Victoria University

QUESTIONING CERTAINTY:

CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF

THE MASTER OF

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

by

Frances M Siemensma

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in

Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Social Inquiry and Community Studies

Melbourne, Victoria

November 2001

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work
and has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part in respect of
any other academic award.

Frances M Siemensma

November 2001

Values are an expression of an individual and social state of needs; they are an expression of factual and habitualized preferences. A *theory* of values must therefore be understood as a critical examination, as a case to case suspension of the validity of needs. I am myself convinced that the survival of humanity in the course of the next century will not to a small degree depend on ... whether we will carry out a self-critical and effective examination of our needs and our preference hehaviour (Wils, 1993, in Koslowski and Shionoya, eds, p 103).

Truth is an infinitely complex reality and he has the best chance of arriving nearest to it who most recognises but is not daunted by its infinite complexity. We must look at the whole thought-tangle, fact, emotion, idea, truth beyond idea, conclusion, contradiction, modification, ideal, practice, possibility, impossibility (which must yet be attempted) and keeping the soul calm and the eye clear in this mighty flux and gurge of the world, seek everywhere for some truth of harmony, not forgetting immediate in ultimate truth, nor ultimate in immediate, but giving each its due place in the Infinite purpose. Some minds, like Plato, like Vivekananda, feel more than others this mighty complexity and give voice to it. They pour out thought in torrents or in rich and majestic streams. They are not logically careful of consistency, they cannot build up any coherent, yet consistent systems, but they quicken men's minds and liberate them from religious, philosophic and scientific dogma and tradition. They leave the world not surer, but freer than when they entered it (Sri Aurobindo, 1994, p 13).

CHAPTER 2

AN ACADEMIC VIEW OF THE MBA 61

CHAPTER 3

THE MBA AS A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE   119

CHAPTER 4

A GENDERED MBA?   178

CHAPTER 5

THE MBA AND CIVIL SOCIETY   222

CHAPTER 6

THE MBA AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY   **268**

CHAPTER 7

THE MBA – WHICH VALUES, WHOSE VOICES?   320

Preface

My desire to undertake research into the values associated with the Master of Business Administration (MBA) was provoked by the changing role of business education. Not only are more students studying in this specific vocational area, but, increasingly, many choices are made or justified using concepts such as 'efficiency and effectiveness' which are drawn from this framework. As a management academic who was educated in the liberal arts, I wanted to examine what business education meant to those who were involved in it.

The changes to higher education over the last ten years have highlighted what a powerful influence the concept of 'nation building' was when I first went to university. Some twenty years later, working as a full-time academic in a business faculty, the increasing emphasis seemed to be on achieving commercial and vocational goals, including attracting full-fee-paying international students. I often felt an outsider within the faculty and rarely discussed my concerns about the differences between the implicit values of my own undergraduate and postgraduate education and that promoted by the programs which I taught. However, jointly developing and teaching a course in business ethics provided the opportunity to help students to recognise the interdependency of business and civic responsibilities. This became a personal research focus (Siemensma, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998). In contrast to this perspective, many of the business ethics texts, both Australian and American, seemed primarily aimed at discouraging students, and consequently business practice, from being unethical. Few, such as Beauchamp and Bowie (1997), French and Granrose (1995), Grace and Cohen (1998), and Velasquez (1992) promoted those values which would improve the practice of business for all. Even fewer writers of business ethics texts recognised that business responsibilities to society involved more than finance and law, for example, Chakraborty (1991, 1993, 1995, 1998), Coady and Sampford (1993), Singer (1993, 1994), Solomon (1994)

and MacIntyre (1981). The aim of business ethics courses at that time was primarily to prevent the negative consequences of the 1980s, resulting from an amoral pursuit of personal gain, from recurring in the 1990s.

The growing belief that business existed to maximise shareholder wealth seemed to be rarely criticised by management educators. Many business subjects were taught from the perspective that companies sought staff who would comply with the law, while acknowledging that their primary responsibility was to achieve corporate objectives. Relationships with employees, and people external to organisations, such as suppliers and sub-contractors, were seen as a means to that end. Every activity, from promoting 'family-friendly practices' to preventing stress and illness in the workplace and developing an environmentally sustainable process, was typically justified in terms of its contribution to the 'bottom line'. Treating staff as human beings was desirable only because they would work harder and 'smarter'. Business was typically not perceived as part of society. It was seen to exist for its own sake.

I recognised a dissonance between those values which I held – which reflected (among other influences) my family and university education – and those which business academics in the 1990s, seemed to espouse. During this time, social critics such as Eva Cox, Robert Theobald, Robert Manne, Michael Pusey and John Ralston Saul became increasingly vocal. This convergence prompted me to explore the values which students and staff currently associated with management education. I speculated on whether staff and students were influenced by issues other than profit. I also wondered how many felt free to voice their concerns within meetings, classrooms and in the setting or answering of assignments. As the proposal took shape I gained satisfaction from anticipating that asking these questions could potentially generate evidence bearing on whether business could, or should, be separated from society.

The decision to explore how management education was experienced required a specific research focus. In other words, management education was too broad a topic. In addition, my academic work in Malaysia, China and India had alerted me to the cross-cultural implications of teaching management theory. Teaching Chinese undergraduate business students in Shanghai prompted me to explore the underlying value themes of management education (Siemensma, 1995, ANZAM conference paper). My awareness was honed by attending a management workshop, designed to convey 'Indian insights' into management for business practitioners and academics, which was conducted by staff from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. This experience consolidated my desire to explore how students and staff from diverse cultures and countries perceived management theories. My interest in investigating cultural influences in management education was also spurred by the memory of a former postgraduate student from Bangladesh. After many difficulties associated with his apparent inability to reflect critically, he had explained that his style of academic criticism was based on a Marxist critique which he had judged would be unacceptable to Australian business educators.

'Businessmen', working in both the private and the public sector, are often characterised as 'suits' pursuing profit. Their expensive corporate uniform is perceived to hide individual thoughts and beliefs; the visual uniformity is seen to convey ideological conformity. For many people, the MBA graduate epitomises the 'suit'. At the time that I was considering these questions, MBA graduates were being criticised by writers such as Ralston Saul as unfeeling technocrats, motivated solely by self-interest.

My personal experience of teaching MBA students, both male and female, did not confirm this blanket description. But I did recognise that it would be informative to investigate how this group, and their teachers, conceptualised the values associated with business education. It is probably not surprising that individual students and staff expressed various understandings of the

MBA. Students recognised differences between themselves, between lecturers, and subject expectations. And they were quite happy to negotiate these differences. The stories associated with studying and teaching the MBA highlight the extent to which this academic experience is embedded in culture. The MBA was not experienced as neutral, abstract or universal, but was seen to confirm, teach and promote specific beliefs and principles. Although many academics and students initially perceived these beliefs and principles as implicit or invisible, after a period of discussion most were keen to personally scrutinise them.

This research was designed to explore the values which relate management degrees to society and also to address how management academics pursue their personally-held convictions. A key question was how individuals associated with the MBA believed that decisions should be justified, and how they related their significant beliefs to the study and teaching of this program.

Acknowledgments

Many people have assisted me with the writing of this PhD thesis. Starting from a chronological perspective, there are those such as Helen Borland and Peter Rumpf who guided its initial steps. Then there was Santina Bertone, who through the Workplace Studies Centre supported me to gain financial support through Victoria University's Quantum Funding Program, which enabled me to undertake the research. Subsequently, Maree Fitzpatrick assisted me in planning, conducting and recording the group interviews which inform much of the thesis. Maree's cheerful and generous support was more that of a friend than a research assistant. A shift in research focus created the need to change supervisors and during this time, Ron Adams' advice and workshop proved invaluable. As a result, Julie Stephens undertook the supervision of my work, and during her leave, Les Terry. Both gave me the benefit of their special skills at the time when they were most needed. Michael Hamel-Green then assumed the final role of supervision. He is owed both thanks and praise for the calm, solid and ever-vigilant way in which he oversaw the final phase of the thesis. Prior to this change one of my children had become seriously ill, and Michael provided the positive, accepting encouragement which helped me to finish this thesis. Liz McCormack advised on copy-editing the first three chapters and Jane Trewin, as well as many other kindnesses, supervised the formatting of the overall document. I am indebted to each.

Many have supported me in writing this thesis in other ways. They include the Library staff of Victoria University, whom I have not named individually because of the risk that I would miss one of the many who helped me. In a more public vein, the staff of ABC Radio National are to be thanked for programs such as 'Life Matters' and 'Late Night Live' which made me aware of writers including John Ralston Saul and Eva Cox. I also wish to thank friends in India, who have supported this research, at the same time as they were so generous of themselves. On a more personal level, there are

Summary

The Master of Business Administration has a reputation for enhancing management careers. This thesis examines contrasting perspectives on the way in which it is perceived, for example, Ralston Saul critiques the MBA for promoting corporate profit over democratic values, yet Collin characterises it as 'Babel', because her British studies indicated that the MBA promotes multiple voices rather than a singular conformity with business norms.

Such contrasting perspectives provided a way to examine and analyse the values evoked through the MBA experience. Ralston Saul claims that 'corporate' language dominates business and society and that beliefs about 'certainty', allied with 'efficiency', have anaesthetised citizens. This research was prompted by a desire to explore how MBA students and teaching staff brought together the values inherent in the program and the values which they espoused as individuals. The approach adopted raises related concerns such as the distinctions made by individual academics and students between public and private domains, and the extent to which business education did, or should, promote discussion of civic issues. The overarching issue is whether the MBA was felt to promote one or many perspectives on such questions.

Methods drawing on ethnographic techniques were used to investigate the MBA experience within three Australian and two Indian management schools. Individual interviews and group interactions within the MBA provided insights into how the program was perceived to relate to, or influence, values. The findings are discussed under the themes of academic culture, cross-cultural influence, gender, civil society, and personal identity, and are further elucidated through personal narratives which encapsulate how individuals interpreted the language and practice of the MBA.

While the MBA originated in America, Australia's cultural diversity created the opportunity to explore how both its citizens and international students reconciled their studies with the country's political and social norms. The academic practice and management concepts associated with the MBA indicated that it was a gendered experience. This perception influenced judgements of the acceptability of certain values and concerns. The program was explored as a context where students and staff related their personal identity, including spiritual and religious beliefs, to their understandings of management education and theory. For example, the espoused values of Australian MBA educators made it possible to characterise them as 'academic lions', 'devil's advocates' or 'disciplinarians'.

The MBA was perceived to influence perceptions of corporate responsibility, citizenship and personal identity. For many, it promoted doubt and uncertainty; yet, the majority self-censored those beliefs which they felt were inappropriate to management practice and education. There was a widespread perception that management principles espoused in the MBA often conflicted with personally-held values. Such findings raise the need to further examine how management education affects values such as those which promote civil society and social justice.

The thesis employs a cross-disciplinary approach including ethnography, cultural, post-colonial and feminist studies. The findings of the thesis should assist those who plan, market and implement management programs for Australian and international students. They will also be of interest to those who seek to understand how Australian and overseas students have conceived their own cultures within the MBA experience. More broadly, the findings address the relationship of management education to democratic process, especially the need to examine and affirm those values which nurture civil society.

Introduction

General significance

As management education has grown, both within Western countries and as an activity which has become an export 'commodity', so has the need to examine its assumptions and values. This need is compounded by the increased influence of business concepts on social and political decision-making. Education, at both secondary and university levels, now emphasises vocational skills in a way which is quite different from the focus on 'nation building' described by Stuart Macintyre (1999, p5) and experienced by many older academics. Stuart Hall (1988)[1] and Simon Marginson (1997a, 1997b) also have expressed deep concerns about the values which connect higher education with society. Denis Collins (1996), Amitai Etzioni (1989) and Amanda Sinclair (1999) specifically recognise the need to address the value conflicts associated with providing MBA education.

In the early twenty first century, a robust conversation has developed around the responsibilities of business (Balasubramaniam (ed) 1998, Brokensha, 1997, Chakraborty, 1998, D'Mello, 1999, Giddens, 1999, Hutton and Giddens, 2000, Sojka and Wempe (eds) 2000, Solomon, 1999, Van Hooft, 2000, Xavier and Ramachander, 2000). In the mid to late 1990s, when this research was undertaken, there was a growing discussion about the impact of globalism (Camilleri and Muzaffar (eds) 1998, Hofstede, 1994, Said, 1993, Sen, 1987), the need for ethics in business (Covey, 1992, French, 1995. Solomon, 1997, Singer, 1993, Stewart and Donleavy (eds) 1996) and the issues of social and environmental responsibility (Beck, 1992, Carroll and Mann (eds) 1992, Etzioni, 1996 and Wheeler and Silanpaa, 1997). In addition, the increased polarisation of

---

[1] Hall interviewed by Terry (1997, p 57) expressed dismay at how public institutions, including the universities, had 'been transformed in the image of the market ... by taking on the ethic of the new managerialism as the everyday practice of institutional life'.

1

wealth and power, often justified on the basis of competition, was becoming recognised as a threat to democracy (Martin and Schumann, 1997, Pusey, 1991, Rayner, 1997). Central to these discussions were the concepts of risk and uncertainty. Ulrich Beck (1992) described a global risk society as a world, threatened by ecological and other problems, which previous generations had not known.

In this context, John Ralston Saul (1997) popularised a critique of global capitalism which proposed that an allegiance to 'corporate' beliefs had eroded critical thinking. He argued that the West was operating in a 'clinical state of unconsciousness' because of language captured by such beliefs.

> For the ideologue, language itself becomes the message because there is no doubt. In a more sensible society, language is just the tool of communication (Ralston Saul, 1997, p 42).

The notion of 'certainty', in Ralston Saul's perspective, has created a preoccupation with efficiency and market forces which ignores fundamental human concerns. He states that 'doubt is central to a citizen-based society, that is, to democracy' (1997, p 43). Ralston Saul's critique of 'corporate' language, the language used by the new technical 'experts', provides a perspective from which to analyse management education; the MBA was chosen to contextualise the values associated with this form of education.

This thesis employs a cross-disciplinary approach to explore Ralston Saul's contention that business has prompted an inappropriate certainty about social and political issues which need to be debated (1993, pp16-19. 1997, pp 42-43). This approach provides a critical perspective on how certain students and academics perceived the MBA during the second half of the 1990s. Also, as many educational writings discuss the MBA within a profit based paradigm, this thesis, by contrast, contextualises this program within broader pedagogical and social frames, including its impact on less economically developed countries.

A specific aim is to reflect on the MBA using a cross-disciplinary perspective based on a range of non-management theories. As a business educator, I wished to use a non-management frame to explore this program, especially how students and staff interpreted concepts which constantly recurred throughout it. Audrey Collin's research on the MBA (in French and Grey (eds) 1996, pp 132-151) analysed British academics who had themselves completed MBA programs. She used an ethnographic approach[2] which allowed her to search for new insights into management education. Her study revolved around whether MBA education should be conceptualised as the teaching of 'a technical function' or as a more complex program which acknowledged issues of social responsibility (1996, p132). She conveyed MBA education as multi-faceted and changing, open to various interpretations from the perspectives of those students, now management educators, who had experienced it.

The thesis adapts the methods used by ethnographers such as Marcus (1986) and Geertz (1973, 1995). Geertz (1995, p 2) describes qualitative research as a 'multi-method, interpretive, naturalistic' way of allowing people to 'interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings' brought to them. Both Geertz and Marcus echo the theories of post-modernism and post-structuralism which testify to a complex and ambiguous world. Writers such as Foucault and Derrida have promoted the recognition of 'multiple voices', a concept which has influenced disciplines such as post-colonialism and feminist methodologies (cited and discussed in Leela Gandhi, 1998, pp 26-27). The metaphor of 'Babel' as used by Collin (1996) is another way of expressing this idea. All these approaches recognise the need to understand diverse meanings.

In terms of the values associated with the MBA, Collin concluded by stating that a 'critical perspective' needs to be embedded throughout the program, which would promote reflection on both history and ideological assumptions (1996, p149). She argued strongly that this critical stance should not be left as the sole

---

[2] Collin studied seven colleagues, both male and female, who had completed MBAs at different institutions between 1987-93 (in French and Grey eds 1996, p137).

province of business ethics subjects, which could be seen by students and staff as having marginal significance to the MBA and management practice (1996, p147). As she states:

> ... clearly we need to introduce our students to a wide range of discourses – ... making the critical perspective explicit by our attention to their epistemological and ideological assumptions and the socially constructed nature of management (op cit, p148).

The MBA is promoted as a means to expedite the career prospects of those who study it, being specifically designed to develop the knowledge and skills required by commercial enterprise (Beard, 1992, Cameron, 1991, Shelley, 1997 and Sinha, 1989). Some have criticised its ability to achieve these goals (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, Hubbard, 1990, Cunningham 1991); nevertheless, the MBA holds a special significance as the 'rite of passage' leading to future prestige and status in the business world. Throughout the world it is perceived as the 'keystone' of business success (Kelly and Kelly, 1987, Schmotter, 1997, Krause, 1997). In Australia, the MBA has been the province of those who have worked for several years after completing their first degree (Sinclair and Hintz, 1991, Ainsworth and Morley, 1993, McKern, 1997). Increasingly, it has attracted international students seeking to gain a competitive advantage before they commence their professional careers (Chen and Martin, 1996, Micklethwaite, 1996).

When looking at the 'export of education', whether by teaching overseas students in Australia or by running offshore programs, it was necessary to consider the impact of the assumptions behind academic programs, such as the MBA, on a variety of cultures and contexts. Both Australian and international students perceive the world-wide desirability of the MBA. It is an expensive and keenly sought after academic program in which the majority of students have several years of business experience (Sinclair and Hintz, 1991, Ainsworth and Morley, 1993). So, for reasons including the students' age, motivation and level of experience, this academic program provided opportunities for asking questions about the values associated with management education. The assumption was that MBA students would be able to verbalise such understandings in the sense of

4

being able to discuss the beliefs which underpinned their behaviour. Regarding staff, it was also expected that they would be able to describe the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' which underpinned their actions. Regarding students and staff, the aim was to apply Hall's concept of domains[3] to explore individual statements of personal, organisational and civic responsibilities.

The rationale of the thesis

Did MBA education encourage individuals to relate values associated with the private to the public, the personal to the corporate and the corporate to the civic? In brief, did the process and content of the MBA course raise students' critical awareness of values' related issues?

To what extent is Ralston Saul's claim that 'corporate' language dominates business and society and 'anaesthetises citizens' born out in relation to the MBA? How did management educators and students integrate social and civic responsibilities with their sense of personal identity? The thesis explores whether students and staff felt able to publicly express personally-held values as they learnt and taught management theory. Or were their critical capacities disabled, as implied by Ralston Saul's image of 'the unconscious society'? How did this perspective on the program marry with those writers including Shelley (1997), Sinha (1989), Schmotter (1997), Krause (1997), Sinclair and Hintz, (1991), Ainsworth and Morley (1993) and McKern (1997) who credited MBA studies with positive outcomes.

These questions were addressed using Hall's concept of language as the 'discursive practice' through which individuals both describe and create themselves. The aim was to explore how diverse students and staff experienced the values associated with the MBA.

---

3 The concept of domains is used in the sense developed by Stuart Hall (elaborated in various articles by and about him; for example in Morley and Chen (eds) 1996). This core concept is discussed more fully in chapter 1.

Values, ranging from the business pragmatism of writers such as Friedman, to the belief in civil society espoused by Solomon, Cox and Pusey, frame this discussion. Other relevant themes range across pedagogy, management theory and cultural context, virtue ethics, spiritual leadership and spirituality, gender, as suggested by Sinclair and Clegg (1997), a perspective on culture, seen according to Hall's framework. The central concern of this thesis is how MBA students and teaching staff conceptualised the interconnections between the values inherent in the program and the values which they espoused as individuals. This research approach raises related concerns such as the distinctions made by individual academics and students between public and private domains, and the extent to which business education did, or should, promote discussion of civic issues.

An overview of the thesis

The following chapters reflect the major patterns that emerged from this research. The thesis is constructed around the question of whether the MBA, as taught in three Australian and two Indian institutions in 1995-97, taught and promoted a singular set of beliefs and values, whether interpreted by its teachers or absorbed by its students. Each chapter, in turn, investigates a perspective on the MBA which emerged from the research, such as the educational context, culture, gender, civil society or personal identity. The focus of the analysis was to assess whether these perspectives were linked to an experience of consensus or complexity. Did students or staff believe that that there was a single way of considering each issue? Discussions of how individuals felt they had changed through their experience of the MBA provided insights into such questions. The interaction within culturally diverse groups emerged as an important influence.

Chapter one details and reviews the history, concepts and theories which provide a background to understanding the values associated with the MBA. Following this review chapter each chapter elaborates one dimension which was perceived by the participants to be relevant to the MBA. The analysis reflects generalised

6

understandings that emerged from discussion with the participants together with three individual narratives which particularise the values discussed. These narratives convey the complexities associated by many with the MBA experience.

Chapter two, the academic experience, presents examines how Australian staff perceived their MBA teaching. It concerns questions such as whether the MBA teaching role was seen as the way to convey a neutral body of knowledge, or to encourage students to adopt a critical, values-based perspective. It explores how faculty members associated with the MBA balanced their commitment to academic and social responsibilities. It also compares the structure and content of Australian and Indian MBA programs.

The third chapter considers the MBA from the perspective of culture, conceptualised as the dominant set of ideas, beliefs and behaviours promoted by a country or organisation. It then investigates what happens when students and staff from a variety of backgrounds met within the MBA classroom. It explores whether there was a perception of one MBA culture, or whether the subjective experiences of those associated with it created multiple cultures. In addition, the essentially American derivation of the program is related to the national contexts in which it was taught in this study, namely either Australian or Indian.

The fourth chapter discusses the various ways and levels at which gender related to the MBA and how it was perceived by students and teachers. This chapter analyses the relationship between gender and management style for MBA staff and students, including pressures to conform and expectations of international students following graduation. MBA experiences in Australia are contrasted with those in India.

The fifth chapter is concerned with the MBA's influence on civil society, in particular how those involved with it characterised their responsibility to society. It explores how the MBA governed perceptions of personal or corporate responsibility, either within or external to the workplace. Interviews with MBA

students in both Australia and India, as well as with Australian academic staff, indicate how programs were linked to the construction and maintenance of a civil society.

The sixth chapter considers the MBA from the perspective of how its students and staff perceived their individual identities. It reflects on how the MBA influenced a sense of self, including commitment to spiritual, religious and environmental principles. This chapter explores and analyses personally-held belief systems and how individuals negotiated the public/private divide.

The concluding chapter brings together these themes which were experienced within the MBA. It critiques Ralston Saul's belief that corporate language has created 'an unconscious civilisation', but it also considers how the pressures associated with the MBA might discourage individuals from voicing dissent based on deeply-held beliefs. The sense of personal identity promoted by the MBA is central to the overall research findings and conclusion.

Limitations

This thesis analyses groups and individuals within three Australian universities and two Indian institutions where the MBA was taught during the period 1995-97. It is clear that many of the topics raised are now more broadly discussed and understood. This thesis does not intend to make claims about current staff or later cohorts of students.

This qualitative study reflects only the courses and contexts which were explored. More extensive research would be required to generalise further.

The central concern involved whether the MBA was perceived to promote doubt or certainty, specifically in relation to values and normative beliefs. Each of the themes is discussed within this context and not treated as a research topic in its

own right. Individual chapter topics would require more extensive investigation if they were considered as a sole research focus.

Despite the necessary limitations of such research, these findings raise important questions relating to postgraduate management education, to business theory and practice, and to social and civic relationships understood both nationally and internationally. A cross-disciplinary approach allows often unaddressed but significant concerns to be voiced, and consequently discussed more broadly within management circles. This goal is essential because 'the manager of a firm ... must manage not only the profitable and efficient but also the good and the right' (Koslowski, in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds) 1992, p1). This discussion of values seeks to understand how notions of 'good and right' were conceptualised within the MBA.

Chapter 1 Management education: the debates of the 90s

As management courses have increased in number and popularity, several management education researchers, including French and Grey (1996), Aaron (1994) and Evensky (1993) have acknowledged that there is a 'critical tension' associated with the pedagogy of management education. The essays in French and Grey (1996) are influenced by writers from Friere to Foucault. They promote a conception of management education which incorporates the broader sociological and philosophical issues provoked by post-Fordism, post-structuralism and post-modernism. Collin's study of fellow academics who had completed the British MBA provides a valuable model (in French and Grey, (eds) 1996, pp132-151) and raises significant questions. Influenced by critical theorists, Collin uses the metaphor of 'Babel' to argue that management students should 'recognise, orient and respond ... to the multiple discourses of management ... [for their] intellectual and personal development'. This image of the MBA reflects the post-modern understanding of 'multiple voices', rather than a centralised and singular message. The image of Babel has been used by various writers to signal complexity. For example, Jeffrey Stout's *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*, flags, through his title and subtitle, his thesis that multiple 'languages' create difficulties for discussing ethics:

> The tower of Babel, for all its antiquity, continues to exert its power over the imagination. Whenever we desire to penetrate the strangeness of alien speech or dispel the confusion of tongues, the image of the ruined tower recurs. It is among other things, a symbol of our moral condition (Stout, 1988, p1).

However, despite 'the desires and disappointments' associated with diversity, especially when discussing how we should act, Stout argues for a language which helps people to behave in a civilised way - a language which accepts difference - and promotes mutual understanding. His approach, together with Collin's research into the MBA, provides an alternative viewpoint to Ralston Saul's

critique of corporate ideology. This set of contrasting perspectives provides a conceptual framework to explore the values associated with management education. Ralston Saul argues that corporate language has lulled the modern citizen into accepting destructive practices, while others, including Collin and Stout, contend that the experience of confusion, or 'Babel', prods many to recognise personal goals. They postulate that when individuals confront diversity they are compelled to make explicit values which they have previously ignored.

While Ralston Saul criticises corporate language for its negative impact on society, other writers, including, most famously, John Kenneth Galbraith (1992) and Amitai Etzioni (1988) have accused economic theories which promote self-interest and a reliance on market forces of undermining the social fabric. Etzioni's *The Moral Dimension: Towards a New Economics* (1988) represents a perspective which has sparked David Sciuli (1996), Peter Koslowski (1992), Alan Lewis and Karl-Erik Warneryd (1994) and F Neil Brady (1996) to edit collections which have probed the ethical and moral implications of economic theory. Their shared perspective is conveyed through Koslowski's rationale for one such collection, namely to integrate:

> ... the ethical discourse into the economic discourse. They [the essays] as well evaluate economics from the viewpoint of ethics as amplify ethical reasoning by methods of economics. ...

> ... the manager of a firm who bears the burden of choice-making for a large number of employees and for enormous amounts of capital and resources entrusted on him must manage not only the profitable and efficient but also the good and the right. To economize in money terms is not enough. Rather the manager's task is ethical economizing and managing the good in an all-encompassing way. The business of business is not only business. It is doing business in an ethically defensible way. The economy does not serve to realise the economical only, it must also serve the realisation of the good (Koslowski, in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds) 1992, p1).

The above quote demonstrates Koslowski's major theoretical goal, described by Jean-Pierre Wils as 'a re-integration of ethics, politics and economics' (Wils, in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds), 1992, p 92), at the same time as it disparages the 'business of business is business' ethic associated with Friedmanite economics. The collections cited above support Etzioni's aim to integrate economics with

broader social responsibility. As Ossipow states, 'Etzioni's book *The Moral Dimensions* (1988) illustrates the struggle for a renewed alliance between economics and ethics' (Ossipow, in Lewis and Warneryd (eds), 1994, p 297). Etzioni states that men and women are influenced by moral considerations when making economic decisions. He promotes 'a mild kind of socialism, more familiar and less feared in Europe than the USA' (Etzioni, 1988, p 372) and describes two diverging views espoused by economists:

> ... the kind of economics which excludes ethics or recommends that free market economics encourages ethical behaviour might be connected with right-wing politics, while the view that economics is too important to be the sole responsibility of economists, that a broader economics discipline is necessary, might be associated with a more left-wing orientation (Etzioni, 1988, p 371).

Etzioni suggests that scholars and researchers should take a more normative stance and argues that they should combat the corrupting influence of 'selfishness' in business and politics[4]. Wils applauds Koslowski's desire (akin to that of Etzioni) to integrate the study of economics and ethics:

> 'Ethics in the full sense can not accept an opposition between fundamental attitudes (morals) and the orientation towards success (economy), between the world of values and the world of living. Only because consequences are evaluated they become what they are: they are not mere events, but they are effects of actions. Values are not material constructions, but they are perspectives, perceptions of preference' (Koslowski, cited in Wils op cit, p 102).

Koslowski's passion to integrate economics with a broader set of social responsibilities is shared by Wils. The latter states that a 'theory of values must ... be understood as a critical examination ... [and] the survival of humanity ... [must] depend on the question whether we will carry out a self-critical and effective examination of our needs and our preference behaviour' (Wils, op cit, p103). Others agree that economic theory needs to question the discipline's 'traditional tolerance towards selfishness' (Gui, in Lewis and Warneryd (eds), 1994, p 251). These economists epitomise those who promote the inter-relationship of values and economics.

---

[4] This perspective prompted him to develop his form of communitarianism for the USA, which is elaborated below.

Frank, Gilovich and Regan (1993) compared the attitudes of economics and non-economics students and stated that 'an emphasis on the self-interest model tends to inhibit cooperation'. They concluded that economists should reflect a more socially responsible attitude in their teaching 'for both the social good and the well-being of their own students'. Aaron's (1994) paper 'Public Policy, Values and Consciousness', questioned the adequacy of economics as a basis for analysing social policy. He claimed that 'profound changes in theoretical orientation and research methods are necessary if we are to make progress in analyzing major social issues'.

These critiques are in sympathy with Michael Pusey, who described Australia's future as moulded by adherents to a 'restrictive, technically oriented, neo-classical economics curriculum that swept through the economics departments of Australian universities from about 1947 onwards' (1991, pp 3-4). He contended that these graduates promoted policies of 'economic rationalism' in the Federal Public Service. Evensky (1993) has also elaborated on the need for economics to acknowledge its social and contextual responsibilities. He criticised the neo-classical economists who claimed to follow in the tradition of Adam Smith, stating that many economists have ignored the central importance which Smith placed on 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments' (1759), as cited in Evensky (1993), which Smith was re-writing at the time of his death.

These writers have argued for economics to be considered from a moral aspect. Thus, interpretations of economics as either objective - described as the tradition extending from Weber to Luhman (comment by Koslowski, cited in Wils, in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds) 1993, p 109) - or embedded in values (as discussed by those including Etzioni and cited above), can be related to the teaching and study of postgraduate management education. However, only a minority of educational researchers, such as Collin, recognises the need to explore and critique the value assumptions which underpin the discipline of management. Robert Locke, the eminent commentator on modern management education, demonstrates the more typical form of criticism. His 1996 keynote address to the British Academy of Management Conference (Locke, Aston, 1996) disparaged

the widespread adoption of the American MBA model and its subsequent failure to add to industrial success or theoretical development. He criticised the role of MBAs as an elite and privileged cohort which eroded the 'unit cohesion that in American business and industry is critical to success at the operational level'. Typifying the 'Quality Movement' as one major influence on manufacturing operations, he noted that it was not a theoretical product of the American business school system. His critique focused on the corporate context and the contribution (or lack of it) which management education makes in this sphere. The major concern was on 'managerial excellence' within a manufacturing environment, not the influence of the MBA on the overall fabric of society.

Henry Mintzberg has also criticised management education, decrying the idea that strategic planning can occur in isolation and stating that this key management function must be taught and practised in an integrated way (Mintzberg, 1995, pp 67-70). This form of education is often discussed in terms of comparative historical development, combined with its contribution to business efficacy, such as in the collection edited by Amdam (1996). For example, Guiliana Gemelli's critical review (in Amdam (ed) 1996, pp 38-68) argued that the 'transnational focus' integrated across the curricula of European business schools was superior to the American MBA program's 'case studies' approach. She, in common with Mintzberg, recognised the importance of the context in which management education takes place. However, her judgement of superiority was based on business outcomes, not on the social consequences of a more inclusive approach. In the same collection, John Wilson (1996, pp 133-149) analysed the way in which management education developed in a British business culture, which had 'an antipathy towards academic qualifications'. Locke also sees the need to acknowledge the cultural context in which management education takes place. For example, his *Review of Management and Higher Education Since 1940* recognised the English tradition of managers' antagonism to formal education (1989, p 281). Other management educators, including Professor Fred Hilmer (Hilmer and Donaldson,1996), have also argued that a distrust of scholarship is detrimental to Australia's business success. Hilmer stated that a culture of anti-

14

intellectualism has promoted fads which undermine the success of commerce. In another parallel, Wilson (1996) portrayed the development of British management education within a dual higher education system, a tradition which also reflects Australian academic history.

The history of Australian management education

This duality in Australian education saw different styles of higher education being provided by the traditional sandstone universities, such as the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney, and the colleges of advanced education. The former had a strong tradition of teaching and researching business related subjects such as accounting and economics. For example, from 1855 the University of Melbourne had a foundation chair which included responsibility for political economy. And, a chair dedicated to economics and sociology was established in 1912. By 1920, the impact of the First World War had created an environment where, according to Hodgart, 'economic questions were among the more important in world affairs' and economists were seen as 'gurus'. The universities were seen as 'the natural place from which such an understanding should come (Hodgart, 1975, p 2). The School, including a Faculty, of Commerce was developed in 1924, with 'roots ... in an interaction between the university and the business world'. Copland, its founding chair, stated that 'commercial education is likely to be more successful if it springs from the needs of industry and is supported by businessmen' (op. cit p 9). But the University of Melbourne's tradition was strongly influenced by Cambridge, which Copland considered 'the Empire's greatest school of economics' (University of Melbourne, 2000, p 2). Thus in 1925, the three year commerce degree, with eight compulsory subjects of the required fourteen, aimed to promote 'a broad education' (op cit, p 2). In 1953, the Faculty established the first chair in Accounting in Australia, which was filled by the notable Professors Fitzgerald and Goldberg (op cit, p 4).

A different tradition of professional business education grew within the institutes of technology. This culminated in the development of degree programs under the

direct patronage of professional associations including the Australian Society of Accountants, the Institute of Public Administration and the Real Estate and Stock Institute of Victoria (Murray-Smith and Dare, 1987, p 308). In 1934, both Footscray Technical School and the Melbourne Technical College, which later became Victoria University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) respectively, commenced running coaching classes for the various accountancy institutes which ran professional exams (op cit, p 221). Accounting, the predominant business qualification, was originally taught under the auspices of the professional associations responsible for its accreditation. Slowly, the institutes took over both the teaching and accreditation until:

> ... by the 1970s it was common for courses to be under the control of the colleges (or their coordinating body) and the academic award from the college [was] accepted by the industry or commercial group concerned, the joint board of examiners being replaced by an advisory committee' (op cit pp 308-309).

The increased demand for business knowledge caused rapid expansion of these institutions in the 1970s, at the time when they were empowered to deliver the first generalist undergraduate business degrees. These institutes, otherwise known as colleges of advanced education (CAEs), had a strong vocational focus and close links with industry. They, together with the more traditional universities, created the so-called binary system. The two styles of higher education coexisted with an accepted sense of difference. As a result of developing generalised business degrees, the colleges maintained and further developed their vocational focus (McNally, 1986, pp13-15). The applied nature of these degrees ensured that CAE graduates were well regarded as potential recruits, despite the institutes being considered less prestigious than the original universities.

The Australian development of MBA programs followed that of England, where initially postgraduate management education, including the MBA, was an extension of undergraduate programs. The University of Melbourne had its first intake of MBA students in 1963. Two years later, the Martin Report recommended that eight Victorian technical colleges would be empowered to grant degrees and provide a second system of higher education, to parallel that of the universities (Murray-Smith and Dare, 1987, pp 379 and 383). This led to the

establishment of the Victorian Institute of Colleges system in 1972, as a result by 1976, RMIT's fellowship diplomas were replaced by degree courses, and faculties (including business) headed by deans, were established (op cit pp 427 and 435). In 1978, through the establishment of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission, the institutes of higher education gained the autonomy to grant their own degrees (op cit, p 445). Further changes, directly influencing the delivery of the MBA came about in 1982, when the Ralph Committee recommended that a second national management school should be established at the University of Melbourne 'on condition that it is not attached to an existing faculty' (University of Melbourne, 2000, p 3). This created the Australian norm of the MBA, with graduate schools often being developed within the institutes of technology. The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Business established in 1994, differed from the graduate schools of business of the former Victorian CAEs, which typically had small administration units which supported discipline-based departmental offerings (Poole and Spear, 1997, p 47). RMIT, the most prestigious of the universities which were previously CAEs, launched its MBA program in 1977. It established its first full-time, full-fee program for international students in 1990, and had an intake of 154 students in 1993, of whom 41 were non-resident. Of an enrolment averaged over the period 1989-93, male students were 75 percent and females were 25 percent (Ainsworth and Morley, 1993, pp 2-5).

But apart from the structural arrangements which influence its role within higher education, the 'MBA suffers a status stigma in traditional academe' in both England and Australia, because of its applied vocational characteristics (Duke, 1997, p 88). The MBA became a separate entity, but many within the discipline-based departments criticised its academic credentials as a master's degree based on course work, not research.

John Dawkins, in the role of Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, brought about further changes to Australian higher education. Simon Marginson describes how the Dawkins' reforms of 1987 - 91

not only caused higher education to compete on the basis of social demands and labour market requirements (1997a, pp 225-26), but also abolished the CAE sector (pp 231-32). The newly-introduced 'Unified National System' classified all higher education institutions as universities which were equally required to undertake a research role. Dawkins' legislation (Marginson, 1997a, pp 220-222) ended the binary system. It prompted most institutes of technology to amalgamate to form the new universities of technology, or to merge with the existing universities. The changes also introduced the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), in which Australian students paid a proportion of their educational costs, and introduced fee-based postgraduate programs for local students. This system also encouraged universities to enrol full-fee-paying students from overseas. With this new focus, universities were now competing for students and the associated funds. Marginson characterises these changes as the 'marketisation of higher education'(1997a). He states that this Australian government took an unprecedented role in influencing how universities should operate, creating a new system where 'managements were expected to be professional, strategic and entrepreneurial' (Marginson, 1997a, p 220).

Part of these changes involved universities creating funds through the export of education. Thomas reports that in 1995 Monash University generated earnings of $45 million associated with the export of education, contrasted with RMIT's $36 million and Curtin's $28 million (quoted in Reid, 1996, pp15-16). And while major changes were taking place throughout higher education, the international prestige of the American MBA program beckoned aspiring managers, including those candidates who already possessed undergraduate degrees in commerce or business. This change affected those CAE academics involved with teaching the MBA. The focus moved away from teaching and industry-based consulting towards academic research and publication. Thus, although both the traditional universities and the previous CAEs had established MBA programs by the late 1980s, the Dawkins' reforms could be argued to have caused greater changes for staff who were originally employed by the CAEs.

In contrast with the critical social perspective of Marginson's research (1997a and 1997b), the majority of Australian authors on management education, including Byrt (1989) and Smith (1992), are primarily concerned to research the efficacy of management. Few question the ultimate goals and values of business. Byrt is part of an international comparative group which seeks to understand management education in various national contexts. This group is concerned with the way business education has changed, and how various management paradigms have evolved in America, Britain, Japan and Germany (Engwall and Gunnarsson (eds) 1994, and Amdam (ed) 1996). This research genre has seen the tension between the history of the development of management education and its relationship to the business community as centrally important. Its underlying concern is that management education may not be producing the growth and profits for which it was created and on which its future is dependent. This search for effectiveness is partly explored by analysing the comparative advantages of management education as practised by both the well-established and newer universities. However, in common with the perspective promoted by Marginson, John Smyth, as both editor and writer (1995), adopted a more analytical and critical stance when he addressed how Australian academics experience change. Smyth, like Marginson, sees the OECD preoccupation with 'international reconstruction and competitiveness' influencing higher education to adopt a 'market' stance, driven by concerns for privatisation and labour market readiness. He agrees with Marginson that the above changes and tensions can be seen as responses to the key underlying economic, social and political influences.

