu 1998). This sense of commitment, which implies a commitment to the values and 'rules' of a field is described by Bourdieu as 'illusio'. Agents within a field ascribe common value (forms of capital) to that field and its practices: to those without this sense of commitment, practices may seem ridiculous or even inexplicable.

The interlocking of field and individual habitus goes a considerable way towards explaining the persistence of organisational fields and relations of social inequality over time, through the achievement of certain more or less temporarily stabilised outcomes, 'constituted and reproduced through conscious strategies and unwitting practices constructed by the actors themselves' (Clegg 1989: 204). For a complete picture, however, Bourdieu requires a theory of value and the power effects produced by common

ascriptions of value. This is given expression in his account of forms of capital and strategies of power.

### ***Bourdieu's sociology: forms of capital and strategies of power***

Bourdieu's account of forms of capital is essentially an account of value, and leads to his conception of power: what is valued acquires power. Although his account changes several times, in general Bourdieu identifies four main types of capital: economic (as traditionally understood); cultural (objects and practices that come to be valued 'for themselves'), social capital (groups of relations and people one can call on) and symbolic capital.

Fields are accumulations of varying types of capital (economic, cultural social, linguistic and symbolic) and also sites of contestation over preferred forms of capital and its distribution. That is, capital only makes sense in fields that value the specific form of capital that is 'produced' and exchanged within the field by interactions among people. Within fields, however, multiple forms of capital can co-exist and one form of capital can be exchanged for another, i.e. types of capital functions as forms of currency. Cultural and economic capital, for example, can and do exist together, as in universities. As well, different fields may also exhibit correspondences, or homologies (Bourdieu 1991a), and so individual sources of capital across fields may be correlated.

Symbolic capital is different to the other types of capital (economic, cultural and social), in that it comprises the 'misrecognised' version (Bourdieu 1977, 1991a) of another form of capital and accrues when that other type of capital is 'consecrated' and thus acquires a power of its own. The translation into symbolic capital is not an 'empty' move but needs to be signified by specific actions. For example, the transmutation of economic capital into symbolic capital relies on a form of giving, such as philanthropy in the case of individuals or redistribution of resources in the case of governments. For Bourdieu, the state is thus a major source of social power as it has both economic and also cultural capital but also symbolic power derived from this capital.

Symbolic capital also includes the 'misrecognition' of cultural capital through the ascription by others of prestige, celebrity and recognition of specific individuals as 'experts' and, analogously, the 'misrecognition' of social capital as access to networks.

Bourdieu also identifies a specific linguistic field in which 'linguistic capital', defined as access to more or less powerful styles, or in its symbolic form as personal possession of skills in oratory or other impactful styles, is valued in ways that allow the speaker to extract 'additional value' from a situation (Bourdieu 1991a). However, Bourdieu's account of linguistic capital makes it clear that linguistic capital only exists in an interactional situation and only when the other participants value it: it is not an unrealised potential or a power that is ascribed to discourse per se (Bourdieu 1994).

These forms of capital, which can be seen as things that are valued as part of the 'common good' (Albertsen & Diken 2001), can readily be related, at least in a partial fashion, to Boltanski and Thévenot's 'regimes of justification' (1991), where:

- Economic capital relates to market and, possibly, to industrial logics;
- Cultural capital relates to the inspired logic but can also relate to other forms of expertise, as in the industrial logic;
- Social capital relates to domestic and civic logics; and
- Symbolic capital relates to the opinion logic.

Such a correspondence provides a link between Bourdieu's theory of value and the naturalised logics that people are able to draw on when presenting institutions or phenomena in discourse.

Institutions can be significant sites of symbolic capital. However, institutions are also sites of struggles for domination by competing groups or individuals (Bourdieu 1990b) who seek the consecration of particular forms of capital, and particular practices associated with those forms of capital. Fields and institutions are never entirely stable

or static but, at the same time, the presence of symbolic capital and thus of power effects, woven into the fabric of existing institutions and practices, imposes barriers to their ready substitution by alternatives.

The struggle for consecration is evident within the field of universities as currently constituted. Bourdieu (1994) has shown how senior academic staff are supplied with symbolic cultural capital while students are positioned as apprentices, learners, whose access to this cultural capital is acquired by osmosis rather than by explicit teaching and demonstrated by mastery of the language of the discipline. This basic rhythm of university life continues, but increasingly is shaped and replaced by relations that are economic, from the identification of students as consumers through postgraduate students willing to trade economic capital for additional credentials to an increasing emphasis on the commercialisation of university research (Slaughter & Leslie 1997; Clark 1998; Gallagher 2000a, 2000b; Cain & Hewitt 2004).

The growth of managerialist practices in the public sector and in universities (Hood 1991; Marginson & Considine 2000) engages the symbolic and economic capital of the state to privilege economic capital (market and industrial logics) over social and cultural capital (inspired and civic logics). While change within universities may begin or be most obvious at field boundaries, the growing domination of heterogeneous disciplines, such as the academic study of 'management', is itself reshaping the options for more autonomous disciplines of the academy.

### ***Bourdieu's sociology: domination and challenge***

Bourdieu's account of modern societies posits that the accepted division of social practices into fields, and the symbolic capital thereby generated, provides significant economies in the use of strategies of domination. Fields are largely a product of the inescapable human tendency towards categorisation or systems of classification but the constitution of a field also partially confers its authority. Institutions and actors within a field are granted legitimacy precisely because they operate within the norms dictated by the field and when this occurs, they do not need to rely solely on their own coercive or persuasive capabilities

in order to mobilise resources. Instead, they have access to symbolic power, a form of socially sanctioned (and misrecognised) domination:

[the] constitution of institutionalized mechanisms makes it possible for a single agent (a party leader or union delegate, a member of a board of directors, a member of an academy, etc.) to be entrusted with the totality of the capital which is the basis of the group, and to exert over this capital, collectively owned by all of the 'shareholders', a delegated authority not strictly related to his personal contribution... (Bourdieu 1977:194)

For Bourdieu, misrecognition is a central mechanism through which relations of social domination are reproduced. People understand actions within the structures and processes that have already been legitimised and accepted within an institution. The majority of existing (dominant) practices are therefore misrecognised as 'natural' or 'part of the background' and may be appealed to as having an essential value or necessity of their own (Cunningham 1993). Seen in this way, misrecognition is a form of forgetting:

The agent engaged in practice knows the world... too well, without objectifying distance, takes it for granted... he inhabits it like a garment... he feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of the habitus. (Bourdieu 2000: 142-143. Quoted in Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002: 25)

The widespread acceptance of certain institutions and practices as legitimate, and thus their instantiation as sites of symbolic capital is a key driver for the reproduction of social relations of inequality:

...objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic relations of power, in visions of the social world which contribute to ensuring the permanence of those relations of power. (Bourdieu 1991a: 238)

Misrecognition of situations as 'natural' or as instances of the outworkings of accepted principles by individuals, even where those individuals themselves are disadvantaged by such situations, are instances of what Bourdieu describes as 'symbolic violence' or 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 167). Gender relations based on women's acceptance of masculine leadership provide an obvious example. Bourdieu's ideas of misrepresentation and

symbolic violence are consistent with Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1971), especially in later formulations which emphasise the naturalised or hidden forms of domination including the 'taken for granted' forms of social practices.

This 'taken for grantedness' of the social, in its broadest form, is described by Bourdieu as 'doxa':

...when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call doxa, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs.  
(Bourdieu 1977:164)

One of the tasks of a reflexive sociology is to dissect the 'taken for granted' nature of institutions and practices to reveal them as instances of symbolic capital and symbolic power and thus to point to those whose interests are served by the legitimation of particular types of value in the forms of economic, social and cultural capital (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002).

Bourdieu's challenge to sociology is thus one that is echoed by critical theorists and many sociologists themselves (Giddens 1993; Layder 1994; Mills 1997). It is also one that parallels the tasks many critical discourse analysts have set themselves in regard to the role of language in social practice. As Bourdieu indicates, legitimacy is rarely permanently assured: there are always struggles to define legitimate action and hegemonic closure is never completely realised (Thompson 1991: 28). There is one sense in which complete social stability is impossible, as agents themselves are an irreducible source of instability. Most agents act simultaneously across several fields: at the simplest level, we move between home and work. We seldom reproduce in our practices *exactly* what has been before and people, all possessing different habituses, may act as more or less unconscious carriers of change across institutions and fields, exposing new possibilities but also creating instability.