Wider debates on management education

The focus on business outcomes common in much management education has been attacked by Ralston Saul. He described the methodology promoted by the Harvard Business School, founded on Taylor's Scientific Management philosophy, as 'constructed to be free from memory, beliefs and nonmanipulable obligations' (Ralston Saul, 1993, p 121). He contends that this style of education promotes undisciplined self-interest, competitiveness and 'having a ready answer

to all questions', which leads him to accuse the 'leading centres of elite education' of 'preaching social anarchy' (1993, p 122). Other elite business institutions, including the London Business School, were also seen to have opted to improve management education with the goal of creating 'real growth, a revivified industrial base and healthier economies' (1993, p123).

Ralston Saul believes these schools promote abstract and mathematically-based skills and a depersonalised sense of professionalism. Rather than generating increased wealth for all, Ralston Saul accuses this style of education of encouraging a self-centred, uncreative, unimaginative conformity. For example, the French Ecole National d'Administration (ENA - the prestigious French school of public sector management) and the Harvard Business School are portrayed as:

> ... the high points of a general state of affairs. Business schools and administrative schools have popped up all over the West and reproduced the same logical errors of answer-oriented, multipurpose elites. Few of their graduates have the sense of relative truths produced by an exposure to a real society. Absolute truths based on a detached abstraction reign supreme. These truths are endlessly defendable and interchangeable (Ralston Saul, 1993, p 129).

This same rationale has increasingly been associated with the internal administration of the universities, where discussions about desirable outcomes have become dominated by the themes of budgetary constraints and increased measurable outputs from staff. It has been argued that the business of education has become business, combining 'high participation with user payments' (Marginson, 1997a, p 222). Under this process, the goals of education are perceived to be dominated by financial considerations, while academic debate about social, cultural, political or ethical concerns becomes increasingly peripheral.

The idea of tension implies the need to recognise competing ideas which must either be resolved, or accepted as irresolvable. Such a process in a social context demands the capacity to verbalise and negotiate priorities, which may relate to conflicts of values. Ralston Saul (1997) claims that the certainty of 'corporate' language has privileged market forces and efficiency at the cost of civic concerns.

As discussed earlier, his focus provides a way to investigate management education, especially when contrasted with Collin's (1996) characterisation of the MBA experience as 'Babel'.

The relationship of 'multiple voices' to management education

Amanda Sinclair's research on the role of gender (1995a, 1995b) in Australian management education discusses the need to recognise multiple voices, and the lack of attention being given to those of women. Sinclair analysed course content and process and encouraged further investigation of this area. Her earlier research into the experience of female MBAs (1994) highlighted that women risked being marginalised if they contested organisational norms. In a subsequent work, Sinclair (1998) combined these themes to argue that Australia needs to promote a new, inclusive paradigm of leadership, to replace the belief in the 'heroic male', which she believes has outlived its usefulness. Sinclair is one of those who employ gender as both a descriptor and a metaphor in their study of management practice and education. Thus gender can be used to critique theories which testify to a singular and universal experience, for example whether power should be characterised in only one way (see also Sinclair, 1994). In addition, Sinclair's (1999) paper 'The Ethics of Managers; Cause for Despair?' is one of the minority which has considered the values of the MBA in a way which is similar to the focus of this thesis.

Many post-modern theorists are concerned to validate multiple voices, including those of the poor, in order to highlight the negative outcomes associated with power disparities, especially in less industrially developed countries. The post-colonial writer, Gayatri Spivak, recognised when she was in France that both Derrida and Foucault were 'dismantling' the tradition of internationalisation to which she had aspired in India (Gandhi, 1998, pp 26-27). This caused Spivak to question whether what benefited the elite was also good for 'Southern' women. In a similar way, the 'Post-Enlightenment Project' reflects the doubts of various writers, including Dipesh Chakrabarty (cited in Gandhi, op cit) and Stuart Hall

21

$(1992)^5$, who ask whether the 'grand narratives' are capable of resolving social and political problems. For Hall these include questions relating to postcoloniality and the globalisation of culture:

> [G]lobalization must never be read as a simple process of cultural homogenization; it is always an articulation of the local, of the specific and the global. Therefore there will always be specificities – of voices, of positioning, of identity, of cultural traditions, of histories, and these are the conditions of *enunciation which enable us to speak* (FS ital). We speak within the logic of a cultural-global, which opens a conversation between us, which would not have been possible otherwise (Hall, interviewed by Chen, 1996a, p 407).

Hall's statement, that individuals are only able to speak because of their particularities and specificities, can be applied to an exploration of the values associated with the MBA. Hall sees individuals becoming who they are through the circumstances, or conditions, in which they act. Hall supports those who argue for a complex and textured understanding of reality. These perspectives reflect Ralston Saul's concern that uncritical commitment to general principles, such as the belief in market forces, may produce unintended and undesirable outcomes. These arguments were the basis for seeking to record and understand the specific voices of those studied in this research. Broad sociologically based theories, such as Geert Hofstede's (1980) insights into softer and harder management styles (feminine/ masculine) have provided tools to analyse individual comments.

A questioning of decontextualised general principles seems largely absent from the planning and administration of management education. Australian universities, among others in the West, have committed themselves to raising funds through the 'export of education', whether by teaching overseas students in Australia or by delivering programs offshore. Management education has played an important role in this strategy. Some within universities describe the MBA as

---

[5] Hall's (1992) article not only critiqued the 'grand narrative' but also the idea of pure national or ethnic identity. His self-inclusive use of the words 'hybrid' and mongrel created a storm of protest.

the 'cash cow'[6]. Other academic writers perceive that the changes involving increased number of international students require not only recognition of student diversity within the academic context (Sinclair and Britton Wilson, 1999), but also an awareness of where management skills will be practised after graduation (Reid, 1996, pp 19-20, 138-41, 150-51). Anna Yeatman, in a perspective that combines an awareness of competitive market forces with issues of diversity relating to staffing, sees affirmative action programs since the 1986 Australian legislation as part of the 'dynamics of restructuring' (in Smyth, 1995, pp 194-205). In criticising the 'simple reductive agendas of market-oriented, employer-dominated restructuring', she argues that higher education is being influenced by a political debate which reflects new – but not necessarily more gender-inclusive – models. Reid, Sinclair, Yeatman and Smyth recognise potential clashes from emerging values, which involve changing, and often conflicting, conceptions of higher education.

The impact of 'economic rationalism'

Hall was bewildered at the speed with which Western nations employed 'Thatcherite ideas', such as 'managerialism, individual contracting, entrepreneurism' (interviewed by Terry, 1997). The business schools in the UK implemented 'economic rationalism' and fuelled the managerialist revolution faster than any government could have enforced such a change (Hall, March, 1998). Hall sees both conservatives and 'left-wingers' espousing these ideas. He shares Ralston Saul's concern (1993, 1995) that the language through which reality is perceived and interpreted has become distorted. Using a cultural studies framework to explore the ideas of personal identity and of citizenship, he laments the absence of ideological understandings in social debate.

---

[6] Schmotter's (1997) interview notes that American university presidents viewed MBAs as 'cash cows' which also ensured gifts and donations. Business academics 'rooted in the real world' were preferable to 'tweedy left-wingers'.

This 'conflict of loyalties and desires' is claimed by Hall to have provoked 'chaos and unpredictability in the ideological field' (Hall, 1988, p 274). New constructs mould 'people's conceptions' so as to change political realities. He explores the 'discursive practices' associated with political ideology, and he notes the impact of the associated change on areas including public education. Reflecting on ideological 'chaos' being caused by 'conflicts of loyalties and desires' raises questions in relation to the MBA. An MBA which fomented ideological 'chaos' could not at the same time promote certainty.

Approaches to culture and language

In addition, Hall's concept of culture as 'a process, a set of practices ... concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings between members of a society or group' (Hall (ed), 1997, p 2), provides a framework to analyse how Australians and international students experience the MBA as a site of practice and personal identity. From this perspective, the MBA can be seen as a process which engages both students and staff. Hall's recognition that meaning is played out within a cultural context provides a conceptual approach to explore how participants, in this case within the context of the MBA program, describe their values and beliefs. Thus the experience of students learning to use the language and concepts associated with the MBA can be understood in Hall's terms as them appropriating 'cultural things' which gain 'value or significance' by becoming part of their everyday existence (ibid, p 3).

Language is described as central to how meaning is 'produced and circulated'. For Hall, it is a means to regulate and organise the world and also to construct personal identity (ibid, p 4). Seeing language as a privileged 'media' of meaning (ibid, p 4) facilitates research into the values associated with an academic program, including how students demonstrate mastery of its subjects. Hall provides ways of exploring cultural tensions, including whether the MBA is value neutral and the espoused values of its teachers and students. This perspective is associated with his focus on individual identity.

Hall's concept of identity draws upon 'domains', those aspects of lived experience which create 'a continuous cross-dislocation of one identity by another, one structure by another (as quoted by Julien and Nash, 1996, p 478). He states that 'the "machineries" and regimes of representation in a culture' play 'a *constitutive* and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event role'. Thus, Hall claims that aspects of representation 'such as subjectivity, identity, politics, [ideology]' help create, as much as express, social and political life (Hall, 1996c, p 443). They are part of this 'constitutive' process. Conversely, in terms of personal identity, individuals are forged by their social interactions. In terms of the MBA this would imply that the program would itself come to reflect the influence of culturally diverse students, at the same time as staff and students would be changed by the culture and practices, including language, which they experienced within the program. From this perspective, the MBA can be doubly considered as a process which alters at the same time as it changes those who engage in it.

Language and personal identity

Coming from a neo-Marxist materialist perspective, Hall analyses how those who are at the 'margins' create a sense of self. He conceptualises the personal identity of cultural and political outsiders, paying particular attention to the complexity of racial identity (specifically 'blackness'). It is neither simple nor static: Stratton and Ang quote him as stating 'that what [we] have to say comes out of particular histories and culture, and that everyone speaks from positions within the global distribution of power'. They state that because such positions change, individuals experience 'politics as a "war of position" ' (Stratton and Ang, 1996, p 388).

In describing his own theoretical area as 'a field of proliferating antagonisms', Hall accepts this is 'the only way in which the endlessly contradictory terrain of cultural production and articulation can be grasped' (Hall, interviewed by Chen, 1996a, p 404). Thus the complexity and instability within the field of cultural studies can be seen as paralleling the tensions and changeability within

individuals, how they experience and consequently re-create themselves. Hall develops Gramsci's concept of the 'self' as 'not a unified but a contradictory subject and a social construction (Hall, 1996b, p440). This notion of the self as a 'contradictory subject' provides a way of investigating individual players associated with the MBA. It predicts tensions, uncertainties and contradictions and fuelled the decision to maintain the voices of the most informative interviewees. Hall accepts, indeed celebrates, antagonism as a way of achieving new cultural insights which promote social justice. Tensions associated with, even provoked by, cross-cultural experiences were seen as a tool for examining the MBA program.

Identity, meaning and language are interwoven. Together, they 'articulate' in a material sense which Hall states has 'a double meaning', not only as spoken or uttered, but also as pulled, in a contingent, rather than a necessary sense, as if by a prime mover (Hall, interviewed by Grossberg, 1996, pp141-2). The space created by 'articulation' allows for change and flexibility. Hall's concept of domains gives insight into a dynamic construction of personal identity, which is both experienced and constituted through the words which individuals choose to convey meaning.

However, Hall promotes discussion of social justice by giving importance to the personal and the political, the private and the public.

> I think the re-theorization of the nature of the disposition of social responsibility within social structures will necessarily touch on questions larger than our own experiences, while never letting go of the subjective dimension. Our own personal experiences intersect with that, but they don't cover it (Hall, interviewed by Chen, 1996a, p 402).

His approach provides a way to engage with the praxis of the MBA. Because Australian management education attracts many students from diverse backgrounds, as well as a broad ethnic range of Australian citizens, there is a need to explore how they engage with the course aims and the pedagogic strategies adopted to attain them.

This thesis uses Hall's theories about culture and domains to elaborate on particular themes, while privileging, as his work does, the subjective voice and individual experience of those who were involved in this study. Hall's understanding of personal identity provides insight into how students and staff experience their own sense of self within the MBA. Culture can be understood as influencing the values associated with the MBA in three different ways, namely as a) the norms, beliefs and practices of the MBA program itself, b) the national context in which the study is undertaken, and finally as c) reflecting the cultural background of those studying or teaching it. This approach highlights the dominant culture as experienced by both 'insiders' and 'foreigners'; a perspective that is often overlooked within studies of management education. It also raises questions about which aspects of 'self' are engaged when individuals teach or study the MBA.

Hall's concept of domains[7], where individuals' actions influence their sense of identity, is central to this thesis. This perspective makes it feasible to ask whether there is a difference between values which individuals, interviewed within the context of the MBA, believe they should espouse publicly, and those values which they personally believe are more significant. The concept of personal identity, or self, relates to the subjective acknowledgment of specific values. The thesis explores how individuals saw and chose to portray themselves within the experience of an educational process, specifically the MBA, where students from a range of countries came together to undertake studies explicitly designed to further their business careers.

It is worth considering the impact which the experience of studying or teaching MBA programs has on the individuals concerned. Reflecting on the experience of the MBA provokes questions, including whether it has a particular flavour when taught in Australia as compared with other countries. Associated questions involved how national context influenced staff and students, as well as program

---

[7] See the major analysis of Hall's work by Morley and Chen (eds) (1996); it includes articles by and about him which amplify and explain the concept of domains.

content and delivery and whether students and staff perceived that the overall MBA reflected one or more cultures.

Applying Hall's concept of culture provides insight into the beliefs and behaviour of the academics associated with these programs. This focus emphasises how academics associated with the MBA described their career choices in terms of educational, normative and financial considerations. Additionally, Hall's concept of domains clarifies how individuals related their beliefs and values to their sense of personal identity and to their personal experience of the program. His comment 'It is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are' (Hall, 1996d, p 473) provides a means to understand those involved with the MBA.

Universities need to validate difference as their student populations become increasingly heterogeneous. Chalmers and Volet (1997) explored certain assumptions about 'Asians' who come to Australia to study. They found that some academics held preconceptions about these students which were inappropriate and educationally counter-productive. Their research highlights the importance of cultural and individual differences in learning styles and personal interaction, as well as the risks of stereotyping. In addition, as the ethnic mix of students studying business in Australia increases, there also exists a need to research how to blend Australian content with the predominant American theory of the MBA.

Social theory and the MBA

The need for a broader focus is also associated with more students coming to Australia from countries with socialist histories. This change, combined with the need for Australian managers to understand a transnational world, demonstrates the significance of a critical perspective on capitalism, especially when investigating the values implicit in the MBA. Kuan-Hsing Chen, a Taiwanese cultural studies theorist influenced by Hall, has sought to understand global

capitalism in a post-Marxist age. Stating that post-modernism 'constitut[ed] a new historical formation', he argued that post-Marxist theory should influence cultural politics and practice. According to Chen:

> If 'late' capitalism 'is part of the 'post-modern project', can one eliminate its impact on the other 'half' of the globe ... by arguing that it is a 'local' phenomenon? The fact is that the international structure of capitalism has escalated and has put more 'developing' countries in permanent poverty ... [I]t is within the geographical site of the 'underdeveloped ' or 'developing' territories that the evils of capitalist exploitation are most nakedly revealed (Chen, in Morley and Chen (eds), 1996, p 310).

The need to recognise an international political perspective, raised by Chen, applies to the teaching of business management, especially in university environments where the principles underlying capitalist practice have often been ignored. This approach involved not only examining what was taught, but also raised the need to explore how academics perceived the increased focus on competition and market forces within higher education. Chen's criticism of a micro-analytical perspective is applicable to management education. This approach highlights the MBA's international perspective on capitalism, which has involved teaching the norms of business and society to future managers.

Universities, like the broader society, have been influenced by concepts of 'user pay services' and 'efficiency', associated with a decline in government funds and the consequent need for organisations to raise their own revenue. Smyth (1995), Reid (1996) and Marginson (1997a, 1997b) recognised that the pressures for universities to be 'market responsive' applied to the design and teaching of programs which are explicitly competing for 'full-fee' students both in Australia and offshore. Along with other academic critics, they have noted the structural constraints at the institutional level. But the pedagogical questions about the role and conduct of higher education seem to have been subsumed by the need for universities to increase their degree of economic self-sufficiency.

However, the question of how to educate managers for a complex and diverse world needs to be related to the pedagogic philosophies of higher education in the West. As universities have developed programs, such as the MBA, to educate

greater numbers of aspiring managers, it becomes more necessary to consider the business and social norms promoted by such programs. There is a strong need to articulate the values which underpin courses such as the MBA, values which academics and students relate to their personal, corporate and civic roles.

The relationship of values to management

Writers such as Coady and Sampford (1993), Collin (1996), Chakraborty (1993, 1995, 1998), Sinclair (1995a, 1995b, 1999) and Solomon (1993, 1994, 1999) have proposed that values need to be explicitly acknowledged in management education and practice. Their arguments for recognising and espousing those values which promote a 'civil society' (Cox, 1995) are consistent with the need to understand the cultural context in which education takes place. Cultural context, in this case, includes both the university norms and the dominant beliefs reflecting national aspirations, such as the earlier belief in 'nation building' as recalled by Stuart Macintyre (1999, p 5). Coming from a slightly different perspective, Michael Pusey (1991) has also contributed to this debate. His landmark study addressed two major concerns, namely the need to describe and analyse the senior bureaucrats who advised the Australian government on policy, and secondly, to address the implications of economic rationalism, structural adjustment, and public sector reform. Pusey found that the public sector elite, which he designated the *mandarins*, has been irrevocably influenced by the study of quantitatively-based economics at university. Because, he states, their studies ignored the underlying principles of economics, these bureaucrats were destined to promote policies which ignored 'nation building' considerations.

Pusey's study underscores the need to review the broad role of management education in Australian universities. In a period in which business and commerce graduates have increased power in both the government and commercial sectors, it is necessary to understand the assumptions and philosophical underpinnings on which these programs are based. Pusey (1991) contends that the study of

economics may lead to a decline in cooperation, a contention which raises similar questions regarding how MBA educators and students would see the influence of subjects taught in the program.

Competition and individualism

Changes in education parallel changes in business – both its conduct and the language used to describe it. The diverse writings of researchers and social critics such as Ralston Saul (1993, 1997), Hutton (1996), Giddens (1990, 1991, 1999) and Hall (1988), imply that the currently accepted conventions of business practice disregard the least privileged and facilitate what Galbraith (1992) has called the 'culture of contentment'. In describing how American socio-political processes are producing an increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, Galbraith (1992, pp13-15) highlights that those in the top 20 percent of income control the democratic process. This control leads to social policy reflecting only the needs of the rich, which, in turn, promotes an increasingly polarised society. The underlying assumptions, as noted by Galbraith, are that the affluent have gained their position through hard work and intelligence, while poverty results from laziness or foolishness; that governments should not formulate long-term policies; and that, consequently, government bureaucracies should shrink so as not to waste public monies by pursuing ill-advised philosophies. Galbraith (1992, p107) describes 'the quiet theology of laissez-faire' by which the rich absolve themselves of personal responsibility. Through a process of social segregation, individualism and competition are seen as the dual philosophies which determine social place. The whole system is typified as one which ignores any sense of responsibility towards the poor, as well as denigrating civic awareness and its consequent responsibilities.

Galbraith, along with others including Amartya Sen (1987), recognises the fundamental significance of the works of Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations*

31

(published 1776) celebrated 'the invisible hand' of competition. Smith's metaphor for an unfettered market-place was seen to underpin increased opportunities for all, to encourage the creation and distribution of goods and services, and consequently to bring about a group who would become the new middle class. But both Galbraith and Sen argue that many modern economists have failed to respect the moral principles which underpinned Smith's advocacy of free market principles.

Ralston Saul, in common with Galbraith, criticises the increased power of the rich, especially transnational corporations, as being detrimental to democracy. His Massey lectures (1997) and writings (1993, 1995) demonstrate his desire to promote doubt. He believes that citizens should not give up their responsibility to 'experts' and individuals need to maintain their critical capacities. An important aspect of his argument relies on his positive interpretation of individualism, a theme worth exploring within the MBA:

> Now the very essence of corporatism is minding your own business. And the very essence
> of individualism is not to mind your own business. This is not a particularly pleasant or
> easy style of life ... Criticism is perhaps the citizen's primary weapon in the exercise of her
> legitimacy. That is why in this corporatist society, loyalty and silence are so admired and
> rewarded; why criticism is so punished or marginalised (Ralston Saul, 1996, pp 169-170).

Ralston Saul conceives abstract individuals in whom the personal and the political merge; this conception of a hybrid self underpins democracy. In his understanding of individualism, a person's primary identity rests with empowering the nation through the democratic process; only individual democrats can unselfishly argue for the good of all. He derides individuals who have traded democratic dignity for the 'baubles' of corporate power (1993, pp 13, 29, and 33). Despite the West's professed belief in individualism, Ralston Saul declares that the rationality of the French Enlightenment has become perverted, conformist and politically apathetic. He portrays a world where critical thought has given way to the 'ideology of corporatism', in which professionals or experts negotiate corporate rather than civic interests (Saul, 1995, pp 74-76).

In his eyes, democracy has degenerated because corporatist ideas promote specialisation. As specialist knowledge is given greater significance, only 'experts' have the authority to hold opinions and to criticise (1993, p 29). In addition, as amorphous shareholders own publicly listed companies, senior executives work primarily to increase shareholder wealth. Ralston Saul sees this goal making corporate employees mute (1993, p 29). Corporatism is presented as substituting material symbols for independent critical thought, which is presented as the essence of individualism. As a result, the state comes to be run by ongoing negotiations between various corporations. Ralston Saul sees MBA programs fuelling corporatism by promoting a distorted form of individualism, based on material acquisition not democratic pursuits.

This understanding of individualism is similar to that of Alain Finkielkraut, a French political philosopher, who argues that political equality before the law must depend on a philosophy of nationhood in which individuals choose to be citizens. Finkielkraut describes the French Revolution as elevating citizenship to the highest consideration, previously 'reserved for God' (Finkielkraut, 1995, p15). They argue that all individuals have rights and corresponding duties and that democracy is under attack from elites, including MBA graduates, whose beliefs erode civic-minded individualism.

Finkielkraut[8] mirrors Ralston Saul's argument that the empowerment of exclusive groups denigrates the individualism which underpins democracy. This non-materialistic form of individualism is different from that typically associated with the MBA and raises questions about how those involved in this form of management education understand individualism.

The MBA and corporate responsibility

---

[8] Finkielkraut had briefly supported Jewish political causes, but ceased this after deciding that any diminution of abstract individualism could harm the democratic state.

Discussing how business people, including MBAs, reflect on their sense of personal and corporate responsibility, Max Charlesworth, from the perspective of a philosopher, noted:

> ... most business people have a high sense of personal morality and of professional morality, but many view the attempt to introduce ethical considerations directly into business decisions and activities as totally quixotic. Young executives on MBA courses that I have lectured to have said, in effect, that if one attempted to do business in this way one would smartly go out of business ...
>
> In the case study method, much beloved of the Harvard MBA program, issues of business morality are often presented in such a way that the student is brought to see that a certain business practice is unethical, but he or she is also reminded that the attempt to act according to strict ethical principles often leads to paradoxical results (Charlesworth, 1993, p 193).

Charlesworth recalls C P Snow's thesis about the inability of the 'two cultures', namely science and humanities, to communicate with each other. However, in this case the distinction relates to the rift between practitioners in health or rural environmental management and the 'ethical theorists'. Charlesworth does not doubt the goodness of many business people, but he associates their memberships of various sub-cultures with an inability to canvass problematic ethical issues (ibid, p187). He characterises ethical discussion as operating within a different sub-culture from that occupied by, in this case, MBA students. His comments reflect Etzioni's claim that the 'regular [MBA] program embodies hidden assumptions of which even the professor may be unaware' (Etzioni, 1989, p18). Charlesworth attributes the ethical gap to those from different sub-cultures failing to communicate with each other. Etzioni attributes it to the inability and disinclination of many 'business schools' faculties' and their students, to critique the implicit values, normally relating to competition, inherent in MBA courses.

A language of social responsibility

Another writer Sinclair, an academic teaching MBAs, reflects Ralston Saul's concerns that managers are unable to verbalise ethical issues:

> My argument is not that managerial ethics are dead but that they have been anaesthetised, or more accurately taken out of the vocabulary and language of management ideology. Managers have been seduced and captured by a way of talking about the world that

Staff List - School of Law

Surname	Name	Title	Position	Phone	Location
Arup	Chris	A. Prof	Visit. Fellow	9688 **4495**	FP-A336c
Andrews	Neil	Prof.	Professor	9688 **5205**	FP - A336e
Beattie	Scott	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **4784**	FP-A326d
Box	Gerry	Mr.	Lecturer	9216 **8275** 9688 **4557**	WB-32.42 FP-A339b
Fu	Jane J.	Ms	Lecturer	9688 **4345**	FP - A336a
Henry	Ian	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **5366**	FP- A339e
James	Stephen	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **5202**	FP - A326c
Limon	Cressida	Ms.	Lecturer	9688 **5204**	FP-A326a
Longo	Michael	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **4634**	FP - A326b
McQueen	*Robert*	*Prof.*	*Head of School*	*9688 **5339***	*FP - A316*
Mitchell	Vanessa	Ms	Sen. Lecturer	9688 **4318**	FP-A308
Parker	David	Mr.	Sen. Lecturer	9688 **5365**	FP - A339d
Posthouwer	Marc	Mr	Lecturer	9688 **4374**	FP - A339c
Raff	Murray	Dr.	Sen. Lecturer	9688 **5203**	FP - A336d
Rangelov	Jim	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **4660**	20 Geelong Rd
Robertson	Su	Ms.	Research Officer	9688 **4661**	20 Geelong Rd
Saxon	Rolf	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **4491**	FP-A339a
Stewart	Brendon	Mr.	Lecturer	9218 **3404** 9688 **5268**	SB-8-213 FP - A310
Tanner	Edwin	Dr.		(On Leave)	
Tham	Joo-Cheong	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **5201**	FP- A326e
Tsingos	Peter	Mr.		(On Leave)	
Veljanovski	Angelo	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **4642**	FP-A312
Wade	Jan	Prof.	Distinguished Visiting Professor	9688 **5309**	FP - G4.57
Zeller	Bruno	Mr.	Lecturer	9688 **5352**	FP - A339f

School facsimile number x5066

Administration Staff

Palamara	Nancy	Ms.	Administration	9688 **5359**	FP - A314
Blackmore	Susan	Ms.	Administration	9688 **5083**	FP - A314
Cammans	Bernadine	Ms.	Immigration Law Administration	9688 **5378**	FP - A319a

SB = Sunbury   **FP** = Footscray Park   **CF** = City Flinders   **WB** = Werribee

20 Geelong Road is the School of Law Annex, 100m from the Footscray Park Campus along Geelong Rd

> upholds certainties and censors doubts, that applauds economic pragmatism and casts
> ethical reflection as sentimentalism. ... the dominant economic discourse has made it
> increasingly difficult for managers to express moral ideas or a moral point of view
> (Sinclair, 1999, p 12).

Sinclair highlights the need for a language of social morality which is appropriate for management students and practitioners. She declares her 'unfashionable' belief that MBAs desire management 'tools' which will allow them to perceive alternative possibilities, alternatives based on moral sensibilities (op cit, p17). Solomon (1993, pp 36-41) advocates Aristotelian 'Virtue Ethics' as an ethical language appropriate for pluralistic and secular societies. The Virtue Ethics prioritise *civitas,* that spirit of being a citizen, of placing a concern for the group, the state, above one's own personal needs. Solomon holds that if corporate roles provide power and prestige, individuals must also accept the responsibilities resulting from that employment. He argues for a personalised civic identity which is based on corporate, as much as on individual identity. Solomon's perspective critiques Jackall's perspective (1988) that corporations are 'moral mazes' which disorient their employees and also Friedman's notion of minimal individual responsibility based on compliance with the law. Solomon states:

> I can no longer accept the amoral idea that 'business is business' (not a tautology but an
> excuse for insensitivity) (Solomon, 1993, p 31).

The quote 'business is business' explicitly refers to Friedman's highly influential arguments on the subject of business and social responsibility:

> In a free enterprise, private property system, a corporate executive is an employee of the
> owners of the business. He has direct responsibility to his employers. That responsibility
> is to conduct the business in accordance with their desires, which generally will be to make
> as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of society, both those
> embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom.

> Of course, the corporate executive is also a person in his own right. As a person he may
> have many other responsibilities ... if we wish, we can refer to some of these
> responsibilities as 'social responsibilities'. But in these respects he is acting as a principle,
> not an agent ... If these are 'social responsibilities' they are the social responsibilities of
> individuals, not of business (Friedman, in *The New York Times Magazine,* 13 September,
> 1970, quoted in Solomon, 1992, p 272).

Friedman's philosophy influenced the political ideology of government espoused by Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA, and both sides of government in Australia.

From the 1970s onwards, the market and competition were given almost mythic significance. In the business domain, the pursuit of profit is presented as the major justification for business decisions, while the academic business ethos seemingly promotes Friedman's belief in law as the primary foundation of ethical values. Australians writing on public sector management, such as Bryson (1986), Considine (1988, 1990, 1991), Pusey (1991) and Yeatman (1990), critically highlighted the risks of pursuing policies based on narrowly defined economic premises. Marginson's studies of Australian higher education (1997a, 1997b) broadly critiqued the effects of managerialism and competition policy. Marginson recognised a debt to Stuart Hall's 'New Times project' which aimed 'to make better sense of the world, and on that basis to realign the Left with that new world' (Hall and Jacques (eds), 1989, p11). This approach is recalled by Stephen Ball's (1994) sociological study of the changes in British secondary education policies which critically analysed the increased reliance on market forces and managerialist practices. Ball associated these changes with the loss of 'civic virtue' in a pluralistic society. These writers sought to re-establish values as part of the debate about the role of governments, the provision of services and the identity of citizens. This perspective was supported by Edward Said, who held that the capacity for debate safeguards essential political processes. Balance within and between societies is maintained by debate between a group of 'intellectuals' possessing rigour, distance, passion and courage (Said, 1994, p 79). Sinclair (1999) is a major Australian academic who has analysed management education and the MBA from this perspective.

The underlying values of the MBA can be analysed using language and culture (including sub-cultures) as well as the processes and practices of individuals, organisations and societies. If language, as Hall states, is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in culture, then it is

central to the production of meaning (Hall (ed), 1997, p1). Thus Ball's use of the expression 'civic virtue' links him to writers including Solomon (1992, 1993, 1999), MacIntyre (1981) and Taylor (1991) who have reinterpreted Aristotle's Virtue Ethics as a bridge over the cultural and language divides created by business practice in secular and pluralistic societies. In a distinct, but related, way, the title of Richardson's paper, 'Economics: Hegemonic Discourse' discloses that he is critical of 'economic correctness', but it also recognises that because economics is sanctioned as 'the "in" language [it] provides constant reassurance that one is on the side of the angels' (Richardson, 1997, p 52).

The MBA and values

Expectations based on the above writers indicate that any discussion of values in the context of the MBA would be complex and possibly divisive. One characteristic of culture is its invisibility. It is not a set of explicit rules, but a practice which is learnt over time so that it becomes second nature, described as 'software of the mind' by Hofstede (1991, p 4) or by Bourdieu as a 'habitas', namely 'a system of permanent and transferable dispositions ... [which collectively serves to transfer] practices and images ... without a conductor' (Bourdieu, 1980, translated by Hofstede, cited in above p 18).

The contexts in which graduate MBA students including those from China and India will operate, raise the need to analyse the values implicit in Western management education. Such analysis, combined with a range of non-business studies, could assist management educators to devise more culturally and socially appropriate MBA programs. Post-modernism has influenced the study of literature, history, philosophy and sociology, and promoted an increased questioning of the Enlightenment's faith in rationality from the late sixties (Stephens, 1998, p100). Solomon comments that:

> Postmodernism in philosophy is an attack not only on the pretensions, but also on the premises and presuppositions of modernism: its expansive sense of self, its confidence in our knowledge, its a priori assurance that all people, everywhere, are ultimately like us (Solomon, 1988, p 196).

Post-modern theories recognise the complexity of the world. Feminist and post-colonial studies allow the least powerful to demonstrate the negative aspects of 'progress'. These include issues of justice about the distribution of goods, services, wealth and employment, as well as concerns about equity, sustainability and development. As a result of empowering those who had previously been silenced, progress could no longer be seen as the singular goal of a linear and logically evolving process. National development, seen through a post-modern approach, presents a complex quilt of meaning, in which any one act holds diverse significance and importance.

The Post-Enlightenment Project as pursued by Said (1993) and Ralston Saul (1993, 1997) questions whether rationality can alone resolve personal, social and political problems. In this reading of history, the Reformation and Enlightenment promoted the transition from anonymous conformity to individualistic free thought. These changes, in shattering the necessity of dogma, increasingly promoted intellectual interpretations of the world, rather than those based on intuition, emotion or a belief in transcendence[9]. The belief in rationality nourished liberals such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Weber's interpretation of the Protestant Ethic (see Carroll, 1998, pp 4, 88). It inverted the idea that work was a punishment. For many, the pursuit of mercantile success ceased to provoke spiritual tensions. The ideas behind the intellectual revolution which accompanied the industrial age were that a new-found productivity promoted through free markets, would increase justice and equity. However, many now argue that the swing has gone too far; that rationality, based on a fear of dogma, has caused decision makers to denigrate the immeasurable aspects of life. The end of the twentieth century, according to Carroll, has seen the Enlightenment become sterile. He argues that rationality has failed by denying passion, along with those other emotional, ethical and aesthetic inclinations which make us human. Having carried the West so far, the fruit of the

---

[9] This argument is derived from writers including Carroll (1998) and Ralston Saul (1993).

Enlightenment appears insufficient to sustain future human, spiritual and biological needs.

New solutions require independent thinking. Increasingly, critics of competition policy are arguing for answers which acknowledge complexity within each individual and consequently in society. They have recognised that those models which describe the ordered and ideal nature of markets may deny the factors which make life worthwhile. So, perhaps, it is no surprise that the re-acknowledgment of complexity has coincided with the work of those who want to re-affirm the central importance of society.

Social capital and social responsibility

Eva Cox's Boyer lectures (1995) promoted the concept of 'social capital' within Australia. Her broadcast of these ideas empowered those who also wished to criticise the dominance of economic theory in shaping the future. Eva Cox's central argument is best summed up in her own words:

> We need to build a store of trust and goodwill as part of our social capital – a collective term for the ties that bind us. ... An accumulation of social capital enhances our quality of life and provides the base for the development of financial and human capital. With an adequate level of social capital we can enjoy the benefits of a truly civil society (Cox, 1995, p 11).

Her aim was to re-invoke a concept of society which promoted shared visions of social activities, ranging from education to artistic pursuits. The Cox lectures reflected Pusey's (1991) concerns about the dangers of a narrow financial focus. She applied Robert Putnam's research into Italian organisations which indicated that societies were sustained by cooperation:

> A conception of one's role and obligations as a citizen, coupled with a commitment to political equality, is the cultural cement of the civil community (Putnam, R, *Making Democracy Work: civic traditions in modern Italy*, quoted in Cox, 1995, p 20).

39

Social capital is promoted as a key to the future of Australian life. Cox wants to reclaim 'civic virtue as a collective rather than an individual manifestation of a truly civil society'. She, along with others such as Theobald (1987, 1997, 1999) and Etzioni (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996), argue that the pursuit of personal gain through competition is destructive to society. Etzioni states that 'communitarian thinking and practice' is based on 'seeking and maintaining the balance between individual rights and social responsibilities' (Etzioni, 1995, p 121). Etzioni, who criticised the lack of values in MBA education (1989), aims 'to strengthen the bonds that tie people to one another, enabling them to overcome isolation and alienation' (1995, Preface, p iii).

An approach for 'reworking' the world, propelled by values, to make people realise that economics and technology do not 'override everything else' was promoted by Theobald (1997, pp 48-61,115). Prior to his death in 1999, he argued against the pursuit of maximum profitability, globalisation and international competition. But his project[10] aimed to convince ordinary citizens that their goodness and energy is the only solution to otherwise insurmountable problems. For Cox, the goal of a 'truly civil society' is at odds with the idea that people are essentially selfish and self-centred. She, like Etzioni and Theobald, believes that humankind is motivated by more than economics, because human beings value the esteem of others. Cox's Boyer lectures aimed to encourage recognition of influences other than the 'market forces and competition which divide us'. Thus, these writers, in advocating a cooperative, inclusive values-based approach, can be seen as being at odds with the stated aims of the MBA. Community provides another focus for exploring the values espoused by academics and students.

Cox can be seen as one of the 'public intellectuals' who are motivated to maintain and develop a civil society. Both Walter (1996) and Pusey (1991), in common

---

[10] Theobald promoted alternatives to the current preoccupation with economic solutions. He was influenced by Charles Handy, Jeremy Rifkin and others writing on the future of work, the environment and social cohesion.

with Manne (1992)[11] and Carroll (1998) criticise government policies conceptualised largely in terms of competition and market forces. James Walter identifies civil society as the foundation of a meaningful life. He, in common with Cox and Putnam, praises cooperative and social activities which unite human beings. For Walter, 'the idea of the nation has always been tied to the idea of the citizen' (1996, p 113). He states that citizenship requires an inclusive vision of Australian national identity. Taking a more global focus, Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann warn that a world predicated on only 20 percent having good jobs threatens democracy, social justice and civil society (Martin and Schumann, 1997). They argue that national governments must seek to protect the least privileged from the excesses of globalism.

Reflecting on a lifetime of social criticism, Richard Rorty (1998) rues the loss of the values which characterised the social protests of the 1960s[12]. For Rorty, the 'hippy' revolution degenerated into self-serving conservatism, promoting a materialistic world where personal responsibility was split from public activity. He accuses political and economic leaders of abandoning ideals regarding gender, class, ethnicity, region, and religion. Julie Stephens criticises those who ignore the 'profound changes' which flowed from the 1960s, whether 'concrete' ones relating to 'sexuality, work or authority', or those 'in the ethical and aesthetic domains' (Stephens, 1998, p 120). By reinterpreting 'sixties radicalism as an ongoing aspect of nineties sensibilities', Stephens adds to the debate about the role of values in civic life, and also counters Rorty's dispirited claim that materialism has depleted commitment to positive change.

Civil society and education

The above demonstrates how 'public intellectuals' relate values to civic life. In seeking to understand the MBA, it is necessary to explore how academics apply

---

[11] Manne's article 'The rift in conservative politics' shows this former editor of Quadrant as conservative rather than left wing in his social commentaries.
[12] Rorty criticised those intellectuals who withdrew to develop high theory after the victory of Richard Nixon and stopped espousing public ethics after the Vietnam War.

these values to higher education. In addition to Marginson's (1993, 1997a, 1997b) critical analysis of the effect of managerialism, corporatism and competition on the university sector, the comments of a retired dean of arts convey a personal dimension:

> Surely the essence of the university is its creative individualism and its collegiality, its attachment to such basic values as honesty, truth or truth-seeking and diversity ...? And doesn't this creative difference, this effervescent and continuous argument, which respects opponents, include difference and argument over the role of the university? Unfortunately this is no longer true, if it ever was. ... The enemies of academic freedom come increasingly from within the universities, with the attack commonly couched in a tough-sounding, shallow managerialism (Duncan, in James (ed), 2000, pp 55-56).

Graeme Duncan recognises changes brought about by the changing relationship between universities and government, but also sees the individual implications:

> The [universities'] failure to sufficiently acknowledge and respect legitimate anxiety has bad effects. Academics who care about their university often become defeatist, depressed and more private, and look away from the larger issues concerning the health of their institution, though they may continue the pursuit of scholarly excellence. But they don't want to be active, they don't even want to be noticed, in their own institution (op cit, p 61).

Duncan's comments reflect mounting criticism of university attempts to curtail academic freedom. He shares Manne's condemnation of university interventions such as when in 'July 1998 Melbourne University Press vetoed the publication of a book concerning universities' or, when Monash 'threatened to evict a retired professor ... [for publicly] speaking ... against the withdrawal of funds for the study of the humanities' or, suspended an academic member of university council from Victoria University's e-mail service for 'sharp[ly] criticis[ing]' the university's lease of a corporate box to his colleagues (Manne, 2000, p 18).

These academic critics can be seen as clearly stating values about how universities should pursue their social and civic responsibilities. In a world where narrative is used to convey multiple histories, should one be tempted to side with Rorty's claim that civic values no longer underpin conceptions of desirable social action? If every story, or interpretation, is as valid or arguable as any other interpretation, to what extent can there be a recourse to universals? Hall's theories of culture, identity and domains help to clarify how individuals see

themselves. How do those academics, described by Duncan as becoming increasingly private and denying any responsibility 'for the health of their institutions', reflect on their own values in the privacy of self? How do academics and students characterise their capacities to pursue non-self-interested goals?

These questions tap beliefs about what society should be like, and also about spirituality and meaning in life. Relating these concerns to the vocational education of diverse students in a secular society is complex and potentially divisive. Although she raises this topic in a subtle, almost allusive, way, Stephens believes that discussion about social values and responsibility should recognise spiritual issues (1998, p126). In contrast, Carroll openly addresses the relationship of spirituality to personal identity and socially-held values. For him, spirituality is the foundation from which issues of values arise. In *Ego and Soul* (1998), he explores ways of conceptualising how secular Australians can find meaning after humanism has failed them. He argues that those living in Western countries are seeking to balance material or ego satisfaction with transcendent or spiritual experience, because they have recognised that each 'human being has to have something higher than himself to obey' (1998, p 7).

Within the context of this search for meaning, Carroll charts the rise and fall of the Western university from its medieval Christian foundations, through the Enlightenment, to the nineteenth century when knowledge was idealised, to the emphasis of vocationalism in the twentieth century (1998, pp 104-08). He describes 'the story of the modern university' influenced by a 'Nietzschean shadow' as 'more one of fateful inevitability than of irresponsible teachers' (op cit p 117). In his view, the West's pursuit of comfort, aided by the rationality of science, has produced a weak, 'mediocre' and 'frustrated' culture which is reflected in its universities.

So how does Carroll propose addressing this decline in culture? In common with Ralston Saul, Carroll recognises the powerful heritage of Calvinism. The bulk of

people, in Carroll's view, are still guided by the Protestant notion of individual conscience and of work as vocation which was 'one aspect of the secularisation of worship'.

Carroll argues that soul, the transcendental aspect of the human, is disempowered without death[13]. Ego, the aspect of self which seeks gratification through material consumption, can never be satisfied (op cit, p6). His argument parallels Robert Jackall's (1988) portrayal of corporations as 'moral mazes' where individuals experience 'a Calvinist world without a Calvinist God' (Jackall, 1988, p 193). In contrast to this nihilistic view, Carroll argues that a spiritual framework can restore both hope and meaning to the soulless humanism of late 1990s Australian society, and education.

Despite the secularism espoused by Western education, various well-regarded management writers acknowledge what Carroll has typified as soul. For example, Charles Handy (1998) in *The Hungry Spirit*, discusses how those involved in business should seek 'purpose' and 'a more transcendent view of life'. Handy reflects a hope based on the recognition of human relationships:

> ... the certainty that we are most fully ourselves when we lose ourselves in our concern for others, or in a cause which is greater than we are. We were wrong to have put our faith in an undiluted ideology of self-interest when we should have trusted our humanity more than the system (Handy, 1998, p 264).

Other titles include *Reawakening the Spirit in Work* by Jack Hawley (1994) where significant management questions are portrayed as having spiritual answers. In *Principle Centered Leadership*, Steven Covey espoused a Jungian notion of the collective unconscious, in which 'God is the true name and source' (1992, p 324). Such writers emphasise the need to have 'meaningful, philosophical principles as a sound foundation for successful business enterprises' (Valecha, 1999, p 595). The query remains whether these books, and others such as those by Allen Cox (1996) and Lance Secretan (1996) focus on

---

[13] Carroll rejects the Freudian conception of soul as a psychological illusion for Jung's belief that the soul connects to 'eternal higher truth – which is not illusory' (1998, p6).

44

corporate performance or on the human integrity of staff. Many writers seem to be striving towards what Carroll describes as 'the sacred beyond' everyday reality. It is important to judge whether this increasing recognition of soul in management writing is a move towards humanising the corporate world or a way to increase efficiency.

Carroll criticises the 'failure of the optimistic liberal-humanist world view', and the 'threat' which he sees posed by 'individuals withdrawing into themselves, not engaged in life, frail of ego, weak of desire, faithful to very little' (Carroll, 1998, p 227). He aims to address these shortcomings by speaking the unspeakable. While his comments recall Duncan's (2000) characterisation of 'defeated', 'depressed' and 'private' university staff, by acknowledging the influence of the transcendental, Carroll becomes more optimistic.

Is there space for religion in MBA programs taught within culturally diverse societies? The fear of divisiveness is strong in a society such as Australia, which has been formed by waves of migration influenced by various religions. The fear of proselytising could constrain academics from raising spiritual issues. Civil society promotes calm rational thought based on debate and critique.

However, the influence of Robert Greenleaf, a major American writer on management leadership, demonstrates that an individual with a strong spiritual commitment can be admired in and beyond corporate and academic worlds. He described his life's work as studying and teaching 'how things get done in organised efforts' (Greenleaf, 1998, p 113). His core concept of 'servant leadership' derives from his belief in the human 'spirit', namely the 'animating force in living beings [which] is value free'. However, he adds that 'putting value into it makes it religious'. Greenleaf does not promote a specific religious adherence, but one which integrates the individual's life experiences. To quote his words on religiously-motivated, or values-inspired, leadership:

> I am a creature of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which I grew up, as modified by the
> Quaker portion of that tradition that I acquired after maturity. I cannot judge how I would
> have addressed the subject of religious leading if I had been raised in another culture, or if

45

> my life experience had been different than what it was; but I am quite sure that I would have a different view of it. What is written here is written in the hope that no person will exclude themselves from consideration of the issues raised because of their religious beliefs or their biases about leadership (Greenleaf, 1998, p 112).

The predominant value espoused by this long-term A T & T manager, and influential theorist, is that managers lead from a sense of serving those beneath them. In other words, he promoted the idea that leadership had ethical consequences. Leaders should aim to 'build and sustain a good society by their work'. The concept of values is integral to Greenleaf's idea of leadership. He also recognised that leadership plays a role throughout organisations and society, not just at the top.

Some management writers have related values to social contexts. Hofstede questioned the universal applicability of management theory in relation to specific social and management concepts (1993, 1998), having previously developed universal models to compare management styles across cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Only a minority of management theorists has questioned the structure of management education programs. Mintzberg contended, specifically in relation to the teaching of business strategy (1990), that national and cultural context was an essential element of learning. This perspective prompted him to jointly develop an international MBA program where teaching aimed to incorporate national and cultural understandings. He distinguishes between business (finance) and management (leadership and motivating people), arguing that business education requires both:

> The MBA has always been extremely strong on the business side and anywhere from marginal to dreadful on the management side (Balasubramanian, 1998, p 165).

Mintzberg expressed dread at the prospect of America, around 2010, with 'a million MBAs, a million people who have been trained to lead (op cit, p 168). He developed the International Masters Programme in Practising Management [IMPM] as 'a new model of management education which focuses on learning by doing, where classroom education is a small part and is used for reflection and conceptualisation based on the experience of doing things in one's own

organisation'(Reddy, 1998, p 134).   Mintzberg decried the 'functional chimneys' approach to management education, in which students are taught isolated courses in different disciplines such as marketing, finance and accounting, in a way which makes them responsible for integrating their MBA studies (op cit, p 133). Taken together, these various perspectives cause one to reflect on the role the MBA plays regarding human principles, intellectual courage and cultural sensitivity.

These questions address issues of personal identity, including values, and consequently religious and spiritual beliefs. Greenleaf promoted the idea of servant leadership, that is, that leaders should serve not only those beneath them, but also society. The concepts of values and spirituality are integral to how Greenleaf envisaged leadership in business. His framework for relating values, responsibility and management practice provides a reference point accepted by both academics and business practitioners.

A focus on values raises questions as to whether MBA education encourages individuals to relate the private to the public, the personal to the corporate and the corporate to the civic. When considering education, it is important to analyse how a course is taught and the extent to which students are encouraged to criticise its content.

The thesis argument

This thesis analyses the MBA in the light of Ralston Saul's claim that 'corporate' language dominates business and society. It interrogates his contention that beliefs about 'certainty', allied with 'efficiency', have anaesthetised citizens. Ralston Saul argues that this language promotes selfishness, disguised as economic pragmatism, and has dominated social and political debate to the detriment of Western democratic process. His assertion provides a perspective for exploring how values are recognised and discussed within the MBA.

An exploration of certainty within the academic sphere provides insights into how management educators perceive their social and civic responsibilities. It allows for an investigation of how both MBA students and staff relate their civic responsibilities to a sense of personal identity. In other words, this thesis seeks to explore whether the experience of learning and teaching management theory is compatible with publicly expressing personally-held values. Were those involved in this study able to develop, integrate and discuss values while studying and teaching management? Or were their critical capacities disabled, as implied by Ralston Saul's image of 'the unconscious society'? An aim was to relate his conception of the 'anaesthetising' quality of the MBA to the positive analysis of writers including Shelley (1997), Sinha (1989), Schmotter (1997), Krause (1997), Sinclair and Hintz, (1991), Ainsworth and Morley (1993) and McKern (1997).

Hall's concept of language as the 'discursive practice', through which individuals both describe and create themselves, provides a way to address these questions. Considering language in this way provides a multiple focus, namely of the MBA itself, of the country in which the teaching occurred, and of the cultural aspects of personal identity. Hall's understanding of 'domains', as discrete opportunities where conflicting aspects of personal identity are negotiated, also affords a way of considering how diverse students and staff experienced the values associated with the MBA.

Values are a key aspect of this research as demonstrated by the previous analysis which contrasts, for example, the business pragmatism of writers such as Friedman, with those who espouse a belief in civil society, including Solomon, Cox and Pusey. This focus on values can be interpreted according to writers ranging from Marginson, Sinclair, Macintyre, Pusey and Cox, to Mintzberg, Solomon, Greenleaf and Carroll; the emerging themes range across pedagogy, nation building and civil society, management theory and cultural context, virtue ethics, spiritual leadership and spirituality. Systems of managing organisations can be conceptualised through a focus on gender, as suggested by writers including Sinclair and Clegg (1997) or, via a perspective on culture, seen

according to Hall. The central concern of this thesis is how MBA students and teaching staff conceptualised the interconnections between the values inherent in the program and the values which they espoused as individuals. This research approach raises related concerns such as the distinctions made by individual academics and students between public and private domains, and the extent to which business education did, or should, promote discussion of civic issues.

These questions are contextualised against the present discussion about identity, citizenship and social responsibility. In summary, this research on the MBA produced five discrete perspectives: namely, (a) from within a university process, as an experience imbued with (b) both cultural, and, (c) gendered overtones, (d) as having civic ramifications associated with its business goals and public education context, and, finally, (e) as an arena where individuals confronted and created their sense of self. This approach explores different attitudes and beliefs including the expressed desire of MBA students to succeed as managers. The academic experience of the MBA provided insight into the implicit values of specific disciplines and how academics and researchers perceived teaching. It also raised pedagogic issues such as the relationship of the MBA program to the tradition of higher education, given changes such as the introduction of full-fee and international students and an increased vocational focus. Marginson, Sinclair and others raise concerns about the need to link academic and social responsibilities. These responsibilities can either be conceptualised as an aspect of the public university world (Marginson) or an individual's personal search for meaning (Carroll). Within a larger framework, Ralston Saul's contention that the MBA program promotes a singular sense of certainty invites comparison with Collin's characterisation of it as 'Babel', a complex experience open to multiple interpretations.

The diversity of the students and staff involved in the MBA program provided a rich context to explore culture and practices. Culture can be conceptualised as the ideas, beliefs and behaviours promoted by a country or organisation. Hall's perspective on culture provides a focus to explore how the MBA was

experienced, given the diverse backgrounds of those associated with it. Other management theorists, such as Hofstede, provide cross-cultural insights into how the MBA's American origin relates to the country in which it is taught.

Considering the MBA through the filter of gender raises feminist theories of style and practice as related to management theory and the MBA. This perspective raises questions about how MBA students and teachers conceptualised the program overall, as well as subjects and concepts which related to how managers should manage.

The values underpinning civil society, as promoted by Cox, provide a way of interlinking the MBA with positive social responsibility. This focus is related to how the MBA considered issues such as trust, cooperation and social justice against the more typical business concerns of competition, consumerism, globalism and the pursuit of profit. This approach recognises the tensions associated with promoting business theory within a public university system which is said to espouse the virtues of rationality and 'intellectual integrity' (Carroll, 1998, p 114).

These themes involved how those within the MBA perceived their individual identities. Post-modern writers, such as Hall, state the significance of identity in a period of fragmentation and globalisation. The university context, and the MBA, poses identity against questions of integrity, universal principles in a decentred world, the expression of ethical issues, given an individual's commitment to civic, spiritual, religious, or environmental principles.

Consequently, Ralston Saul's recognition of doubt and certainty, combined with Hall's conception that 'discursive practices' create and reflect identity, frames this discussion and analysis of the values associated with the MBA. This research characterises the program as a process experienced by diverse individuals rather than as an artefact. The MBA is explored in terms of its influence on the identity

of those who engage in it and the consequent social and civic ramifications of such influence.

Aims

This research, building on the insights gained from Collin's work (1996), anticipated that MBA students would be open to reflect upon their personal lifestyle and careers, as well as civic aspirations, and, similarly, that the academics involved in this program would discuss their teaching in terms of both social and business objectives. The thesis provides a 'snap shot' of the MBA - as experienced by its teachers and students during 1995-97 when questions were being raised about the national and international implications of social, economic and environmental changes. There is no expectation that statements made then would necessarily be repeated by subsequent groups. The research aimed to relate the values held by specific individuals to their experience of the program and their sense of personal identity and civic responsibility. A multi-disciplinary approach was chosen in order to understand how individuals who taught or studied the MBA integrated that experience with their personally-held values. Central to the thesis was an exploration of whether the MBA experience coincided with a rise or fall in critical and independent thought. Discussions of how individuals associated with the program envisaged themselves provided a base from which to evaluate Ralston Saul's contention that MBA education discouraged doubt and promoted an inappropriate certainty.

Initial research was originally undertaken at a major government sponsored MBA college in North-East India in 1995, and twelve months later at both this institute and the major state university of that state. Interviews with these 18 MBA students gave insight into how the MBA related to their values and career aspirations, including that of 'citizenship' (Siemensma, 1996, 1999). Analysis of the themes which emerged from these interviews helped to identify key dimensions and concepts for exploration in the wider study of MBA programs at the three Australian universities. The research approach adopted in this thesis

51

employs qualitative methods to explore how specific students and staff associated with the MBA, interpreted their lived experiences. The language in which they expressed values was seen as a key to understand their interaction with the program.

The study – methods and techniques

Social science disciplines including ethnography, cultural, post-colonial and feminist studies underpinned this research. The interaction between students, staff and the course content in a postgraduate program will always be complex. This research employed qualitative research methods to explore whether there were multiple experiences of the values associated with the MBA, and to elicit descriptions of the norms promoted by these programs. The aim was to analyse the ways in which concepts of values were addressed by both students and staff, local and overseas, including those who have worked in the public and private sectors. An explicit aspect of this process was to discover whether concepts central to the academic context were perceived to have an essential and unambiguous meaning.

The research investigated how individual students and staff related to the MBA so as to understand how their prior experience and beliefs were reflected within these programs. From the initial research, it became evident that factors including gender, age, culture, religion and work experience would influence how values were developed and held. Group discussions, adapting focus group techniques (Hurworth, 1996, Krueger, 1988), were one aspect of this approach.

The themes which emerged from the Indian MBA research (Siemensma, 1999) helped to frame what students in Australia perceived to be the core concepts in the program. Ideas which featured during the discussions with MBA students in

India plus concepts central to both management and society, including 'managerialist'[14] language and citizenship[15], were used to produce a self-administered interview schedule. The schedule was distributed to all participants in the study, prior to both group and individual interviews (see Appendix A for staff and student self-administered interview schedules). It became the basis of interactive discussions which I conducted by arrangement with the MBA subject coordinators at the three universities. Most students chosen for individual interviews clarified or amplified comments made in group discussions. Three students were specifically referred by academics responsible for the values-based subjects. The schedule used to frame staff group discussions and individual interviews was substantially the same as that used by the students.

The research methodology adapted ethnographic techniques, including those used in educational research, to encourage discussion. Focus group methods (Hurworth, 1996, Krueger, 1988) aided in collecting and analysing data in the context of MBA teaching seminars and staff discussion groups. The Australian data was collected during 1997. Group discussions involved either students or staff, not the two together. As the person facilitating the student groups, I was known to have no responsibility for assessment or the overall control of these subjects. The group discussions with both students and staff were audio-taped with a research assistant taking notes to facilitate the transcribing of comments. This allowed specific ideas to be attributed to individuals.

The students were categorised as belonging to one of three distinct groups. In chronological terms, the first group was the Indian MBA students interviewed in India, whose comments underpinned the interview schedule developed in Australia. These students are referred to as (In 1-18). All MBA students interviewed in Australia are referred to as (A1-121). Those interviewed in Australia are differentiated as Australian citizens, or permanent residents in

---

[14] Managerialism focuses on efficiency and has strong structuralist associations. It is a key theme which this research sought to explore. It represents management theory as value neutral, basing business on the maximisation of shareholder wealth (see chapter 1).
[15] This concept is discussed and developed in chapter 1.

contrast to those on a student visas. Students described in the thesis as, say, Chinese, Indian or Thai are marked as international students who had typically studied their undergraduate degrees outside Australia. Comparisons with the MBA students in India are made explicit and typically come after the Australian-based material.

The method adopted was based on the following:

i.   *Sampling strategies*: staff involved with the MBA at the three Australian universities. In brief, twenty-six academics, responsible for course management, compulsory subjects, and major electives were interviewed in Australia (method detailed below). Ten class-based student discussions were run across the three Australian universities which included all students enrolled in a values-based MBA subject. In two programs this was a compulsory subject; in the third, it was an elective. Of the 143 MBA Australian students involved in the research, 92 provided in depth group and individual material. In India, individual and group interviews were undertaken with 18 MBA students at two universities, and with fifteen staff at three Indian universities.

ii.   *Structuring of discussions:* guided discussions with either individuals or groups sought personal responses and understandings of the self-administered interview schedule (see Appendix A).

iii. *Size of groups*: group discussions involved five to fifteen people (for more detail see above The study – methods and techniques).

iv.   *Direct observation*: personal notes reflected perceptions of atmosphere, practices, or grounds for further questions.

All the material collected, including group and individual interviews, was categorised into broad themes. Ethnographic techniques (see Marcus, 1986 and

Geertz, 1973, 1995) justified greater emphasis being given to the more textured information provided by some participants[16].

The overall framing and analysis of the material uses a method broadly adapted from the writings of Marcus and Geertz. This style of research has been adopted for extensive use in educational research (Halpin and Troyna, 1994, Robinson, 1994, Woods, 1986, Van Manen, 1990). The aim was to relate professed understandings beyond MBA study to the personal, professional and civic lives of those who were interviewed. It was anticipated that the stories of those students and staff who most fully addressed the importance of values would provide a greater depth to the research. This reflects Max van Manen's (1990, p 67) description of ethnography as 'researching lived experience' by 'borrowing' through interviewing, gathering anecdotes, life stories and lived experiences.

Narrative emerges from ethnographic study as a way of documenting and giving meaning to events and recollection. Reason and Heron (1988) depict the construction and telling of stories as the form and the process which re-create events as meaningful experiences. They portray the researcher as one who helps others to see and change their world. Their 'democratic' and inclusive form of research promotes the idea that research findings should be influenced and framed by the people who are being studied. For them, story-telling is a way of verbalising beliefs, values and perceptions. The research methods used by Reason and Heron provided the rationale for ending each chapter with individual narratives, which while providing the anonymity required by the University's ethics approval contract, allowed for a personalised and contextualised discussion of values. This approach provided a more hermeneutic, or interpretive, frame of understanding.

---

[16] The late Professor Valecha (ex IIM Bangalore) advised that perhaps 1 in 4 participants would provide rich responses (28 May 1997, Melbourne) because, values' issues, for some people, 'could be too internalised, perhaps buried, because of a recognition of conflict which they preferred not to express to another, nor to deal with personally'.

The research method was also influenced by the ethnographic research principles developed by the Chicago School (Faris, 1967, Thomas, 1983). It aimed to gain insight into the tension between social structure and human behaviour so as to minimise the impact of the researcher's preconceptions and generate sensitivity to the potential for ethnocentrism.

> The purpose ... is to describe how various entities are related, to describe the movement and transformation of social relations and to reconstruct an image of the intricate settings in which social behaviour exists (Thomas, 1983, p 486).

Another aspect of this style of research is the 'conscious construction of ... collaborative relationships' which relates to 'information being exchanged' (Johnson, 1990, p 9). This approach was seen to empower the students and staff who provided information and to facilitate an open discussion of significant topics. These methods have been used for research into primary and secondary education (Halpin and Troyna, 1994, Robinson, 1994, Woods, 1986) and also higher education (Terry 1995a).

This research focused on the perceived values of students and staff at three Australian universities, which were previously institutes of technology in the 'advanced education sector'. These universities claimed to recognise and nurture the ethnic diversity of their students' backgrounds as a valued aspect of their academic reputation[17]. In addition, changes in government policies over the last ten years (Marginson 1997a, 1997b) have increased the numbers of international students in full-fee programs, especially the MBA, across all Australian universities.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) portrayed the risks of labelling those who are different as 'other' or 'exotic'. While recognising these risks, this research accepts the need to explore any clash between the espoused and emerging values of overseas students enrolled in Australian MBAs. Australian universities have increasingly targeted India and China in their search for students seeking to undertake

postgraduate management studies. These two countries also made an interesting contrast as India had established MBA education from the 1960s (Ray, 1994, p13, Rao, in Philip and Narayan, (eds) 1989, pp 31-32), whereas at the time of this research, MBA education was in its early days of development in China (Johnstone, 1997, Kamis, 1996). This was a major reason in undertaking the foundation research in India. In addition, students from these two countries experience diverse social, cultural, religious and political influences both before and during their MBA studies.

In Australia, unlike my earlier research experiences in India, few MBA students volunteered to discuss values. Academic discipline coordinators in the program advised me to research students' perceptions through MBA units which investigated the interrelationships between business and society. These classes were undertaken with both first and later year MBA students at the three Australian universities.

Prior to structured discussions, students were asked to write responses to the self-administered interview schedule regarding personal, corporate, social and civic concerns. Most of the 143 students involved in classes in Australia completed the schedule. This, together with group discussions, and individual interviews, produced substantial reflections of the espoused beliefs of 92 students. Discussions were conducted and recorded using an approach influenced by focus group techniques (Hurworth, 1996, Krueger, 1988). The aim was to facilitate a meaningful conversation about values and management and to identify a range of perspectives on values involved in management education.

The research involved ten class-based discussions with students across the three universities. No permanent MBA teachers remained present for these classes. In addition, fourteen students were chosen for in-depth personal interviews. Only those students who were not interviewed following a focus group were asked to

---

[17] This claim is supported by the marketing brochures and course outlines prepared by each of the universities for both local and international students.

review copies of their individual interview transcripts as the second interaction clarified and confirmed content. One group interview brought MBA graduates from the three programs together.

In separate staff discussions, staff were encouraged to name the values which their subjects promoted. In one university which was implementing major changes to its MBA program, the arranged meeting was deferred and finally cancelled. A total of 23 academic staff participated in interviews of between one to one and a half hours. Three others gave briefer interviews. After completion of the interviews, transcripts were provided to allow these staff to correct any misperceptions, or revise their opinions if they wished.

In all three universities selected individuals were interviewed alone, in two out of the three universities, typically after they had been part of a group discussion. At each university, some students and staff agreed only to be interviewed alone, not in a group, and after being reassured that they would remain anonymous. Major changes such as staffing restructures, new management procedures and altered relationships were occurring at all three universities, typically in response to new government policies and the pressure to raise additional funds. These circumstances added to the necessity to ensure confidentiality and anonymity by omitting certain details and insights.

The University's approval process for research involving people required that each university, its students and staff would remain anonymous. Given these circumstances, it was crucial to ensure that confidentiality would be maintained, if necessary at the sacrifice of identifying background characteristics of informants that might have otherwise been useful as a basis for comparative analysis.

The analysis

The students involved in the Australian phase of the study included a male - female mix with a major focus on those from Australia, China and India. The research reflects comments made by first and later year students, as well as those with full-time and part-time work experience. As stated above, interviews were undertaken with staff who taught core, and significant non-compulsory, subjects within the MBA.

Following the analysis of the Indian MBA material which led to the development of the self administered interview schedules, the Australian material was analysed in various ways. An overview of staff or student group discussions, open-ended surveys and individual interviews generated general themes. Given the assurance of confidentiality, the data has been sourced in two different ways. All who provided information used in this study have been tabulated so as to specify the sources of information (see Appendix B). Each number is coded to the schedule of information obtained, indicating a discrete university, date and place of interview, and self-administered interview schedule. Disguised individual narratives are related which convey the major tensions, conflicts and paradoxes which staff and students associated with the program.

The use of an italicised name indicates a more intensive use of the source material. Individual names – used only where appropriate so as not to risk disclosing identity – are used as a means to provide continuity throughout the thesis. The key, which links these disguised individuals to the overall data, is presented in Appendix C. Maintaining a sense of separate identities helped to convey personal understandings of the relationship between the MBA, work and society. An example of the coding which underpinned the analysis is presented as Appendix D. The personal stories of staff and students express values, tensions and associated uncertainties.

Geertz (1995) and Marcus (1986) depict the research task as an incomplete and ongoing activity which is always contestable. They parallel post-modernist, post-colonial, feminist and post-structuralist theories which argue against a reductionist conception of the world. In line with these approaches, Collin (1996) recognises the need to understand diverse meanings which she symbolises by the metaphor of 'Babel'.

The concept of language as the 'discursive practice', which allows individuals to both describe and create themselves (Hall, 1996a), provides insight into the MBA itself and the cultural aspects of personal identity. Through their stories and language, individuals conveyed the MBA experience as complex and diverse. The most important findings involved personal identity, corporate responsibility and issues of citizenship. A personal challenge was to convey those values which students and staff related to the MBA, while safeguarding the anonymity of those who generously shared such understandings.

An exploration of the values associated with the MBA is not just about the pursuit of improved business effectiveness. It also reflects the increasing power wielded by management language as it justifies social and political decisions. Ralston Saul contends that the language of business operates to create an uncritical certainty about social and political issues which require analysis and debate (1993, 1997). Others who recognise how language influences the construction of society include Charles Handy (1998), David Malouf (1999) and Robert Manne (1998). They all acknowledge how individuals, workers and citizens choose terms which justify their activities. Such language expresses the beliefs which motivate behaviour.

The following chapter explores themes which reflect either 'certainty' or 'Babel' in relation to MBA education interpreted within an academic framework.

60

Chapter 2   An academic view of the MBA

Introduction

How do values relate to the MBA? Obviously it is necessary to discuss how a program, which originated in America, is also perceived in Australia and India, countries which are central to this study. This requires considering the beliefs of both the proponents and critics of the MBA. The former tend to regard it as a means to increase business efficiency, whereas the latter fall into two groups: those, such as Mintzberg (interviewed by Balasubramanian, 1998), who doubt its efficacy, and others, such as Ralston Saul (1993), who perceive it to threaten the values which sustain democratic society.

The following chapter discusses a) academic perceptions of MBA education, b) an overview of the objectives and content of the five MBA programs involved in this research, c) Australian staff observations of MBA students' expectations, d) their own experiences of teaching in the program, e) the focus associated with specific disciplines, and f) how Australian staff could be categorised according to their own personal style of teaching. As staff proved the best informants on this topic, this chapter reviews how 27 Australian MBA staff interviewed (both together and individually) related the norms associated with the program to their beliefs and values. The requirement to ensure the anonymity of a relatively small pool of staff precluded many personal staff details from these findings. However, following van Manen (1990) and Reason and Herron (1988), a more narrative approach is used at the end of this and following chapters.

The MBA has a public identity associated with promoting business success for both organisations and individuals who aspire to careers as managers. An analysis of the lived experience of its teachers and students indicated that they perceived it as more ambiguous. Did this group of academics aim to develop a critical, values-based perspective in their students? Did they regard the MBA as a neutral body of knowledge? Did they speak with one voice or many? This chapter is based on

group discussions and interviews with MBA students and staff that indicated their need to juggle political, administrative and educational demands. The findings address how academics considered the social responsibilities of business. An approach based on values requires an analysis of the pedagogy of the MBA, and the assumptions which underpin it.

As there is comparatively little analysis of the values associated with this postgraduate business degree, studies of specific core subjects, such as economics, provide clues as to whether management studies are perceived to involve social responsibilities. Part of this analysis relates to the divide between those who believe in a linear notion of progress and academic researchers, such as Collin (1996), who analyse the MBA using post-modern concepts such as 'multiple voices'.

Hall's writings on culture (Hall (ed) 1997) help frame an account of how the MBA relates to the business values which influence society. They recognise that the MBA operates within the context of universities which have political and social responsibilities, as well as vocational charters.

Perceptions of MBA education

The increasing significance of management education highlights the need to examine its assumptions and values. This is not only true in Australia, but also in countries such as India where academic institutions are seeking to meet the management and educational needs of industry. When facilitating a round table discussion with the present and past directors of three major Indian MBA schools, Venkatesh noted that in 1998 there were over three hundred graduate business schools certified by government to conduct MBA courses in India (Venkatesh, 1998, p 89). He assessed graduates of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) as 'sometimes arrogant, self-opinionated, [the] somewhat elitist attitudes that MBA graduates have, [cause] some people [to] often feel

disillusioned with management school graduates' (Venkatesh,1998, p107). As the Director of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC) stated:

> [T]here is room for both top grade management schools and second range management schools in India. There are many types of organisations to manage. A particular management programme may be weak in not providing an in-depth and holistic view of organisation and management. But it may provide inputs in functional areas. In the process, such schools may make some of the plain graduates employable and, in our society, employability is an important factor (Prof Amitava Bose, quoted in Venkatesh, 1998 pp 90-91)[18].

The immediate past president of IIM, Bangalore (IIMB), summed up the role of these graduate schools established by the Indian government:

> The vision of the IIMs as centres of excellence and as institutions of national importance implies social returns, that is, their contribution to improving the quality of management education and research in the country or to the productivity and competitiveness of Indian industry (Prof K R S Murthy, quoted in Venkatesh, 1998, p 103).

When asked to discuss the attributes of the students attending the IIMs, the director of IIMB commented:

> I do not think it is possible to select students on the basis of the attitudes and so on. The problems that afflict the quality of students we attract are not just the institute's problem. It is a problem at the social level. Our students may not be high on loyalty to organisations but this may be the perception of those who do not have the same opportunities. Organisations may expect that institutes will mould the students and institutes may feel that the students will be moulded in the organisation (Prof M R Rao, quoted in Venkatesh, 1998, p 105).

And when discussing why his institute had introduced a course in ethics, the previous director of IIMB explained:

> The faculty committees reviewing the (MBA) curriculum had pointed out the need for teaching values in management education, a need that was being felt by schools all over the world. There was a suggestion also that unless Indian managers and organisations developed a proper sense of their own identity, they would not be in a position to establish themselves well in the global environment (Prof K R S Murthy, quoted in Venkatesh, 1998, p 110).

These forthright comments are pertinent to MBA programs in Australia. Raising questions about how MBA students perceived themselves, how staff regarded

---

[18] These levels of Indian management schools are confirmed by Sinha (1989).

them and the responsibilities of management schools to commerce, society and their students' future careers.

Henry Mintzberg, who conducts part of his international postgraduate management program at IIMB, is critical of India 'aping' the American business school model 'with no critical assessment of its nature' (Mintzberg, interviewed by Balasubramanian, 1998, p164). He doubted that the 80,000 American MBAs graduating each year could improve business effectiveness (op cit pp167-68) because they lacked the generalist skills and practical wisdom required at lower organisational levels.

Over the last 20 years the numbers of postgraduate business management students has grown in Australia. For example, in 1982 only 1.6 percent of the professional engineers in Australia had undertaken formal postgraduate management education, but by 1995 the percentage had increased over seven-fold to 14 percent (Thomason in Neelamegham, Midgely and Sen, (eds) 1999, p 395).

A comparison of the Australian and Indian MBA programs

Both the Australian and Indian MBA programs reflected the MBA's American origins, but in Australia there were fewer required subjects and less emphasis on numerically based subjects. The greater number of subjects taught in the Indian MBA provided more opportunities to study social and values-based issues in these degrees.

The Indian MBA programs had a greater quantitative focus than the Australian programs in this study. However, they also specifically addressed social responsibility in an Indian context as stated in their course objectives. This could be partly attributed to the higher number of subjects studied, but also reflected a desire to contextualise the program. Perhaps this supports Ray's claim (1994, pp 13-14) that the management education espoused by the Indian government in the 1960s reflected previous socialist goals. It also alludes to the diversity of Indian

opinion about content and approach to management education. On one side the Indian Institutes of Management, for example, are seen as promoting an American model of quantitatively based education. Yet some subjects taught in these institutes also provided examples of the promotion of Indian 'Brahminical systems and assumptions of knowledge' labelled by some as 'Bharatiya management' (D'Mello, 1999) which aimed to adapt indigenous philosophy to the study and practice of management.

The structure of the Australian MBA degrees

Each Australian MBA program[19] comprised a minimum of 14 units, including two to four electives. Two included a compulsory research project, while the third offered additional electives as an alternative option. Electives allowed students to meet their specific needs, such as further studies in marketing, finance or information management.

These three Australian degrees shared the core subjects of accounting, economics, marketing, management, management information systems and strategy. These subjects, although described in various ways, always focused on a business management perspective and typically were one semester long. In addition, two of the three included compulsory subjects on international business, finance, applied management and the relationship of business to society. Apparently distinguishing features, namely those subjects which were compulsory in only one program were often provided as electives at the other universities.

All three programs were changing. Thus, within the one program, the same subject was elective for some students and compulsory for others. All three programs differentiated courses for locally–based students from those offered to international students. This difference was often associated with the need to offer

---

[19] Subject data is drawn from the three Australian universities' 1997 subject guides.

international students a full-time program, in contrast with the part-time study typically pursued by Australian students. It was judged that international students were attracted to the generic MBA program while those in Australia were more interested in specialist programs such as finance or marketing.

Overall program aims

The three programs[20] were described in terms of:
- Producing globally aware, broadly-based organisational leaders
- Acquiring/broadening technical and analytical skills in business disciplines
- Educating modern managers, strategic leaders and innovators
- Promoting responsibility and ethical practice

The various brochures emphasised the personal career progression of MBA graduates. The focus was on fostering individual achievement through a program with strong corporate appeal.

Core subjects

An overview of the aims of the core subjects offered by all three universities is outlined below. Elective subjects usually built on the knowledge and skills developed in these core disciplines. The formal subject descriptions were typically both pragmatic and relatively specific, for example:

Accounting was related to the management role and practice of 'planning and decision making within the business environment' which included basic concepts of profit and loss, forms of ownership and reporting.

Economics varied from a technical, quantitative approach on which to base business decisions to one which taught 'the interplay between fact, values and theories of economics'. Forecasting was of central importance.

Finance emphasised 'valuation principles' so that managers could better understand 'investment, financing and dividend decisions' in organisations'. Decisions on 'capital investments (and) sources of finance' were related to 'financial mathematics'.

Management /Organisational Behaviour subjects stressed their role in promoting 'effective performance' which could assist managers to sustain the pressure of change. They emphasised relationships both within and beyond the organisation, such as through 'understanding self and others'.

Management of information technology subjects aimed to promote 'the effective use of (this) technology' and to be able to 'manage it to advantage' so as to 'help improve management performance'.

Marketing addressed the need for 'managers to acquire skills and techniques' to perform 'in competitive business environments'.

Innovation promoted the recognition and develop new business ventures.

Strategy or corporate planning taught models and techniques to 'assess present realities in the industry environment' so as to propose future action and 'integrate functional business areas into corporate strategy'.

Law was specified as a core subject at one of the universities, while at the other two it was part of a required conglomerate subject which addressed the business environment.

'Management competencies' provided a focus in various subjects across the three programs. This concept sometimes rested on the discipline of psychology and at other times on skills related to analysis, research or reporting. It was notable that

---

[20] Drawn from the universities' promotional brochures.

two universities' stated program objectives of promoting responsibility and ethical thought were not mentioned in the core subject outlines. For example, two of the three subjects which provided the class-based interactions in this research were described in the subject guides in relational rather than normative, or ethical terms.

The structure of the Indian MBA degrees

The two programs studied in the initial research required seven subjects in each of the first three semesters followed by six and a research project in the final semester[21]. MBA students were required to complete some twenty six subjects over a two year full-time program. In one case it was residential, in the other the students attended on a daily basis. Most students were in their early twenties and had little professional experience.

Overall program aims

The MBA course objectives in India were described as to:
- educate and develop graduates to meet industry's management needs
- encourage social responsibility and business ethics
- impart conceptual and analytical tools to solve managerial problems
- develop long-term vision and strategic thinking
- enrich managerial heuristics

Core subjects

Both degrees involved similar core subjects. The common subjects were:

Managerial economics: both institutions offered versions of 'welfare economics' and shared a strong emphasis on quantitative analysis.

---

[21] Drawn from the course brochures and subject guidelines of the two institutes.

Organisational behaviour/Business management: a theoretical frame that aimed to 'give students insight into human problems in organisations' through 'an interdisciplinary behavioural sciences approach'.

Business environment: subjects were oriented 'towards an understanding of the business environment in India and the development policies and the politico-legal framework within which these policies take shape'.

Business statistics: technically focused on measures, variance, probability.

Mathematics/Quantitative methods: 'Econometrics and optimisation methods': a highly numeric approach.

Management information systems: typified as 'crucial for the planning and control functions within organisations ... and for formulating corporate strategies'; subjects ranged from introduction to applications.

Accounting: as theory, information system, costing and management tool. Recognised both 'the Indian and international setting' and changes in 'legal framework of company accounts'.

Functional management- production, marketing, personnel, financial, specifically highlighting major changes in India's legal framework; to teach the benefits which effective business practices provided to society.

Both Indian institutions provided choices relating to four specialisations namely finance, marketing, operations management/research/systems analysis and personnel management. Students were to complete and report on 'a summer placement'- three months training in business or industry.