Moreover, in Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) reformulation of Althusser's concept of 'overdetermination' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999), the presence of the 'other' - the dialectic of domination between dominant and dominated, the presence of other meanings within common concepts - inevitably precludes hegemonic closure: objects 'appear articulated not like pieces in a clockwork mechanism, but because the presence of some in the others hinders the suturing of the identity of any of them' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 104).

A number of critics have suggested that Bourdieu's approach to the habitus needs modification to take account of the growing reflexivity and availability, through the media, of 'improvised' identities in later modern society (Appadurai 1997). Various authors have pointed out that Bourdieu has failed to adequately account for social change (Alexander 1996; Crossley 2001) seeming at times to assume that an individual's habitus will be largely subordinated to a particular field (Butler 1999). It has also been suggested that Bourdieu's account of the habitus underestimates the extent to which people are able to 'play' with the resources from their multiple habituses, to use these consciously and reflexively in ways that, in Bourdieu's account, would weaken its inscribed and naturalised character (de Certeau 1984; Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002). This issue is considered below, in the context of tensions between Bourdieu's sociology and the power effects of discourse.

### ***Bourdieu's sociology and governing bodies***

While the general theoretical framework provided by Bourdieu's sociology appears to offer a basis for conceptualising universities and the struggle for consecration of forms of capital within them, it is a useful test of relevance to examine whether this framework can provide insights into the workings of board governance.

Bourdieu's sociology suggests some interesting ways of conceptualising governing boards. As noted in Chapter 2, an under-theorised question from the literature is the ongoing tension between the legitimate authority granted to boards and the difficulties of ensuring the exercise of this authority in practice (Lorsch & MacIver 1989; Cornforth 2001b). On a

Bourdieusian reading, company directors and other boards members are, to a significant extent, 'consecrated' in various forms of law. These forms of law, plus common law case judgements, prescribe the duties of directors and the general responsibilities and, by implication, the powers of boards. Notably, one of the strongest prescriptions is for board members to act in a disinterested fashion for the good of the organisation as a whole, leaving aside individual self-interest.

Boards of all kinds, taken in the abstract, are therefore granted symbolic capital and thus symbolic power in Bourdieu's terms, through the absolute generative properties of law to *create* what it states (1991a: 42). Board members as delegates thus acquire symbolic capital (conferred by law) by virtue of their office. The presence of defined duties of directors, imposed by law, indicates that considerable regulation of boards is considered necessary for the rules of the game to apply, i.e. that boards are unlikely to behave in appropriate ways without such explicit direction. In this realisation lies the 'central paradox of power' (Clarke & Clegg 1998: 41), the fact that symbolic power includes the capacity to delegate but such delegation provides for discretion, which potentially empowers delegates, whether they are board members or management.

Given the legislated existence of apparently substantial symbolic capital for boards, how can the apparent paradox of their frequent impotence vis à vis management be explained? It is suggested that a Bourdieusian view would recognise that boards are endowed with symbolic capital - and thus in the *abstract* with significant powers that outlive the term of any individual member - but that the interactions which occur between a board and the entity it governs are shaped by the play of symbolic capital in the local interactive situation.

Some features of this situation include the fact that a Chief Executive Officer is herself or himself granted symbolic cultural capital by virtue of the office, i.e. the CEO is almost axiomatically expected to have the status of expert in the company's affairs (cf. Lorsch & MacIver 1989). Over time, as Bourdieu suggests, CEOs will tend to become

'professionals of the manipulation of the only situation which could create problems for them, namely, confrontation with their mandators' (1991a: 219).

Board participation also possesses its own 'rules of the game' and these are fairly complex. Members are required to be simultaneously disinterested with respect to particular owners and interested with respect to a notional totality of owners, engaging in the dialectic production of both critique and support for the organisation's operations (Cornforth 2001a). There is no doubt that some board members and boards manage to balance these requirements (people manage similar contradictions in their daily lives as for example when engaging in parenting behaviours). However, the probability is that the complex mechanisms of co-optation together individuals' lack of symbolic capital (especially in regard to the field in question) will weigh the scales heavily in favour of 'support' rather than of effective critique by boards of the organisations they govern. Moreover, as Bourdieu notes, dominant individuals will tend to favour consensus, as a form of agreement that tends to naturalise meanings and social divisions (Bourdieu 1991a: 130-131), suggesting that powerful individuals will work as 'insiders' with the CEO.

Also, board members as individuals may or may not possess their own symbolic capital and this fact may explain how some - but only some - members of the board are likely to be able to influence board conduct independently of their roles as directors. Examples are provided by the private universities in the United States where many trustees devote considerable personal time to trustee work (Harman 2001, pers. comm.), and in other systems where, as donors, trustees possess significant symbolic economic capital (Sosteric, Gismondi & Ratkovic 1998). In such cases trustee influence is significant because of the combination of symbolic capital possessed by individual trustees and their sense that something is at stake in securing the future of the institution, i.e. the fact that they are 'in the game'. Recognition of this point reprises some features of Zald's (1969) hypothesising of board members' variable influences.

Taken together, these features seem to explain the observed tendencies of some boards to act as captives of management while, in other cases, individual board members exert considerable power over management.

Further, distinctive features of each of the theoretical governance models presented in Chapter 2 are highlighted by Bourdieu's sociology. Agency and stewardship models, for example, rely on the idea of economic capital and the symbolic capital conferred on boards by law, the difference between the two lying in the extent to which the stewardship model additionally consecrates the symbolic cultural capital (expertise) of management and supposes a close alignment of the interests of management and the board.

The resource dependency and stakeholder models, with their emphasis on networking and contingent access to various forms of resources, construct boards as embodiments of symbolic social capital, with some possibility of appeals to specific constituencies, each of which may have access to other forms of symbolic capital. A class hegemony model suggests that, in reinforcing *exchanges* of symbolic economic and cultural capital by the few, the main function of boards is to reproduce dominance by elite groups. In contrast, the institutional model suggests that boards are likely to accommodate their roles to the symbolic cultural capital and thus the values and purposes of the organisation.

Finally, the managerial hegemony model reflects the view that local interactions based on the symbolic capital carried by individuals are more important in shaping board behaviour than the generic symbolic capital conferred on boards by law: the board is a 'legal fiction' precisely because these symbolic powers cannot be activated in practice.

Each of these models appears to have something to contribute to our understanding of boards and each is capable of being 'read' by Bourdieu's work on forms of capital. Moreover, an interpretation of university governing boards, or boards more generally, using Bourdieu's account of practices appears to offer some pointers towards a generalised sociological account of board values and behaviours.

The following sections outline the other components of my theoretical framework, namely critical discourse analysis and the method of interpretative repertoires, and consider how these fit with a Bourdieusian sociology.

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis***

The term 'discourse analysis' is used in a number of senses. In the discipline of linguistics, it refers mostly to various technical methods of exploring and theorising features of language use or of the micro-social interactions presented through language. However, and increasingly, discourse analysis is used in a broader way to address a range of sociological and psychological questions through qualitative research. Meta-analysis identifies significant traditions in three separate fields: linguistics, social psychology and sociology, but also suggests some convergence among these approaches (Smith & Yates 1998).

Despite disapproving comments from linguists and others on the confusion and lack of conceptual underpinning the notion of 'discourse' currently employed in social research (Mills 1997; Schegloff 1997, 1998), the analysis of discourse has become firmly established as a technique for researchers interested in individuals, organisations and how categories of the social are constructed. It is difficult to see how more traditional ethnographic research involving language use can now be conducted without reference to discursive practices. Most significantly, the idea of discourse (and Foucault's work in particular) has been important in demonstrating how people do not define themselves as subjects independent of their classification by others (Butler 1990; Deetz 1998; Zipin 1998). Similarly, the socially constructed nature of various (non-material and material) objects has become axiomatic for much social and qualitative research. Taken from a social constructionist view point we can only represent our experiences to ourselves and to others using the concepts embedded in language, so that our thoughts, feelings and how we represent our behaviour - and pass on our version of reality - are all 'pre-packaged' by language.

To say something is socially constructed, however, is often of itself trivial (Hacking 1999: 39). What is more significant for applied sociological research are the implications discursive constructionism has for the reproduction or transformation of social relations, including the reconciliation of people to subordinate places within a social order (Hall 1996), and for the role of reflexivity in research practices.

In this sense, discourse analysis has been applied critically across disciplines including cultural studies, psychology, human geography, organisational and management research, sociology, social studies of science and technology, and public policy (Parker 1999). More particularly, a body of studies from several of these disciplines have identified themselves as practitioners of a particular approach known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

As described by its major practitioners and proponents (Fairclough 1992, 1995; van Dijk 1997, 1999; Wetherell 1998; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; Wodak 2000, Scollon 2001), CDA generally aims to 'rough up' the surface of ideas or formulations regarded as self-evident and natural and to indicate the effects of these ideas in shaping the context or field in which they operate and wider relations of power and domination.