Why the MBA? The expectations

The 1997 promotional material of the MBA institutions involved in this research, such as brochures and course descriptions, highlighted the attainment of corporate and individual success through competition. Across all the discussions and individual interviews, both staff and students understood the general objectives of the MBA as a conduit to middle management for individuals who wished to gain the required skills. The MBA was first developed in America for engineers who had reached a stage where both they, and their employers, wanted them to take on greater corporate responsibilities. Most students would undertake this program in the expectation of rapidly becoming members of an elite group, typically employed by large corporations. While there were differences in the detail of these three Australian MBA programs, they all reflected the culture of the American programs on which they were based. This culture had a strong pragmatic element, namely the need to promote business success for both the individual and the employer. Some staff accepted this focus, while others criticised it. The following comments indicate these two perspectives.

One economist stated that business faculties had designed the MBA to appeal to students who wanted to 'make a quid', namely those unconcerned by 'the social aspects'. Proposing an MBA subject based on an 'ethical perspective' would be akin to 'flogging a dead horse', as it would be contrary to both the faculty perspective and what students were judged to want. In contrast, another staff perspective was that 'the traditional view of the MBA ... emphasis[ing] functional technical skills ... particularly finance-related skills and corporate level strategic analysis' was 'too analytically driven' and promoted 'paralysis by analysis'. The criticism of the analytical style of MBA was that it produced technocrats incapable of dealing with people. The newer 'non-traditional' MBA taught graduates 'soft skills' such as 'management and leadership' so as to produce 'people who [could] operate' in various environments. All three Australian programs in this study could be described as being at the 'softer' phase of

development[22]. All were exploring whether to move on to the next phase of 'specialisation', away from a generic management position. This change would be continuous because the MBA was 'not the sort of curriculum that you can keep fixed for too long'.

University promotional material described these programs as designed 'to provide appropriate business management skills to managers from diverse backgrounds ', or 'to prepare managers and professionals for broader general management roles in an increasingly international context'[23]. One MBA program focused explicitly on students using 'self-appraisal' as a means of personal development. However, the overall framework included 'career goals', 'general management perspectives' and a student network 'of ambitious colleagues' designed to assist the individual's career. The three universities promoted career progression so as to attract students who sought increased status, personal achievement and financial rewards. The programs also geared themselves to the needs of employers such as providing organisational gains through students' increased 'practical ... management skills' associated with 'work-related projects' and minimising students' absence from work. Competition, both personal and corporate, was central to the marketing message. Core subjects focused on management activities such as 'resolv[ing] business problems' and improving 'business decision making'.

Students were attracted by the prospect of personal career progress, either through promotion or potential transferability. The key student concerns were related to issues of individualism and competition, with perhaps the most important role being played by the idea of 'me and my career'[24]. MBA students and staff described this goal in similar terms. Individual gain rested on the assumption that MBA graduate would be regarded as superior recruits.

---

[22] See Mintzberg's critical distinction between business [finance] and management [people centred leadership], where MBA study focused on finance, in Balasubramanian (1998).
[23] Source University MBA promotional brochures 1997.
[24] The next chapter outlines differences between local students and those on student visas.

Staff described the MBA as an important source of funds. They increasingly felt the pressure on their program to attract more pay full fee students. The income from the MBA was seen to contribute to the faculties offering the degree and to the universities overall. Some staff perceived that these changes were altering the culture of universities, for example when students were described as 'customers'. They disliked the idea of a 'market', where MBA programs would compete for students. This provoked a questioning of their commitment to their role within a university. Concerns involved threats to traditional academic pursuits such as research, case study development and 'thinking about epistemologies'. One stated that student demands so dominated MBA teaching that 'the intellectual cupboard' could not be 'restocked' (A105). Without appropriate research, academics would 'run out of useful things to say'. Constraints on research and teaching development were perceived as a major threat to academic life.

Who should do the MBA?

The criteria for undertaking the MBA included an undergraduate degree, work experience, and, in the case of overseas students, an appropriate fluency in English. The various programs set different minimum requirements specifying the style and duration of work. However, a recurring complaint from staff was that these criteria were not met by a percentage of the students in the program. Various academics questioned the quality of intake when administrative staff controlled the offering of places to international students. Poorly controlled selection criteria threatened academic standards and their programs' future reputation and viability.

MBA programs had attracted a significant number of students from both the public service and the 'not for profit' sector, including hospitals and public instrumentalities which were being managed more like commercial businesses. These changes to the organisational structures were linked to the prospect of

private ownership. Students from these sectors were described as 're-skilling' in order to equip themselves for a more competitive world[25].

Teaching the MBA – the reality

Staff associated with the Australian MBA programs interpreted its financial contribution to university income in one of two ways. One interpretation was that they and their colleagues had greater job security than those teaching in less sought-after degrees. An academic, who provided service teaching into the MBA, described the 'lack of decency' shown by business academics to staff from a department threatened with 'being downsized'. Senior academic managers were criticised because they were 'not prepared to argue against finance and budgets dominating the planning of education over pedagogical concerns'. In this new version of universities, senior administrators were 'managing solely by the bottom line' and 'expensive interdepartmental cooperation' could no longer be afforded. Such budget savings were perceived to be at the expense of academic goals. Those MBA staff who described these changes seemed either despondent or angry. As postgraduate course work degrees lost their government-funded status there was a greater pressure on MBA programs to attract full-fee paying students. Previously, places covered by the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) allowed resident Australian students to defer fees. During the major growth of the MBA, those universities which were less prestigious were able to secure their programs based on HECS places. The pressures on MBA programs intensified as the HECS safety net was effectively withdrawn.

Several academics, in describing the MBA as a 'cash cow', disparagingly recognised the broader significance played by this one program. However, its financial importance was tied to its public reputation – a program which relied on being perceived by students as the 'ticket' to success also needed the respect of

---

[25] This perspective was explicit in two out of the three MBA programs. Comments relating to changes within the public sector were made by both course leaders and subject coordinators.

those companies which were the most sought-after employers. The underlying assumption for both these groups was that the MBA program facilitated business success; either increased individual skills and knowledge which commanded higher status and income or improved corporate 'efficiency' which would 'increase shareholder wealth'. As the MBA celebrated competition, the program provided no refuge for 'shrinking violets' or 'social do-gooders'.

The academics' statements about students demonstrated their personal attitudes and expectations. One drew on a contemporary American comedy to describe his experience of teaching MBAs:

> [We are] dealing with a group of students who are two sets of values away from our middle-aged [values]. I do not understand the values of most of them. They are the Seinfeld Generation, highly self-centred, very egocentric. They are harsh, more than cynical, they have a 'what's in it for me' attitude and that's 'someone else's problem'. They are a pretty selfish, greedy generation, very materialistic and money hungry. I don't understand them and I'm not much interested in them (A108).

However, there was another view that this selfishness was part of an earlier phase which was no longer relevant:

> An MBA has some stigma attached to it, I think it's associated with poor community feeling. I think in the 80s, the MBAs were considered to be the people who were put into the think tanks to plot how the company could best achieve its financial goals, basically by asset stripping and takeovers. ... But the market-place is saying we got it a bit wrong in the 80s, that we need to have an MBA which is really preparing students for their role as citizens, and for long-term growth of the company, not just short-term solutions (A90).

Yet, another perspective was presented by the academic who said:

> I've noticed that some of the students in this year's intake ... are concerned about living a good life, not THE GOOD LIFE, not just the corporate ladder, chasing the dollar value thing. There are more and more people coming through in these classes who are running the environmental line, the personal lifestyle line (A105).

These three quotes suggest how MBA educators perceived the students enrolled in their programs. Several expressed dislike of MBA students, whereas others

saw them as a product of social pressures, and a third group stated that raising students' self-awareness was a means to promote desired social change. These attitudes reflected individual perspectives more than any one course direction. It was also recognised that the changing MBA needed to meet the aspirations of the potential students, university staff and the corporate sector. One academic expressed this tension as following:

> Large employers are going to create this league table based on how they see the value of MBA graduates. I think the employers mostly want training with a little bit of education, and I think that that's where one of the conflicts lies, because I suspect the more thoughtful MBA schools, if they are courageous enough to go down a different pathway, will be less and less comfortable providing that particular product (A115).

This quotation raises two different concerns. The first acknowledged the tensions between the corporate employers and MBA educators. Words such as 'courageous' indicated that his preference was towards broad education rather than immediate commercial applications. But secondly this nexus between corporate and academic worlds was described in the language of marketing, applying words such as 'product' and 'commercial environment' to the MBA program and how it would be promoted to potential students. His comment is paradoxical in using a language which seemed opposed to an educational commitment, while actually promoting a process which 'encouraged people to ask questions' and critique the status quo. This example demonstrated that an academic's stance on the 'corporatising' of education could not be deduced from specific words. To describe a program as a 'product' did not preclude educational aspirations and responsibilities.

Staffing the MBA

Each of the three Australian universities employed two discrete methods of selecting MBA teachers. One group comprised the designated core MBA staff, while the other group maintained a more departmentally focused academic identity. Those outside the core teaching group variously evaluated their MBA service teaching as either enjoyable or frustrating, in contrast with those

designated MBA staff who were generally enthusiastic. Members of such multi-disciplinary MBA staff groups described how they were expected to consolidate their separate subjects into a coherent whole. They portrayed this task as difficult, especially given the traditional culture of academic work. One described the process of creating a new program, cooperatively designed by staff from a variety of disciplines:

> [T]he MBA is about helping people ... in their roles managing other people. [The program] philosophy that I hope will carry on [is about promoting] accessibility and trying to develop programs which will suit people and their personal needs (A90).

However, while enjoying the teaching and the collegiality of working in a multi-disciplinary team, they could reflect on the stresses created by teaching young executives, whose work life had accustomed them to high levels of 'service'. Those who taught them MBAs portrayed them as very demanding. They were characterised as (mostly) young men who were accustomed to getting what they wanted, when they wanted it.

The distinctions between these administrative arrangements highlight two different approaches to MBA teaching in Australia. However, most of the Australian academics interviewed in this study described their desire to teach as more important than their commitment to a specific discipline. Their personal style and ambitions moulded their educational goals. As one said, 'most academics' were 'prompted by a belief in the work that they do'. Thus, they described their motivations and satisfaction in terms of 'sharing knowledge', 'developing critical thought' and 'learning from students'. The search for money or power had not motivated them to become academics. One described his frustration by saying that it was inappropriate to 'mix educational decision making with criteria based on economic rationalism'. He went on to add that 'a lot of qualitative issues', such as continuity and the quality of academic life, were 'discounted' by 'this focus on numbers and dollars.' This change was not only provoked by the constriction of government funds but also by the increased

influence of 'management technologies'[26]. His criticism possibly reflects the concepts associated with recent management theories, such as Total Quality Management (TQM)[27], being applied to university environments. TQM argues that 'customer service' is the most important element in managing a business. This academic was frustrated that the universities had become a world where students were primarily regarded as customers. Many described personal misgivings about seeing students as customers, which was changing their relationships with students. As a result of both funding cuts and the imposition of cultural change, academics felt pressured to change their attitudes to students and their style of teaching. This had an impact beyond the programs offered; staff were not only concerned about their subjects and courses, but also with more personal issues. As one said:

> We have to be market-aware to attract students and survive, but we also
> have to protect our own backsides (A93).

This comment indicated that it would be a potentially 'career limiting move' for academics to promote 'non-market'-oriented proposals. The belief was that critics who publicly prioritised academic matters above competitive concerns were both naive and foolish. Another lecturer criticised the changes he had seen at the level of academic board. Describing the changes which he had experienced over a period of ten years, he noted a shift from debating the academic rationale of courses to exploring whether they would be economically viable, based on their ability to attract the right number of students. He felt angry at the loss of 'academic accountability' caused by staff no longer 'questioning academic principles'. He associated these changes with the loss of a sense of belonging to an integrated academic world, the world which he had joined as a young lecturer. He now felt that competition between universities for fee-paying students had

---

[26] Academics interviewed as part of this thesis confirmed the research and analysis of academic motivation in the 1990s, such as Smyth (1995), Hall and Jacques (eds) (1989), p11 on 'New Times' and Marginson (1997a and 1997b).

[27] Clark, Ross and Shackleton (1994, pp 88- 89) summarise TQM as 'a valuable management technique to enable organisations to survive and respond to changed customer needs. It emphasises the crucial need for quality in all aspects of the organisation.' Many academics felt it was inappropriate for higher education.

destroyed a comparatively 'homogeneous' sector, which had existed despite the tensions of the previous 'binary system'. In his opinion, the universities and the institutes of higher education had once provided 'excellent education', but he regretted that, as a result of the competitive 'pressure to make the MBA narrower and shorter', the quality had deteriorated 'across the board, in rigour and depth'.

Another change had resulted from two out of the three universities undergoing amalgamations. Through this process, staff who had developed separate educational beliefs and practices had come together. Even when the programs were not directly influenced by this past, the memories of unresolved tensions and lost dreams were seen to be part of the current reality. As one said 'Now my chances of promotion are marginal, mainly because I have not published enough'. He saw that the rules had changed. Promotion was now dependent on 'the publication list'. This was seen by older academics as an impossible hurdle, and one which made them feel depressed, especially when they considered the satisfactions and expectations associated with their earlier academic career. When they were initially recruited, one staff member described that it was on the basis of 'teaching well, industrial experience and consulting'. He saw that 'the goal posts were shifted' when the institutes of technology became universities, with the result that the new message was, 'Sorry, now it's about research'.

These broader concerns had specific consequences within the MBA program. Historically, masters degrees were specialist programs which built on the academic foundations developed by undergraduate studies. Staff gained intellectual satisfaction from teaching in postgraduate programs which were often aligned to their personal research and promoted the publication of jointly written papers. For these reasons postgraduate research teaching had high status and appeal. But, as the MBA grew in numbers and became more obviously significant, its identity provoked conflict within business faculties. The conflict concerned different understandings of what a masters degree should be. The MBA, designed as a program to teach general management skills, was based on the assumption that the students might not have studied those subjects at

undergraduate level. The subject content was based on the core offerings of an undergraduate business degree, with the expectation that the style of delivery would cater to an older and more professionally experienced student population. For staff who prized the status they attached to masters level teaching, the MBA was seen as a 'trumped up undergraduate program, posing as a masters'. But they were also frustrated that these students expected that their professional experience should be recognised as having educational significance. This expectation not only cut across the satisfactions which they associated with their academic experience, but for some it denigrated their pride in the hard-won 'expertise', or body of knowledge, which defined their professional identity.

Those who joined the multi-disciplinary group, which comprised the core of permanent or long-term MBA staff, were generally academics who had a more process-oriented approach to education. This attitude to the MBA included various teaching styles, but generally involved a more participative style of teaching and assessment and a strong focus on group work. Those who adopted this approach appreciated the maturity, life experience and industry knowledge which students brought with them. The following quote represents this perspective:

> I hope that [by studying the MBA] they'll become very perceptive of their own abilities and ... be able to assess, look beyond just one perspective, and see things from several perspectives. ... To be curious, enthusiastic and interested, I think they're more important attributes than learning what's in the book (A115).

This understanding of the MBA program relied on mutual learning, where students would develop in ways which were not controlled by the academic. In this model, there was more room to accommodate complexity and uncertainty, as different groups would reach different solutions. There was also a sense that these academics were not 'in charge', because activities outside the seminar-lecture framework would also assist learning.

Those who had developed this style of teaching had come to regard themselves more as facilitators than as experts. One staff member was frustrated that she had not received training to improve these skills. A facilitative approach to education built on the capabilities and the achievements which students possessed before they enrolled. Staff who promoted this approach generally believed that most facts or skills gained during the program would have only short-lived usefulness, as they would rapidly be superseded by new developments in the technical field of management. The aim was to teach a way of dealing with three concerns, namely oneself, a new discipline and fellow students. Thus, this style of teaching was strongly experiential, essentially cooperative and democratic. It accepted that students could possibly learn more from each other than the lecturer would ever know. While there was a sense of loss associated with the academic 'missing out', this risk was not seen to threaten professional integrity or to put control at stake. This style posed certain difficulties for some international students. Several staff stated that MBA programs needed to recognise that students who came from other countries expected different styles and content of teaching from that which was standard in Australia. For example, one staff member stated quite explicitly that 'we don't assume that Western management theories or philosophies are universal'. As another said, MBAs were not noted for their 'ability to be flexible', but he had explicitly designed his subject to encourage students to develop the capacity 'to entertain an alternative world view [and] alternative values' by 'suspending' their value judgements. In contrast, another academic who was conscious of the limitations of the knowledge offered by his discipline, described how he promoted philosophical and critical discussion in his classes. He attributed this approach to his personal style of teaching, more than to the dictates of the subject.

Several staff wanted to promote a critical attitude in students, but most educators believed that students had to understand their subject's core principles before they could be appropriately critical. These concerns are further addressed from the student perspective in the following chapter.

James, who is profiled below, represents those staff who wanted MBA students to display mastery of their specific disciplines. This involved rigorously engaging with both structure and core content, and often involved the use of quantitative models. In addition, the staff involved in teaching the MBA who criticised its lack of academic rigour had often taught specialist postgraduate programs based on the undergraduate study of their discipline. They expressed a tension between recognising the generalist management nature of the MBA and wanting to teach students at the levels which they associated with postgraduate study.

Assessment

Reflecting on styles of assessment, there were minor differences between each university, yet overall there was a preference for groups of students to undertake research-based reports and class presentations.

> There is individual and ... group-based work, [both] assignments and presentations ... the style of teaching pursued with the MBA is to discuss issues, rather than just me presenting (A90).

Another staff member reflected how the expectations of students were influenced by their prior academic and work experience:

> With the assignment, they want examples of how it should be done. I say that you'll need to decide on that yourself, develop your own plan ... which is quite scary for some people (A91).

This reflects the inherited norms of the MBA model, with its focus on adult learning and its assumption of a cooperative team-based work ethic. However, once again, there were differences in the way individual staff would teach. One academic recognised the complexities of teaching older, higher status, but mathematically naive students in off-shore MBA teaching in Malaysia. Perhaps the fact that he had migrated from Asia made him more sensitive to factors such as age and status in the way he taught and assessed his subject.

> ... often the people with high level mathematical skills, or high status people, are lacking very basic [business] ideas, ... but they [have to learn] how to communicate with their CEO, or the minister ... so I have

81

> to reshuffle [my teaching] ... give them practical examples ... and I use
> very positive feedback (A96).

His mid-semester test was to assist students to judge their understanding of the subject, so as to gauge how hard they should study. He described how factors such as 'face' were important elements in both what he did and how he communicated with his students. In contrast, *Neal*, who is described below in more detail, used formal tests to ensure that academic standards were maintained. In both of these instances, the process of assessment was an acknowledged aspect of the academic goals. But, for *James*, the assessment represented what had to be done; it was seen as an objective method by which to grade students, not as a valued part of the academic process. He commented that students met in groups only to complain about the difficulty of his subject. In his view, students were 'empty vessels' to start with and assessment measured how full they were. At the same time, he acknowledged that formal testing of numeric concepts suited students who were not native English speakers, especially those who had developed strong quantitative skills in their previous education.

Staff – the discipline focus

What was discovered about the teaching of disciplines such as accounting, business law, economics and statistics within the MBA? What of the assumption that they would be taught in the same way at different universities? An alternative expectation was that each university would have a certain culture, associated with its own program, which overrode differences between subject areas. Was, say, economics taught in the same way in the three programs, or was there be a dominant theme, promoted by one particular university, which permeated through the various subjects? In practice, there were significant overlaps between the three programs. The influence of the original American model could be clearly detected in the subjects which were central to the MBA design. To a large extent this similarity arose from the general recognition that managers would need a certain mix of management subjects. This mix is described in some detail in the individual narratives of *Robert*, *James* and *Neal*.

Each of the universities delegated primary responsibility for the core MBA program to a multi-disciplinary group of business academics. Despite some differences in the choice of the foundation subjects, as well as the degree of informal and formal interaction between the staff who taught these subjects, all three universities had a group which strongly identified with MBA teaching. Some members of each group held ideas in common with those who taught the program at the other universities. There were common themes which could be traced across all three locations. For example, a core subject such as accounting or economics would demonstrate certain similarities in the way the course was designed, the objectives set and the style of assessment across the three different programs[28]. Conversely, within one university, staff expressed differences about ideals, goals, and appropriate teaching strategies. And these differences were not merely the expression of positions taken by discipline teachers remaining in their own departments, contrasted with those who belonged to the multi-disciplinary group. Core staff, who taught in the same MBA program, also expressed a range of views.

Perhaps the most important finding which relates to staff, borne out by the analysis of the three individual narratives which conclude the chapter, is that personal beliefs would dominate what happens in the classroom. Despite the stated claims of each program, each academic's personal beliefs about what students should learn and the process of teaching were the strongest influence in interpreting the subject material. Patterns which described how academics justified their professional behaviour emerged from the group and individual interviews. Staff could be regarded as belonging to one of three groups on the basis of the belief systems which prompted how they acted within the university environment. These groups can be differentiated according to the values which academics described as dominating their teaching lives.

---

[28] These similarities reflect the age of the MBA and its international reputation (see Locke, 1996). International students preferred the 'generic' program more than Australians did.

The first group was convinced that academics should promote education as a contributor to the social good. Such academics were prepared to defend their stance both within and outside the university. They were the 'advocates' or 'academic lions', who risked being mauled in the public arena. They were described as both fools and heroes, but in either case their public persona was associated with strongly-held principles.

The second group can be described as playing the role of 'devil's advocate'. They encouraged students to state opinions as long as they were justifiable on academic grounds. They saw MBA teaching as a means to promote critical, analytical and independent thought. As a group they were also committed to personally-held values, which included stated concerns for social justice and environmentalism. However, these academics chose not to publicise such opinions within the universities' administrative realm, nor as formal external representatives of it. Some perceived that MBA students saw ethical issues as irrelevant to their study of business and felt that it would be counterproductive to pursue this approach. Other academics were more optimistic about students' readiness to deal with issues beyond this narrow range. But, in either case, their colleagues knew what these individuals regarded as significant. They were seen to be committed.

In contrast, the third group, which can be characterised as 'the technocrats', did not disclose their beliefs about values. They presented a professional sense of themselves, which drew on their academic discipline and their skill in teaching it. They were reluctant to criticise the theories which they taught and nor did they encourage their students to question them. The personal beliefs of this group's members were less obvious, with colleagues and students having to guess where they stood in regard to social, environmental or political concerns; for example, even close friends were unaware of how an individual would vote at federal or state elections.

Individuals whose academic behaviour could be conceptualised in these ways taught in each of the three universities' MBA programs. This is not to imply that

these individuals only behaved in one specified way, more that it was their dominant style. Their interpretation of their academic responsibility could not be predicted on the basis of age, gender or a specific ethnic or social background. Neither the disciplines which they taught, nor their professional allegiances, provided an explanatory framework. For example, economists have been accused[29] of promoting a narrow, self-interested view of the world. This perspective raised the question of whether those who taught certain disciplines would align themselves with the three academic styles described above. For example, would those who taught marketing, a subject which has been typified as promoting materialism[30], all fit within one group?

The values of education and the disciplines of business [31]

The marketing staff who were interviewed generally conveyed a 'devil's advocate' attitude to their teaching. They valued the technical skills which they taught, but wanted students to recognise them as tools which could be used for both desirable and undesirable ends. One marketing academic described his teaching style as taking 'the hard marketing line', namely that 'we don't create demand and of course you can't manipulate it'. But then he laughingly acknowledged that this approach characterised marketing as a game. In other words, he initially adopted this perspective in order to gain the attention of his students then proceeded to demonstrate a variety of potential meanings of the concept of demand, which he described as one of the key elements of his course. He appreciated that there were certain skills and knowledge associated with marketing which could be used for desirable or undesirable ends, depending on the motivation of those who used them. He accepted that marketing 'was not ... seen as a valid discipline' by a lot of people. Another marketing academic judged the context in which the theory would be applied as equally important to the

---

[30] For example, Etzioni (1989) in 'Are Business Schools Brainwashing their MBAs?' accused subjects like marketing of indoctrinating students. He questioned those who denied the implicit ethics of teaching 'methods of persuasion', yet feared the teaching of business ethics.
[31] This section is not fully cited as several staff are featured throughout the thesis; combining discipline and opinions could make them recognisable.

techniques chosen. She felt responsible to teach in a way which recognised issues such as gender, culture and religion. Thus, she described paying as much attention to the background of her students as to the content which she desired them to master.

This contextual approach was also adopted by several who taught economics. One individual expressed a concern that he would teach students definitions, 'not from the textbook, but to explain the meaning', and that what was taught should 'suit the students, being as complex or as simple as need be'. He based his approach on the students' need 'to know what to use and when and how to make sense of it'. His style contrasted with that of another economics teacher, who criticised two aspects of MBA education: firstly, the importance that he perceived the program gave to group learning, and secondly, that students were not prepared for the 'hard slog' required to learn certain fundamental techniques of the subject. As he said, he felt affronted because 'a standard deviation is not something which is open to negotiation, and that is a problem [for MBA students]'. This economist criticised the inadequate background of MBA students. He felt frustrated by teaching a generalist management program where middle managers, who lacked mathematical knowledge, were expected to understand and apply economic concepts in a very short time. For him, the study of economics involved the mastery of complicated mathematical formulae. This ability logically preceded any discussion of the underlying philosophy. Thus, because he believed in 'expertise', he denounced students who criticised the discipline before they had mastered it, or who wanted to apply economic analysis to social circumstances before they had earned that entitlement. A concern for social issues could not, and should not, be addressed using economic concepts by those without the academic credentials to join the club.

His approach to his subject reflected the disciplinarian who judged that MBA students lacked the time to become proficient. He demonstrated this attitude when he related the risks of 'giving [MBA students] the most fundamental tools about demand and supply and all of a sudden they are running off at the mouth

86

about the rate of depletion of natural resources'. He felt frustrated that MBAs, like society generally, were guilty of employing the most 'rudimentary techniques' to come up with totally inappropriate conclusions. He described how 'everyone' wanted to discuss issues such as wage levels, higher inflation and tariffs, because of their far reaching effects. Consequently, he saw that this resulted in economists with 'years of experience, many publications [and] peer recognition' being attacked from all sides. For him, these issues should only be debated within the field of economics. Those who lacked 'the necessary expertise' should be precluded.

These different interpretations of personal roles, expectations and responsibilities demonstrate that no one style dominated the teaching of a specific subject. Academics teaching quantitative method, business law and accounting, also demonstrated either a process equated with a devil's advocate approach, or described the 'disciplinarian' approach to their subject in terms of technical or expert knowledge. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the 'advocate' or 'academic lion' appeared less often than the other two categories. However, both male and female versions of this role appeared across a range of subjects. Perhaps an influential characteristic was that they were older, and having weathered many storms already were not frightened of the consequences of publicly voicing their convictions about education.

Promoting a stance on values in the MBA classroom

The four major ways in which values issues could be addressed in the classroom illuminate the three academic types described above[32]. The first aimed to encourage students to consider values-based issues. This approach made context the central consideration in understanding and applying theories which related to business. A second perspective involved the students focusing on their subjective

---

[32] These distinctions were discussed more fully in individual interviews, although group and individual sources were complementary.

reality, an experiential documenting of management life. A third style of teaching, in relation to values, was described as a process approach which promoted procedures more than answers. A fourth style, the 'technocratic approach', taught business using mechanistic or mathematical models. Typically such models were seen as the means to maximise profit.

The first approach involved academics who aimed to create an environment where issues of values could be openly discussed. It is demonstrated by a lecturer in business law who taught a subject which covered 'anything' that affected 'the employee or employer in a workplace', and considered a range of societies from the 'so-called third world countries' through to the Australian situation. This subject aimed to demonstrate that people could lead equally valuable lives in quite different environments. He saw that this 'world view' approach was 'probably unusual in [teaching] law'. However, he believed that it was justified within the MBA. His subject addressed issues such as the distribution of power, and the need for all groups to be treated equally within society. And he stated quite openly that 'consideration of ethics' was 'fundamental to an understanding of it all'. In his opinion, conflict was caused when 'the ethical principles' broke down. His classes aimed to convey that business people should recognise 'that fighting court actions really benefits no one in the long term'. His teaching was not based on 'a legalistic perspective', but sought to encourage students to discover the underlying problems. He believed that when society acknowledged and practised values such as cooperation and social justice, then problems could be resolved without the need for contesting sides to go to court. He saw that 'people' were the most important thing in society, and the way one treated people established one's 'overall value to society'. His general philosophy was 'Society could be a wonderful place if you just emphasised values'.

This approach was carried through to the style of assessment and examination, where students were encouraged to undertake group work, including the exchange of research papers at the end of semester. His various ways of interacting with

students clearly demonstrated his belief in encouraging cooperation and respect for a range of perspectives.

The second perspective can be demonstrated by the academic who stated that values should be explicitly recognised in the classroom. He ran a subject in which students kept self-reflective diaries. This staff member characterised his subject as a 'values clarification exercise'. Individual students were expected to 'work' on their subjective beliefs and behaviours, using a process which aimed to assist them to clarify their moral priorities. His approach was one of trying to be 'neutral, being empathic, but not ... judgemental'. Students had to recognise personally-held values through reflection; they were encouraged to make their own judgements. Another aim, which he described as 'the hidden agenda', was to 'create a conflict in students' so that they could recognise the 'implicit assumptions' of management. He wanted students to gain personal insight, and consequently learn how to think and judge, by experiencing 'confusion, complexity, controversy and challenge'.

A third style of teaching in relation to values was described by an academic as a process approach, whereby 'you are not teaching answers, you are teaching them to understand certain procedures'. Her reluctance to 'give them answers' was because she did not 'really know'. Her aim was to promote in students a recognition of 'the middle line' from which they could look at 'both sides'. Perhaps her most interesting comment was that she found 'the ethical arguments difficult to manage because everybody had a different point of view'. She 'tried not to make value judgements or to generalise' but felt that 'invariably' she did. This admission was associated with some sense of not having lived up to her own personal goals of neutrality and tolerance. She believed that staff should make comments about whether certain activities were appropriate or not for certain environments. However the justification should be on practical grounds of what would 'work'. Having 'convinced' herself 'that she 'did not have to be the expert', she had become more comfortable with students who were 'older, or more experienced', than she was. Reflecting on her personal values, she saw that

her goal, which also related to her teaching, was 'living in the present moment'. This meant the desire to recognise that ideas could be 'taken or left'. In other words, she was keen to promote discussions which included ethical considerations, but her aim was to be seen as the facilitator, not the expert. However, when she sensed powerful emotions, such as anger, being provoked by a discussion which involved ethical issues, her preference was to 'leave it'. She recalled intense and uncomfortable experiences where cross-cultural ethical concerns had provoked various interpretations.

Her comments conveyed a certain ambivalence. She wanted to create an environment where important issues were discussed in relation to her subject area, but while she was content not to play the expert, she feared the risks associated with arousing emotions through this process. She recalled feeling tense when beliefs were argued in an unstructured class, not because of the ideas, but more because such disagreements could provoke difficult group interactions. Her sensitivities and ambivalence may highlight a key dilemma for a secular society, where perhaps tolerance rates more highly than debate on ethical issues. She indicated the risks which could discourage other academics from discussing ethics in their classes. However, to some extent these concerns can be understood as cross-cultural, and, as such, are taken up in more detail in the following chapter. They can also be interpreted as relating to spirituality, which is discussed at the end of the thesis.

A fourth style, the 'technocratic approach', is exemplified by academics who characterised their subject content as employing a framework which considered only business. They promoted the maximisation of profit through the use of mechanistic or mathematical models. In other words, this group of academics highlighted technical content. They often promoted models drawn from engineering, which were to be applied regardless of the context in which managers should find themselves. However, this group was not determined by the subjects taught, but more by the attitudes of its teachers. This attitude was demonstrated through highly theoretical subjects such as statistics or quantitative

method, as well as in economics or accounting. Conversely, some academics teaching these same subjects adopted the approach typified above as the 'devil's advocate'. In the following examples, teachers of management subjects which addressed business planning, strategy and implementation, for example, Total Quality Management[33], demonstrate this technocratic approach. TQM was portrayed by one academic as an international style which was just 'good management' and which applied to all as a 'mind set' for 'doing things perfectly'. This staff member stated that there was no need to consider national or socio-economic factors when choosing to implement such strategies because, for example, 'in Asia, labour is virtually a commodity', while the comparatively high cost of labour in Australia meant that it 'could not afford labour-intensive work'. His comments reflected a seemingly dispassionate attitude to unemployment, which did not reflect his personal opinions. However, he felt it was unnecessary and desirable for his 'technically' based teaching to reflect his own beliefs. Although he disliked the disparities between rich and poor countries, such considerations were outside the scope of his teaching. His attitude matched those who described themselves as pragmatic.

The primary influence on one academic's teaching was 'customer service':

> We always have to remember that business is a very practical thing. It's something that you do at work and it's to be distinguished from your home life and ... you go to work to earn money through satisfying your customers. Now ... customer issues, such as who are those customers, if they're Aborigines, or if they're Muslims or whoever they are, then you have to be sensitive to that (A93).

He designed his subject according to 'customer focus' and presented this perspective as if it were not open to criticism. It framed issues which management could address and consequently precluded many other considerations. He drew strong lines between his personal beliefs and what he judged to be appropriate professional behaviours. His own teaching reflected the distinction which he made between business and home life.

---

[33] See Clark, Ross and Shackleton (1994) pp 88-89.

For him, 'the key to good management' was to focus on the 'customer's needs' which, by definition, meant not selling products which caused harm. Business people would gain a benefit as a result of 'satisfying needs' and 'making people happy'. Business would thrive by producing a product, or service which filled a 'social purpose'. However, there was 'an inconsistency, of course, in practice' because people pursued 'their own goals and ambitions irrespective of their concern for the customer'. So having posed customer satisfaction as the key to ethical business practice, he also had to acknowledge that it relied on cooperation. But a systemically focused subject did not provide the time or opportunity to explore cooperation, and the prime object was 'the immediate customer and the value-adding process'. So, finally, the need to promote customer satisfaction and more efficient operations dictated the subject content, as he had 'to be very clear about where we begin and where we end'. He acknowledged the need to recognise ethical implications, but such responsibility was covered 'in other subjects'. So although he felt the need for a values-based perspective, perhaps through offering ethics as a 'capstone subject', this responsibility lay with other staff and other subjects.

A number of business academics felt constrained by the theoretical limitations of their subjects. An academic teaching economics stated that 'individualism and rationalism' were the theoretical foundations of his discipline. The theory of economics assumed 'rationality, self-interest, maximising behaviour'. However, no one would 'behave in that way all the time' and he questioned whether it was even a 'socially desirable' philosophy. But he resolved this tension by resorting to a belief in its usefulness 'to view what is going on'.

Concerns about social desirability and philosophical issues were outside the scope of his teaching. But his fundamental position was that individuals should make the decisions about how they really wanted to live. Issues such as 'growth per annum' and 'fiscal policy' had to be measured against political process and what individuals really valued.

In other words, his fundamental position was based on individualism and the pursuit of 'enlightened self-interest'. Acknowledging that these assumptions were possibly false, or socially undesirable, provoked tensions that were dismissed on the grounds that social and business activity had to be justified. His teaching would help companies to make decisions.

All of the staff who were interviewed can be grouped by relating personally-held beliefs to academic identity. The following three narratives demonstrate this classification. *Robert* exemplifies the first group of academics, the 'academic lions', who held strong beliefs about the role of education which they debated throughout the university and beyond. While individually espousing a 'left-wing perspective', he represented this group through his commitment to critical thinking and open discussion, rather than by his political allegiance. Such staff, though they were in the minority, saw public dissent as an essential element of their academic identity. Being fearless, they were sometimes described by others as 'foolhardy'. Others accused them of being 'politically naive'. *Neal* represents the second group. Typically, members of this group held strong personal beliefs about the role of education which were apparent in their teaching. Proponents of this 'devil's advocate' approach encouraged students to 'be critical' of the core assumptions of their disciplines. They provoked debate by arguing viewpoints other than their own. For them, critical discussion was preferable to an ill-informed consensus.

James represents the final group. He seemed to seek certainty and was sensitive to any slights against the authority of the academic role. Members of this group were more likely to reflect on insults, either in print, such as *James* described, or from students, as in the case of one academic who had felt threatened by criticism of his teaching style. They were more inclined to espouse an ideal way of teaching and tended to emphasise the expert nature of their discipline. This was the group which was most affronted by those students who questioned either the content or the assessment of their subject. Regardless of their age, they were

more likely to regret the loss of academic prestige. They perceived threats to their security, either from having to teach their subjects in new ways, or by the deterioration of the academic world which they had chosen. Although some of these fears and beliefs were shared by the two groups above, this group used the expertise of its discipline to avoid discussing concerns which hinged on values.

The previous thematic commentary, while raising issues central to the MBA, does not convey academics as individuals. The following three narratives of male academics indicate that it was complex for them to relate their values to their personal and working lives. These accounts seek to integrate the academic experience of the MBA by personalising what is was like to be an academic lion, a devil's advocate and a disciplinarian. In addition, they addressed concerns about the discussion of ethical issues in the classroom and how academics approached their subject material, including their desire to encourage students to be subjective or critical of their academic disciplines. The three taught financial management, having been business academics for most of their careers. Each had undertaken administrative responsibilities, in combination with designing and teaching postgraduate management programs. They had all experienced the development of their universities' undergraduate business degrees and had seen their own careers influenced by the growth of management education. And, in a similar way, each had experienced the increased pressure on business education to generate profit from fully-funded programs. They were born in Australia of English speaking parents and had taught overseas. Two out of the three had been involved in amalgamations which affected the culture, history and mission of their own institution. So, any differences between them cannot be explained away by reference to gender or generation, or being an immigrant Australian. Perhaps the most important similarity was that all three described their core identity as academic. This role was the key focus of their professional identity. They had rejected non-academic possibilities, although their academic disciplines had provided real opportunities to change their careers. They represent a group concerned with quantitative concepts, a group which can be characterised as most pragmatic about business education. Conversely, they are often portrayed as the

group least concerned about social and civic issues. However, given these assumptions, it was intriguing to recognise that their personal and professional beliefs, and their difference in views, could be seen to reflect the complete range of academics involved in teaching the MBA.

The individual narratives

Robert – the academic lion

Robert's teaching came from a strong technical base, which was balanced by a broad educational philosophy. He was politically aware, confrontational, and valued debate. Happy to be the dissenter, he acknowledged its necessity, even at those times when it had undermined his own proposals. He described 'the origins of the MBA as a degree targeted at engineers, scientists and non-business graduates who lacked academic training in business disciplines such as accounting and economics', because, historically managers had come from functional areas, especially engineering and accounting. The MBA flourished in Australia on 'the American model' which recognised the 'post-Second World War need to train another cohort of business leaders' rather than relying upon the 'historical evolution of finance people or engineers'.

He compared the first MBA programs – which were established to help managers develop 'the wide range of attributes and personal characteristics' exhibited by those who were the 'business successes of the turn of the century'– with the current curriculum which 'comprised a wide range of concurrent disciplinary studies'. He considered that the inter-disciplinary relationship between subjects occurred 'more by accident than design', but described the MBA as aiming to produce management generalists rather individuals who were 'expert in a wide range of things'. His key educational focus was to assist students to 'know what questions to ask of the experts' in matters including 'personnel, finance, property, and planning matters'. These problems would not be resolved by 'their primary disciplinary training'. In fact he saw a danger that students' initial degrees might

have 'conditioned' them into negative ways of managing. He believed the MBA should assist managers to 'shift ground rapidly' so as to be able to understand people with different educational backgrounds. In other ways, he believed that education could not only frame the language and perceptions by which individuals lived, but also that this framework, once established, could be altered.