CDA is not primarily concerned with language or language use per se, but with the exploration of relationships 'between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes' (Fairclough 1995: 132) and with the analysis of discursive interactions in specific social settings (van Dijk 1999; Titscher et al. 2000). In common with other forms of discourse analysis, CDA takes as a starting point the observation that *discursive practices themselves* reflexively construct the fields in which they act: for example, we may identify a field of 'universities' in which the word itself connotes particular rules for belonging, or 'relations of meaning and membership' (Clegg 1989: 219). Linked by an emphasis on struggles for domination in discourse, CDA accommodates diverse theoretical positions and methodologies for qualitative research on texts and talk (Wodak & Meyer 2001).

CDA shares with both Bourdieu and poststructuralists a suspicion of theory not generated and fertilised by empirical work and a suspicion of grand totalising theory. However, critical discourse analysts have also been among the most diligent of discourse analysts in efforts to 'read' and practice CDA within the concepts and categories presented by wider sociological theories (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000). While this is largely a consequence of their explicitly critical stance and concern with relations of domination, in so doing, they seek to avoid a common criticism that the analyses of texts produces mainly superficial glosses or mere reworkings of what has already been said (Antaki et al. 2001). For the purposes of establishing a research plan within a transparent theoretical framework, CDA is therefore more attractive than approaches to discourse analysis that make no attempt to ground their analysis within established approaches to considering social organisation. Moreover, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough have demonstrated, there are clear 'relations of relevance' (1999: 114) between Bourdieu's sociology and the practices of CDA, the latter offering the potential to further develop Bourdieu's account of relations between fields through use of concepts such as the 'appropriation' and 'colonisation' of discursive practices across fields (ibid.: 93-94).

As for Bourdieu, CDA takes as a primary assumption that social life is made up of practices, 'habitualised ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 21). Practices in social life attempt to achieve closure, to fix meanings and boundaries, but are inevitably located within a network of other practices, these external relationships determining the internal constitution of a practice:

...the discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people's heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social practices. (Fairclough 1992: 6)

Language use or discourse is one component of those practices but not the only component - bodily practices and material objects and technologies also act to constitute practice (Fairclough 1995; Law & Hassard 1999; Scollon 2001). Specific discourses and discursive moments exists in a dialectical relationship with their contexts, so that

discourse is not produced without context, where context includes both intertextuality and, in the case of research, the researchers' own socio-cultural knowledge (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Moreover, discursive practices can only be understood in relation to their own histories of production and the socio-cultural (and temporal) determinants of the field in which they occur. In these respects, the tenets of CDA have elements in common with Foucault's account of discursive formations in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) but also with Bourdieu's requirement that any account of language use be viewed in terms of its specific speakers and context (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002: 13).

For CDA, the social determination of language is always partial and incomplete and comprises a complex interplay among differing discourses, differing purposes of discourse and non-transparent relations between discourses and underlying norms of behaviour. As we know, our talk is constructed from existing resources:

These resources are the repertoires, repertoires we do not create anew when we speak, but which we have to borrow and refashion for our own purposes. A problem is that when we borrow a repertoire it always carries more with it than we (could) think. (Burman & Parker 1993a: 4)

Using ideas that are consistent with Foucault's account of discourses, Bourdieu's presentation of 'doxa' and the Gramscian concept of hegemony, proponents of CDA argue that the co-existence of multiple types of discourse within a field or an order of discourse is indicative of a challenge or struggle for primacy and, eventually, for naturalisation and universalisation of its concepts. There may also be a number of ways in which multiple discourse types co-exist within individuals' discourses and among individuals - each constitutive of a social 'object' that is simultaneously the same and different (cf. Mol 1999).

### ***CDA and interpretative repertoires***

Social psychologists working within the constructionist and critical framework of CDA have made extensive use of the concept of interpretative repertoires and 'ideological dilemmas' (Wetherell & Potter 1988, 1992; Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996; Edley 2001) to

analyse both small and relatively large bodies of interview texts for evidence of multiple, often naturalised, discourses.

The approach of interpretative repertoires begins from the observation that within an individual's discourse or within the discourses of a group of people, the same concept may be presented more or less consistently or more or less differently. In this regard, it engages with Foucault's observations regarding regularities in discourse, and the fact that, in any one period, an idea or object is likely to be presented discursively in only a few, sanctioned ways, other possibilities being excluded (Foucault 1978).

An interpretative repertoire is 'a culturally familiar, recurrent or habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places and tropes (doxa)' (Wetherell & Potter 1998: 400), used in 'characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena' (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 149). This characterisation of an interpretative repertoire brings it closely into alignment with the 'regimes of justification' of Boltanski and Thévenot described earlier in this chapter. It is not dissimilar to the idea of 'concepts' (Harré 1979) used elsewhere in social psychology to address the clusterings of ideas through which the world is understood by individuals and bears some relation to Morgan's (1986) use of 'images of organisation' as frames for the multiple understandings we bring to organisational life.

In early work, Potter and Wetherell (1987; see also Potter et al. 1990) draw attention to the structuring features of function and variability in the construction of discourse, where function is the purpose served by presenting an object in a particular way (i.e. as a joke, as a property of a situation rather than a person, as the inevitable consequence of other events). The logic of repertoires is that function leads to variation and by identifying broad variations in language use, combined with an analysis of the context and positions of speakers, pointers to function can be established. That is, if distinct patterns of discourse are shown by certain groups or individuals but not by others, it may be inferred that those individuals are (consciously or unconsciously) making specific legitimacy claims, supported by their symbolic power.

On the other hand, where there is common usage across a range of subject positions (and across people with different levels and types of symbolic power), a discourse may be said to be largely naturalised. Moreover, if two or more understandings of the same object are present across a range of speakers, the ways in which the speakers manage such 'points of incompatibility' (Foucault 1972: 66) are also of interest.

For these reasons, the method of interpretative repertoires favour working with groups of texts rather than with solitary extracts:

...discourse is variable in the sense that any one speaker will construct events and persons in different ways according to function. This is not to imply there is no regularity at all in discourse - simply that regularity cannot be pinned at the level of the individual speaker. There is regularity in the variation. Inconsistencies and differences in discourse are differences between relatively internally consistent, bounded language units which we have called, following Gilbert and Mulkey (1984), interpretative repertoires. (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 172)

A particular strength of Wetherell and Potter's work, lacking in the work of some other critical discourse analysts, is its explication of a method for examining patterns and variations in content across a large body of texts produced by individuals in similar circumstances. One of the reasons for preferring this approach to that of, say, Fairclough, is that it has been fairly widely used in analysing interview texts and thus has demonstrated its applicability in this context.

In common with other discourse analysts, Wetherell and her colleagues recognise that the implications and consequences of discourse may be unrealised and unintended by speakers - people may just be saying 'what comes naturally' (Burr 1995: 121). However, people may also be using language to strategic ends. McKinlay, Potter and Wetherell (1993) identify three broad dialectical dimensions of language use: intended/unintended, interpersonal/ideological, and explicit/hidden. They present these as forming a rough continuum, from a local and intended position of 'accounting' (e.g. making claims, justifying, blaming) to a less intentional advancement of an overall and less conscious position, noting that at times both effects occur together.

The method of interpretative repertoires is therefore strongly interested in how the 'same' object (for example, the role of a governing body) is constituted differently in text, the contradictions or competing discourses which are apparent and the functions such contradictions serve (Parker 1992, 1999). A focus on the importance of variability and potential contradictions mirrors the idea of 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al. 1988), which suggests that the presence of different themes implies an ideological dilemma within naturalised ideologies (cf. Condor 2000). In this regard, Billig's account of ideological dilemmas is the reverse side of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) view of hegemony as occurring wherever discursive practices are completely naturalised.

In Wetherell's version of CDA, analysis is facilitated by identifying various forms of contradiction between different ways of describing something (Parker 1992):

Firstly... there are inconsistencies - noticeable to *both* analysts and participants - between the different forms of account. Secondly, these forms of account are generally separated into different passages of talk so that inconsistencies do not become a problem for participants to deal with. Thirdly, on these occasions when the different repertoires *are* deployed together, participants display in their talk an orientation to the potential inconsistencies, or the variation is organized for different functions - one repertoire presented for disclaiming, for example. (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 178)

Thus, for Wetherell and her colleagues, one of the primary tasks of CDA is to identify sets of more or less naturalised repertoires within a particular text and to explain how the ideological dilemmas implicit in conflicting sets are managed by participants. A related task is to identify how subject positions are constituted in discourses, for example, how a discussion of 'university students' may position them as 'credential seekers', 'developing minds', 'apprentices' or 'customers'.