He criticised some MBA programs for the 'foolish notion of education' that treated 'the candidates as empty vessels'. He recognised 'the inter-connections' between students' previous study, their work experience and the MBA program overall. As an educator, his focus was on 'the personal skills, the communication skills, the relationship skills, the marketing skills, rather than on learning technical knowledge'. He wanted to promote 'the process attributes of the candidates', for example, cooperation. He initially linked the goals and objectives of the MBA to the needs of the employment world. However, when considering how to balance work with other concerns he advocated 'the whole development of people'. His wife provided his example of someone with the attributes and capacities of the 'whole person' that he hoped to develop through the MBA. He stated that the 'process' of the MBA was more important than 'the content' and criticised those with 'a grossly exaggerated view of the importance of their subject' within the program.

Through the MBA he wanted to 'inoculate' potential managers against being 'puzzled or confused by any smart games' business people might choose to play on them in the corporate context. This would involve the 'continuous process of developing their personal and professional skills [so as] to be able to conceptualise and lead groups to solve problems'. For him, an ideal program would use 'a problem solving approach' to 'address the competing aspirations of the stakeholders in a business'. He was frustrated that many academics, by protecting their discipline areas, were impeding the implementation of this process-oriented approach.

Robert wanted questions about 'the nature of man' and 'the role of ideas' –
including 'economic activity' and the 'purpose of life' – to be considered within
the MBA. These perspectives were typically ignored by management training,
which he dismissed as 'this pragmatic world'. *Robert*'s language conveyed the
passion of his convictions. For example, he described the 'bloody dangerous'
belief system of a well known chief executive, who promoted 'irresponsible'
ideas, which were justified by 'such a strong private property ownership
perspective'. He typified the company as a 'corporate beast' because it equated
'individuals maximising their welfare', with maximising 'the welfare of the
society'. This belief denied the reality of 'the process of competition'. He
doubted, despite their claims, that these same corporate leaders wanted the MBA
to promote teamwork and cooperation. Their focus was to 'compete, fight and
win'. These executive managers wanted recruits who were 'highly
individualistic, tough', and motivated by narrow 'constituent interests'. He saw
that such executives did not give 'a damn about cooperation', as long as people
met their demands. As he said, 'That's their definition of cooperation; it's about
power and coercion'.

Education should not promote the advantage of those with 'entrenched power'
and he worried that these executives represented success for students. He feared
that the MBA would perpetrate existing business structures, which would cause
him to judge: 'Well, my life in business education has failed'. For *Robert*,
management education should assist students to relate personal concerns to both
corporate and civic considerations. The MBA should produce graduates who
combined personal ambition with a sense of civic responsibility. The personal
belief system that underpinned corporate behaviour had to be developed and
broadened. However, he conceded that this aim was very difficult to achieve.

> How can you use an MBA to cause change to occur in society? Well, I
> don't think people can use MBAs for change. I think there's probably
> pretty good compliance following an MBA.

This realisation caused *Robert* to experience tension and conflict. The course
would be judged by the corporate world. As an academic responsible for

developing and teaching management programs, he had chosen to be in education because he had strong beliefs about how he wanted to live, and the legacy he wanted to leave. He saw that graduates chose to do an MBA because they wanted 'a business ticket' and even if the university did create 'a left wing MBA' it would probably fail to attract students. And yet, society and business needed graduates with a broad vision, who were flexible and open-minded. Narrow, elitist executives ended up 'being counter productive' – they would not produce sustainable or long-term wealth. There was an inherent tension because 'the market', namely the employers, expected the MBA to produce managers who would implement the values of organisations.

He considered whether MBA programs caused students to verbalise their values. Did the MBA prompt students to relate their personal, family, ethnic and religious values to the corporation? Did the university experience encourage them to think about themselves as citizens? In relation to personal concerns was the implicit message 'talk about it with your spouse at home, but don't bring it up here'? I asked him whether academics encouraged students to experience doubt as part of a process of making choices or promoted in them a certainty where the parameters were never questioned. At this point *Robert* conceded that it did depend, which was 'a bit preposterous, ... upon the values of the people who are running the subjects and the courses'. The best forms of management education addressed the problems of specific academic disciplines and attempted to understand 'the implications of the questions' associated with those disciplines. For example, in his own classes he had always explicitly criticised 'the academic model which distinguishes between the enterprise and the external world'. This concept had allowed industries to dismiss environmental considerations and turn the Yarra River into 'an open sewer'. But it was problematic to encourage students to criticise theory before they mastered it. This created a quandary:

> We don't allow novices to go poking around our sacred beliefs, until
> they understand them. But by the time they understand, they are so
> inculcated with perceived wisdom that they have difficulty in seeing
> outside the boundaries.

He saw that subjects which were classified as quantitative were 'shot through with ideology', which excluded concerns such as recognition of the environment and concern for the workers. A compelling academic goal was to produce graduates able to criticise core management constructs. The example set when the University of Sydney 'years ago ... [had] set up a parallel curriculum between Ted Wheelwright, economist to the left, and Neal Hogan, economist to the right' represented an ideal, but unattainable, way of teaching business management.

Robert stated that management style influenced how work was carried out, for example, participative decision making had become increasingly important and was now part of university process. However, its success depended on whether senior management accepted dissent. He believed that staff who were prepared to disagree gave better advice. Those with the courage to ignore the vanities of their seniors were often the most loyal employees. And in his eyes they contributed most to organisations. He held strong views about organisational politics which recognised not only organisational theories but also the centrality of power relationships between factions.

Yet, despite these complexities, he characterised universities as comparatively 'free zones of thinking and action', where knowledge was the major goal. The difference between science and the arts was seen as important. He gave academic priority to the establishment of 'higher order problem solving skills'. Students with these skills 'should be useful in their communities' because, as problem solvers, they should be able to critique socially destructive assumptions. He believed MBAs should know how to best utilise resources and employ staff capacities within their organisations. But they also needed to understand broad civic principles. However, while they should be challenged and developed through specific subjects, not the overall structure of the MBA, the values perspective within subjects depended on the beliefs of the academics involved. This recognition coexisted with his concern for the 'conflict between private and public values'. And he worried that private values increasingly emphasised materialism and personal gratification.

The passion conveyed by his story waxes and wanes. After so much energy directed at political and ideological issues, in the end critical thinking emerged as the highest academic achievement. Students' intellects were to be refined, but within the constraints of 'an irreducible core of content' of subjects such as 'management, planning, finance or money, personnel and marketing'. His anger about the power of the city elite, including its influence on MBA content, was uneasily resolved by relying on the critical capacity of MBA graduates. The appeal of the Sydney University experiment, which critiqued capitalist ideology, lost against the potential cost in student numbers, and consequently, funds. His idealism gave way to financial pragmatism.

The interview followed a circular path. From being initially pragmatic about the course, *Robert* adopted a more broadly based philosophical and political stance. It was as if he had moved from being constrained by the task of MBA teaching to wider social and civic considerations. The discussion started with the needs of industry and students, moved to the idealistic stance which considered what management education should be, and explicitly criticised the 'ideology of business'. After claiming that an MBA course should develop the critical capacities of students and go beyond business content, he concluded that the major focus of the MBA should rest within subject areas, which were controlled by those subject coordinators.

His story is marked by tensions and pressures. *Robert* was committed to teaching, but constrained by politics, funding cuts and the pressures of amalgamation. These pressures left him as an uneasy conformist. Perhaps, in Ralston Saul's sense, the resolution of those tensions was in his 'loyalty' to a program of which he was critical. He felt the program had to attract management recruits who appealed to a corporate market. Ultimately, his involvement in the MBA allowed him to continue the debate within the limits of his own classroom.

Neal – the devil's advocate

Neal, like *Robert*, had chosen to be an academic out of a sense of commitment and had remained because it was a career which accommodated his family responsibilities. His early pursuit of quantitative finance and education studies had been followed by a period of working in commerce. His style and attitude to teaching conformed with those described as 'devil's advocates'.

In contrast to *Robert*, he presented his concerns about the environment first, before discussing his teaching. The interview was briefly delayed while he consulted with two postgraduate students; his style was both gentle and intense. His first degree was in commerce, and he had studied both humanities and science degrees at a later stage. He had flirted with other career options but had chosen to stay in teaching. He characterised his area of quantitative finance, and perhaps teaching more generally, as using theory to explain 'why you do something' and 'how you do it'.

In his experience, MBA teaching involved distilling the essentials of a discipline for a demanding, sophisticated student group. The challenge of MBA teaching was to promote technical competency, while giving students an experience of 'significant work' in class 'at a level worth doing'. He described his area as 'technically not complex, but difficult to get right'. Teaching part-time Australian MBAs, he had 'to take a quite complex idea' and quickly convey 'the guts of it, the essence of it'. He found it satisfying to teach the 'latest, reasonably heavy stuff' not covered in the text. He enjoyed 'getting rid of 80 percent of the background detail, concentrating on some key ideas' and then relating those ideas to business. His goal was to convey relevance and practicality which enabled those with business experience 'to get involved'. Academics also had to reconcile the different styles of international students. For him, Thai women were 'unassertive' and hard to involve in class discussions, while Indian men were 'the other way round'.

There were difficulties associated with accurate financial reporting. Professionals reporting to corporations experienced 'very strong pressure' to comply with unethical demands. His subject taught that corporate decisions should not be made on solely financial grounds. *Robert* aimed to promote 'an ethical view ... to measure performance correctly, accurately, and in an unbiased fashion'. In class, he had discussed such failures of honesty pursued by businessmen such as Connell and Bond. And he became angry when he recalled that MBAs had laughingly dismissed their dishonesty.

Those ethical standards which sounded 'good on paper' would not prevent unethical practices in business. He was frustrated that academics helped devise legal solutions which unscrupulous advisers could then subvert. The pursuit of money and material possessions created a constant pressure and cynicism in society. His responsibility was to teach return on investment and profit, with the end goal of running a business legally. While recognising that the fashion in finance was 'to get maximum value to the shareholders', he clearly differentiated between shareholder and stakeholder issues, because 'the general public has a stake in the company'. Yet, at the same time, he disliked the central focus of finance which promoted a consumerist society.

Within the MBA context, he wanted students to understand that his discipline was 'not nearly as certain or as objective' as many believed it would be. He sought to promote accuracy and objectivity within a specific situation. He claimed that this was not a moral issue. Nonetheless, if a student accepted illegal behaviour, such as stealing from an employer, that would be a problem which he would address. He normally set individual and group work so that students could learn the subject in a way which suited their needs and interests. But in circumstances when he could 'not trust' the students, he had used formal tests. In these instances, he had prioritised the need for a just assessment above his belief in learning through participation.

In his own classes, he found it 'incredibly difficult' to encourage students to consider social and environmental perspectives. The idea of competition constantly intruded on his experience of teaching. He described the MBA students he taught as 'nice people but ... aggressive and ... competitive', who promoted the idea of a sixty-hour working week. He was critical of Australian part- time students, who 'project success all the time' and were just 'showing off'. When the focus on competition really 'got up his nose', he pushed the MBAs to consider whether there was more to life than work. They responded that it was 'easier in a university than in private industry'. At such times he saw them as members of 'the Seinfeld generation', a group which espoused 'the most cynical view of life'. They were so 'selfish, amoral, so little committed to anything' that they left him feeling 'quite empty'.

Recalling this classroom banter caused him to reflect that he had opted for a lower-paid career because of 'having kids and wanting to spend time with them'. That time was gone, and he now worked 'very long hours'. In his experience, university life had become increasingly competitive, and staff were now expected to 'achieve in so many things'. He regretted that his personal relationships suffered because work took so much of his time and energy. While some senior managers decried these pressures, no attempts were made to improve the situation, and a few, highly paid academics had effectively 'opted out' without forgoing their high salaries. Academics who personally profited from external consulting were criticised for pursuing 'that paradigm' of 'consumerism'.

His appreciation of social and environmental problems had been influenced by 'new' ways of thinking. In contrast, MBA courses did not prompt students to revise their view of life, because these courses largely ignored broader concerns. As he said, when management educators aimed 'to disturb the dominant paradigm' they were probably speculating on technology, such as 'Total Quality Management or Just In Time or whatever'. The political battles about conservation and the environment had 'been resolved by the use of economic rationalism', which he defined as 'thinking in terms of production and wealth,

with ideas of efficiency and effectiveness being dominant – using economics rather than other ways of thinking'. He sadly reflected that 'the battle was lost in the 80s probably'. For him it was 'no good blaming governments' as it was caused by 'the vast majority of people [who] just want to be successful and wealthy'. While they wanted to 'preserve beautiful things like national parks', they ignored 'the basic issues' such as soil quality and water. These were only considered as economic issues, and were consequently subject to 'man's destruction'. In contrast, for him the 'maintenance of urban wetlands' was a 'quality of life issue' and a strong personal need. But his major sense of tension centred around 'social issues like poverty'. Most people focused on issues such as tax reform, which denied the needs of 'the disadvantaged and the poor'. He was distressed that most were preoccupied 'with making the rich richer, the successful more successful'. Society was split between those who favoured a materialistic, or 'survival of the fittest', mentality and the minority, including those involved in the conservation movement, who were community-oriented.

Students from 'former communist countries', who learnt about Western market economies, such as share markets, through the MBA would 'make good little capitalists, unfortunately'. Capitalism was a preferable system to communism, but both systems were 'damaging' and there was little scope to criticise capitalism within business education. Perhaps, because he felt responsible to convey essential content in a limited time, he could not fit a 'values-based' critique within technical subjects. However, he found 'the world we live in', as portrayed by commercial TV, even more depressing than MBA teaching. His teaching would never encourage behaviour which was 'environmentally damaging or unethical', and he had the autonomy 'to teach people to do it properly and ethically'. Relating 'qualitative factors about environmental and social issues' to business decision making helped him to fight 'the banality of commercial TV'.

Neal had a 'more radical view' of environmentalism. Yet, his life, in contrast to that pursued by his 'environmentally conscious friends', did not reflect the values

which he espoused. They recycled intensively, lived in cooperative urban communities and doubted that those in the 'mainstream' could actively conserve the environment. These non-business friends encouraged him to stop being an academic, saying he could survive with less money. Their commitment made him self-critical, while consumerism continued to influence his life. His comment that 'MBA courses are not about disturbing the dominant paradigm' related to him as an academic as much as to those he taught. But, for *Neal*, 'opting out' on a low income and achieving 'self-sufficiency' through an urban community was a utopian dream.

The Christian ethic informed his beliefs about 'what is right and wrong'. Australian society was only 'Christian in a nominal political sense' which had 'no connection with our capitalist lifestyle'. His ideal was the 'pure form of socialism in the early church', based on living communally and sharing. But this was distant from the technical subjects which he taught. His dealings with daily issues, such as students and administration, reflected his belief in decency, which was 'difficult to translate generally' into MBA teaching.

While holding strong beliefs, he saw a problem with imposing such beliefs through any formal teaching of ethics or culture. He wanted to promote belief in diverse systems. For *Neal*, Australian society equated the technical with the secular, and both were separate from religious concerns. Australians had an understanding of a moral dimension with spiritual, environmental and social aspects, which, in his view, was distinct from the technical and conceptual elements of business. For example, part-time students would not cooperate with any academic whom they judged to be a 'political moral crusader'. Ethical issues could only be related to business when they were seen to have practical consequences. He used the example of some Australian part-time students who claimed that 'we are paying so much an hour for this and you are wasting our time; we want rates of inflation and budget deficits'. In contrast, full-time students were 'easier to deal with, because they are younger and they are a little more naive and more idealistic probably'.

When asked about the desirability of seeing the MBA as a context for promoting a sense of civic awareness and responsibility, *Neal* was 'wary' and doubted that he had 'the right'. Once again, he seemed torn, this time between his responsibility to convey his discipline and the perceived intolerance of many MBA students. However, his exploration of whether academics were 'the right people anyway' clarified why he hesitated. *Neal* opposed the promotion of values in the classroom because he believed that academics were among the most ardent proponents of economic rationalism, a philosophy which he had bitterly rejected. He feared that the promotion of a values-based approach to higher education would further empower the philosophy of competition and consumerism. And, beyond the universities, he was depressed that the process of democratic government had failed to address the major questions. Both sides of government had exploited the environment for more than ten years. He was bitterly disappointed that this destruction had been justified on economic grounds.

Neal, like *Robert*, placed corporate responsibility firmly in a civic context. Yet, it was only within his classroom that he felt he could promote truth and objectivity. Objectivity was his only bastion against the economic paradigm. Using Ralston Saul's terms, *Neal* feared the ideology of corporatism. Neither political processes nor professional associations displayed any commitment to preserving what he valued. His ideal life involved living in a cooperative, communitarian society, motivated by principles of equity and environmental sustainability. However, his lifestyle choices were incompatible with this goal. These conflicting pressures caused him pain. Perhaps they were an artefact of the day, and demands made on his time. But, when given the opportunity to revise his comments, he said that there was 'nothing that he would change substantially'.

And so, in the final analysis, his way of contributing to society was to teach business people to reframe problems and use conceptual skills. He prized objective thinking as a tool of good citizenship. He believed that the social and political systems were too entrenched to be directly confronted. But he silently

hoped that proficiency in the principles of logic and rationality would equip MBA students to perform better as citizens. He disliked the cynical attitudes of his students and his fellow academics. Perhaps he feared that he was also tainted: 'We [academics] can be more cynical than the students at times, more committed to capitalism and economic rationalism.'

He conveyed the impression of having the weight of the environmentally aware community on his shoulders. Like a prophet coming down from the mountain who had wrestled with his demons, he also seemed exhausted.

James – the disciplinarian

James said he was an academic because he 'enjoyed passing on knowledge'. He described how he enjoyed clarifying concepts which students considered 'esoteric and complex'. MBA students would not become experts during their study with him, but he aimed to give them sufficient knowledge to stop them feeling 'totally intimidated'. He can be represented as the 'disciplinarian' who found security within his subject area, and who also used it as a boundary which excluded criticism from those who did not see the world as he did. He was an educator and a boundary-keeper. *James* aimed to induct students into the intellectual rigours of his subject, but at the same time MBAs who did not appreciate its significance would be castigated through options ranging from sharp comments to academic failure.

James described his family as 'picking the eyes out of the religious observances', rejecting all 'the onerous things' and enjoying the rest of it. As a result of his family experience, he believed that religion was an important aspect of culture. In contrast, while he was 'probably politicised at home', politics was not often discussed in his family and he characterised his father as 'still to the left' of where he stood. In common with *Neal* and *Robert*, *James* had taught in a specialist discipline area for a number of years. Unlike them, he did not have a long

experience of teaching MBA students. He hoped to help them negotiate better in business, to protect both them and their companies.

His style of teaching shared similarities with 'learning a language', as students might eventually use the conceptual 'phrases' in some other context. He did not expect MBA students to confront the subject's assumptions, the 'philosophical underpinnings', because before they could do that, they needed to master the basics. So, striking an ironic note, he stated that it was unnecessary for students to understand, say, 'the virtues of capitalism'. *James* saw that because 'most ... were working in the private sector in Australia, they would be most interested in financial concepts and techniques' which related to Australia. MBAs had no interest in the underlying philosophical values.

His major MBA teaching problem was the 'non-numerate background' of the students, which he described as 'shocking'. He found that 'the techniques were not a problem' for the engineers. In contrast, the knowledge of some of the others 'was so incredibly limited' that it precluded any discussion of the underlying values and assumptions. Some principles were 'more normative', but outside the capacities of 'these students ... in 13 weeks'; there were 'real problems' in encouraging students who lacked quantitative studies to critique the subject. His MBA teaching sought to help students compensate for this lack which was why he taught techniques rather than proofs or philosophical understandings.

He was frustrated by students' in the MBA who wanted a 'human resource management'-type program. His more traditional concept of the MBA was that it involved ' some accounting, some law, some economics, finance, operations research, marketing ... business-related disciplines'. Students' motivation for doing the MBA caused 'lots of problems', as they held a different 'frame of reference' from that of most academics responsible for the program. He expressed shock that these students could not calculate a basic profit and loss statement. Many MBA students, with 'a much grander picture of themselves',

denigrated technical knowledge and skills. This attitude provoked him; their stated convictions lacked 'any firm grounding'.

James disparaged those MBAs in his class who indicated that, 'anything that they couldn't grasp straight away or which required a bit of work' was too difficult. He referred to them as 'future captains of industry' with an 'exalted view of their own importance'; the self-proclaimed 'experts' who thought that it 'was almost unseemly' to do homework or read a book. The MBA was purely their 'ticket' to make money and their 'chief executive approach', namely, wanting material presented in summary-form, was inappropriate. He hoped that the MBA would teach them to 'be a bit circumspect', to have an open mind, to respect both 'an existing body of knowledge' and those people (namely academics) who knew more than them.

He portrayed full-time overseas students as less egotistical, less frustrating to teach. He also stated that there would be no need to change the subject content for students from Malaysia or Singapore, because their finance environments would not be 'all that different' from Australia's. And because the course was not 'prescriptive', any differences would not create problems. He did not question the assumption that the societies are the same, because the teaching of finance was based on the implicit assumption that 'markets work, or are allowed to work, and that prices reflect something'. The subject operated at a general level, promoting 'an international awareness' of the economy, because 'we recognise that we live in an integrated world where capital flows almost freely'. He portrayed himself as an expert in finance, not in social or cultural differences.

The concepts of markets and competition were central to *James'* work. While he could acknowledge that such concepts were open to criticism, he could not accept that students would achieve this capacity within their limited study of his subject. While stating on one hand that the MBA, or any degree, should assist students to criticise over-simplification, he also insisted that students had to master his subject's analytical framework, using core concepts of the subject, prior to

debating its tenets. He condemned the popular media which portrayed economists as unsophisticated and accountants as 'bean counters'; in his opinion, academics from both groups mastered complexity. He was angered when journalists covered issues such as unemployment, environmentalism or globalism which he believed should be left to experts.

The introduction of fees had encouraged students to adopt the attitude that 'paying for' education should preclude having to 'do extra work'. *James* was offended when students hinted that because their fees funded his salary, they were entitled to influence his program's content. This attitude prompted him to respond that it was 'not like a restaurant' where customers could 'send the meal back' if they did not like it. The discipline of finance demanded that students were exposed to numbers and techniques which they did not have to like. He used the analogy of wanting to be a doctor, with the expectation of 'no sick people and no blood'. For *James*, 'the teacher-student relationship' revolved around that expertise which the academic was responsible to convey. He was frustrated by trying to provide an overview of the subject, at the same time as encouraging students to 'respect' it.

Perhaps because this was not his primary teaching program, he denigrated the academic levels of MBA programs and preferred to teach a specialist masters. While he conceded that subjects should cater to student expectations, he described himself as keen to maintain academic standards. So, he experienced a tension between promoting academic rigour and the need to accommodate fee-paying students, as they were customers who provided income to the university. He was concerned that the universities' reliance on this income could compromise the quality of teaching. Lecturers had to make their subjects practical, balance what their disciplines required, and keep fee-paying students happy. This required a compromise between a 'cutting edge' approach and one that he felt weakened academic standards. *James* expected MBA students to master 'the fundamental tools', or basic skills, of his subject and parodied their

expectation of a 'warm and fuzzy' discussion-based approach to learning, regardless of its suitability.

For *James*, the ethical aspects of finance included the values of the market, the relationship of risk to revenue, and taking personal responsibility for the consequences of individual action. He viewed the MBA as a course designed to assist engineers to move into business or management; such students were not interested in underlying principles. It was desirable that they reflected on the values issues, but, 'the deep and meaningful philosophical point of view' was 'the hard stuff' which required that the 'groundwork' had been done. *James* had not 'thought long and hard' about these questions and did not 'really have a view' on them. But, when prompted, he wondered whether values concerns should be raised in any case as MBA students were often older and more experienced than the academics who taught them. From his perspective, it was far less risky to impart technical knowledge than to discuss issues such as managing older staff or gender issues. Neither these, nor concerns about religion or spirituality, were part of his academic role. Students who wanted to reflect should 'go off to an ashram or join a monastery', because values were not the 'business' of a university. There were two aspects of his personal responsibility,. The first was that MBA students who were 'out there and senior' should be able to reach their own conclusions and the second was to see his role as neutral, not to feel that he should 'stop people damaging the environment'. It was not for him to 'preach to MBA students', as they should 'make up their own minds'. *James* believed that staff who held ardent beliefs should attempt to neutralise them. If they could not, they had a responsibility to make it clear that students were not expected to share their personal viewpoint.

With regard to expertise, *James* wanted MBA students to develop an 'open mind' about finance; he criticised students who denied their lack of knowledge. When considering how ethical issues related to his teaching, he relied on published writings, including those of his discipline, which justified the academic position. As he said, he lacked the qualifications to speak about issues such as spirituality.

He suggested 'a cap-stone subject' to be taught by those with expertise in philosophy. In other words, he portrayed himself in terms of mastery of his discipline. He believed that it would be dangerous for academics to teach areas where they were not 'expert'. To this extent, he confirmed Ralston Saul's fear that many perceive knowledge as bounded, which prevents any open discussion about broad social and civic issues. The paradox is that, despite his claim that open-mindedness was the goal of his MBA teaching, he precluded students from being critical because they lacked mastery of his subject. This emphasis on mastery constrained him from holding opinions outside his academic discipline.

On a personal level, he felt that values were 'easier to practise than to discuss', and because they were 'hard to verbalise', they were not easily dealt with in a public arena. For him, questions about the MBA facilitating good citizenship seemed remote from its core goals. While hesitating to describe what a good citizen should be, he believed that the gaining of knowledge and expertise would promote that goal. In sum, *James* believed that values should be explored in private, with close friends, rather than in professional life. Academically, *James* experienced a tension between wanting to help students to recognise complexity, and becoming angry when they would not respect the quantitative demands of his discipline. Students should become critical, and also adept in a subject which required mathematical skill. However, because of time constraints, he could not assist MBAs to critique the philosophical principles which underpinned the subject. The academic process which he adopted did not involve criticism. And the question remains as to whether criticism is possible within such a framework. While conceding that the conceptual framework of his subject was open to analysis, he primarily represented the academic who, as *Robert* had described, demanded that the student enter the 'magic circle' of a discipline in a way which effectively precluded objective criticism.

Conclusion

Reflecting on these three academics, *Robert* voiced his concerns in public. He criticised his discipline, the university, business, and society as he saw the need. In contrast, *Neal*'s environmentalist and social justice beliefs were mostly subsumed by his desire to promote critical thinking and objectivity through his teaching. He avoided the differences between his personal motives and those of his MBA students as, for him, the teaching of values was inseparable from ideology. *Neal* chose to promote critical thinking rather than risk advocating any ideological stance through teaching.

Both could articulate the ethical concerns which they had about the relationship of business to society. They criticised consumerism, materialism and the shortcomings of capitalism. Both recognised that ideology played a role in the business curriculum, even though they adopted quite different strategies for dealing with it. One integrated his passion into his teaching, the other was frustrated by the cynicism he perceived around him. In contrast, *James* saw values as essentially private, and quite inappropriate for the classroom. His academic discipline, an expert's tool by which to analyse social and political activity, was offered as a neutral device for MBA students. *James* would accept criticism only from students with appropriate qualifications, namely more than three years study in his discipline. His ideal was that academics should be intellectually superior to their students, and consequently they should not teach outside their expertise. The respect due to an expert seemed more important to his sense of identity than being a citizen. He aligned himself more with his discipline than *Robert* and *Neal* had done.

After reflecting on the experiences of these three MBA academics, one can address the values against which they individually judged their own teaching responsibilities. Many of the differences evident in these three narratives are characteristic of the complex and diverse individuals teaching in Australian MBA programs. Their stories, combined with the teaching approaches undertaken

across the program, indicate different values within the MBA. Both individual and group based sources reflect on the themes of openness, acceptance of complexity, the promotion of diverse opinions, and the relationship between private and public worlds, as well as academic and corporate worlds. The narratives give insight into how three particular individuals applied their values within the structure and political realities of university life. Each of the three portrayed above could be characterised in terms of one dominant style, but, they also reflected aspects of the other two styles. And in a similar way, all the staff who took part in this study could be grouped in positions ranging from the fully 'transparent', and lionesque players, to those who encouraged a critical stance within the classroom and those who approached teaching with the goal of academic mastery.

MBA students and staff variously acknowledged the personal and corporate achievement which the course in each of the universities was understood to promote. Not surprisingly, few publicly criticised this perspective. While both academics and students recognised that the MBA had greater consequences than the careers of individual managers, many felt unable to critique corporate concepts, either within the university or in a broader public context. Significant numbers of both students and staff, especially when interviewed alone, criticised the goals of personal and corporate enrichment. Many academics felt responsible to promote debate and alternative viewpoints within the classes which they taught. This research illuminates Ralston Saul's claim that corporate language promotes the norms of big business (1997, pp 40-43) through an exploration of how disciplines such as accounting, business law, economics and statistics were taught.

The same subject was taught in different ways by different universities and within any one MBA program, different staff interpreted the goals of management education in various ways. There was no one interpretation of any one specific academic discipline. Academics varied in their responses regardless of whether their MBA program had a 'harder' or a 'softer' focus on what management

should achieve. Rather than promoting conformity, many academics encouraged students to criticise their subjects' assumptions.

These findings reflect those of Audrey Collin (1996), whose research into graduates of English MBAs led her to conclude that the academic process was more like 'Babel' than a routine machine-like process. This aspect of the research found that there were a variety of responsibilities and personal styles recognised within each of the MBA programs. These three academic types, which ranged from the explicitly critical and the classroom provocateur to the more authoritarian academic, were found within each program, and each was represented in all the major disciplines. Differences in academic style were not attributable to being associated with one specific university's MBA, nor to quantitative as against qualitative subjects, nor to being male or female, nor Australian as compared with overseas-born. Each style was represented in each program associated with a range of subjects in different ways. The constant was that MBA students would experience diverse expectations and practices within the programs. Each academic would convey his or her own values filtered through their own pedagogical perspective. Essentially, all who engaged in the MBA experienced it as complex and diverse.

This complexity was compounded by the individual ability of academics to integrate the values associated with the various domains of their lives. The 'academic lions' appeared to experience least internal conflict and the 'devil's advocates' sought to nurture their beliefs under a mantle of critical thought. In contrast, the 'disciplinarians' seemed to most closely conform with Ralston Saul's claim for an anaesthetised state of being. Thus Hall's concept of domains clarifies and substantiates an argument for a multiplicity of voices within the MBA.

In *The Stakeholder Corporation* (1997), Wheeler and Silinpaa argue that the notion of a customer or stakeholder creates ethical responsibilities beyond business expediency and economic pragmatism. Some staff drew on stakeholder

theory namely that companies must acknowledge responsibilities to individuals and causes beyond the company. Beliefs about how business related to society reflected a gap between narrow business-only theory and social realities. And yet, the responsibilities of teaching extensive and demanding subjects made it hard to justify the inclusion of topics which addressed these realities. This perspective highlights the need to teach the MBA in a way which overcomes the educational problems provoked by what Mintzberg (interviewed by Balasubramanian, 1998) described as the 'smoke stack' or disassociated subject approach.

The concept of 'customer' was at times perceived as a threat to sound academic relationships with students. Yet, some staff who described their students in this way also promoted a critical educational process. For them, this concept did not equate with lowered standards or inappropriate regard for student expectations. The concept of 'customer service' in the academic environment was open to a long-term perspective; universities which lowered standards to meet marketing goals would be disadvantaged by a decline in the reputation of its MBA. An alternative belief was that a market-driven process of attaining students had led to shorter and less rigorous programs. The concept of students as customers divided MBA teachers into pragmatists and idealists. This supports the research and analysis of academic motivation in the 1990s such as Smyth (1995) and Marginson (1997a and 1997b).

Another perception was that an individual's own academic discipline was the essential element of teaching. However, this stance also recognised ethical considerations, including the importance of their personally-held ethical beliefs. But if these beliefs were considered personal they would be separated from professional responsibility. Several staff, like *James*, were motivated to behave as good citizens. But they isolated the values which prompted civic behaviour from the ethical responsibilities which guided their teaching.

It proved important to understand how these academics conceptualised the public and the private. The 'lions' and the 'devil's advocates' were more inclined to

criticise this divide as a false distinction. In contrast, the 'disciplinarians' were less critical; they accepted that many important issues were outside the scope of their teaching. Academics who believed that their primary role was to promote critical thinking actively fomented debate and accepted the idea of uncertainty; the courageous, or naive, would voice their dissent in groups such as departmental or faculty meetings. Others would contain their viewpoint to the relative security of the classroom. Both settings can be seen as public places. The 'disciplinarians' saw doubt as private, relating to ideas that they would share only with family or the most intimate friends. This difference can be partly understood on the assumption that those who espoused privacy felt that values or ethics were personal concern; by contrast, the more critically-oriented saw that ethical considerations should be part of public discussion.

However, despite the significant numbers who promoted the need for a broader, values-based subject, those wishing to maintain a discipline focus to business education would not advocate MBA programs which decreased the focus on their own subjects. The politics of course design remained a major constraint. Unless there was a strong department which chose to take up ethics, no such proposed subject would be adopted when the academic content of the program was being revised. In addition, an elective offered without departmental support would have limited chances of attracting sustainable numbers of students.

It can be concluded that an approach dominated by an allegiance to specific academic disciplines has taken values issues out of the design of the MBA, and allowed ethical considerations only at the personal level of staff behaviour within their specific subjects. Some academics felt quite attuned to their civic and democratic responsibilities, but believed that such a role was essentially part of one's personal life. Others believed that, as academics, they were responsible to debate such issues through their teaching process. Only the lions expressed a need to formally recognise values in the course structure. And even they could be persuaded of the foolhardiness of this line when threats to academic budgets and consequent staffing numbers were made clear. When these threats were raised,

those staff who promoted solutions which threatened the status quo raised doubts about their personal loyalty to their departments.

Consequently, many academics publicly conformed so as to shield themselves from threats associated with critiquing the corporate language, a language which they perceived was common to the university hierarchy, the corporate sector and academic funding bodies. Reflecting on the three academic styles discussed above, an academic lion might choose to promote an MBA program because it increased faculty income, rather than out of pedagogic conviction. An individual's style was influenced by personal perceptions such as loyalty, politics or the pragmatics of survival. For many, their seeming compliance or certainty was a form of self-protection, provoked by fear of how change would impact on individuals and the university sector overall. Hall's concept of culture as 'a process, a set of practices' (Hall (ed), 1997, p2) contextualises the MBA and explains some degree of self-censorship. However, interviews with MBA staff generally did not uncover the 'certainty' to which Ralston Saul refers. It was more the case that no one program or subject discipline within the MBA was perceived to have a singular and certain interpretation.

Chapter 3 The MBA as a cultural experience

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the MBA programs within three Australian city universities in terms of the values and perceptions of academics. This chapter explores MBA students and staff interactions in both Australian and Indian contexts. It takes the findings from group discussions and individual interviews to consider several cultural influences on the MBA, namely:

a) the country in which the MBA was taught;

b) the content and process that academics expected students to master (recognising the MBA's American origins);

c) cross-cultural experiences involving students and staff.

d) students' expectations and experiences of the program itself.

Hall's concept of culture, where members of a group produce and exchange meanings, provides a way to interrogate the experience of the MBA (Hall (ed) 1997, p 3) as it relates to values. The analysis is based on individual interviews, the self-administered interview schedules and group discussions. Hall's concentration on 'the discursive practice' of language highlights the interaction within groups and the way that individuals use words to both convey and create meaning. Language is described in terms of 'articulation'; language conveys established ideas, but, like a 'prime mover' also 'pulls' new meanings into place. This conception of culture employs the idea of domains, where individual identity is 'forged' by social interaction, including the use of language.

Such an approach to cultural analysis was judged more appropriate for research on the MBA which adapted ethnographic techniques, than the broad focus on culture employed by researchers such as Hofstede (1980, 1984).

The Australian analysis in this chapter is based on group and individual discussions with students and staff at three Australian universities and the Indian

material is drawn from two Government-run MBA programs in India. Staff groups did not include students and vice versa. All interviewed in Australia are designated by (A1-A121). The indication of nationality in the broad text reflects that the student in an international student in an Australian MBA program. Thus, *Paraswati*- an Indian student- is shown to be enrolled in an Australian MBA by the code (A11).

The Indian MBA programs, unlike those in Australia, had few international students or staff. The students who studied in India are differentiated by the codes (In1-18). The analysis of their comments follows the discussion of students enrolled in the Australian program on a topic by topic basis.

A more individually focused analysis, such as that adopted in this thesis, allows assumptions based on culture to be interrogated. Chalmers and Volet (1997) and Sinclair and Britton Wilson (1999) argue that such stereotypes are misguided and counterproductive. The following analysis of postgraduate management education, from the perspective of Australian and international students and staff, reflects on how this education process relates to society and business. Hall's focus on culture 'as a practice' provided a rationale to analyse the findings around questions such as the following: How did these individuals feel about these issues in relation to the MBA? Did the interplay between students, staff and the concepts associated with the MBA make them question themselves and their beliefs? Did corporate language dominate their discussion and outlook?

Because MBA staff were potentially identifiable, they have been described as coming from geographic regions. This does not imply that individuals from one country share one understanding and experience, but alludes to culturally influenced differences while maintaining the anonymity of particular staff.

The way in which national context affected individual staff and students suggested that the MBA was experienced in multiple ways. In this situation both students and staff had to confront complexity and ambiguity.

The MBA in Australia - which culture?

<u>What it means to be Australian</u>

Australian MBA students, at the universities which were previously institutes of technology, were often the children of working class parents. Typically they were the first generation of their family to attend university; they came from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds and demonstrated the complexity of the Australian identity.

Genevieve, an Anglo-Celtic Australian from a working class background, demonstrated a 'matter of factness' which perhaps reflected Australia's initial history as a convict settlement, and later expansion through the discovery of gold to become a settler society. Her narrative is told later in the chapter. The cultural traditions expressed by *Genevieve* and which patterned university education, were unfamiliar to many new arrivals to Australia, including international MBA students.

MBA students and staff who came from hierarchical, and consequently more respectful cultural traditions were often disconcerted by the egalitarian Australian attitude. Many Australian students and staff seemed to have internalised a sense of Australian culture which they associated with expressions such as 'she'll be right'. A more explicit sense of Australian identity was often influenced by being raised in another country or by working or studying overseas. Those who belonged to Australian sub-cultures had developed an awareness of the complexities of interacting with the dominant group. Academics, sensitised through past study or work outside Australia, recognised the complexity of national cultures. The experience of 'otherness' was associated with the acceptance of cultural norms as the artefacts of chance or history. However, this recognition often co-existed with a stated belief in the desirability of certain Australian values.

Julia, an academic, characterised Australian culture as tolerant.

> As Australians we accept and tolerate all sorts of differences, and
> provided they don't infringe on our personal space, we tend to accept
> that other people can be different. I think that's one of the great
> strengths of our society.

'Australian values' were often associated with the experience of growing up in working class families dedicated to a 'fair go'. When religion was discussed, it was seen as a foundation of childhood development, associated with parental teachings. Many Australian MBA students with children espoused the importance of community activities without recourse to religious concepts. They were more likely to discuss changes to the political or social fabric.

Australian cultural themes

The commonly shared beliefs of many of this generation of Australian MBA students perhaps reflected the universities that they were attending and their own socio-economic backgrounds. Several acknowledged their parents' commitments and formal religious beliefs which had also influenced them as children. Many were motivated by community involvement in their current lives, often linked to either the schools and kindergartens which their children attended, or the sport which they themselves played.

A marketing academic described Australian part-time MBA students, who were full-time employees, as members of the 'Seinfeld generation' which he explained involved a 'cynicism and materialism' which left him 'cold'(A100). This critical image was further elaborated by several other MBA staff.

Stewart was an Australian born students who had gained satisfaction from working with small neighbourhood communities. He criticised large corporations and trans-national companies that no longer accepted responsibility for staff, social justice and the environment. *Stewart* reflected a belief that the quality of

Australian life was declining due to an uncritical acceptance of competition, combined with the deregulation of banking, finance and trade relationships. He portrayed Australia as a country where family was important and where work, although essential, increasingly detracted from living life well.