Wetherell (1998) also introduces the idea of 'troubled' and 'untroubled' (normalised) positions for subjects and also, potentially, for objects as constructed in conversation. A 'troubled' position is one which is resisted by its subjects or which implicates subjects or objects in formulations that are uncongenial, socially unacceptable, to the extent that they

require some re-working. It may also refer to the ideological dilemmas reflexively identified by people themselves in speaking of an object. The ways in which they are managed by speakers are thus analogous to Foucault's 'points of equivalence' or the identification of two alternatives as not in competition and 'link points for systematisation', or ways in which contradictory or alternative formulations are combined into new sub-discourses (Foucault 1972: 65).

Overall, the significance of an analysis of repertoires lies in its potential to illuminate the extent to which 'naturalised' or 'motherhood' concepts (e.g. equal opportunities, community) are indexed to a range of different and possibly contradictory ideas. Through this account, the tensions inherent in any form of 'consensus' can be uncovered. The analysis of repertoires may also show how contradictions are managed in discourse or how persons possessing differing symbolic capital, e.g. several speakers with differing expertise, make differing legitimacy claims in the 'interpretation' of an object.

Bourdieu's sociology and the method of interpretative repertoires used in critical discourse analysis, despite their different interests, appear to have marked similarities in their approach to social analysis. Some agreements between CDA generally and Bourdieu's sociology in regard to their understandings of practices and naturalised discourse have already been outlined. Additionally, it has been suggested that the sense in which Wetherell and her colleagues talk of repertoires can be related back to wider ideas about the constitution of value in social life.

More specifically, Wetherell's approach appears to rely on a sense of something like 'habitus' as a structuring device and it certainly makes use of the concept of 'doxa' and of naturalised discourses. Wetherell's description of interpretative repertoires makes use of the concept that people are not tied to a particular discourse but rather may draw on different discourses at different times in their talk as they try to achieve different aims. However, she also recognises that people have to make use of discursive resources that are (already) available for them to use. Differences in repertoires available to people would, in Bourdieu's terms, be a product of their habituses (including but not limited to their

linguistic habituses), as would choices of which repertoires to use. While the concept of 'fields' or 'orders of discourse' has not been foregrounded in recent work using interpretative repertoires, there is nothing in the concept of interpretative repertoires to suggest that the idea of a field could not be validly applied to describing the analytic context for a particular study.

Critics of CDA and the methods of interpretative repertoires point to potential circularities whereby conclusions are justified by reference to their premises, or a researcher's own interpretation is 'forced' onto texts (Schegloff 1997, 1998; Widdowson 1995; Antaki et al. 2001). Proponents of CDA however argue that what counts is the extent to which the analysis appears plausible to readers and illuminates features of language as social practice that would otherwise be overlooked, or dominated positions that would otherwise be silenced.

A further criticism is that CDA has failed to articulate a way to reconcile the incompatible premises of two streams of theory, namely, a structuralist and Bourdieusian emphasis on ideological 'power *over* discourse' and poststructuralist accounts of 'power *in* discourse', as in Foucauldian analyses. The next section considers how these 'chicken and egg' (Gee 1999: 82) premises may be reconciled.

### ***Power over and in discourse***

If, as is suggested, the framework of Bourdieu's sociology can be combined with a critical discourse analysis based on interpretative repertoires, there still appears to be at least a partial incompatibility between Bourdieu's concept of power relations, with its reliance on concepts of hegemony and domination, and CDA's use of a Foucauldian premise that, in reflexively constructing the fields in which they act, discursive practices generate power effects (Titscher et al. 2000: 145).

Wetherell and her colleagues show themselves as reflexively aware of the dualities inherent in conceptions of power in and over discourse (Wetherell & Potter 1992). As they and others acknowledge, their approach to analysis has relied on a sometimes-

uncomfortable pairing of these differing theoretical approaches (ibid.: 79-87; Mills 1997: 131-159).

As indicated above, Bourdieu's account of the linguistic habitus and of linguistic capital appears to reject the idea that *language* produces power effects. Bourdieu's account of symbolic power appears to rely on a causal or *directional* model in which a person or agency (consciously or unconsciously) causes another to do something (Clegg 1989), in a context structured by the field and habitus of those who are communicating. That is, for Bourdieu language possesses no inherent power of its own: authority in communication or symbolic power is derived from the socially-legitimised authority of the speakers (Bourdieu 1991a: 107). His account is therefore distinctly at odds with Foucault's account (1972) of discourse/power/knowledge as infinitely diffused, operating in myriad capillary ways as 'disciplinary power', where the constitution of fields and positions within those fields is itself a product of the historical effects of discourse as diffusing disciplinary power, rather than of specific intentions or agents (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 83).

In one sense Bourdieu is correct, as struggles for symbolic power may be more or less overt, as when particular actors (organisations, people) are identified with particular attempts to construct a social object or position in a specific way (e.g. Hardy & Phillips 1998) within an organisational field. Bourdieu thus seems correct when he points out that persons with symbolic power often shape what can and cannot be said in a particular interaction, even allocating rights to speak or not to speak. He also seems to be right when discussing situations where speakers with different forms of symbolic power (experts versus politicians, say) contest the right to discursively define a particular event (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 257-258, quoted in Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 99-100). Moreover, critics have pointed out that Foucault's location of power as fragmentedly 'out there somewhere' potentially leads to the negation of the concepts of agency and directive force in social life (Wetherell & Potter 1992; Fairclough 1995; Hall 1996).

On the other hand, as noted above, critics of Bourdieu's concept of the habitus have pointed to a lack of a convincing account of the generative capacity of the habitus. A corollary is that Bourdieu's account of language also looks more 'backwards' to previously-constituted positions and field relations than forwards to the ways in which fields and agents are recast or reformulated in social interaction (Swartz 1997: 114). If reflexivity and the ability to 'borrow' discourses drawn from social settings outside our habitus are features of modern societies, then the diffusion and dispersion of different forms of discourse may exert their own effects, i.e. discursive practice is not only shaped by but also shapes fields. Bourdieu himself appears to recognise this feature of language in societies constituted by a multiplicity of fields (1991a: 42). Seen in this light, 'fields' as networks of interaction are the outcome of discursive/knowledge practices, more or less temporarily stabilised outcomes, 'constituted and reproduced through conscious strategies and unwitting practices constructed by the actors themselves' (Clegg 1989: 204).

Bourdieu's formulation of practice as

$[(\textit{habitus}) (\textit{capital})] + \textit{field} = \textit{practice}$  (1984: 101, quoted in Swartz 1997: 141)

therefore appears overly deterministic, open to replacement by a dialectical relationship between practice and habitus/capital/field, where practice includes discursive practices.

It is therefore possible to suggest that power *over* discourse and power *in* discourse operate together, as instances of 'episodic' and 'disciplinary' power respectively (Clegg 1989). Bourdieu's account of local relations of power expressed through the discourses of particular agents explains some features of social struggles for domination but should be complemented by an understanding that wider networks of power relations, within which these agents act, are constituted and sustained in part through discursive practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 24, 121; see also Laclau & Mouffe 1985). That is, both conceptions of power are present and neither is reducible to the other. It is this double-sided interpretation that is adopted as a working framework.

## *Summary*

This chapter has described a theoretical framework for the research that combines Bourdieu's sociology with the approaches of critical discourse analysis and, in particular, the method of interpretative repertoires. Following Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), it is suggested that Bourdieu's general project, of critically examining the ways in which social structures and relations of dominance are reproduced or transformed, can persuasively be correlated with CDA's specifically discourse-oriented critical stance. It has been shown that Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus are of use in considering universities as a specific field and academics and managers as actors within this field, and that these concepts are compatible with CDA, including the method of 'interpretative repertoires' used by Margaret Wetherell, Jonathan Potter and their colleagues.

Moreover, this chapter has indicated how Bourdieu's account of value, expressed as forms of capital, plausibly relates to the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) on naturalised 'regimes of justification' and how these in turn can be broadly equated to building blocks or clusters of ideas that can serve as interpretative repertoires. A discussion on governing boards and forms of capital supports the relevance of Bourdieu's account to ongoing theorising of the roles of governing boards. Finally, some issues raised by Bourdieu's construction of linguistic habitus and capital have been addressed, suggesting that these are not incompatible with CDA but can be supplemented by critical attention to the work performed by discourses as an element of practice. The next chapter explains the specific methods used to conduct the research, using established approaches for the 'uncovering' of interpretative repertoires.

## Chapter 4

### METHOD OF CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

*For a researcher interested in repertoires, the data are usually a body of interview material from different speakers. The researcher probably works from transcripts which record the words spoken by consecutive speakers but little further detail...(Taylor 2001a: 26-27)*

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter describes the conduct of this qualitative research study, discussing the data gathering instruments used, the issues considered in developing specific research questions, and the method of analysis. I also reflect on ethical considerations and my role in the conduct of the interviews. As both context and habitus need to be considered in undertaking discourse research, some specific contextual features of universities in the Australian State of Victoria are outlined, as are particular features of the five public universities whose council members were interviewed. Characteristics of my interviewees are described briefly. I discuss steps in the analysis of interview texts and how these led to the identification of four interpretative repertoires described in successive chapters.

#### ***Research design: interpretative repertoires and interviews***

The methodology for my research was developed concurrently with the research objectives and the theoretical framework. As the aims of my research involve an exploration of the ways in which differing repertoires or concepts of governance are present and justified in discourse by members of university councils, I decided on a qualitative approach that confines itself to the detailed analysis of the views of council members themselves, i.e. the language of the persons who most obviously enact board governance. It is beyond the scope of my study, although certainly interesting for future work, to examine the actual behaviours of council members or ways in which university managers enact governance in their language and actions.

Unlike some other forms of CDA, which use close analysis of small samples of text 'at all linguistic levels' (Titscher et al. 2000: 160) and elaborate coding to indicate turn-taking, pauses and emphases (see Fairclough 1995: 98-101), the method of interpretative repertoires usually works across comparatively large bodies of text, aiming to identify patterns of similarity and variation. While this approach may seem similar to ethnographic methods, it differs in having already identified a theoretical perspective (Titscher et al. 2000: 94) and key concepts that are likely to be meaningful in an interaction with interviewees, e.g. corporate governance versus stakeholder participation.

Given the need to collect a significant amount of 'talk' - or accounts - from council members, face to face interviews with individuals was the preferred method of data collection. Methods for research using interpretative repertoires collected by means of interviews have been outlined in various texts (Potter & Wetherell 1987; McKinlay, Potter & Wetherell 1993; Wetherell & Potter 1988, 1992; Condor & Antaki 1997; Edley 2001).

As Potter notes:

In discourse research, interviews have been used extensively because they allow a relatively standard range of themes to be addressed with different participants - something hard to achieve when collecting naturalistic materials...An interview can be a particularly effective way of getting at the range of interpretative repertoires that a participant has available as well as some of the uses to which those repertoires are put. (1996b: online)

I chose interviews with individuals with a view to uncovering some of the concepts expressed by people who might otherwise be silent, i.e. with the idea of ensuring that all council members would have an opportunity for their voices to be heard. For this reason, I rejected the idea of focus groups, because they could generate 'consensus' views that might inhibit the process of uncovering differing interpretations. Although telephone interviews would have been possible, they impose considerable limitations in terms of interaction, most obviously in regard to the understanding of non-verbal cues. I also rejected the use of a questionnaire. All these methods, together with observation and analysis of council dynamics, could however be used in future research.

In choosing to use interviews, I was conscious that the act of interviewing generates a series of interactions that are themselves constitutive. Use of the concept of accounts and interpretative repertoires provides its own inbuilt corrections to the trap of believing that interviews somehow reveal a series of pre-determined and underlying categories or set responses. There is always the performative element and, more subtly, there is also an extent to which a question determines an answer. Discourse analytic research, then, requires a degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, an acknowledgement that there is always an incomplete separation between the researcher, the research context, the way questions are asked and findings analysed (Taylor 2001a). To this extent, the ethnography of collecting 'accounts' is closer to action research (Goodley 1999), where both interviewer and interviewee collaborate in the construction of an exchange that, by being brought into existence, also changes reality.

### ***Sampling and structure of interviews***

The method of interpretative repertoires requires the collection of a sufficient number of accounts for the researcher to feel some confidence in identifying patterns of variation and agreement across them. The aim is to collect an amount of text (transcribed interviews) that is 'adequate' in terms of revealing variability but still manageable in terms of analysis. However, I was interested in obtaining accounts from different categories of council member (classified broadly into 'external' members, staff, students, Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors), as potentially providing repertoires that varied according to position. I wished as well to obtain accounts from members of more than one university council, to explore similarities and differences across universities.

I considered it was desirable for those interviewed to be active council members, i.e. to share a common language context in time, although I recognised that some council members might be new while others could have served several terms. For practical reasons, including travel costs, and to ensure a roughly equivalent political context, my sample was drawn from one State (Victoria).

I decided to interview, to the extent possible, all council members who volunteered for interview, unless the number was so large as to be unmanageable. I recognised that in so doing, I would be speaking to those council members who were willing to talk about questions of governance and able to spare the time to do so. That is, my research does not consider the views of council members who did not express an interest in discussing governance.

The sampling method for my study is purposive rather than random or quantitatively stratified (Patton 1990; Krathwohl 1998). My interviewees were self-selecting but from a relatively homogeneous group of current university council members of Victorian universities. There was no quota for particular categories of council member but a desire on my part to interview members from all categories.

The key criterion was that interviewees were prepared to express their views on governance. To this extent, my study reflects an ethnographic approach of in-depth interviews with 'key informants' (Krathwohl 1998).

I decided that my interviews should be semi-structured, as I wished to explore the ways in which council members provided accounts within the framework of a more or less standardised range of topics. In this way, I hoped to be able to oscillate 'between the world view of the informant' (Wainwright 1997: online) and some pre-determined structural elements.

### ***Interview questions***

Within the framework of interpretative repertoires, the researcher's questions are seen as active and constructive, not neutral and passive. A research interview is:

...no longer considered a research instrument for accurately revealing an unbiased set of opinions, but seen as a conversational encounter, the researcher's questions become just as much a topic of analysis as the interviewee's answers.  
(Potter & Wetherell 1987: 165)

The method emphasises the importance of transcribing interview questions as well as answers and being sensitive to nuances of questions and comments. This approach also allows some diversity in the ways topics are introduced, resulting in more informal exchanges and researchers actively collaborating in the making of the account (ibid.:164-165). The construction of questions therefore should not make them so closed as to 'force a card' onto participants by implying the possibility of only one answer.

When I commenced my study, the categorisation of theoretical models of governance described in Chapter 2 was not well articulated. I used known issues in corporate and university governance to shape my research questions but did not use Hung's (1998) categorisation or Boltanski and Thévenot's (1991) concepts of 'regimes of justification'. To a considerable extent, therefore, my research questions were developed independent of these categories, although my analysis was undertaken when this categorisation was available. Of course, the tensions between corporate and stakeholder governance and between individual and representative roles in university governance were familiar themes, available as structuring features for the research questions and analysis.

My primary interest was in the differing concepts of governance presented by council members. However, I wished to obtain a sense of where the emphases were strongest and also a feeling for which council roles, in particular, were considered important.

I was aware of the need to be familiar with the context in which council members act, i.e. to have my own sense of the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98-99) before developing my interview questions. Reflexive social research implies that the researcher 'cannot make social life available as a "phenomenon" for observation independently of drawing upon her or his knowledge of it as a resource whereby it is constituted as a "topic for investigation" ' (Giddens 1993: 169).

During the early stages of my research, I attended council meetings and examined council agendas and minutes from several universities, to assist in understanding the frames of meaning that interviewees might apply. I was familiar with the ways in which

universities operate and with wider changes in the university sector, having been employed in a management or research capacity at different universities for some time. As my research progressed, I supplemented my understanding of the context by informal discussions with former Chancellors, university council members in other States and others with an ongoing interest in university governance.

I decided to structure my questions around the three main topics of roles, accountabilities and expectations, but in so doing to ask about individual roles, accountabilities and expectations as well as about councils as a whole. I also included some more general questions asking council members to reflect on their own implicit models of governance (e.g. similarities to a corporate board, sources of ideas, recipes for good governance). In examining a wide range of concepts, I aimed to uncover repertoires that might be obscured through a focus on a single topic.

The topic of roles was chosen because it has been widely addressed in the literature (and thus could be expected to reflect at least some normative formulations) and because it provided a useful way to obtain broader ideas about governance. As well, I wished to explore the differences between general concepts of the roles of council and the ways in which members presented their own roles within the group.