He was a manager, completing a part-time MBA while his wife cared for their children full-time. He shared these characteristics and beliefs with other male Australian MBAs (A16, A52, A83). Their wives maintained family and local community relationships while they, the salary earners, concentrated on their paid work and studies. Australian male MBA students seemed to have limited domestic responsibilities, in contrast with the few female students who had children[34]. Generally the children of MBA students were young; there were no indications regarding whether female partners would work at a later date.

The issues of tolerance, fair play and secularism were often raised within the context of the Australian MBA. International students praised access to education, jobs, health services and housing. They experienced a country where the rule of law and an egalitarian tradition were seen to promote social inclusion. The questions emerge as to how principles such as tolerance and justice can be expressed in the workplace and society and whether students with diverse beliefs felt able to discuss topics which had social or national implications. These questions highlight educational responsibilities around difference, including concerns about matters of principle.

The educational culture of the Australian MBA

The dominant academic expectation, as discussed in chapter 2, was that MBA students would develop the individual ability to be critical, analytical and decisive within a business context. The need to develop effective group skills, although espoused in course documents, was variously interpreted by staff. Australian

---

[34] These finding reflect Sinclair's (1995a, 1998).

students, regardless of their discipline background, tended to accept these norms, even when they had difficulties mastering new subjects such as accounting or economics. International students took time to discover the implicit rules associated with the Australian educational style. A pattern of transition was the use of silence followed by learning how to present the key concepts of each subject's text and lectures. However, in discussing the meaning of recognised Western business concepts, some cultural variations emerged. For example, international students would regularly repeat text book answers such as that 'business was responsible to generate maximum profit returns to shareholders', but when questioned, several Thai students, for example, explained that profit included respect for society and the natural environment. Some Asian students interpreted 'family friendly employer' to mean a positive attitude to paternalistic management[35]. Expressions commonly used in management education were understood in ways which reflected the students' own cultures.

Students from countries with strong religious traditions, including Thailand and India, stated that such values should influence business decisions. Concerns raised included perceptions that Australian academic norms did not allow for discussion of religious beliefs. A contrasting viewpoint was that this style of argument promoted objectivity. The prizing of objective principles was associated with the need to anticipate personal, work or social consequences. Many international students demonstrated that they believed in academic goals of rationality and objectivity. Some students brought this belief with them, while others appeared to have developed it in Australia.

The expectations of international students often differed from those of Australian students and staff. Their expectations included academics being all-knowing, that teacher's should manage all aspects of student life and that the relationship was based on 'respect'. A student recalled that he had expected that the 'professor' would present all the subject content and when he was asked to talk in class, felt

---

[35] In management theory this expression refers to work designed around family responsibilities.

124

'I don't understand, this is not what I expected'. Such initial expectations were often at odds with those of Australian MBA students.

Staff concerns about international students included claims that they lacked sufficient business experience and academic pre-requisites. Several academics commented that the standard was gradually improving and described this phase of the MBA in terms of 'establishing a market', while others recognised that assessment of quality could be cultural.

Emma, an academic, noted that when culturally diverse students worked in groups that they would learn more about the different cultures than she would do. The transition for many students involved accepting that Australian academics taught in unexpected ways, for example, by not controlling students' discussions. She also described how students experienced 'a lot of personal stress' early in the MBA program which would influence both the way the subject operated, as well as how groups interacted outside the class. She believed in 'actually acknowledging it [stress] and recognising it and building it in'. This led her to 'not being quite so strict some times', for example, being more flexible about submission dates as students adjusted to new ways. Several staff (A90, A95, A96, A104) empathised with students who had not been taught how to 'critically analyse' written material, such as the Thai students who were described as reluctant to make negative comments. These teachers perceived that the initial MBA subjects would need to 'ease' international students into the academic culture of the program. They encouraged them to join culturally mixed groups so they would learn from other students and designed subjects which covered the required content at the same time as they promoted new educational norms.

The acquisition of new behaviours was seen as an important element of learning. In Australian post-graduate education, and especially in the MBA, students were expected to critique and synthesise argument and then relate these ideas to a real or hypothetical experience. *Yun-wei* described how he initially found these expectations frustrating. Australian academics were also frustrated by students

who sat quietly and said nothing – their assessment of cross-cultural classroom encounters are described in more detail in the section below.

Many students found that personal interactions provided some of their most meaningful MBA experiences. For *Yun-wei*, the MBA created an opportunity to explore his cultural traditions, and to experience a sense of 'Chineseness'[36] with those whose ancestors had left China, often generations before. *Yun-wei* stated that he had learned to appreciate his Chinese traditions by being separated from his culture. Perhaps overseas students were more perceptive of cultural elements than Australian students because distance enabled them to reconsider what had previously been taken for granted or denigrated. For example, *Yun-wei*'s parents had perceived their son's pursuit of a business career as dangerous, while he personally could not recall any discussion in China of practices which he later interpreted as Confucian. He described how Maoist-Marxist ideas had been promulgated during the Cultural Revolution – a period when traditional Chinese principles were considered counter revolutionary and those who maintained them were excluded from society.

Wendy was one of those who had been influenced by globalism before she came to Australia. She felt that foreign books had made her 'softer' and given her an understanding of others. These images of cross-cultural fertilisation reflect the comments of Indian students who frequently acknowledged the impact of the continuing influences of British colonialism on their social, cultural and educational norms. Such sub-themes are further developed later in this chapter.

For international students, the MBA was one aspect of Australian life. This experience, often grounded in part-time work, was filtered through cultural beliefs to interpret current studies and develop principles for future action. This involved perceptions of appropriate government activity and interrelationships between government and business. *Willow* admired the Australian social security system and recalled that the Chinese government had introduced tax concessions

to encourage the disabled to be independent – but she also criticised government support of gambling as harmful to society. Both Indian and Chinese students admired Australia's lifestyle. *Parveen* described how he had registered a business name without an introduction or paying a bribe; he cited this as an example of the dispassionate efficiency of the Australian public service. In other words, they interpreted the MBA within the framework of a secure and equitable society and contrasted Australia's social and political context with that of their own countries.

The MBA – staff perceptions in Australia

Most MBA staff accepted that they required flexibility to teach culturally diverse students. This involved not only teaching and learning styles but also influenced academic administration.

The following quotation demonstrates how one academic recognised the sense of cultural difference conveyed by the text:

> At the beginning I say we are learning from an American text and not all
> of it applies to Australia, so, I say that it is seen as conventional wisdom
> and that they have to make up their own mind about it. For example,
> even the Vietnamese are quite capitalistic in their daily behaviour
> (A109).

This comment critiques the notion that Australia is the same as America, at the same time as it refutes the idea that ideology can totally differentiate societies. Politics and history were seen to influence human behaviour and cultural norms. This comment warned students not to interpret labels such as 'socialist' as a total explanation of the behaviour of people in another country. The idea of 'conventional wisdom' not only alluded to the American cultural context, but also encouraged students to recognise their own subjective reactions.

---

[36] See Wang's essays (1991) on Chinese identity in the mainland and the Chinese diaspora.

The following conveys a proprietal regard for the students who undertook the MBA:

> Well, I like to think that we are training and opening students' minds. We are teaching them to go back and be leaders in their own countries and the Australians, I would hope that they are going to take leading positions in society here. Surely to heavens, if they're going to be the leaders, we would hope that we were influencing them in the right direction (A98).

This attitude, although worded in different ways, was expressed by those academics who believed that the scope of the MBA included factors other than financial profit. A number of academics (A91, A94, A95, A97, A99, A101) indicated that the MBA would potentially change how students saw themselves. They also recognised that many who gained the degree would be expected to demonstrate accountability to the broader society. This comment was seen to apply in a special way to Asian students, including those from India and China, where a foreign masters degree, especially an MBA, bestowed increased personal status.

Understanding the broader social context co-existed with an awareness that personal style was also important. For example, an academic (A95) who had grown up and completed his education in Asia prior to coming to Australia for doctoral studies, recalled that his most valuable learnings in Australia had involved language norms. Recognising his ambition to remain as an academic, his Ph D supervisor had coached him to adopt an Australian style of speech. He came to see that sounding 'foreign' would hinder his classroom acceptability, and consequently lower his chances of being recruited or promoted. His personal experiences influenced how he interpreted his responsibility to both Australian and international students. Coming from a hierarchical society, he recognised the seeming informality of Australia. Consequently he was very keen for students to address him by his given name, but recognised that some students would find this difficult. He was clear that MBA study should assist students to recognise their own culture more clearly so as to make them more able to deal with others. He

believed that gaining this insight was equally important for Australian and international students.

Course promotional materials and many management articles described the MBA as promoting effective business practice, not only within national boarders and between individuals with similar cultures, but also in an international context which acknowledged the importance of difference. Within Australia, the two distinct aspects of the MBA were to educate Australian graduates to work with a range of cultures and to assist international students, typically from non-Western countries, to achieve national and international corporate objectives. The implicit assumption behind Australian MBA programs was that they assisted their graduates to adopt practices and principles required by business, and also to recognise the importance of culture through working within those from both Australia and overseas. MBA students were initially expected to experience this complexity of the commercial world within an academic context, and later apply this knowledge to the larger world.

An academic who had influenced MBA course development (A97) stated that 'we ought to run MBAs recognising that various groups around the world all have some impact upon the values that are drawn into business and life'. He felt that MBA subjects which aimed to assist students to operate in different contexts needed to promote flexibility and an acceptance of difference.

This question of goals and cultural sensitivity has many aspects. One Australian academic (A93), who like many Australian business-educators had taught in Asia, felt that cultural sensitivity should influence teaching-style. Yet he also felt responsible to deliver the prescribed content of Australian programs in an 'Australian way'. He demonstrated that there were various interpretations of Australian culture and how it should affect MBA teaching.

This academic had depicted students as 'customers' and stated that only high academic standards would ensure the long-term attractiveness of the program to

international students. He indicated a conflict between the satisfaction he gained from cross-cultural interactions and the need for rigour within his subject. This individual felt that syllabus and timetable constraints hindered his ability to teach in a culturally sensitive way. However, he was pleased when successful students described his subject as a challenge. He believed that his academic role was to convey a discrete body of knowledge to all students – students should develop flexibility, while his responsibility was to be predictable.

An example of teaching accounting demonstrates specific concerns regarding culture. One academic, who had worked in tropical countries, (A90) stated that, in his experience, this lifestyle was incompatible with a long-term approach to either family or business matters. Equatorial culture was stated to conform less to principles of Western financial management than say, Communist China which had a centrally managed economy.

Most academics recognised the diversity of Asia, and were hesitant to generalise. Several (A92, A 109, A110) commented that students from countries which had been colonised by the British including India, would find it easier to relate to Western conceptions such as individualism, more than students from countries like Thailand with an essentially Buddhist culture. One (A92) described India as a 'complex country' whose colonial history had acquainted it with Western cultural norms and styles of education. The various ways in which academic and national culture influenced issues such as gender, generation and class are noted here, but dealt with more fully in the following chapter.

Australian secularism was an issue in the cross-cultural classroom. For some staff (A103, A104, A107, A108) this precluded any espousal of religion, whereas others (A92, A101, A106, A109) were more enthusiastic to discuss Christianity as part of an Australian heritage, with the proviso that the discussion should reflect only philosophical principles and not religious rituals. Some academics enjoyed the prospect of discussing religious concerns within their subjects while others were ambivalent at this prospect. As one management educator said:

> I would be surprised if any students were to ask me about my religion. I
> don't think it would be appropriate behaviour for me or for them. On the
> other hand, when a value issue comes up in class, then it is appropriate to
> say, "Well, does your religion give you direction?" and that comes up all
> the time (A98).

This comment initially indicated a belief that individual religious convictions were not within the scope of management education. But at a deeper level it appeared to acknowledge that the MBA was an occasion to discuss business behaviour and everything which could influence that was worthy of consideration. This ambivalence demonstrated a hierarchy of beliefs where the educational norms were seen as more important than personally-held religious concerns. This distinction could be seen as relating to the division between public and private, where moral concerns were conceptualised as private and educational responsibilities were attributed to the public arena. This same academic was aware of the tensions associated with provoking this debate:

> One of the great values of our MBA [is] that we create - or I work very
> hard to create, an environment that is very supportive and people can
> virtually say what they like without getting shot down. ... I do
> encourage people to bring out their different opinions, because I think
> that's part of their education.

Another example of the importance which some Australians gave to tolerance came from an academic whose primary motivation was to teach management principles in a way which did not embarrass overseas students. He discussed his rational when he taught them management concepts which they could apply to their home countries on graduation:

> I stay away from the political settings. So, that is why I talk about the
> African Bushmen. Africa is somewhere that very few of our students
> come from. You're putting that up as another model and therefore
> you're not seen to be criticising either China or India, so it's done quite
> consciously. Yes, I'm fairly careful because, for example - mainland
> Chinese, they're going to have to go back into China and I don't want to
> set them up in a situation where they find it hard to return (A99).

He recognised that openly finding fault with specific countries could cause overseas students problems when they returned. But he primarily wanted to

create a neutral context so as to encourage all students to develop critical thinking. His course considered Australian issues such as the Mabo and Wik decisions which related to indigenous Australian issues because he believed they held significance for all business students. The value that human concerns should motivate business activity was threaded through this subject, conveyed by the content of his lectures and by student group-work, where they were encouraged to share their research papers. Not all academics shared this view, and of those who did, only some were able to integrate this value into their teaching.

The student as customer

The increased focus on the need to generate income, and the importance of the MBA as a source of full-fee income influenced how some academic staff perceived both Australian and international students. This re-conceptualisation of education as a commodity, as discussed in chapter 2, has had a major impact on the culture of the MBA. Many staff (A93, A94, A108, A109, A112) were concerned that course eligibility for international students was judged on their capacity to pay, more than their possession of appropriate education standards, business experience and language skills.

When viewed in this light, cross-cultural issues were primarily seen as a problem. The demand that eligibility requirements should be tightened often reflected concerns about ensuring the fees raised from international students. Staff responded to the MBA as a generator of funds in various ways. Some (A90, A93, A101, A111, A115) accepted financial need as the new reality and accommodated it by designing subjects appropriate for both local and international students. Others (A92, A94, A110, A106, A107, A108) were concerned that such influences could be detrimental to course quality and reputation, specifically that international competition had sacrificed education in pursuit of 'customers'. The perceived pressure to pass full-fee paying students raised questions about the readiness to exclude those who were not succeeding

from the course. One staff member (A109) recounted stories of conflict with program managers over the failure of international students who had claimed their rights to 'fair assessment' and staff who maintained that minimum requirements had not been achieved. In this instance the academic had prevailed, but academic staff interpreted the new administrative procedures which followed the complaints to mean that they should not fail international students.

The concept of students as customers had various implications in the cross-cultural classroom. It evoked questions of whether staff could confront stereotypes such as 'they like lectures, they don't like to be critical, or having to perform in class'. One academic explained the change from his previous group-work focus to a more formal lecturing style:

> But the point is that they really do enjoy that sort of education, so I think, give them what they want (A93).

These beliefs influenced staff who felt it was dangerous to frustrate expectations. The academics (A93, A96) who were most preoccupied with 'market-oriented education' altered their teaching to avert possible objections. A greater number of staff (A95, A97, A104, A106, A109, A110) saw that MBA teaching involved cultural orientation, namely the promotion of independent critical thought and participative process. These academics ranged from taking a sensitive and persuasive role to a more confronting one. An intermediate position was taken by those who saw the MBA experience as a form of socialisation, so that initial subjects should be run alongside orientation programs which assisted students to understand Western educational norms. A final position was taken by those staff (A103, A111, A112) who perceived their discipline as neutral or objective. These staff felt that cultural context was largely irrelevant to subject content or academic style.

This range of opinions was represented across the three universities and also over the subjects taught within each MBA program. The comments did not describe the culture of any one program. Staff perceived that subjects including

133

quantitative analysis and economics either involved universally applicable principles, or needed to be taught so as to recognise social context. The choice depended on the perspective of the lecturer and the academic philosophy which that individual espoused.

Thus, staff from various subjects demonstrated a range of attitudes within each university which displayed various cultural sensitivities in a program offered to international students and Australians from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The educational focus did not promote any one given style; subjects were taught in ways which reflected the choices of the academics who ran them.

The relationship of context to management theory

Emma believed that all MBAs benefited from group work. She wanted to learn from her students, but accepted this as a secondary goal which she could not always personally achieve. In contrast, *Helen*, who was interested in Buddhism, stated that she had learnt about 'human dignity and [how] to treat others with respect' through teaching international students. As a result she had reassessed the role of power in the teaching relationship and recognised that academics could learn important insights from culturally diverse students.

This academic described how when she taught individualistically based theory to students from 'more group orientated' societies she had become aware of 'a huge gap' between the espoused theory and the world known by those students. Her teaching sought to bridge the split between experience and theory. She was looking for new management theories which would explicitly acknowledge the cultural base of both Australian and international students.

Many of the staff interviewed were prompted to reflect on social values when they recalled cross-cultural incidents. One academic described an American text which she used to teach management concepts to both Australian and overseas students as a threat to implicit Australian cultural values. She stated that many

management principles did not appear to support the sense of 'fairness' which was central to the Australian psyche:

> Particularly in Australia, ... there is some notion of fairness, people know when someone's gone too far. There's a ... 'taken for grantedness' about what's acceptable, which doesn't get conveyed. It's culturally understood but not explicit. So when we're teaching, I think that's one of the themes that gets lost. Because it's so taken for granted, sometimes it's not even recognised. It's a bit like giving someone from a different culture specific knowledge from a book; but the bit of knowledge comes from a context. And we don't give them context (A92).

Her experience of how other societies acknowledged their religious culture in a business context, had caused her to question whether Australia could do the same thing:

> Just as for those international students whose culture is structured on religion, so is ours. In Thailand much of the way they do things is done in the context of ... Buddhist philosophies. I found a book on Buddhist Economics [in a Thai airport] ... saying there needs to be a middle way ... to look after all parts of societies, not just increasing economic value. It talked about non-consumption, moderation, contentment. It's saying 'yes, we all need economic growth but a small amount will be sufficient for all of us'.

This comment makes one consider the role played by spiritual beliefs in Australia. Has Australian culture been stripped down to its bare essentials so that core values are no longer recognised? This academic stated that students from other cultures had made her recognise that Christianity underpinned Australian culture and values. Her statements raise questions about the role of secularism – relating to social inclusion, cultural pluralism, diversity and the acceptance or denial of difference. She alluded to the risk that Australian inclusiveness and tolerance could become inscribed in a way which eroded the cultural beliefs which had made them possible.

She acknowledged the dangers of religious practice being divisive, whereas she personally felt the core principles were universal. The difficulty was in negotiating this delicate balance within a cross-cultural classroom which reflected the diversity of the Australian population:

> I think we're denying spirituality, in a broader sense, and society is missing a sense of spirituality. It's difficult ... because we institutionalise religion, which is different from spirituality. In all the major religions including Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, even Confucianism or Taoism if you get down to the essence, there's not much difference. The universal is about responsible care of others and compassion, especially compassion (A92).

These comments indicated differences between religion and spirituality as aspects of personal identity within national culture (identity is addressed more fully in chapter 6). They also indicated her conviction that business education should promote universal principles such as responsibility and compassion. How that goal should be achieved was not clearly addressed.

In contrast, several staff had specific business-related cross-cultural concerns. A number noted tensions associated with the sensitivities of international students about their home countries (A90, A96, A98, A104, A106, A109). Students often conveyed a sense of responsibility for their country's reputation, including concerns about levels of technology and new ways to manage business enterprises. MBA teachers who promote business-based outcomes faced complex situations. It was for these reasons that one (A99) had chosen to focus on the example of the Bushmen of the Kalahari desert.

Academic recognition of culturally embedded concepts

Some academics criticised teaching texts used in their subjects for their incompatibility with Australian and Asian cultures (A92, A101, A109). Several staff stated that religion helped promote better relationships between individuals (A95, A96, A99, A110, A111). While they indicated that countries founded on Christianity were different from Asian countries, they also recognised that Christian foundations did not necessarily bring about shared realities. One academic (A92) explored this theme by noting that most management theory taught in Australia originated from the United States. She was concerned that America's culture, including values, was quite distinct from Australia's. She

described both countries as Christian, but stated that Australia had not been influenced by the Puritanism which had dominated America. For her, a sense of fairness was derived from a sense of interdependency. She portrayed this value as essential to Australian culture.

The risks of being isolated, were seen by another, as re-emerging through Australian political parties based on race:

> A couple of years ago one of [my] kids said, 'that's to do with a country that's outside Australia, I don't really have to be concerned'. I said you have to be very concerned because we live in a world, we don't live in Australia. It's the fact that we were insular that led to a lot of problems in the past, it led to our ability to maintain the White Australia Policy (A99).

A recognition of cross-cultural issues was conveyed by many academics who were involved in the design and delivery of the MBA. Australian-born staff with overseas experience voiced greater sensitivity to the unstated cultural norms and values within an educational context. Academics who had migrated as adults brought conscious cultural awareness to the MBA overall.

The process

Comments from many final year students indicated that group-work had taught them about themselves and others in the context of an academic subject. In common with both *Wendy* and *Yun-wei*, many international students were initially frustrated by this approach. However, most students later came to enjoy an interactive style of education.

Several Chinese students (A21, A23, A34, A35) had claimed that according to their cultural ideal, students should study quietly and be receptive. Behind this behaviour was the assumption that intelligent people would only speak when they fully understood, when they knew that they had something significant to contribute. Their educational norms contrasted with the Australian expectation

that bright students would speak up in class, that silence was negative[37]. Students coming from China described these differences as confronting. The Australian expectation conflicted with Chinese educational norms where scholarly interaction came after knowledge was mastered; it also denied concerns about proficiency in a second language and lack of local or business knowledge. For example, *Willow*'s reason for not commenting in a class-based discussion was 'because I am from a different background, it's very difficult for me'.

In contrast to China, India's culture blended the polytheistic decentralised structure of Hinduism, together with the monotheism of Islam and the influence of British colonial rule, to create an indigenous social democracy. This culture nurtured a range of political philosophies, including Marxism and elitism, which spawned diverse educational opportunities. In describing his schooling, one Indian said he had 'been educated by the [Catholic] missionaries, the best alternative to the mercenaries'[38]. Colonial India's heritage included a strong Christian education system and elite secular secondary schools modelled on the English private school system. In addition there were local government schools, Hindu and Muslim schools, and those supported by other religions (James, 1998, pp 335-6). English style public schools were patronised by the rich, especially in the North, because of the English presence in government and trade (James, 1998, pp174-5, p332). Indian students from conservative Hindu families may have been educated in Christian schools prior to university (A4, A11). This educational experience was also shared by some who described their families as modern, with the result that they practised only the religious rituals demanded by weddings, and funerals. *Pushpa*'s story (chapter 4) elaborates the educational and religious experience of a young urban Indian MBA student.

---

[37] Brick (1991, pp153-60) discusses Western and Chinese teaching and learning styles which help explain why Chinese students rely more on the teacher and the text.

[38] He meant that the there were two ways to gain entrance to university, either through the Christian mission schools or through private, often cram school, tuition.

138

The culture of the MBA - its attraction for Australian and international students

Academics described the motivations of international students for studying the MBA as personal development, career opportunities, and acquiring the skills to assist their families' businesses. One who had supervised international students' projects over several years, described their expectations:

> A lot of the students we have are from families which run businesses and they are expected to take a role in those businesses. Their parents have sent them out to grow up and to learn, from that perspective it affects their personal lives a lot... On an individual basis, they probably have a strong commitment [to study], because they have grown up in their [business focused] families [but many] have not had formal jobs as such. Some of them are coming out to investigate market opportunities, a lot of wheeling and dealing and networking (A109).

Some academics recognised that the experience of an egalitarian Australian lifestyle, when combined with discussions of issues such as merit and equal opportunity evoked different insights in international and Australian students. For many international students, Australia was more than a place to acquire management skills and business opportunities. Cultural differences posed immediate personal problems. One academic described the experiences of an Indian MBA student in Melbourne:

> ... being here, living in a flat, shopping, cleaning. ... [he was] from an Indian family, with lots of money ... not domestically inclined, he wanted to go to America, but his English was not good enough, speaks an [Indian dialect], never went to English speaking school, which is very unusual. Probably from a traditional Southern family, and he was living in a house with three other Indian guys and he said that he was quite stressed coming here, which I couldn't appreciate. He was really missing his mother and he had never washed clothes in his life, and he said 'I won't beat the servants any more, because now I know how hard it is to get the shirts spotless'. I didn't make a value judgement, I just said 'I am glad that you are getting something out of the experience. And it's interesting that you can see things from a different point of view now'. And he said, 'My father hopes that this will turn me into a man' (A109).

This academic believed that most affluent Indians sent their children to English medium schools, but more significantly, that some families anticipated that studying in a different country would promote their maturity. Almost no description of Indian males can be made without alluding to the complexity of their relationships with their mothers[39]. But more broadly it needs to be recognised that overseas students may come from different socio-economic backgrounds, with different exposure to wealth and privilege than many Australian students.

How Australian staff perceived a culturally diverse MBA group

The mix of culturally-diverse students was perceived by staff in different ways. It was described as creating learning opportunities or disliked on the grounds that the need to consider many factors constrained discussion of appropriate business behaviour. The solution of Australian staff who had experienced a range of cultures was to convey a sense of relativism, saying that academics could not comment on 'morally complex' issues. One academic who had taught overseas made the following comment:

> The question of values is interesting and complex when you get an international group of students. People come from such different understandings of what's important, such as how labour should be treated and the role of business and their role as a manager. It's up to us to ask them to question and to challenge [these understandings]. Sometimes you might assume that this particular way of managing people is better than another way, but I think you can only point out the differences and some benefits of that model. But obviously there are going to be different ways and people should be given the right to disagree (A90).

Once again there was a tension expressed between opening up a question, such as implementing desirable work practices, and recognising that the answers would depend on the available infrastructure within a country. He explicitly stated his own values and criticised the colonial-style managers who 'abused the local staff,

took no responsibility for improving their position and then retired to the white house on the hill, to drink another scotch'. His beliefs about a desirable structure of society, combined with a reluctance to impose these values in an educational setting, represents one style of MBA teaching. Although this style acknowledged cross-cultural concerns, in a broader sense it reflected that the role of the academic is to probe, and question, not to provide students with preset answers which echo the values of the lecturer.

His viewpoint contrasts with that of another academic (A93) who stated that appropriate business choices would need to reflect the range of options and thus were dependant on the industry, the product and the society; these factors were influenced by whether 'different choices are unavailable or inappropriate'. He believed that teachers should assist students to gain the insight they required to work in complex situations as, in the future, they would have to 'work it out for themselves'. The complexity of their potential employment situations meant that he could do no more than alert them to the issues. This academic focused on the market context because he believed that the market should judge a product or service. His teaching aimed to promote profitability and economic sustainability.

An academic (A109) acknowledged problems with students who would make a claim about business practice in their home country such as, 'we [Indians] don't do any market research', when the lecturer knew that 'a lot of market research conferences are held in India'. Students and staff were described as sometimes promoting contradictory perceptions of academic expertise or country knowledge. These conflicts were often attributed to students not wanting to be seen as lacking knowledge about their country.

---

[39] For example, Kakar (1990) discusses how the Indian mother-son relationship has implications for students' development, and the relationships between men and women in the workplace.

Expectations and preconceptions of the MBA

Insights into why the students undertook the MBA and their expectations emerged from their personal stories. The differences within one national group demonstrate the risks of stereotyping students on the basis of their home country. For example, some Chinese students came with, and maintained, a desire to maximise their own wealth. These students hoped their studies would improve their capacity to compete successfully when they returned to China. However, for other Chinese students, MBA study provided the opportunity to reflect on prior work in China or part-time work undertaken in Australia. From this several became committed to promoting more equitable and humane work practices. Within the context of the MBA, Chinese students reached various understandings. Some differences between Mainland Chinese students are highlighted through the stories of *Wendy* and *Yun-wei* at the end of this chapter.

Most local and international students demonstrated an initial ambition to improve personal wealth and status. But it seemed that the MBA experience prompted more international students than Australian students to reconsider their priorities.

Cross-cultural themes in MBA study in Australia and India

Chinese and Indian students contrasted their countries with Australia. More Indian students raised differences which related to urban-rural distinctions, as well as those based on region, religion, class and the specifically Indian issue of caste. Some Indian students, in both India and Australia, stated that the MBA promoted objectivity and, therefore, justice. However, those in residential Indian MBA programs acknowledged that issues of class and caste would be more difficult to confront after they ceased being students. The student life in India was seen as an extension of privilege. Perhaps a difference amongst Indian students was that the majority who studied the MBA in India were from typically middle-class professional families, and those who came to Australia were often from less academic backgrounds. Mainland Chinese students in Australia either

142

denied differences in class and region, or were prepared to discuss such differences in detail. A major point of difference within the Chinese MBAs was a denial of or identification with a personal sense of work-related social responsibility after they completed their MBA.

Few Chinese students, in common with the majority of Australians, voiced concerns about balancing personal ambition and social responsibility. For example, *Wendy* indicated her desire to work appropriately within her home-culture and also to reconcile China's national interest against the needs of foreign corporations. As a result of the MBA, she had decided that she owed her skills to her country, rather than gaining advantage for herself by assisting outsiders.

A sense of culture associated with the MBA in India

Post-graduate management students interviewed in India (In7, In8, In13, In14) reflected on their MBA education in terms of being separated from their parents. They also descibed how study had encouraged them to develop a more objective view of life which included making new friends from around the country and of the opposite sex. These students prioritised family as their dominant influence. They conveyed a sense of responsibility, at times tinged with frustration, when they described their connectedness to parents and grandparents. They prioritised their relationship with family and friends in making decisions. Perhaps their youth and relative inexperience inhibited their reflection of a broader sense of social responsibility. Overall, these students emphasised the day to day experiences of post-graduate study and their hope of success in their careers.

Indian and transnational companies compete fiercely to recruit the best MBAs, consequently, these graduates expected to have the highest paid and most prestigious careers. Students who were soon to graduate had to balance their personal dreams against the expectations of their families and their prospective employers. They recognised potential value conflicts in negotiating a world made up of personal, family, business and social domains.

Reflections on business and work within the Australian MBA

Students and staff interviewed within Australian universities recognised the many opportunities to learn when they studied and worked with people from different countries. Cross-cultural experiences were seen to provide them with the chance to conceptualise management theory or corporate responsibility and to address personal concerns including loyalty, their own work ethic and national allegiance. Many raised these issues in relation to the role of the MBA in relation to the past, the present and the future.

One staff member (A92) stated that management theories typically described 'mono-cultural worlds'. She believed that culturally diverse practitioners, who worked for multi-national and trans-national companies, would create new management theories. As these managers experienced 'the fissures between reality and espoused theory', they would be the best ones to address these problems.

An Indian student (A19) feared that the experience of working for a multi-national company would provoke the employee to conform with company demands, even when such demands were anti social or illegal. This fear was also echoed by a Chinese student who ranked the demands of the job against individual responsibility and respect for law, especially when an individual worked for an international company:

> A good manager is a good human. [However,] in say, Tokyo, a good manager can never be a good citizen because the company values are always different from society's needs. Managers have to achieve company goals and sometimes they break the laws of the country as well, or exploit people or the land (A22).

As a student of the MBA, he questioned whether being a good corporate manager was compatible with being a good citizen. He implied that management education promoted the pursuit of profit above the development of moral

integrity. Within Australian MBA programs, his was one of the most straightforward claims that companies encouraged their staff to behave illegally. His comment reflected the despondent acceptance of potentially illegal or unethical acts stated by many MBA students in India. Several other international students from China and India expressed concerns that work could be 'tough', or 'cruel' such as, when large numbers of staff were dismissed, or cultural or moral concerns were denied. Many of the overseas students described that their major moral responsibility was to choose the right graduate employer, they indicated that they would not want to work for say, munitions, or tobacco companies. Overall, Indian and Chinese students felt that Australians could not imagine the pressures they experienced. Their comments[40] acknowledged past or anticipated pressures which would make them choose options contrary to their personal ethical beliefs. They asked for tolerance on the grounds that Australia's wealth was such that its citizens should not make value judgments about social and political environments outside their knowledge.

A Chinese student stated that those who worked for international companies risked losing their sense of nationality and a place to belong. As a divorced engineer, who planned to work for a transnational company, perhaps he was expressing his own fear of becoming a Flying Dutchman of global business.

MBAs expected overall that careers forged in an international world would be difficult and unpredictable. Both staff and students also anticipated that commerce between different cultures would be demanding and complex.

Positive learnings about business practice

An Australian academic perceived that countries differed in how they understood the role of business. She felt that Australians could learn from these different attitudes.

---

[40] This issue is discussed in more detail in ch 4.

> This is a bit of a stereotype but Asians do value personal relationships
> much more than other things. And I think if we learnt that at a business
> level, I don't mean just so we can make more money, ... but if we just
> learnt simply to have some respect for people as people, not just as a
> mechanism for getting more money. Have a relationship with the person
> first and then - well, you might have business [success] with them. But,
> [we need to] see them as people first (A92).

Contrast this with *Wendy*, the Chinese international student who said:

> People should be well respected. I was quite funny before [in China],
> when I think back. Even in the office, I was the perfect person, so I
> expected that the admin support staff would have everything done on
> time, without mistakes. Now I realise that mistakes are quite natural. I
> play a part-time admin role now, so I understand that it is not an easy job
> to do. Now, I understand that every work role, every person is important
> and I [need to] make everybody happy, if I want to have the job done.
> So this, for me, makes the MBA very interesting.

An enthusiastic Chinese MBA (A35) student hoped to work for an Australian company in China. He wanted to improve the world through companies which played positive roles in and beyond his home country. He anticipated that he would gain satisfaction if he could be proud of the organisation for which he worked. In contrast, another young Chinese international student expressed the confusion which she had recognised in Australia:

> [Re China] things have changed so dramatically. Not enough rules and
> regulations, especially [regarding] individual businesses. People's values
> are confused. Now there are lots of different standards. Society has to
> set up a positive and correct value (A5)

She expressed concerns about equity and the distribution of wealth through the comment, 'people are striving for profit [and are] not concerned about the environment'. Her implicit criticism of other people's 'confused' values, reflected her reasons for coming to Australia to study the MBA. She felt that society should establish general values and regretted that the pursuit of self-interest had negative consequences for the poor, the least powerful and the environment. And yet she described her own motivations in purely personal and family terms. Despite stating that she was motivated by personal gain, she was aware of the negative social consequences if all were self-interested. She relied on 'society', presumably through centralised government policy, yet, she seemed to doubt the efficacy of this solution.

146

Some Australians felt that answers to difficult problems would emerge from Asia, while others believed the solutions flowed the other way. Several stated that the MBA gave individuals the chance to reflect so as to understand themselves better in relation to their corporate and social responsibilities. An Australian academic described problems associated with an African student's current work world:

> The difficulties that he had with his superior were grounded in his religious point of view and his background, the values that he'd had sort of imbedded in him, such as respect of the senior, you don't discuss things, you don't give your opinion, all those sorts of things (A98).

These concerns were recognised within an MBA class and seen as most relevant for discussion. The insight gained was expected to assist this individual to function better, both in Australia and when he went home. This point of view was expressed by an academic who perceived the evolution of a single international-culture which would be promoted by television and implemented through trans-national companies. Major cultural differences in the work world would eventually be subsumed by this global culture.

Her claims contest Hofstede's work (1980, 1994) which argued that the national origins of a company would mark its corporate culture in a way which persisted through various national locations. Both interpretations reflect a concern for personal identity which is influenced by work, place and education. The recognition of issues of identity also relates to a world culture where international professional elites could potentially have more in common with each other than with the less educated citizens of their own countries.

An academic who taught students to become 'better managers' (A101) stated that his subject essentially encouraged them to become 'more selfish'. He was reflecting on tasks which encouraged students to become more assertive in their work and study. But *Yun-wei*, whose story is related at the end of this chapter, stated that the study of assertiveness made him value others, causing him to reject an authoritarian management style.

International students' perceptions of Western management theory

Within the context of the Australian MBA, globalisation was criticised by some Indian and Chinese international students on the grounds that it eroded local conditions. These students explicitly condemned the implementation of Western styles of business management which failed to recognise the importance of national context. Many of these students perceived that modern principles of business failed to support policies such as the provision of accommodation, educational and health -services in 'colonies', created by companies in India, and factory support of health and pensions in China. The importance of these systems did not seem to be valued by managers from countries where government carried such responsibility.

Some Indian international students saw these systems as part of India's social fabric and several indicated that they would trade future high salaries for a life-style which included security of accommodation, health-care and future educational needs. Companies which sought to sustain long-term relationships with staff were considered to inspire greater loyalty than those which focused only on short-term considerations.

Chinese and Indian international students, more than Australians, indicated that they believed that modern management theory facilitated more equitable selection and promotion procedures, especially in populous countries with major differences between regions, ethnic groups and classes. This recognition seemed to have been promoted by the realities of a foreign country. Through the experience of menial work, a socially elite group of students had gained awareness of the lives of less educated workers. Some of these students valued the chance to understand employees similar to those whom they would later manage. They also stated that their work experiences had helped them to realise that a focus on short-term profit destroyed loyalty, promoted a harsher working

environment and encouraged selfish behaviour. However, issues such as the decline in paternalism evoked ambiguous responses; it was seen as desirable in terms of reducing cronyism, but as detrimental to the relationship between managers and workers. The impact of 'modern management' was greeted with both ambivalence and loss.

Themes raised by international students within the context of the MBA included the importance of the family, the influence of religion, the effects of globalisation, the pursuit and distribution of wealth, and the sense of class or status distinctions in Australia and other countries.

Business as perceived by MBA students in India

Most MBA students interviewed in India felt overwhelmed by the size of their country's population. They perceived that population pressure promoted unethical behaviour. These students stated that after graduation, regardless of their personal power or ethical principles, they would have compete for work on the terms offered by employers. This pressure loomed as a dark cloud over all MBAs, regardless of their relative affluence, status or social connections. As a consequence, MBAs' first jobs were often portrayed as initiations to be survived, not enjoyed. Most students believed that they would have to conform to organisational norms prior to having a chance to make a difference. They were attracted to modern, professionally managed companies, where, they felt, new graduates would receive less pressure to engage in corruption. They hoped these organisations would not be entrenched with undesirable practices such as unduly slow production rates, inappropriate divisions of labour, or nepotism.

Many Indian students associated employment with a publicly, or family owned, organisation with expectations of bribery or other forms of dishonest behaviour. They indicated that the pressure of competition forced many companies to be unethical. They also stated that they would have to ignore their personal values as their employers cut corners to survive. Some described this behaviour with a

sense of resignation, while others stated their desire to become more ethical after they had met their initial material needs. These MBAs who were approaching graduate interviews felt they first had to make enough money to justify their expensive education. Their second priority was to establish themselves so they could start their adult life which included marriage. When considering the more distant future, few students conveyed a belief that they could contribute through their professional work, but most hoped not to be compelled to behave dishonestly. While a minority hoped that their professional experience would assist them to find a company which shared their personal values, the majority expected to be initially compromised by their work. They believed that any achievements worthy of pride would come from acts of 'charity' or 'duty' which they would perform outside their employment.

These Indian students generally demonstrated an uneasy acceptance of the notion of management 'universals'. Students without work experience doubted that generalised management principles could assist them to succeed in business. All the students were keen to have local case study material to help them apply the theory. Discussion with Indian academics suggested that those students who came from more privileged family backgrounds would feel more personally empowered. However, a diverse range of students appreciated that management education promoted a sense of objectivity. They stated that it enabled them to deal with the complex situations which they would confront during their working lives. One student attributed Western management theory with teaching him to focus on behaviour rather than judging individual motivation. He felt that this focus promoted tolerance and more desirable outcomes. In terms of values, the students' ethical justifications were based on a range which included Hindu, Sikh, Christian and humanistic concerns. None of the students who discussed these issues described themselves as Muslim.