Accountability is a 'motherhood' word, something it seems there cannot be too much of. In corporate life, calls for increased accountability can be found most in discussions of board responsibility or performance (Coaldrake, Stedman & Little 2003). At the same time, accountability is a complex idea, a 'chameleon' (Sinclair 1995) that changes its form depending on the audience and the context (Jensen 1998). As was noted in Chapter 2, whether a 'shareholder' or a 'stakeholder' view of accountability is appropriate forms one of the most keenly debated topics in theories of corporate governance. An important element in making sense of governance, accountability remains nonetheless a contested and elusive concept.

Given the significance of accountability to any overall picture of governance, I therefore asked my respondents a series of questions about the accountability of councils and their own personal accountabilities. My questions on accountability parallel the analytical strategy developed by Brooks (1995), which asks to whom, how and for what an account is to be given.

I chose the topic of expectations in the hope that it would provide an indication of the ways in which council members justified their roles and accountabilities to different groups and a sense of how subject positions were constituted on council, such as the position of Chancellor. This choice was prompted in part by Luhmann's (1986) writings on the construction of social life as the mutual structuring of expectations but I appreciated that people do not routinely ask each other questions about expectations, which are mostly tacit. This topic also provided an opportunity to ask, in a neutral fashion, about the sensitive issue of relations between the Vice-Chancellor and council.

In developing my interview questions, there were many topics that were deliberately avoided. Perhaps most significantly, I did not set out to ask direct questions about how well council, or the Vice-Chancellor, was seen to be performing, or about internal tensions and disagreements. (As it happened, many of these topics were raised and discussed by the interviewees.) By censoring my questions to keep them general, I hoped to avoid the impression that my research was directed to the uncovering of scandals or criticisms that could reflect unfavourably on an institution.

Many of the questions asked for council members' views on abstract topics associated with 'governance', rather than their accounts of actual situations where governance behaviour was exhibited. To this extent, the language of my interviewees may not fully reflect the concepts of governance that these council members use to justify a particular position in an actual debate or discussion. (A more indirect 'critical incident' or narrative approach could possibly draw out the use of governance repertoires in action.) And, as noted above, my research does not examine the differences between what council members say they believe and their actual practices.

My interview questions instead allowed council members to offer their own justifications, based on commonly accepted views of what is good or valued in university governance, without a need to try to deduce such justifications from their actions. The final list of interview questions is at **Appendix C**.

### ***Context of the research interviews: universities in Victoria***

The State of Victoria has a population of over 4.5 million, of which over 3.5 million people live in or around the capital, Melbourne. There are eight universities, four of which were established early in the 1990s through the reconstitution of former institutes of technology and Colleges of Advanced Education. (One other Australian university has a major campus in Melbourne and several others have minor campuses or learning centres.) Student numbers in these eight institutions range from nearly 29,000 to fewer than 4,000.

All these eight universities have multiple campuses, and all have at least one campus in a regional, rural or urban fringe area. At the time of my interviews, two of the eight universities had their main campuses in Victoria's two largest regional centres, each about a hour from Melbourne: since then, one university has moved its main campus back to metropolitan Melbourne. Each of these universities is established by the State Government under an Act of Parliament.

At the time of the data collection, these eight universities had councils of either 22 or 21 members. A brief summary of current council membership for the Victorian universities, by category, is shown at **Appendix D**. In 1997, the review of the governance of Victorian universities noted in Chapter 1 (Storey 1997) led to a substantial reduction in the size of councils of some older universities. The consequences of this change were still being felt at some institutions and the memory of this change was fresh in the minds of many interviewees. However, the outworkings of previous mergers and changes were also significant in leading councils to their present size and composition, as one interviewee explained:

I've been on [University] council for 11 years and I've seen it develop from what was a reasonably small council, but heavily representative, a representative of each major political party, a representative of...you name it, they had a representative on it...Then it became really too big, it became like a public meeting with the amalgamations...Then it was reduced somewhat by the first round of elections and now it's really a tight organisation. (410, external member of council)<sup>1</sup>

Most of the eight Victorian universities are now dual-sector institutions, that is, they provide post-secondary Technical and Further Education (TAFE) programs as well as traditional university-level programs.<sup>2</sup> Some of the new universities are strongly dual-sector but older universities have also acquired some TAFE programs. The operations of the TAFE sector are under the direct control of the State Government, which in the 1990s adopted explicit purchaser-provider contracts and asked TAFE institutes to operate like private businesses. One interviewee described the situation as follows:

We deliberately moved to in a sense make TAFE colleges virtually the same as companies, just not under the Companies Act but we changed the Vocational Education Act to give them all the powers and rights of a company. So they had limited liability, they could enter into contracts, we tendered or purchased training, they didn't get government grants, and they operated in full competition in the market that we created...And we changed the constitutions of college councils in the act so that they had smaller numbers and it was spelt out then by a code of best practice. They would operate as if they were boards of directors. (502, external member of council)

The presence of a TAFE component was especially significant for my study, as some of the institutions from which the participants were drawn are strongly dual-sector institutions. As well, the Victorian TAFE sector had recently completed a major rationalisation, which led to the merger of a number of previously free-standing TAFE colleges with other institutions, including the universities.

One noticeable effect for my research was a strong presence in the newer universities of council members appointed as a direct outcome of the absorption of TAFE institutes. If

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<sup>1</sup> The coding system used to report interviewee comments is explained later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Victoria and the sparsely populated Northern Territory, which has one university, are the only two States or Territories in Australia with dual-sector universities.

these members had viewed TAFE institute boards as akin to company boards, their accounts of university governance might reflect similarities and differences to TAFE institute boards.

### ***Approach to participants and ethical considerations***

Ethical considerations in conducting the research include the way in which the study is presented, confidentiality and protection of information, informed consent and the right to withdraw participation, and the way in which I portrayed myself as 'the researcher' (Taylor 2001a).

Approval to undertake the research was granted by the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee. I then wrote formally to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of each of the eight Victorian universities, on University of New England letterhead, seeking their endorsement for participation in my study by members of the councils. A copy of the letter to Chancellors is at **Appendix E**.

I chose this approach after consultation with my supervisors: to approach council members individually, I needed to obtain details of their current contact addresses and so some agreement by the institution to release the information would be required. As well, it was considered that Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor support for the project would be likely to result in higher response rates.

The study was presented as an analysis of the ways in which university governing body members described their roles, accountabilities and the expectations others held of them. In my initial letter, I explained that my interest was the language repertoires in use across a group of interviewees, a description of the research that is consistent with the analysis undertaken. I also advised Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors that no individual and no institution would be identified - or identifiable - in the report of the study's findings. Interviews would be confidential and results reported anonymously.

In subsequent letters to council members who had indicated a willingness to participate (**Appendix F**), I explained the focus on the language of council members, noting that I was looking at patterns of similarity and difference in the way council members expressed themselves in response to questions on various topics. That is, I made it clear that the emphasis was on language and variability across the range of interviews. I explained that the interviews would be taped and that extracts from interview transcripts might be used in my thesis. I also noted that comments would be anonymous and that no individuals or indications that might identify an individual or a particular university would be included. I offered to provide a list of interview questions in advance, on the assumption that most interviewees would seek to establish legitimacy and justification in their accounts of university governance and they might as well do so from having considered the questions beforehand.

I outlined the processes for keeping material secure and confidential and explained participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time.<sup>3</sup> Before commencing each interview, I obtained an informed consent statement from the participant (the pro-forma is at **Appendix G**).

It was also important for me to identify my own biases in approaching university councils. The first of these, as will be clear from earlier chapters, is scepticism about claims that corporate governance models are either necessary or desirable for good university governance. Having attended a number of council meetings and spoken at some, I was concerned at the lack of discussion of values. I was also aware that attempts by staff and students to raise wider issues were often dismissed. However, as a university manager at the time, I was also sympathetic to efforts to ensure that council did not seek to re-open discussion on internal matters of administration. More generally, I was dismayed at the lack of any attempt, in the universities I knew, to provide council with meaningful summary information on the university's overall performance.

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<sup>3</sup> No interviewees withdrew from the study.

In considering how councils could operate more effectively, I was thus somewhat in favour of both greater openness in discussion and greater professionalisation in review of performance.

Both speakers and interpreters are positioned in any spoken interchange, and speakers may consciously adopt particular subject positions in order to structure a dialogue. In conducting my interviews I was conscious of positioning myself as a 'researcher' and of making attempts at some privileging of the interviewee as the 'leader' (or possessor of symbolic power) in determining the conversational strategies to be employed (within the pre-set framework of 'an interview'). While I did not always disclose my views when I agreed or disagreed with a specific point that was being made, I expressed my views when it seemed appropriate to do so, given the conversational situation.

Throughout the question-answer patterning of my interviews, I tried to convey to participants the information that there were no necessarily 'right' or 'wrong' answers, although some interviewees looked to me for reassurance that what they were saying was not somehow incorrect or ignorant. Several interviewees from one university were known to me personally. While I did not have a close involvement with these council members, my impression is that they talked more informally to me than interviewees from other universities.

Each interview was given a number that linked back to the institution, e.g. Tape 209 is the ninth interviewee from University Two. I kept the master list linking interviewees' names to their interview numbers. As I needed to access the tapes on a fairly regular basis immediately following the interviews and during the analysis but also to ensure the confidentiality of the material, the tapes were kept in a lockable filing cabinet at my home.

### ***The interview process***

I received initial responses from six universities, through their Council Secretariat or the Vice-Chancellor's office. Two institutions did not reply at the time, although one subsequently contacted me, several months later, explaining that my letter had been

misplaced. Of the six responses, one stated that the Vice-Chancellor did not consider it would be appropriate at that time to accede to my request, while the other five institutions agreed to participate in the study. Given that the five participating institutions promised to provide a reasonable sample for the purposes of my research, I decided to wait and to approach the other three institutions again if I needed to. In the event, I decided that the interviews from members of the councils of the five institutions provided sufficient material to address my research questions with some confidence that the range of possible responses had been covered.

Of the five institutions which agreed to their council members being contacted, one Chancellor decided that rather than allowing me to write to individual council members, he would draw my letter to the attention of council members and ask them to contact me. This procedure resulted in a much smaller response from the institution in question (University Three). I believe the small response was directly attributable to the method of approaching council members.

For the other four universities, I wrote to each member of council personally, seeking their participation and enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope for reply with contact telephone details. I received 60 replies (out of a possible 87). Two council members declined in writing and two others could not be contacted to make a time for interview, leaving a total of 56 council members who were interviewed. The total of 56 is just under one-third of all council members in Victorian universities, a number I consider adequate for a purposive sample to obtain a broad range of views, given the composition of the respondents.

The five participating universities had a total council membership of 108 and consisted of three new universities and two older universities. Taken as a group, participation was biased towards council members from the newer universities. This could be taken as either an advantage or a disadvantage for my research. On the one hand, it offered the possibility of additional commentary on the governance issues relating to changes to the Australian higher education sector due to the establishment of new universities. On the

other hand, conclusions about the effects of changes on older universities would necessarily be more tentative. The research findings might also be affected by the extent to which the backgrounds of council members differed between older and newer universities.

Around half the interviewees asked to be sent the interview questions in advance and some respondents made notes prior to our meeting. A number had referred back to the enabling legislation. Given that I was expecting and even aiming for participants to respond with at least some formal language of justification in presenting their accounts, I was not surprised that some council members took this approach.

Interviews were conducted between July 1998 and February 1999. I piloted my interview questions on the first few interviewees and made some minor adjustments to the ways in which I introduced particular topics. I added a couple of additional prompts from issues that emerged (remuneration, induction and evaluation of council members) but otherwise kept the interview questions the same. There was some variation in the ways in which I introduced specific topics and the amount of time spent on each.

I did not necessarily ask each interviewee all the questions on my interview schedule. Some questions were addressed in the answers to others and it would have been redundant to ask for a repetition, while in some interviews a concentration on particular topics meant that other issues were addressed only sketchily.

For the most part, I finished the interviews from one university before commencing those for another. Interviews were conducted in a setting chosen by the participants, having regard to locations that were convenient for them and accessible by me. Most interviews were conducted in a neutral setting that located the interview within a work or business environment rather than a home or 'family' setting. Locations however varied: the majority were at offices made available at the university in question or staff or students' own offices, and a couple were in quiet areas of public space. A few people were

interviewed in my office or another private space in my workplace complex. One interviewee invited me to lunch beforehand.

The length of interviews varied between forty-five minutes and more than three hours. The majority of interviews lasted between 90 minutes and two hours. All interviews were taped, using a microcassette recorder and I reviewed the interviews on their completion.<sup>4</sup>

The meaning of the interview consisted in part of asking my interviewees to re-constitute themselves performatively as 'council members' in a situation outside the normal activities of council and the patterns of social interaction within council activities. To this extent, the research interview offered a new performative space, a novelty, and one that provided interviewees with some flexibility in how they presented themselves.

As I had assumed, some council members treated the interview as a formal accounting for their roles, and thus presented themselves as if they were representing the university as a council member. Others, however, took the opportunity offered by the performative space of an interview to distance themselves from their council member roles, constituting themselves as 'someone commenting on council membership', or, for example, as 'a lawyer and expert on councils' discussing council performance. Both these types of presentation, however, facilitate a conceptualisation of the interview as a process of council members giving a formal account of governing boards as sources of legitimate authority and, for the most part, interviewees used 'formal' language to a significant extent.

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<sup>4</sup> Although I had some minor problems with sound quality and some details were lost in changing tapes, only on one occasion was there a major difficulty with the taping, when the first half-hour or so of an interview did not record. On discovering this, I arranged with the participant to re-run those questions the same afternoon. The interviewee obligingly agreed and I am grateful to her for this. After finishing the rest of the interview, I made notes from my recollection of the first half-hour. The re-taping provided similar responses.

### ***Characteristics of the interviewees***

The number of council members interviewed in each university was as follows:

University One	16
University Two	11
University Three	4
University Four	12
University Five	13

In four of the five universities, at least half the council members were interviewed. Thirty-six of the 56 council members interviewed were men and 20 were women, including 7 staff and 2 student members of council. The number of interviewees by category is shown in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1** Membership categories of council members who were interviewed

<b><i>Membership category</i></b>	<b><i>Number interviewed</i></b>	<b><i>Per cent</i></b>	<b><i>Comments</i></b>
Chancellor	3	5%	
Vice-Chancellor	4	7%	The Vice-Chancellors were not necessarily from the same universities as the Chancellors.
Staff member	15	27%	Includes academic and general staff. Includes elected and ex officio members. Includes 7 Board chairs and/or academic managers.
Student	5	9%	Includes undergraduate and postgraduate students.
External member	29	52%	Includes some Parliamentarians and public servants.
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>	

As Chancellors are external members of council, the total number of external members who were interviewed is 32 (57%), slightly less than the 2003 proportion of external members (59%) of councils of all Victorian universities (see **Appendix D**) and less than the proportion in 2000 (AVCC 2000).<sup>5</sup>

The proportion of student members is close to that for Victorian universities (10%). Staff members, including Vice-Chancellors, are over-represented in my interviews relative to their numbers in the total population of Victorian council members (34% as against 28% in 2003). They were possibly more ready to volunteer because of their general support for academic endeavour and their understanding of the exigencies of postgraduate research.

There are some differences between the current Victorian and Australian proportions of council members by category, most noticeably in the smaller numbers of politicians and alumni, as shown in **Appendix D**. However, the overall distribution is almost identical. Compared with the Australian proportions for 38 of the 39 universities, the proportion of external members in my sample was smaller (57% as against 59% for Australia), the proportion of staff members was greater (34% as against 29% for Australia) and the proportion of student members slightly smaller (9% as against 10%). From this, I conclude that the interviewees for my research are broadly representative of the overall composition of Victorian and Australian university councils in 2000 and 2003.

Of the external council members, all but six had been on council for more than 2 years, and the majority had been on council for a considerable period of time, suggesting that those who were interviewed were mostly likely to be committed participants in university governance. There were seven current or former Deputy Chancellors in addition to the three Chancellors, indicating that my group included quite a number of those who were likely to be regarded as 'insiders' on council. There was a strong connection with TAFE institutions for 10 of the external members I interviewed.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2000, the eight Victorian universities reported very similar compositions of council members by category: each had 5 or 6 staff members, including the Vice-Chancellor, 2 student members and 14 external members.

External members were a combination of those appointed by the council itself and Governor-in-Council appointments under the university's enabling legislation. No interviewees were members through election by the alumni association, although a few were alumni or alumnae of the institution.

Although I did not ask about age, the majority of external members interviewed were over fifty years old. Several were retired or semi-retired but the majority were working full-time. The external council members I interviewed were active in a variety of occupations and professions: accounting; law; engineering; secondary education; the private sector (self-employed, graziers, small enterprises and larger corporations); industry associations; public service; nursing/health/community development; local government; academic; politician. Many interviewees had backgrounds across multiple fields, having moved from education or business to government or to industry associations, and several had academic experience.