Management students in India considered merit and age would be important considerations when they were managers, especially when dealing with 'elders'. The students (In7 to In16) felt it was necessary to use a 'family style' of

management and also to employ objective outcome-based criteria. They acknowledged that differences in status would be harder to deal with after university when their work would involve greater disparities in education, status, age and intellect. This was especially true when the employed MBA graduate was younger but more senior in status in the workplace:

> 'Til now I have been in an atmosphere where respect for elders has been totally sacrosanct. In the family and in the professor-student relationship [it's] more of elder kind of relationship. Discussion on an equal kind of platform [level] is not there in India. So how will I handle a [work] situation where I may have to handle a team of elderly people? That is one of the conflicts in my mind (In8).

The desire to balance respect for merit, status and hard-won academic knowledge was complicated by the issue of age. The issue of younger staff with MBAs managing older and more experienced workers, especially in sales, was seen as a potentially embarrassing situation for both parties. Both family and social traditions paid respect to age and to knowledge. The problem of having to reprimand older staff is demonstrated by the following:

> I tend to agree with the Western school of thought [on age]. If I had a subordinate who was elder and who was not doing a good job, maybe the respect would be in terms of offering him a seat. I wouldn't use those harsh words that I would to a subordinate who was a junior in terms of age, same for the opposite sex too. I wouldn't be that harsh ... I agree more with the Western thought that a work relationship ... remain impersonal. ... Maybe show respect for age but not much compromise with regard to the work. When I am 40, if he [junior] is being professional I think I can take it, otherwise be prepared to shape up or ship out (In8)

This acceptance of a 'harsh' style to those who are younger, excluding a politeness which should be shown to women, is significant and by no means unique. A woman engineer, studying the MBA, stated that she had gained greater recognition as she became older. She exemplified the status issues associated with age, education and gender. A female, even an engineer, demanded less respect at university or in the work force, being older helped. A successful manager needed to know how to balance these factors.

Certain ways of seeking promotion were perceived as a threat to relationships with peers and those above or below. The following reflects some concerns about the affect of MBA education:

> My association with my friends here has given me a more effective
> personal objective. ... The Harvard Business Review cases, all Western
> based, have an inclination of only the self, at the impersonal level a value
> that performance is the only criterion. With that I don't feel very
> comfortable. ... [MBA study] has given me a more impersonal outlook
> towards life. It has shown me that it is you also who has to achieve, but
> at the same time [I believe] you have to balance your own drive with
> your relationships that you are building with others (In14).

The MBA was also portrayed as bestowing major power in the workforce:

> In marketing, when a graduate joins at MBA level, the moment they join
> they are overseeing the work of sales representatives in the front line of
> the company. Those sales reps are directly recruited from the field, they
> don't rise high because they are just graduates. They stay in that position
> for 10-15 years. My friend is in this position saying 'I have a 55 year
> old man who has been in that position for 15 years. I am barely 23.
> And he calls me 'sir ' simply because I am [an MBA] and in the senior
> role'. We really don't know how to relate to these people and for many
> of them I am sure it must be a problem. For me I think it is a problem
> (In11)

Another important theme was the need to earn credibility by gaining hands-on experience. If new MBA graduates had little bargaining power any value disputes or disagreements with employers would have to remain unvoiced. Generally, there was a widespread recognition that MBAs would enter the workplace with status from their degree, but that their career would be influenced by their ability to handle relationships. One student indicated that certain relationship issues were foreign to her world:

> If you work for an established company then the caste system doesn't
> really hold. But there are certain pockets eg Tamil Nadu where the caste
> system is really strong and heavily biased against Brahmins as such ...
> But these rural areas don't have the companies which employ MBAs, or
> MBAs don't have to supervise staff there. MBAs will always be in big
> cities. This is relevant and important for others and should be discussed
> ... but for us it is all academic, not practical (In7).

Despite the implication of the above comment, large national and international consulting firms which advise both commercial and government clients, recruit

many Indian MBAs (see Venkatesh, 1998). But apart from recognising the divide between urban and rural populations, this comment also indicates that caste remained an issue. Members of the higher castes appeared to resent government 'reservations', those quotas which were designed to assist the 'backward castes' (see Gandhi, 1999, pp 286-7, 374-5).

Some students felt that organisations should operate as meritocracies based on education, skills, performance and expertise, and that traditional notions were irrelevant to the management of age and status at work. While others perceived future dilemmas:

> [I]n the family and at university there has been an easy conformity with the idea that elders should be respected and treated with deference. ... [I am] worried by the prospect of managing a group ... who are significantly older, say in their fifties... [It is] a daunting prospect. To avoid this conflict the majority of ... students [want to be] recruited by ... financial institutions and banks ... [which are] highly professionalised ... flat [and] small. These attributes are seen as appealing by a highly educated and autonomous student group especially when ... supported by higher salary rates.

> [T]he student body] makes you cope with a variety of people, but with intellectual parity. However, on graduation, those one worked with would not be as educated and then the differences would be much harder to deal with. Lower caste people are a problem in the civil service, with government policy setting aside percentages of positions for specific disadvantaged groups, whereby a manager may have less education and skills than a subordinate ... [This is] one extra reason for making the civil service a less desirable career. Large bureaucratic structures are also a disincentive, for ... students want positions where they can do the entire job, an intellectual job in a flat structure ... with more autonomy and not the same problems of managing large staff numbers ... Individuals need to recognise the structural issues such as hierarchy and bureaucracy apart from issues of policy (In9).

The criticism of government quotas for the underprivileged also reflects that many Indian MBA students aspired to work for modern, less-unhierarchical 'professional' companies. Many of these quotes describe a tension between the values students attributed to their families and those associated with MBA study which related to being an employee. There was an ambivalence about losing traditional values, but an acceptance that modern management theory could improve organisational outcomes; companies which recruited and promoted on the basis of merit and achievement were sought after. They espoused Western

management ideals of objectivity and criticised managers who used traditional management systems to justify poor treatment of younger, or subordinate, staff. These issues required sensitive negotiation. Many students stated that management theory should be taught so as to acknowledge concerns such as, the interrelationship between merit and age.

These students enrolled in Indian MBAs raised questions the adequacy of stereotypes constructed around traditionalism or emerging modernism. Students were not committed to a sole perspective. When they discussed particular situations, individual students would often express seemingly contradictory allegiances. They indicated that MBA programs should recognise and address the inter-relationship of modern and traditional ideas.

So, how did students respond to this interplay of expectations and experiences? Perhaps a useful way of conceptualising the MBA is to see it as a lattice of the subjects studied by students, which was, in turn, framed by the expectations of the staff who taught them. However, it is also important to acknowledge how the program related to the students' sense of personal values and beliefs. They, and, in some cases their parents, had invested a great deal in their pursuit of an MBA.

The individual narratives

The following narratives convey some of the complexity and tension which students experienced during these postgraduate studies. These stories explore how the MBA operates in the Australian context. These three narratives convey significant details of personal lives, education and careers which demonstrate how values can be related to MBA education through the filter of culture.

Genevieve

Genevieve was an attractive, ambitious woman in her early thirties, a successful manager in the not-for-profit sector. Following divorce, she had primary responsibility for her young child. *Genevieve* demonstrated a 'matter of factness'

154

which can reflect Australian culture[41]. Australia's history provides insights into how generations of men and women have lived, worked and studied. However, the ambivalence about the role of women within Australian culture is addressed more fully in the following chapter.

Genevieve viewed life as one reality made up of work, personal activities and studies. Social justice was a core personal belief which she related to both government and business. She attributed her working-class values to her father's commitment to unionism. She had learnt about issues such as occupational health and safety when she visited factories with him when she was a child. He had initiated her into part-time work with the gift of the relevant industrial award; this 'rite of passage' was recalled as a demonstration of how her father's values permeated *Genevieve*'s sense of adult-identity.

Her reinterpretation of the family's belief system was neither traditional nor conformist; she portrayed it as an anchor, a foundation by which to judge and act. She admired her father's sense of purpose, yet, she had rejected his conservative values and judgmental stance in favour of her mother's commitment to being 'a community-minded person'. However, unlike her mother – the 'quiet worker' who helped people 'on an individual level' – *Genevieve* adopted a strong public persona. She was half-way between her father's desire to control others, drawn from his mother's 'immutable values', and her own mother's more flexible style. Her undergraduate studies had suffered when she became a student representative, her leadership ambitions and commitment to social causes were reconfirmed. She knew that she preferred a position of power to a quiet, unappraised one.

Christian family values were central to her life. Her choice of career, her belief in social justice and her support for the local community all reflected the religious values which she associated with her childhood. As an Anglo-Celtic, she was

---

[41] Early convict settlement and the need to work together, promoted an inclusiveness considered as compassion in some cultures. *The Bulletin* brought 'mateship' (see Ward, 1978) into Australia's twentieth century.

155

part of the dominant cultural group, as a Catholic, she represented a 'working-class' middle Australia of simple pleasures and outdoor team-sports. Her portrayal of her parents recalled Australian inner suburban life of the 1960s where men and women had strong local links. In many ways her adult identity drew on her Catholic education and childhood connections with youth groups and sport. *Genevieve* claimed to have rejected Catholicism, yet she expressed a kinship with other ex-Catholics friends who lived in her inner-city suburb. She had rejected Catholic ritual, not the priority which she believed the Church gave to people.

Genevieve was worried by the decline of governments' power to regulate and restrain business, yet she believed in consumer-power as a positive influence. This form of pressure was the only safeguard against globalisation; consumer networks, based in neighbourhood communities, were the only insurance against global business. She believed that local experiences, often centred around children's education, would not only give individuals insight into what needed to change, but also how to achieve it. The power of community lay in its capacity to unite people around concrete issues. But at the same time, ideas were open to challenge. As she said:

> The local stuff is confrontational on a personal level. That's why people
> are beginning ... to look at their own communities.

For *Genevieve* community values meant, 'act locally – think globally'. She saw family involvement in community activities as essential for an active and satisfying life. However, as she had no partner, she represented the family in activities such as sport or children's education. *Genevieve*'s work involved an international perspective; she stated that the security and peace of the world relied on sustainable development. She hoped local groups would champion soil degradation and inadequate water supply as a major concerns which threatened Australia's future.

Genevieve recalled when she had reflected with other MBA students on a class dedicated to cross-cultural issues. She and one other were the 'Anglo Saxon

students in a class otherwise dominated by Indian students'. Genevieve had enjoyed encountering the values of these students. As she said:

> It was important in bringing us closer as a class, and not feeling so different [from each other]. It gave us much more of an understanding of each other's value systems and the kind of cultural context from which we came, and that was very useful. I think particularly the US based companies are going to have quite different value systems when they operate in different countries. [For example] India is quite different.

She conveyed a continuity between personal and national values, as well as the need for new solutions. A different sense of cultural and educational tradition is seen through the stories of *Wendy* and *Yun-wei*. Their experiences of the MBA differed not only from *Genevieve*'s but also from each other's.

Wendy

Wendy was a Chinese woman of a similar age to *Genevieve*. *Wendy*'s story gives insights into the world of Mainland Chinese students who had been involved in the Cultural Revolution. China at the end of the 1970s was dedicated to rebuilding national identity and pride: statues of Mao Tse-tung dominated the city squares; opera, theatre and wall posters continued to extol the Communist Revolution; women wore no make-up and cut their hair short; and, both sexes dressed in either military green or Chairman Mao blue. Families had limited private space and those like *Wendy*'s lived in cramped flats, where they often shared communal bathrooms and toilets[42].

Wendy demonstrates themes such as modernity, cultural and cross-cultural identity, and the influence of politics and history on an individual. One element is cultural maintenance and change, in a world where the literate draw their inspiration from disparate sources, some of which may challenge the prevailing norms. Another element recognises that individuals will only be understood through using a combination of cultural and psychological insight. Citizens of

---

[42] These comments are based on a personal 'study tour' experience in China in August-September 1978, which involved visits to elite 'middle schools' and middle-class family homes in Beijing and Shanghai.

157

the one society will pursue different goals in different ways. Choices made reflect both the circumstance and an individual's response to challenge.

Wendy portrayed her life in phases. She described how in primary school, she was so 'strictly controlled' by her mother that she had little self-awareness and concentrated only on study. As a tiny 'young pioneer', dedicated to the work of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, she had developed a Marxist discussion group and given lectures at several primary schools. She had modelled her behaviour on her father who was socially and politically involved as a 'Party person from the early times' in the 1950s. *Wendy*'s political activities, which were prompted by her love for her father and her trust in Chinese Marxism, commenced during the Cultural Revolution[43]. As she said:

> I trusted everything. I believed everything that they told me, everything
> from Mao Tse-tung, and I made my group mates believe it.

Wendy described her early talents for music, traditional martial arts, painting, writing and poetry. Her father worked for the government, and her mother was a teacher with a degree in European languages and literature. Because she demonstrated early musical promise, her parents had hoped that she would gain a specialist music-education and become a professional musician. Instead she was accepted into a select experimental-school recognised as facilitating entry to a good university.

Despite her political activism, *Wendy* claimed that she followed her mother's wishes in her early schooling. However, when she entered high school, known as middle-school in China, she was seeking independence from her parents; she resisted their pressure for her to specialise. As she said:

> I was particularly interested in painting, and annoyed my parents because
> they wanted me to focus on one thing, saying 'You can't do everything'.
> But I always wanted to do something which they didn't want me to do.

---

[43] From 1966 –76, the Cultural Revolution was a period of disruption to Chinese education. See Salisbury (1992 pp 232-238) and Fairbank (1987, p 201).

The transition to secondary education provoked great change. Her new school was far from home and *Wendy* became stressed when she had to travel alone, or perform several times a week for visitors to the school. Elite schools, such as hers, encouraged their students to give impromptu performances for visitors to demonstrate the children's talent and discipline. In the period following the Cultural Revolution, as China opened its doors to the West, such concerts would often be staged for foreign visitors[44]. These performances caused *Wendy* to miss classes which made it 'very difficult to continue at the standard of the class – [and this was] very hard, especially in mathematics or chemistry'. She described this period:

> When I was about 12 or 13, I was not in good health. I was very
> sensitive and couldn't communicate with people outside the family. And
> I always felt hurt, and always felt so much pressure and couldn't cope
> with it, to face those faces of people that I didn't know much about.
> Maybe the health problem was psychological, [because of] too much
> pressure.

This twenty-year-old memory of when she had to 'face those faces of people' still provoked anxiety. The idea of face can be seen as having three dimensions for *Wendy*. One was the fear of strangers, especially foreigners so different from the people she confronted on the street. This is in the context of China as a country which had traditionally characterised itself as the Middle Kingdom, namely the centre of the world[45]. The second consideration related to *Wendy* growing up as the government tried to remedy the economic and social legacy of the Cultural Revolution. Following the death of Mao Tse-tung, China needed the external world's assistance to help resolve problems relating to education, trade, technology, and finance[46]. 'Foreign experts' and other 'foreign friends' were demonstrated the heritage of the Chinese people through school and professional performances. The third meaning emerged from the significance associated with these performances. It relates to the special significance of 'face' in Chinese culture. Face, as elaborated by those including Bond and Hwang (1986) and Ting-Toomey (1988) can represent not only what is seen, but it can also symbolise

---

[44] As a visitor to China in 1978, concerts at these elite schools were often part of the itinerary in major cities.
[45] See Wang (1991) NB ch 5 'Song -Yuan - Ming Relations with South-East Asia' which demonstrates how the idea of the 'middle kingdom' influenced China's history. This tradition continues today.

one's identity, good name and responsibility to others. In this phrase, *Wendy* can be seen to allude to layers of meaning which added tensions to those performance encounters. And for a child who had taken responsibility for serving both the Party and the country so seriously, perhaps the pressures became overwhelming. For *Wendy* 'facing the faces' of foreigners became the focus of many anxieties, including both her parents' and teachers' expectations that she would maintain a high level of academic performance, despite the denigration of education during the previous years.

As a result of all the conflict which she experienced, *Wendy* 'left school for that year'. Then she 'didn't feel any pressure' and 'was so happy' at the prospect of no 'school every day, no examinations, no performance'. Over that time, she seemed to ignore her parents' wishes; she was happy at home, but spent little time on music. Her mother had studied European languages and literature in her own undergraduate studies, and collected foreign novels after the Cultural Revolution, when international books were no longer forbidden in China[47]. *Wendy* described how these factors influenced the period when she did not attend school:

> I tried every moment to steal my mother's novels. It was really a cultural boom, an opening up in the literature area, after the Cultural Revolution when those sort of books had been burned. My mother was very keen on literature and had so many [foreign literature] books at home, in Chinese. And she tried to hide every one of them, everywhere in the corners, but I managed to find them. I was home by myself, and I was very happy just by myself.

The image of her searching the family's flat for novels, hidden by her mother, is incompatible with seeing *Wendy* as compliant. When one recalls her previous fears, it is hard to believe that within a year she would be home all day, alone and engrossed in previously denied books. Her story demonstrates that cultural influences, such as books, can penetrate and influence with great speed[48]. During this year *Wendy* became critical of her mother. As she said:

---

[46] After he took charge in 1978, Deng Xiao-ping promoted new economic policies and relationships with the West, because 'backwardness and poverty did not mean Socialism'(Salisbury, 1992, pp 383-89).
[47] This period compares with the New Cultural Movement of 1915 -1923 when Western literary ideas flourished in China. See Hsu (1985).
[48] From personal travels in China in 1978 and confirmed by Spender and Hockney (1976)

> I don't like the characteristics that I see in my mother. She is a very strong woman, and a friend of all of her students. They admired and loved her. But sometimes I feel that she didn't care much about me. She spent all her time with her students, helping them to achieve their best. I felt that she had used all of her patience with her students and that she had left nothing for me, just instructions. And she was very strict with me.

Intimations of jealousy, anger and resentment come through her words. Her use of tense is informative. Chinese language does not convey past and present through verbs[49] and consequently, many Chinese students have difficulty with the variety of tenses required by English grammar. However, Wendy had a subtle mastery of English, as can be judged by her quotes, and one is left with the impression that she continued to have doubts about her mother's love for her. The belief held by many in the West, that Chinese parents were committed to the state and that everyone was content in their patriotism is denied by the antagonism she expressed towards her mother and the teaching profession. However, Wendy changed as she read surreptitiously:

> After that year, I thought about everything in a more human way. Before that I didn't realise [what it meant to be] a human being, a woman, a man or a mother. I just had no idea. I can't say [the realisation came] just from reading foreign novels, it doesn't make sense. But that year made a big difference for me. I think that year makes me softer and I can understand others. I can appreciate something is beautiful, something is ugly, that there is not only one red colour. It can be a very colourful life.

Once again her language conveys emotional insights gained at that time as if they continued to be present influences. Her love of poetry is also carried through into English with the play on the word 'red' to symbolise how she had changed. She described herself as becoming more insightful, more empathic. The idea that there is more than one colour red implies her earlier passion for the Communist Party, symbolised by the red scarf which she had worn as a Young Pioneer. She learned that other ways of life also existed, consequently, she could adopt a 'softer' role, perhaps in contrast to her mother. But she also came to recognise choices and options which made life more exciting, more varied, more 'colourful'.

When she had completed a degree in humanities, *Wendy* started work in China so as 'to prove' her financial independence. Unlike most of her class-mates, she did not 'pursue an American MBA', but married immediately after graduation and gained employment with an international company. Through her work, she undertook a Western-run training course, where she met an African for the first time. As she said:

> It altered my attitude, for example, to people from other races and other countries. I had no knowledge about black people. China lacks knowledge about that part of the world. But they are very clever people, very well educated, full of humour. They were the people who made the class so enjoyable. They were so amusing, so open-minded. They would bring up things that my Asian class-mates [could not].

Her experience presents an interesting paradox. A year away from school; her realisation of the frustration provoked by 'rote learning' at university; her choice of staying in China in preference to studying in America; plus, her decision to marry without her parents approval – all recall her rebellious streak and demonstrate a continued sense of patriotism. Yet finally, after experiencing Western education within a cross-cultural group, she chose to go overseas because 'overseas study opens people's minds a lot. I could never expect such openness if I stayed on'.

For *Wendy*, study offered an intellectual challenge, the joy she associated with learning. She chose to study the MBA in order to help China. *Wendy* would no longer assist foreign companies to further their interests over China's:

> When I go back, I think I should contribute to Chinese companies. I have learnt so much about foreign countries that I can see both sides. When you work for the foreign side you have to play your role and that's your job. But sometimes I think that the Chinese side should put some pressure to gain what they want.

The skills which she had acquired during the MBA would help 'the Chinese side'. *Wendy* recognised that her organisational focus had made her appear tough,

---

[49] See Yin and Felley (1990, p271) for how Chinese grammar conveys tense by elements other than verbs.

insensitive and 'very pushy'. She hoped that these studies would make her kinder, as she had previously been 'too straightforward'. Her lack of 'native knowledge and experience' had meant that she could not 'really dominate any [MBA] group' in Australia and as she struggled in class she became aware of what it felt like to be 'a listener'.

Through the MBA, *Wendy* had learned to understand feeling powerless and inadequate. She also learned not to equate silence with stupidity. Personal humiliation had increased her concern for others and her desire to be a more caring manager when she returned to China. *Wendy* clearly prioritised her values: her knowledge and skills should assist her country and she should pursue corporate objectives, while also respecting junior staff. *Wendy* expressed ambivalence in her interview, and appeared to seek reassurance that she could be both effective and humane. She seemed worried that these objectives were incompatible, especially when she confided that she had a 'competitive nature', which she struggled to contain. Through the MBA, she sought to resolve value conflicts which she had experienced. For *Wendy*, life was about personal identity, self-respect, being 'open' but not 'too trusting', and fulfilling responsibilities to family, work and society.

This intelligent and successful woman had assessed her way of thinking as essentially Chinese and consequentially inappropriate within Australian education. Her MBA experiences had caused her to doubt her abilities. *Wendy* stated that 'psychologically or physically you must be very strong to cope with the pressure'. She was 'always the two-sided person' who would 'think about one side very strongly' and then 'the other side very strongly'. She saw 'everything in that way, I think that is the Chinese philosophy'. For example, her MBA management class was asked 'to analyse and then compare two models' so as 'to compare the strengths'. *Wendy* said that she recognised that 'a very strong point ... can also be a weak point as well', while her 'Australian class-mates' believed that 'you can't have it both ways'. Her ideas seemed 'quite ridiculous' in English but 'very natural ... in Chinese thinking'.

Wendy portrayed herself as the outsider. She believed her style of thinking was quite different from the other students in that class. This difference made her feel very alone, but also gave her insight into the balance and harmony which characterised Chinese thought for her. This is an intriguing reflection, as she had criticised Chinese education as rote and boring, and looked forward to the openness of Western education. Her understanding can be translated in terms of traditional philosophies, but it may also reflect the ideographic structure of Chinese language which is so different from that of English[50].

Wendy feared that becoming proficient in two cultures might cause her to feel comfortable in neither; she had experienced how politics influenced social norms. During the Cultural Revolution the intention was that:

> ... everything about Confucianism was criticised or put aside. [But these beliefs were] part of tradition and [it was] not possible to eliminate [them] from ... the whole of society. If Mao Tse-tung could not do it, nobody could successfully do it.

Despite having been 'purely educated under the Communist way', *Wendy* felt that both she and her parents had been influenced by a 'Confucian way of thinking'[51], a tradition which underpinned 'the way of looking at the world, dealing with the world'. She had 'studied and practised the philosophy of the five elements'[52] which had helped her 'not to be angry, to stay calm'. Her outlook was that 'everything around you changes, if you just remain very calm then you can deal with everything'.

---

[50] Yin and Felley (1990, p 9) comment on the 'traditional Chinese character writing system [which] does not indicate word boundaries'. Brick (1991, pp 33-35) discusses formation of characters to create new meaning. Both reflect the complexity of written Chinese.

[51] Fairbank (1987, p 180) states that China only promoted critical thought in education after 1905; traditional civil service exams promoted conformity. Fairbank, portrays Mao, like other 'touchy emperors', as anti-intellectual.

[52] The combination of 'yin and yang' with 'the five phases of nature' is attributed to Chou Yen (305-240 BC) ie this syncretic tradition of Taoism and Confucianism highlights the metaphysical. See Wu (1985, pp 238- 241).

Wendy's beliefs prior to studying in Australia are compatible with Neo-Confucian beliefs[53]. Chinese traditional thought permeated her everyday consciousness at the same time as she exemplified the intellectual synthesis of Eastern and Western thought.

Wendy's independence, shown by not conforming, and her scorn of Chinese educational practices seemed at odds with those Confucian principles of piety and respect, which she had stated underpinned Chinese culture. And her later choices seemed to reject her father's Marxist beliefs and the sameness promoted by Chinese Marxism. She stated that belief and trust had dominated her life, yet, a year's isolation had created the opportunity for her to rebel.

Her story demonstrates the danger of imposing national stereotypes. She was complex and at times seemed paradoxical. She conveyed a world understood through poetic insights. She was keen, almost adamant to proclaim her 'Chineseness', but in a way which challenged traditional and Marxist ideas. She told her story with immediacy and emotion. She recognised the complexity of being a bilingual student, and a by-cultural student. Her understanding of group activity was important in helping her to understand cultural difference. *Wendy* spoke as a student in the first semester of the MBA, a context where the insight which she had gained into Western management practice had allowed her to reinterpret how she saw herself at work.

Wendy's descriptions of working in China showed the potential dilemmas experienced by local country staff employed by a foreign company. When anticipating her future, she feared her management style would cause her to become personally isolated[54]. But she also wanted her skills and knowledge to benefit China, not a foreign organisation. Using Hall's conception of domains,

---

[53] Confucian philosophy had evolved alongside Taoist principles (and arguably Buddhist). Wu (1985, pp 238-241) discusses how twentieth century China incorporated Western thinkers. Bishop (1985, pp 407-409) argues that this synthesis created a recognition 'that reality is pluralistic'. Chan claimed that 'the relationship between philosophical doctrines and actual practice in China has been very close indeed' (cited in op cit, p 404).
[54] This issue is dealt with more fully in chapter 4 under the theme of management style.

Wendy could be described as being personally influenced by Western management theory while she remained committed to her country. Her corporate self was affected by Western ideas at the same time as her civic identity remained largely Chinese. Jenny felt the personal risks of pursuing these two potentially conflicting sets of beliefs and behaviours.

Issues relating culture, MBA study and work are further developed through *Yun-wei*'s story.

Yun-wei

He was a year ahead of *Wendy* in the program, and an engineer. *Yun-wei* was no rebel. He was a Mainland Chinese student in his mid-twenties who said he had led a 'charmed life'. The differences between these two Chinese students are informative; *Yun-wei*, for example, was less influenced by the Cultural Revolution, again, in contrast to *Wendy*, he described his initial reason for studying the MBA as similar to many other Chinese students, namely a means to increase his own wealth and status. He, the son of university educated parents, was one of China's cherished only children, the 'little emperors'.

Yun-wei's parents had both studied engineering and had hoped their son would become an academic. His decision to do the MBA and become a 'business man', followed several years' work for a trading company. *Yun-wei* claimed that his parents feared that a career in business was a threat to his future security. He portrayed their timidity as resulting from China's revolutions. Business represented a generational divide: for his parents it had dangerous counter-revolutionary associations, for him – as China had 'become rich and open to the world' – it opened personal opportunities. Yet, his parents were 'more free, more democratic' because 'Western styles of thinking' had promoted more open discussion within educated Chinese families.

Yun-wei saw his parents as Marxist more by label than in substance. In his experience, the Cultural Revolution had promoted 'new ideas from Western countries' and had also denigrated traditional Chinese philosophies. His new MBA friends from Taiwan and Malaysia had introduced him to Buddhist and Confucian beliefs, which he saw were part of China's culture. Before he arrived in Australia, he, like 'most Chinese people', was 'more interested in money ... [as] the first priority'. But, the experiences he had gained during his studies had given him a new 'view of life', causing him to recognise that Chinese values were based on the 'spiritual' aspects of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, as well as communism.

The government compulsion to study Marxist philosophy had caused *Yun-wei* to share the experience of those who 'feel uncomfortable, they don't want to learn it because they [academics] push it too much'. University students should study 'a kind of philosophy [which] encouraged them to think more about the world' beyond 'only one view'. *Yun-wei* was pleased that his old university now taught courses on Freud and Sartre.

The 'most valuable subjects' in the MBA had taught him 'a way of thinking, not only content'. *Yun-wei* recalled his recent reaction to a television documentary on the Tiananmen Square Massacre, which would have previously overwhelmed him. Becoming analytical had helped him to consider this event in a more dispassionate way.

Yun-wei described undergraduate experiences at university soon after the Tiananmen Peace Movement, when students asked the lecturer to apply Marxist theory to that social conflict[55]. These questions 'sometimes made the lecturer very embarrassed because it's very difficult to explain it in the right way'. His use of the 'right way' had several possible meanings. Despite support for the

---

[55] The May 4 celebrations recall when mass protests on this date in 1919, caused the Chinese government to refuse to sign the Paris Peace Conference treaty (Hu, 1985, p 366).

167

student protest, many academics were also concerned that open dissent could make life difficult for students, staff and many others[56].

An academic recognising the need for caution, and conforming with government edicts for compliance, would probably have experienced conflict when recalling this period of student protest. Through television and other forms of mass media, the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the USSR was well known in China's universities. Or, perhaps both the academic and the students were acknowledging the unspeakable. While a spirit of political activism still persisted in the university sector, perhaps students could be seen to be teasing their teacher, pushing at inferred disparities between the official government line which academics were meant to uphold and their personal discomfort with these ideas. In both interpretations dissent was a form of political responsibility which remained essential to Chinese university culture.

Yet *Yun-wei* described himself, prior to coming to Australia, as someone who had not been politicised by his family or educational experiences. If he recognised the tradition of individual political responsibility associated with a university education, he did not conform to this expectation. The positive aspects which *Yun-wei* ascribed to democracy at this time were associated with the freedom of individuals to pursue wealth, a principle which had been promoted by Deng Xiaoping (see Fairbank, 1987 and Salisbury, 1992).

Yun-wei recalled his frustration on first encountering MBA subjects where he was expected to develop his own strategies and solutions.

> The lecturer did not tell us what we should do, just led us to think by ourselves. And at first I think 'Give us some direction or some help'. It is a different learning style.

He contrasted this style of education with his previous education which had pursued 'one truth, only one end', with lecturers as the focus of knowledge.

---

[56] Fairbank (1987) and Hsu (1985) note that student protests have continued to influence China's political history.

However *Yun-wei* volunteered that this reliance on lectures, text-books, rote learning, and class exercises may have described engineering as much as Chinese education styles. As he adapted to MBA education, he began to enjoy it, accepting that 'more mature' MBA students 'should have some space to think' by themselves. He had learnt from lecturers and fellow students, such as those from India and Thailand with 'good qualifications and experience'.

Yun-wei reported being quiet during first semester of this program where 'speaking is part of the process of thinking, not only the end result'. By the second semester, he became more actively involved as he realised that his ideas 'were not so silly after all' and that this was a 'good way of learning'. He perceived that Australian academics encouraged Asian students to speak by using the 'technique' that 'no person is entirely right or wrong'. He considered that this was a 'major gain' for Chinese students and those who came from non-Western academic traditions.

The Australian MBA focus on groups was portrayed as 'a very good way to study and also to work' and superior to the Chinese concentration on personal performance, namely 'do your best and show the others'. He analysed his MBA experience; initially, students aimed solely to complete assignments, but slowly they recognised that learning involved shared ideas. Resolving the conflicts which emerged from this process was 'a good experience'. He was proud that by their last assignment, his study group had enough courage to express 'different views' from those espoused by the lecturer. These final year MBAs had decided it was more important to 'speak honestly' than 'to get high marks'. He prized this as a demonstration of the academic independence and achievement which could be gained through group work.

The need to become a listener, which had dented *Wendy*'s self-esteem, matched *Yun-wei*'s initial fear of speaking. However, perhaps because he was further advanced in his studies, he had discovered that he could speak without claiming full knowledge of a topic. *Yun-wei* came to realise that the MBA course

encouraged students to express diverse opinions. His description of the process of 'learning by speaking' reflects the importance of group decision-making in Western academic, social and business interactions.

His Australian experiences had taught *Yun-wei* that assertion was necessary so as 'to not only take care of the group's benefit, but also to respect your own needs'. He contrasted this with China, where people were taught that respect came from others. Chinese education did not teach people to 'speak out' their needs; he hoped to encourage this in others when he returned home to work.

Yun-wei gave an example of being 'assertive'. Previously, in 'the traditional Chinese way', if he could not study because his flat mate had the television up too high, he would have retreated to his room. This 'passive behaviour' was prompted by 'thinking this person is too bad, next time I will make the noise and let him suffer'. *Yun-wei* learnt to ask for the sound to be lowered. When his flat mate also learnt to voice his needs, their 'relations were much better than before'. China's denial of this aspect of 'fundamental human nature' resulted in frustration which led to violence at home and at work.

Yet, the Chinese ideal of self-sacrifice was not practised in the work-place. When *Yun-wei* started work, his manager had told him 'if there is some conflict between the organisation and yourself, give up your benefit and work for the organisation'. This advice was seen as typical, but he felt that most workers would pursue their own needs. Ideally, corporate principles should recognise workers, and vice versa. *Yun-wei* believed that individuals had to state their wants so that organisations could understand them. He, unlike the majority, understood assertiveness as the key to compromise; the Chinese principle of balance required both. *Yun-wei* stated that managers needed courage and integrity to respect the workers for whom they were responsible[57].

---

[57] How Chinese culture considers assertiveness, group interactions and individualism are discussed more fully in ch 5.

Yun-wei's choice of language recognised culture in different ways. The words he associated with 'collective' can be related to Hofstede's (1980) use of the concept of individualism/ collectivism, or self-focus as against groupness, which *Yun-wei* had studied. Or perhaps his use of 'collective' demonstrated more Marxist connotations. But his vivid account of work-place conflict in China evoked personal history, far more than dispassionate theorising. The word 'collective' seemed to combine *Yun-wei*'s personal, historical and cultural awareness with his varied experiences in Australia.

Through his MBA studies in Australia *Yun-wei* had crystallised the Chinese goal of 'a balance between the family and social and work life'. He disliked work practices which took workers away from their families:

> My ideal life is eight hours for working, eight hours for family, eight hours for sleep. So that is my dream of life and I hope to avoid conflict between the family and the business so that I can make the two halves perfect.

The family should be the foundation of society. *Yun-wei* identified strong values common to Australian culture and his own. He applauded the philosophy of the eight-hour day. Initially motivated to come to Australia to achieve personal wealth and status, through the bridge of the MBA, he had developed respect for human values:

> [Chinese] people just seek their own benefit. That makes for lack of trust. People do anything to make money and I don't think it is a good idea. But before I came here I also thought this was okay. When I came here I changed. There should be balance: we cannot only have one side. Australia is a very mature society. Even though we say Australia is an individualistic society, I think most of the people [recognise] social responsibility and they take care of the weak, the poor people, to some degree even better than China at this moment. But in China, I think because of the Cultural Revolution, we have lost trust in others, so sometime when they can help people, they hold back, because they do not trust others. That is the [legacy of the] Cultural Revolution.

Yun-wei's Australian experiences caused him to recognise that the Cultural Revolution had alienated people, making them selfish and timid. Working as a dish-washer, which he would not have done in China, had broadened him:

> The pressure and the low position, you know, washing dishes is always the lowest position. I felt very uncomfortable, because in China I have good social status. In China we have a very hierarchical society. But I think it's a good experience for me, because now I can understand other people's thinking. And to know that even those who do this kind of job, they're human beings, they are still intelligent, so we need to respect them. That is my experience.

His discomfort was caused not so much by the physical nature of the work, but by its low status. Those with privileged backgrounds, like himself, were regarded in China as 'God's own children'; a curious description when used in a communist country rapidly coming to grips with capitalism. *Yun-wei* believed that an isolated elite could not produce effective managers. Chinese university students did not mix with those who lacked education and power. The ability to empathise with unskilled workers would make him a more humane manager. This 'little bit of suffering' would prompt him to become a more participative manager when he returned to China.

Yun-wei's comments challenge some Western assumptions about the egalitarian nature of the People's Republic of China. He indicated the existence of privilege, social isolation and clear class distinctions. In his experience, only employees of private international companies which paid high salaries could afford to study prestigious Western degrees, especially the MBA. *Yun-wei* wanted China to join the world market. Globalisation, interpreted as importing foreign capital and technology into China, would improve his country's economic position.

Cultural themes raised by students within the context of the MBA recognised the importance of the family, the influence of religion, the effects of globalisation, the pursuit and distribution of wealth, and an awareness of class or status distinctions within China. Both *Yun-wei* and *Wendy* were aware of class and status distinctions within a China influenced by Marxist and Confucian principles. They saw patterns left by age-old philosophies, the re-emergence of Communist revolutionary zeal and the later hazardous pursuit of democracy by students. Their experience of tradition was very different from that which Australian students, such as *Genevieve,* associate with gaining a degree. She reflected the

172

Australian themes of social justice, tolerance and a fair go within a society where children were free to seek an education and pursue a life different from that of their parents.

How culture influences the MBA

A sense of Australian culture was more often demonstrated by those, both staff and students, who had worked or studied away from their home country. Many Australian students did not seem aware of culture, values or mores; they reflected the 'taken for grantedness' of the familiar.

The experience of a different way of life influenced how overseas students understood the MBA. The Australian legal system provided a valuable backdrop to their formal study and the lifestyle provided a context for them to absorb the ideals of rationality, openness and objectivity promoted by many MBA subjects. Those academics who had been the 'outsider' demonstrated greater empathy with international students. They were more likely to accommodate Australian MBA students from migrant backgrounds, and to criticise foreign texts which promoted values contrary to Australian ideals.

Culture was also applicable to the process of MBA education. Local students seemed familiar with those educational norms which often presented hurdles to those from other cultures. The pre-existing norms and expectations of international students appeared to have influenced their responses to the course, as well as how they later reflected on personal identity and work-related values. The question involved how concepts including competition and globalism fitted into a country's culture, its business norms and also how they related to the overall MBA program. Academic concerns which emerged were the importance of Australian cultural norms, the need to reflect and accommodate the students' diverse origins and cultural norms. In contrast, Australian students largely did not connect management theory with a national cultural context. The two concepts were perceived as discrete and unrelated.

173

Wendy, with greater linguistic awareness than many MBA students, demonstrates that the experience of the bilingual student is typically more complex than of those who speak only English. Silence in the classroom did not necessarily indicate either an inability to respond or a pragmatic acceptance of 'the right answer'. International students possessed various educational and social norms. Management educators might bemoan their language skills, but both staff and students gained when they recognised a variety of practices.

Wendy raised the psychological aspects of being an international student. Her English language skills were no substitute for an understanding of the norms of business, social and educational practices. She, like many Australian and international MBA students, recognised that managers who pursued corporate goals could attract personal criticism.

Hall's concept of domains provides insight into the stress that *Wendy* associated with the 'Western' management style which could threaten her relationship with her Chinese colleagues, despite her patriotic goals. The MBA highlighted multiple aspects of identity. The comments of those MBAs who studied in India, demonstrated similar concerns, which were often posed in terms of conflicts between the values which they wanted to practise and the 'Western management' skills which they believed would help them succeed in their careers. The culture of Western education was felt to promote objectivity and rationality and help India to better manage region and religion, class and caste.

The opportunity to engage with a variety of cultural norms within the relative safety of an Australian MBA classroom gave students the opportunity to experiment with globalism. The group-work focus of the MBA often facilitated mutual understanding and respect, especially when supervised by academics committed to such ideals.