There were some differences in the general trend of occupations across the five universities but it should be noted that I did not interview all external members from each institution. However, Universities One and Four had comparatively more members with industry backgrounds, while Universities Two and Five had a more marked local government presence.

There was only one union nominee and one State Parliamentarian among the interviewees. Eleven of the external members had a substantial private sector background or private sector experience. Of these, several were or had been associated with large enterprises that are users or sponsors of university research, and which possess their own research and development capabilities.

All the external council members I interviewed had other experience on governing boards, and often on boards of differing types (not-for-profit, school, TAFE, community associations) although only six had been on private sector or corporate boards.

Of the 15 staff members, 6 were ex officio members of council (four were chairs of their university's Academic Board and two were chairs of a TAFE Board). Varying constituencies elected the other 9 members: 3 were elected from the academic staff; 4 from the academic staff of the TAFE division; and 2 from the general (non-academic) staff. Most of the staff members had been on council for at least two years and many had had previous terms on council or periods of involvement with the boards of TAFE institutes. Two of the Academic Board chairs were also members of the senior executive group of the institution, that is, they held a managerial position in addition to their office as Academic Board chair. One of the 9 elected members also held senior management responsibilities.

Of the 5 students, 3 were elected by higher education students generally, one was a postgraduate student representative and one a TAFE student representative. While the normal terms for most student members was one year, three students were serving longer terms, either as the result of mergers or because they had been re-elected for a second term.

### ***Interview transcription, analysis and evaluative criteria***

The taped interviews were transcribed using a professional transcribing service. I transcribed four interviews, where the sound quality was poor and some recall was helpful. I also listened to the interviews again when reviewing the transcripts, a process I repeated for some interviews at various points during the analysis.

Before transcription, I agreed with the transcribing service that the tapes would be transcribed verbatim, i.e. repeats and stumbles were noted, as were pauses. However, I kept coding conventions to a minimum and did not attempt to use the formal conventions of linguistic analysis. Both questions and answers were transcribed: my words are identified as **Q**, with the response by the council member shown as **A**.

The interview transcripts ranged in length from 4,660 to 16,314 words, the majority of transcripts being between 7,000 and 9,000 words (around 15-25 pages of transcript). That

is, the words transcribed amounted to over 400,000. The minor problems with sound quality on some recordings were not significant.

People have their own characteristic styles of expression, inscribed in the habitus, not only in their use of concepts but also in their means of self-presentation (Bourdieu 1977). The following extracts from two interviews illustrate some of the differences in interactional style among interviewees and also, incidentally, the extent to which my questioning was in turn structured by these differences. The first is a more formal, turn-taking interaction while in the second, the interviewee in effect recontextualises the interview questions as part of a more general account of her concerns about society:

#### **Interview extract 1**

[Researcher] Are university councils different to other types of governing boards?

[Interviewee] I don't think so, I don't think so. Basic principles are the same, I think, regardless, I mean, when you're thinking of governance at any institution.

[Researcher] So some of the dynamics are clearly going to be different but the fact that universities are to do with education, higher education?

[Interviewee] That's right, that's your core business, as they say these days, but basic principles are, again, ensuring good governance, ensuring good management, financial and whatever other core businesses. Those all have to be fair and your role and responsibilities are the same.

#### **Interview extract 2**

[Interviewee] ...as an old student straight through from Plato right through and including people like Hannah Arendt and giving them up to the occupations and the professions and having the professions, and even science, cut loose from some of the stuff to do with the human condition, the values and the knowledge and the ethics and all of those sorting devices about trying to use technology and not have technology use us. Now I do think that's the stuff for which the council should be trying to get some notion of accountability...

[Researcher] It does seem to me that that's one of the really, really big questions.

[Interviewee] But you see what's happening here, the paradigm that's dominating is business and the stuff to do with knowledge, to do with human conditions, to do with accountability to society is just fading into a memory.....

To assist in analysing the interview material, I used NUD\*IST NVivo software to code and extract material and to develop summaries of particular forms or patterns of response. I coded each of the interview tapes against an evolving set of key concepts (nodes), drawing in part from my interview questions to classify the responses, but also drawing on ideas emerging from the interview transcripts on multiple re-reading. A particular passage of text might be coded to several nodes at once. For example, a piece of text describing a person's role on council might be coded under the categories of: individual roles; individual versus representative; regional; recipes; accountability.

Text extracts were therefore not limited to being coded under the specific question that was being discussed. The selected passages of text isolated as nodes were then able to be reviewed as manageable extracts. From intensive reading of these, I developed accounts of the commonalities and variations and thus of the patterns in regard to presentations. I used the 'attributes' functions of NVivo to summarise some of the emerging patterns.

The analysis was completed over time, as I shuttled between close reading of specific coded nodes and consideration of other research and writing on governance. However, the repertoires I identified are not the result of an imposition of pre-developed theoretical categories onto the interview texts. Rather they are the products of an analysis that initially at least was not constrained by the research literature on boards and universities. Although concepts of stakeholders, agency theory and representative roles were present in my mind, only as I reviewed the coded responses did I identify the parallels with Boltanski and Thévenot's (1991) 'regimes of justification', the ideological study of Daley, Netting and Angulo (1996) and the emerging professionalised discourse of efficient university governance.

My early attempts to identify repertoires began with a consideration of governance as accountability and moved to a preliminary account based on seven repertoires: self-governance; efficient governance; governance as community development; accountable public governance; governance as symbolic; governance as personal contribution/elites;

and 'good' governance. Further reflection and comparison led me to settle on four main repertoires, described in succeeding chapters.

The method of interpretative repertoires emphasises inclusive coding, openness of the process and the inclusion of extracts linked to specific explanatory points:

Studies of this kind include a representative set of extracts along with detailed interpretations which link the analytic points to specific features of extracts in such a way that the reader is able to assess the success of the interpretations and, if necessary, offer alternatives. (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 183)

For this reason, I have included in the chapters that follow a significant number of extracts from interview transcripts.

Various writers on discourse analysis have identified criteria through which to assess the value of an analysis of discursive practices. Plausibility, fruitfulness and interest are three key tests (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Wetherell & Potter 1988; Wetherell 1998; Taylor 2001b; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001).

A useful set of criticisms of discourse analyses is presented in Burman and Parker (1993a: 11), who note that many analyses may be little more than positivist research tied to the label 'discourse' (see also Schegloff 1997, 1998; Widdowson 1995). Similarly, Antaki et al. (2001) identify six possible sources of failure for critical discourse analysis:

- Under-analysis through summary;
- Under-analysis through taking sides;
- Under-analysis through over-quotation or through isolated quotation;
- The circular identification of discourses and mental constructs;
- False survey; and
- Analysis that consists in simply spotting features.

I have kept these cautions in mind in undertaking and presenting my analysis, although it is for the reader to judge how successful I have been. A further caution concerns the generalisability of the repertoires to the current situation of all Australian universities.

My research was undertaken in a particular context (in the State of Victoria) and this context is significant for an understanding of the ways in which council members described governance cultures at the time. Since then, university governance has gained a higher profile and more formal processes for the induction and information of council members have been introduced or promoted (AVCC 2002; Edwards 2002b; AVCC 2003b). Elsewhere in Australia, and several years later, the context is likely to be different and so may be the discourse dynamics.

### ***Succeeding chapters and conventions used in interview transcripts***

The next chapter provides an overview of the views expressed by council members, as a general orientation to the range and emphases of the issues they discuss. It describes in detail the four main interpretative repertoires identified through analysis of the interview transcripts. The following four chapters present each repertoire in greater detail, to allow the reader opportunities to assess the plausibility and 'fruitfulness' (Potter & Wetherell 1987) of the different repertoires that were discovered.

As noted, many extracts from interview responses are provided in these chapters. Where extracts are offered, the speaker is identified by a number that also indicates the university. That is, '502' always means interviewee number 2 from University Five. As it may be important to understand the interviewee's council membership category, I also identify whether the speaker is a Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, staff member, student or an external member of council.

In accordance with the agreement I gave at the time, details that would identify a particular institution or individual have been removed. In some places the missing word or words are identified by square brackets indicating the missing content, e.g. [University] means that the individual was referring to the institution of which she or he was a council

member. At other places, [xx] refers to a particular person, discipline area or faculty, or other identifying feature. Any other text inside square brackets has been provided by me for clarity or to explain an omitted name or number. I have used a series of dots (...) to indicate where text has been left out, either to avoid identification or to summarise a point.