Yun-wei's demonstrated that international students encountered concepts which had different cultural significance in their home and host countries; his distinction between 'being right' and 'getting it right' acknowledged the ideals of both Australian culture and democratic process. He also demonstrated a capacity to accept ambiguity and to adopt cultural norms not usually associated with Chinese education. Hall's framework of culture as a process (1999) provides a way of interpreting how students such as *Wendy* and *Yun-wei* interwove different aspects of their identity with the affect that they were changed by their inter-cultural experiences of the MBA. These changes involved more than acquiring new concepts, skills and business practices.

Conclusion

The MBA, when perceived as 'a process, a set of practices ... concerned with production and the exchange of meaning between members of a society or group' (Hall (ed) 1997, p2) demonstrated various interpretations by staff and students. These various beliefs and values were experienced in and beyond the classroom, and were influenced by social, legal and political norms. Students learned from their total life, not from a purely educational frame. Hall (cited in Morley and Chen, eds, 1996, p 15) argues that personal identity, constituted or created by experience in different contexts, reflects 'an uneasy suturing of the tensions between conflicting aspects of self'. Students, especially those from different cultural backgrounds, confirmed this perception, and further demonstrated that these tensions helped to forge a new sense of self. Cultural challenges caused a reinterpretation of earlier experiences and beliefs. Language used in the MBA had evolving and changing meanings due to both the course itself and its social context. Students learnt major lessons from each other. These experiences are consistent with Hall's insight into individual identity where lived experience 'creates a continuous dislocation of one identity by another (as quoted by Julian and Nash, 1996, p 478).

Genevieve, Wendy and *Yun-wei* interpreted the MBA in terms of cultural and educational expectations. Their beliefs and values were experienced in and beyond the classroom, under the influence of the prevailing social, legal and political norms. They, like all students interviewed in this research, learned from their total life, not only through formal education. Personal challenges caused many to reinterpret their experience and beliefs. *Yun-wei*, for example, gained insight into traditional culture from students of the Chinese diaspora.

Chinese and Indian students in Australia seemed more enthusiastic than Australians to understand other cultures. While more Australian academics appreciated the importance of cultural awareness, the majority found it difficult to verbalise within their subjects.

Many MBA students experienced a conflict between the need to respect the individual, either themselves or others, and the pursuit of corporate goals. Some Anglo-Celtic Australian students were concerned at the loss of traditional Australian values, whereas others did not, perhaps could not, discuss this issue. In a paradoxical, way the pursuit of the 'universal' aspect of management philosophy was perceived by students as both a strength and a major weakness.

Hall's concept of the internal restructuring or 'dislocation' of identity was most apparent in students from non-dominant cultures; they felt that business principles should reflect the impact of culture. *Wendy*, for example, encountered conflict between the personal, corporate and cultural domains of her life which changed her sense of self. These insights indicate that MBA study needs to encourage students to become aware of the norms implicit in the societies from which they come. But in terms of the overarching question of this thesis, the experience of individuals, alone and within groups, reflected Collin's findings that students encountered the MBA as complex; the experience was of multiple voices or 'Babel' (Collin in French and Grey (eds) 1996, pp132 -151) more than a single coherent oneness. Students confronted ambiguity and doubt as they sought to master concepts holding different meanings in their home and host countries.

The MBA, whether in Australia or India, demonstrated contradictory strands. Whether students chose to voice this complexity or not is another matter. And similarly with staff, a minority relished the opportunity to learn from the values held by students, whereas others felt they had to accommodate difference in order for their careers and their courses to survive. How students and staff judged themselves as managers, and as individuals, is discussed as an aspect of gender in the following chapter.

Chapter 4   A gendered MBA?

Introduction

Another perspective which emerged from discussion with both MBA students and staff was that of gender. Perceptions around this topic added another layer of complexity to the MBA experience. Those interviewed associated gender with the MBA in various ways. Sinclair notes the distinction between 'sex' as physiology, and 'gender' as 'a social and cultural construction' (1995a, p 296). Those involved in this research perceived the influence of gender in both of these ways, namely women as women, and secondly a 'softer' approach to management and social theory described as 'feminine'. In line with the first understanding, Marginson describes the 'sexist terminology' of economists who 'are individualists by conviction, but collective in their professional habits ... so that the universal person becomes masculine' (Marginson, 1993, p xiv). This chapter explores both of these perspectives within the context of the MBA. Marta Calas and Linda Smircich, two American academics involved in MBA teaching, argue for applying 'feminist theory ... as a form of cultural critique to an analysis of the *epistemological* (FS italics) and ethical grounds of organizational science' (in Larson and Freeman (eds) 1997, p 51). They criticise the notion that 'organizational science literature focuses on the values, mostly implicit, of rationality, efficiency, and effectiveness of organizational performance' (op cit, p 50). Feminist theory, according to their argument, allows the consideration of 'difficult questions' because it values those 'areas of social concern' which are typically ignored in the teaching of management. Sinclair similarly critiques 'the prevalent economic discourse [which renders a] discussion of managerial ethics as a non-business, frequently feminine one (1999, p12).

This chapter applies feminist theory to examine the normative concepts associated with this program; concepts which were often implicit. It considers the MBA from Sinclair's perspective that Australian culture constructs business 'leaders [as] heroes' which privileges men of Anglo-Celtic origin (Sinclair, 1998,

p 320); Australian cultural norms make such men 'invisible' so that only women and non-conforming men are seen to be gendered (op cit, pp16, 24-33). Sinclair cites Derrida in noting that 'the attribution of difference is never a benign act, but one in which "difference" is always attributed by those with power to the characteristics of less powerful groups' (op cit, p133). The following discussion and analysis also recognises the biological aspect of 'being male or female' typically described as 'sex' (Sinclair, 1995a, p 296), which is often equated with access to power and status.

Thus, gender provided a focus to explore concepts central to the program, as well as how students and staff interpreted the MBA in terms of their personal and academic perspectives on politics, policies and classroom experiences. In common with the focus of this chapter, writers including Clegg and Hardy (in Clegg, Hardy and Nord (eds) 1996), Clegg (1995, 1997), Handy (1998), Covey (1992) and Hofstede (1980,1991) have developed theoretical frameworks which propose a softer or more 'feminine' style of management. One of the four dimensions formulated in Geert Hofstede's (1980) study, namely, masculinity/ femininity[58], was a major influence on cross-cultural management research. These theorists recognise the need to include women as women, but also the to adopt new metaphors of management. They promote a more 'feminised' management style, involving flexibility and interconnectedness, as desirable in knowledge based industries including education.

This chapter follows the example of writers who, like Clegg and Hardy, pursue 'the struggle' to 'learn from the diversity and ambiguity of meaning' (1996, p 14), by engaging with diverse conceptual frameworks, including feminist studies, to engage with complexity. Thus gender provides a further perspective to explore the MBA experience.

---

[58] Hofstede's dimensions have wide usage in cross-cultural studies. He later emphasised 'masculinity/ femininity' as a hardness/ assertiveness - softness/nurturance metaphor.

The writers noted above raised questions which this chapter seeks to address. How did women and men envisage themselves as MBA students, teachers and, as leaders? But beyond their subjective beliefs, what systems of organisational management, such as those involving questions of 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness', were promoted through the program? Other aspects of gender involve the styles of management promoted within the MBA, how students reacted to these concepts as well as the broader implications of this for the construction of personal identity and society. The MBA in Australia, as experienced by local and international students, is contrasted with that of students in India, where gender concerns reflected differences of region, caste, class and religion.[59]

In brief, this chapter seeks to interpret whether the MBA experience can be seen in gendered terms. Did Sinclair's claim that powerful males fail to recognise the problems of women or minorities provide insight into the MBA (Sinclair, 1998, p 24)[60]? She reported that American women had by-passed the MBA, not only because of 'child-bearing and -rearing' and the fear of not recouping heavy costs, but even more importantly, because 'women appear to be rejecting the male model of management education' (Sinclair, 1995a, p 298). This latter aspect of her critique reflects the perspective raised by Calas and Smircich (in Larson and Freeman (eds)1997).

An emerging theme is how MBA educators and students apprise rationality and power. Did the findings justify Sinclair's claim that women found the MBA to be 'an excluding culture' which needed to be remedied by 'the articulat[ion] and validat[ion of] alternative experience, and values' (1995a, p 301)? Did MBA staff and students agree that the MBA 'train[ed] people to be good managers by treating them as neutered' (Sinclair, 1995a, p310)?

---

[59] NB (A) = interviewed in Australia and (In) = interviewed within the Indian MBA.
[60] Sinclair demonstrates how the absence of women influences concepts of leadership.

Gender, like religion, has both conscious and unconscious associations. A female who researched these issues could be suspected of having a personal agenda, or of being biased. On a broader level, some interviewees equated gender issues with the pursuit of radical change and an increase in the power-base of women. Many men perceived affirmative action as a threat, others stated that these battles had been won and did not need to be repeated. The constraints associated with addressing gender resulted in this chapter being largely written from the perspective of those who expressed clear opinions about it. The use of hypothetical names presents their comments with their individual voices.

The following analysis uses two major sources of information, namely individual and group interviews with staff and both local and international students involved in the program in Australia, as well as perceptions from MBA students in India. Comments about gender, drawn from group and individual interviews, were compared and contrasted using Sinclair's (1995a, 1995b, 1998) research into the MBA, gender and leadership, as a foundation for discussing issues including family relations, power, and management style. The findings are initially presented in a thematic way and the chapter concludes with three individual narratives which elaborate these insights.

The gendered university

In the context of the Australian MBA, women academics were the group most likely to raise gender as a major issue, while within the Indian MBA it was primarily female students who did so. Yet, *Jeremy*, a male Australian academic, who expressed his concern for gender-related issues through his MBA teaching demonstrates the danger of generalising from this claim. His stance contrasted with that of *Julia*, a senior female academic, who stated that although gender was one of her highest concerns, it was hard to raise. For example, she felt disinclined to discuss MBA administration, planning and teaching, because she felt that most male staff did not share her concerns.

Catherine reflected that 'economic rationalism has taken over' university management, which was no longer 'about ... how to motivate and get the best out of the people', but had involved a new style of manager – namely 'a hit person' who organised 'voluntary departure packages with no apologies'. She characterised the university as increasingly unsympathetic to women, anyone with family responsibilities and those who prized cooperation.

These last comments can be interpreted on two levels. The broad message involved her concern that economic indicators were prioritised over human or emotional concerns; at an individual level, she was angry that changes in MBA funding and program management threatened her job.

The Australian experience as viewed by academics

Helen's comments reflect the many Australian women academics who recognised the range and importance of gender related concerns. She stated that the constraints of gender also affected men because there was only 'one form of masculinity that gets you to the top', noting that it 'can be termed gender, but it is also about style'.

For her, style was 'a good example of the public and private divide'. Any improvements in gender equity were merely 'lip service' because, 'in reality', women experienced inequity on a 'daily' basis. *Helen* did not promote a gender-based critique within the university because she feared 'being out in the wilderness again'.

For *Helen,* the 'level playing notion' was 'another way of restructuring society to benefit those who already had power'. As times became tougher, males who had power would watch women 'fall further down the ladder'. Universities, were 'only reflections of society' and 'mirrored society in different ways'. However, the need for more inclusive attitudes to women was becoming recognised and would alter organisational cultures. This slow progress meant *Helen* still

182

experienced gender as a 'conflict between public and private' and consequently, would have 'to tip toe quietly on those sorts of things'.

The privatisation of the public sector involved moving problems which were 'too big to solve in the public arena' into the private sector. Privatisation was justified on financial grounds, which she typified as an attempt to disguise the 'worsening conflict' and 'increasing gap' between public and private. *Helen* felt that society had increasingly ignored difficult issues including sadness, loneliness and conflict by relegating them to the private sphere. Australia had become a society where 'we won't talk about them in the work place and we won't talk about them in the MBA either'.

Catherine described sexist language which 'embodies so many values and keeps them unconscious, normalising inequities'.

These comments encompass a breadth of gender concerns. The women quoted above demonstrated concerns about both the role of women as women, and the consideration of role and organisational culture in ethical terms, such as raised by Calas and Smircich (in Larson and Freeman (eds) 1997). The latter perspective was demonstrated by those who epitomised the MBA as 'masculine' on the grounds that it was dispassionate, objective and public. In contrast, a predominantly female group of academics wanted intuition and emotion to be recognised in business.

Student attitudes to gender in Australia

Students enrolled in Australian MBA programs held various attitudes to gender. Some, such as *Bernadette*, a successful manager in her late twenties, stated that gender issues were 'hyped up' and that women were 'smart enough ... to get around it'. She acknowledged her 'limited experience' – as a young manager in a largely male group of medical-technology managers which lacked senior women because their careers were interrupted by parent-hood. Having criticised

183

the lack of females, she then stated that having a child would also make her less career-focused. She would have 'seriously consider[ed]' this option but for the fact that she had divorced after commencing the MBA. *Bernadette*'s work gave her the chance to be 'a good example of something constructive and successful'. She often treated her subordinates like a 'mother' despite being only slightly older than they were.

Linton, a male student in his mid thirties, responded to another male who had sympathised with women's experience of the 'glass ceiling' in the work place, with the comment that it was both 'very advantageous' and 'handy to be a female these days'. His company was actively seeking the 'spread of females up at a higher level' but he did not question why these female managers had 'not been staying that long'.

To generalise, in several discussions within the Australian MBA programs, male students were prepared to discuss women being managers. In some groups dominated by Anglo-Saxon Australians, men raised arguments both for and against the role of women. However, in a group (A9-A15) which included Indian and Australian students, the strongest emotion was conveyed by a young Indian woman (A11) who derided her countrymen as sexist. Several Indian males responded that their sisters would not be 'allowed' to study overseas, because a woman's role was with her family and did not require her to be highly educated. These Indian males indicated that only men should be educated to become managers. However, in contrast, another male Indian student, *Parveen,* whose narrative is told in chapter 6, supported women's rights to professional life. He represents those international students in Australia who fulfilled the MBA's prerequisite professional experience. Several, such as *Parveen,* were married with children.

Family considerations in Australia

Within the context of the Australian MBA, students variously recognised the influence of gender on their family roles. Males were inclined to identify themselves as partners and fathers; however, Australians, unlike Indian students, did not define themselves as sons or daughters, with roles which entailed future responsibilities or conflicts.

In contrast to the younger MBA students in India, *Parveen*, an older Indian, whose wife and child had accompanied him to Australia, spoke about the diminishing role of family business. In his experience, younger urban Indians wanted to be independent, not tied to the bottom tier of a family dynasty. Most hoped to escape the emotional ties and its tight-knit paternalistic management of Indian family business. The older styles of Indian business relied on a family model, even large and successful companies 'such as Tata and Godrej', which he had rejected in favour of professionally managed companies. However, he felt the loss of the traditional Indian style of management because he believed the new professionalism diminished care, friendship and enjoyment at work. These new professionally run companies relied on competition and financial rewards which undermined their employees' commitment and loyalty. So, while he criticised the constraints associated with paternalistic management and family business, he appreciated the trust and emotional connectedness which they engendered.

Gender related concerns in the Australian MBA classroom

Di was an Australian MBA student, while *Willow* had come from mainland China and *Paraswati* had come from India to study. Their comments raised issues often ignored by men within the MBA and at work. *Di* believed that females weren't 'considered equal to males in terms of getting higher jobs' or equivalent 'salary packages'. She described how she 'lived to work' because she was 'at the bottom' and 'trying to break in ... at work', which combined with study, meant

that she did not have time for 'family or friends'. Two males, with whom she had studied for three years, prompted her to balance career ambition against personal needs. They encouraged *Di* to prioritise so as to make time for her partner[61].

In an individual interview, *Willow* related how she and her husband had decided that she should pursue an MBA degree. When they both came to Australia to study, their one year old child was looked after by grandparents in China because of the problems and costs of combining work and study in Australia. Her experiences demonstrate the tensions between stated beliefs and action. While *Willow* criticised gender inequity in China, she described being the first of her university class to change jobs for a higher salary and subsequently, her proficiency in English meant that she, rather than her husband, should study the expensive MBA. *Willow* stated that this was for the whole family's future security, including future private education of their child. Her perception that women were disadvantaged in China appeared to conflict with the independent way in which she pursued her career and education, as well as Australian expectations of the responsibility involved with being the mother of a young child[62].

Paraswati, a young Indian MBA student in Australia, criticised those Indian sexual mores which precluded women from careers. Her comments could have reflected the period when she attended an American school. However, she was not unlike *Pushpa*, the MBA student whose role as the self proclaimed 'rebel', which signalled her refusal to conform to gender stereotypes, had evolved within India.

Most male MBA students interviewed in Australia ignored the disparities between the recruitment and promotion of men and women to senior levels of organisations. An increased role for women in management seemed to be based

---

[61] Female students in this study, in contrast to Sinclair's (1995a, pp 295-317), did not report the support of male mentors in relation to their studies or career.
[62] Several Thai and ethnic Chinese students reported leaving children with extended families.

on the assumption that such women would be childless, as most of these males expected their partners to support them[63]. Any expressed concerns did not address how companies could become more equitable. The major images of males supporting their partners in Australia came from international students such as *Parveen* from India, and *Yun-wei*, a Chinese engineer. Both *Parveen* and *Yun-wei* acknowledged that both partners would need to make concessions in order for women to succeed in a career.

A discussion of women in the workplace raised tensions between how individuals expressed beliefs and put them into action. Students from the one country often differed between themselves about issues concerning gender. It is significant that no students raised values associated with the various management subjects, including law and organisational theory, which would deal with gender issues. The general lack of awareness by MBA students of equal opportunity frameworks questioned whether gender equity has been accepted throughout society. Students gave no substance to Anna Yeatman's (1993) hope that equity would be advanced by a revolutionary re-conceptualisation of gender issues within the university sector. The students' comments generally confirmed Sinclair's findings (1993) that management education largely ignored equity issues. The expectation that more women would participate in management was not reflected in discussions of how to improve conditions in the workplace, and only rarely in the home. MBA students adopted a personal and corporate attitude to equity. They did not discuss the role of under-privileged women with regard to accessing credit as promoted by SEWA in India (Bhatt, 1998) and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (Bornstein, 1996), or recognise problems such as those associated with dowries (Jain, 1996, Ghadially and Kumar, 1988) or female infanticide (Krishnaswarmi, 1988). Social justice and equity have worldwide implications, especially with regard to the needs of dependent children. Despite the major changes in business and society, students rarely considered the need for strategies and structures to accommodate families, including the care of children and ageing parents. The concept of a 'family friendly' employer was cynically

---

[63] This finding reflects Sinclair's findings (1995a, pp 308-9)

described as an oxymoron. Even companies, such as those for which several students worked, which claimed to hold such policies, were described as not practising them.

In contrast with Indian students interviewed in both India and Australia, Australian female MBAs rarely discussed their potential for having children. And similarly, Australian women academics tended to ignore the family aspects of identity associated with study and career[64]. *Julia*, for example, responded 'quite badly' to the 'metaphor that 'we're all one big family' because for her it recalled power based on 'patriarchy' and as she said 'we've probably experienced enough of that'. *Emma* was the only academic who stated her need to balance teaching and family responsibilities. Domestic and personal concerns were typically excluded from the subject of values. Female academics tended to describe their relationships with partners, parents and children as irrelevant to discussion about academic roles and responsibilities.

Helen, a lecturer, felt that the predominant cultures were masculine and that women constantly experienced changes in the criteria for measuring performance which she described as moving 'the goal posts'. Her encounters caused her to believe that women were 'ever so subtly' treated as sexual objects. She recalled Pringle's (1998) research which characterised female administrators as a bimbo, a child, or a wife; these conceptions were still 'quite prevalent in the [university]'. As she said, 'you're not related to as a teacher, ...[but] as a woman first ' by many, especially older men.

She had started to address these issues in her teaching, because gender concerns were 'one of the big tensions' for a female academic in a business faculty. As she described this tension:

> I'm speaking about gender when I'm of the gender that generally speaks
> about it. And so the pressure's on me to always prove what I'm saying.

---

[64] These also confirm Sinclair's findings (1998, pp 64, 65, 97, 136-7)

Which exposed her to the risk of 'sounding like sour grapes' and also being viewed as an obsessive and blinkered individual. She judged that individuals who were seen as difficult, non-conformist or critical would limit their own career options. This would be counter-productive, so as her confidence and awareness developed, she addressed such topics only within her subject.

In contrast, *Emma* highlighted gender difficulties she had experienced within the cross-cultural context. She stated that some international students recognised that women held lower academic and professional positions despite the claims that Australia provided equal opportunity to both men and women. And, consequently, she was not surprised when international students, who were used to a hierarchical and patriarchal structures, tested whether they could pass subjects in which women had assessed them as failing through an appeal to more senior (male) course managers.

Julia focused her gender concerns primarily on career opportunities. She was concerned that society only paid 'lip service to giving credit' to women and that 'merit differences' favoured male professionals in the university environment. She felt that society, including management schools, chose inappropriate and unfair criteria to select and promote staff. She described academic administration in terms of jobs done by women which were only considered valuable when problems arose. Her ambivalence became more evident when she went on to criticise Australian industry, where women who wanted 'to reach the top' were 'forced out, into running our own businesses'. Not only did this discrimination, which she had experienced, personally upset her, she also regretted the overall loss of professional expertise.

She expressed a strong desire to perform well, yet felt that much essential and arduous work was invisible to the university. Her professional persona appeared almost anti-feminist, but she felt denigrated because she was a woman. Despite the domestic metaphors which enlivened her language, in contrast to many male academics, she did not discuss family relationships. Her ambivalence about

gender was further confirmed in a comment about the classes that she took, where she tried 'to emphasise that we're all professionals, and gender isn't an issue'[65] because individuals had to contribute according to what they had to offer, rather than who they were. This was 'an ideal' approach which had to be 'battled through'. Gender was approached in class by addressing issues as they emerged through topics. Gender bias was 'just a fact of life' which she did not have 'to point out'.

Within her Australian MBA classroom, *Julia* aimed to demonstrate a style which dealt equally with males and females. She stated that she expected the students to model themselves on that experience and to detect injustice involving unfair treatment of women for themselves. Her classroom behaviour aimed to implicitly model how gender equity should be addressed.

In contrast with *Julia*, *Catherine* aimed to explicitly address issues of gender through her teaching. And for her, this included an emotional awareness of the implications of certain management activities. She criticised most MBA students for their impersonal acceptance of 'downsizing' which she blamed on the 'euphemistic language of management' which disguised workforce losses. Her alternative explanation was the students were unable to empathise with a situation which they hoped never to experience. Perhaps these two interpretations together convey the complex reality. But *Catherine*'s reflections recognised business as a tough world, unlike her students whom she felt used professional language to obscure unpleasant realities. She described her approach as holistic and feminine, their approach as male, irrespective of their gender[66].

Female academics addressed issues of gender in the classroom more frequently than males. These various views included that women, both academics and students, experienced difficulties in the academic context and potentially in future

---

[65] See Sinclair's claim that career focused women avoid such matters because 'masculinity is interwoven into ... presumptions of organisation and managerial leadership' (1998, p 63).
[66] This comment reflects the gender perspective presented by writers including Sinclair (1998), Clegg (1997) and Hofstede (1991).

management careers, as well as gender perceived in political terms. The political perspective ranged from the larger context of overall career prospects for themselves and their students, to more specific issues such as conflict management within the classroom.

However, women academics were not alone in recognising and juggling the complexities raised by gender. *Lawrence*, an experienced management educator, described the business environment as tough and mean spirited. He expressed satisfaction that every year, four or five students would claim that their MBA studies had assisted them to leave the very corporate world normally associated with the degree. *Lawrence* stated he preferred not to make value judgments in the classroom, but acknowledged that his values matched those of students who decided to leave the competitive world of business. If an individual discovered a 'person job misfit', then this realisation was a 'legitimate and desirable' outcome of the MBA. He believed that each student should be 'free to choose' so as to 'take responsibility for one-self' and also that a male-dominated management style was inappropriate for a significant group of men. While *Lawrence* recognised that only a minority held these beliefs, he also felt that students should be 'exposed to alternative world views ... [in line with] literature which indicated that the future of business [lay in] abandoning profit maximisation'. He stated that the 'role of business' was 'really to serve the community', which, together with his belief that higher education should provoke students to consider alternatives, prompted him to promote a critical perspective.

Lawrence believed that the teaching of 'profit maximisation' created a 'dog-eat-dog attitude' as well as a 'games-theory' approach to business which 'caused a lot of pain and suffering in organisations'. He prescribed readings which contended that business was not about 'winner takes all', or based on 'a win/lose situation'. He was keen to promote a more 'feminine' style of interaction within his class and to encourage his students to consider more cooperative ways of doing business. Yet curiously, even when he was interviewed by a woman, he did not

mention female students. He accepted that gender was a major concern, but he addressed it in terms of men's needs[67].

Through his teaching of management, he encouraged his students to verbalise and honour their own values. He did not believe that management education should promote uncritical compliance with business goals. He and *Robert* argued that students should be encouraged to criticise a system which encouraged them to adopt a tough 'macho' style of management.

Gender evoked a range of understandings and experiences. Many students and staff conveyed that it coloured their reactions and prompted their behaviour in ways which were outside the scope of beliefs associated with the MBA.

The gendered classroom in Australia

Several women academics commented on conflict provoked by expectations about the role of gender when it emerged as a topic within management. This difficulty was experienced in classes with Australian students and also international students. Such difficulties could be exacerbated when different groups in a class held diverse views on the role of women. *Helen* described how she had used humour to push her viewpoint:

> 'in teaching MBA international students ... I can't count how many
> times this semester, I've said 'she' and made a point of saying
> humorously, or seriously, that they have to change. It's unacceptable at
> all sorts of levels, but we still continue to use 'he'.

Other examples of the influence of gender in the classroom included *Emma*'s perception that a 'relatively unsophisticated' Indian male had disregarded the greater business experience of a Thai woman and consequently provoked 'a battle of the sexes'. In contrast, *Julia* related how a male student's cultural and religious beliefs caused him to judge female managers as unacceptable. Over the

---

[67] He confirmed Sinclair's findings that male MBAs were reluctant to discuss concerns about 'being male' (1998, p 73). His subject used personal diaries to promote self-reflection.

semester she had seen him 'shift quite radically from being totally unable to accommodate having female managers', to giving 'some weight' to what females had to say in class. Whereas *Emma* was diffident about dealing with such gender issues, *Julia* stated that it was an important 'part of their education'.

Within the MBA, Australian female students seemed more supportive of female academics than either male or overseas students. Women academics judged that both male and female international students did not respect their role and authority. Some female academics attributed this lack of respect not only to gender, but also nationality, social status or wealth. In other words, they felt that they may be have been disregarded, not solely on the grounds of their gender, but more significantly because they were perceived to lack appropriate family background or social status. For example, one female academic saw tensions emerge when the teaching role, which had high status, was undertaken by a woman, who was seen to have lower status than a man. This situation was linked with students from countries where few women held senior positions.

Few male students introduced the topic of gender. Many Indian international students in Australia indicated that gender was a provocative topic. *Paraswati*'s views on gender equity led to strong disagreement by the five older Indian men in her group. Some male Indian MBA students in Australia (A9, A14. A15, A19) stated that a family would be criticised if daughters were allowed to study overseas or to take on jobs that involved travelling within India. The ensuing debate considered whether such constraints hinged on tradition, religion or safety. The younger Indian men seemed torn between being 'modern' and the expectations of their families. This discussion of gender-related issues caused the non-Indian students in the group (A12, A13) to recognise the complex and varied beliefs expressed by these Indian students.

Parveen, in another group, indicated how the world trend to employ more women had influenced India. He noted that foreign companies were using their female employees to attract further female recruits, including MBA graduates. At the

same time, he characterised that women in certain roles for example, in marketing, would be subordinate to male staff members because of the risks faced by women who worked alone; he implicitly denied that women could be supported by subordinate-males. Perhaps his opinion reflected a traditional conservatism, or a pragmatic recognition of the difficulties associated with travel throughout the country and the use of public transport.

Linton claimed that affirmative action policies of the company he worked for advantaged females, at the same time as he acknowledged their low retention in certain 'macho' industries. As the majority of Australian MBA students worked full-time and studied part-time and the MBA required students to have business experience prior to their studies, personal experiences were used to substantiate the claim that organisations' equal opportunity policies disadvantaged male managers. This discussion raised questions about how, for example, the laws and practice of equal opportunity were addressed in various subjects and interpreted within an MBA class. *Linton*'s disparaging remarks about such policies could also reflect that personal career progress was the primary motivation for most students to undertake the MBA.

Gender and personal identity

Lawrence described gender as a major issue experienced by many of his male students that involved their 'self doubt of where they fitted in the overall scheme of things' and included how to connect with female staff, 'especially those who were demanding, who didn't show feelings', and 'female bosses, especially women with balls'. In addition, he noted 'underlying tensions', an 'almost archetypal feeling', which could have reflected feelings of being an inadequate male and 'not knowing how to please' a partner. As he said, 'a lot of male managers were seeking to find a place for themselves in the 90s'. And he portrayed this search as relating to 'societal roles', at a 'difficult time' when a lot of men were experiencing 'uncertainty'.

194

Peter, an Australian student with children, recognised the conflict between family and business responsibilities. This was essentially an issue 'about self' because he needed to achieve 'the right balance'. He found it difficult to separate the 'family man' from the 'business man'. If individuals 'changed [their values] between business and family life' then they were 'not being true to themselves'. He left his wife to manage the family links with their local community 'in order to gain time for both family and business'.

Stewart rang his wife daily to recognise and support her 'full-time mothering' role. His 'very successful marriage' was focused on their children's interests. There was an apparent ambivalence between his reported admiration for his manager's decisive, yet 'sexist style', and concern voiced over his 'family friendly employer' which had sacked women because of work tensions associated with child-rearing. Yet, overall he seemed uncertain whether women with children should be in the workforce.

Di believed that women faced greater hurdles to employment and promotion hurdles than did men. Combining her full-time job, weekend work and MBA commitments, left no time for her partner. These constraints, plus the migraine headaches provoked by lack of sleep, were portrayed as the costs of 'climb[ing] the management ladder'. The Australian males in her group warned against sacrificing her personal life for a 'career'.

Willow, despite her personal circumstances, criticised China's gender norms. She stated that employers in China generally portrayed women as burdens because of security issues and the prospect of child-rearing. In contrast, another Chinese student, *Yun-wei*, whose wife was studying on a research scholarship in another Australian city, described Australia as 'more conservative' and less attuned to women's needs than China. He stated that the Chinese held more equitable attitudes to gender, for example, his Beijing university class mates would share his beliefs about women and equality.

Paraswati's mother had insisted that her daughter continue her studies, probably because her own family had frustrated her desire to become an engineer. Indian males in other groups demonstrated different versions of this debate. Some accepted expanded-employment opportunities for women as long as 'family values' were given top priority.

In the group and individual discussions which included Australian students and international students from China and India, men talked about relationships with partners and children more frequently and positively than women did, especially in connection with a personal career. In contrast, women largely felt they had to compete in a world which preferred male employees. The Australian students indicated that children would limit women's careers; men were able to compete and engage in MBA study, because their partners looked after children. Only *Willow* indicated that women with children could pursue a management career path, as distinct from the Australian[68] MBA students. They appeared more closely aligned with the Indian students in their acceptance of traditional 'family values'.

Management style as perceived in Australia

The concept of gender was intricately interwoven with the individual perception of a suitable management style. However, this implicit awareness was best evoked by comparing how MBA students in Australia, including those from Australia, India and China, perceived what a manager should be.

Wendy anticipated risks in going back to China. She explained her fears:

> I am not sure whether I will be well accepted by companies that
> [conform to] Chinese culture. As I get to know more about Western
> company culture, I am gradually losing the other end. Somehow I can be
> in the middle, if I am in the middle it means that I am not at either end.

---

[68] Most Australians had attended university after the implementation of equal opportunity legislation. They indicated that the spirit of these changes was not widely embraced.

Wendy feared that her management style could cause her future problems in China. She demonstrated similarities with Hall's concept of domains when she likened her personal style to positions on a continuum. She indicated that if her work style became 'too Western' she would lose her Chinese insights and capacities and risk her sense of belonging. However, as she toyed with situating herself on a continuum of cultural style, she recognised that various situations would influence her sense of self. Her sense of cultural 'fit' made her realise that she would be changed by the experience of work, for example, Chinese employees of Western companies would find it hard to relate to Chinese workers who had different experiences and expectations.

> ... as a newcomer, when I enter a new organisation, I will have to be very careful not to be isolated. And also it depends on the situation. ... I am a Chinese national but sometimes in order to get things done, I put a lot of pressure on my Chinese counterparts. ... probably some of them would mind, but they would never tell, unless they became very close friends of mine.

This comment indicates how management style reflects personal style, and how personal style reflects the individual's psychological make-up as much as culture. Her comments provide insight into how she saw herself within the context of the MBA. *Wendy* recognised the psychological as well as cultural aspects of her identity; she felt that these, together with her organisational experiences, were an influence on how she would achieve organisational goals and on her relationships with her fellow nationals. She acknowledged the tensions associated with these different aspects of her identity.

In contrast, *Julia* believed that management style was increasingly influenced by both East and West, because within 'twenty years time... a global society' would promote 'a lot more common managerial staff across the world'. Management style was portrayed as a neutral artefact of the work environment rather than an expression of an individual, or corporation which reflected gender and cultural concerns.

This perspective contrasts with Sinclair's (1998) analysis of leadership, where the concept of the 'heroic male' underpins the ideal professional business image. Yet

Julia, despite her stoic acceptance of tough business practice, was saddened by the harsh reality of business practice. She combined academic theory with flashes of concern for others. She was confident but very wary of being type-caste as a feminist. This woman railed at frustrations outside the academic world; she described family business ventures where action based on concern for staff had aroused criticism. There were tensions between her stated desire to nurture others, her assertive language and her lack of self-revelation.

The ways in which many academics taught MBA subjects seemed to assume the existence of a just and open society. This provided the background against which to promote objectivity, merit and profit. However, as few academics contextualised their teaching in this way, *Helen* feared that culture and society would suffer if MBA students were not encouraged to relate social norms to management theory. Her major concern was that Australians who had never experienced threats to democracy and civil society, recognised only those principles which were enunciated within the MBA.

Indian insights into management style

In contrast, secularism in India was often portrayed as a means to mitigate racial and religious intolerance. The complexity[69] associated with renewed nationalism plus the tension between Hinduism and other religions have all shaped this country's aspiring managers. The objectivity promoted by Western management represented for many Indian MBA students a calm, mediating and equitable influence. Both male and female students admired the clarity promoted by objective and unemotional criteria. They were represented as a 'cooling' influence.

---

[69] This tension was apparent at a conference on values in management where Indian academics criticised an indigenous management style on the basis that traditional Hindu ideas could be divisive. The fiftieth anniversary of independence saw religious divisions being reignited (see D'Mello, 1999).

Concerns about management style became apparent at a workshop run by Indian MBA teachers in India which involved academics who have promoted indigenous Indian models[70] based on traditional writings. Several advocated values such as respect for age and status associated with a male-dominated management style which has largely ignored the role of women in business. Some associate this perspective with a renewed sense of Indian nationalism. Within India, there are those academics who criticise this philosophical movement as a threat to the objectivity and secularism promoted by Western management theory. For them, management style not only related to the role of women but also to the inclusion of men from the lower classes and castes. Many critics of 'traditional' indigenous management styles stated that Western management theory promoted a more just and open system of recruitment, promotion and overall business practice. They associated Western styles of objectivity with social justice, fair competition, cooperation and more inclusive practices. The traditional world was portrayed as more patriarchal and non-consensual. In some ways these critics of traditionalism appeared to attribute 'feminine' characteristics to Western management principles.

Student attitudes to gender in India

The MBA students interviewed in India indicated that perhaps the rules around gender were changing, but few males indicated that India should pursue a more equitable gender balance. These MBA students typically aspired to be managers in a large multi-national company which paid high salaries and provided good training. However, a significant group of students hoped to work for specific local companies because of cultural and life style reasons. As one MBA student said:

> [In] international firms you get the sense that you will be in a constant
> state of flux ...[with] appraisal every year and you are either up or out.
> [Rather than] that kind of environment, where I have to prove myself

---

[70]I attended this workshop in Calcutta, in February, 1998. Prof S K Chakraborty promotes indigenous management style through books and programs for Indian organisations. See publications listed in bibliography.

> time and again, I would be attuned to Indian organisations which talk of
> a long-term relationship (In14).

Paternalistic management was valued; a good manager considered family situations, including diverse regional aspects such as religion, food, and festivals. MBAs wanted to work for managers who would nurture their early careers, and many aspired to care for their own staff in turn. Students saw the importance of combining this understanding with formal MBA study. While some feared aspects of Western management theory, such as constant performance reviews, others believed such practices helped managers to address India's disparate cultures and regional differences. A broadly based objective behavioural stance would promote effective management of diversity such as was required in rural India:

> ... if this were implemented here [in this program] and instituted all over
> the country [it] would reduce the sense of tribalism [in the sense of
> urban/professional elitism] which is happening throughout India (In15).

These students recognised that managers needed to be malleable; many believed that paternalism helped to balance staff-development needs with the pursuit of profitability based on efficiency. Many students recognised that efficient work practices should be promoted, while several raised ethical issues associated with subjecting workers to undue pressure to achieve results.

For MBA students in India, management style provoked dilemmas. The espoused ethical values of a 'good manager' would be tested by the need to make company profit. These students often portrayed efficiency as more compelling than individual conscience, in a way which seemed to reflect their understanding of local practice. Theoretical studies were often characterised as remote from the 'nitty gritty' of the 'real world'. Students stated that workers were alienated by corruption in society and in their work environments. Several students equated a successful management style with being 'manly ... aggressive and successful at work'; many accepted that 'being a successful manager' would conflict with personally-held values, but this was part of the 'macho' reality of business practice.

Reflection on gender-based roles by MBAs in India

Family, and the responsibilities of sons and daughters, was of primary importance in interviews undertaken in India with students from two different MBA programs. Yet, many sought to balance personal and parental wishes, such as the expectation that an elder son would provide financial, housing and emotional support to parents.

However, MBA students in India typically came straight from undergraduate degrees, most were in their early twenties, were single and had little professional experience. As a result, their discussion of gender tended to combine theoretical knowledge with beliefs espoused by their families.

Female MBA candidates in India appeared more interested in change than their male counterparts. Some of these women stated that they appreciated the needs of minorities because they too were 'oppressed'. Several (In11, In 17) wanted to improve the work place for others more than personal power; they sought to apply 'feminine' values to society, perhaps through applying the Indian esteem for the 'mother'[71] to a professional context. However, *Pushpa*'s description of how she had 'to fight' for the place she had 'earned' and 'deserved', dismissed any claims for pure altruism. She acknowledged the pressure on urban girls, while she ignored the documented hardships of rural or uneducated women. She was middle class, educated in a well-regarded Christian school, and highly competitive. In contrast, a student, whose mother was a doctor, felt that divorce had condemned her family to social isolation. Perhaps *Radha*'s concern for social justice was prompted by her parents' divorce. The male dominated Indian society oppressed even well-borne Indian women, such as herself, with engineering degrees and 'excellent' postgraduate qualifications. Her 'difficult' choice was to

---

[71] Kakar (1990,131-32) 'certain forms of the maternal-feminine' (are) more central in India ... than in the West; Bumiller's (1991) study conveys a more Western understanding.

201

'advocate [industrial relations] change' such as promoting equal career opportunities for women and the poor.

Another female engineer in the MBA (In9) was frustrated that women were disregarded as fellow students and potential managers. She stated that male students, and society more generally, denigrated women's professional potential. The MBA should educate males to recognise female students as equals, not 'as women' who were inferior. But she conceded that women might need to demonstrate flexibility, by, for example, eschewing personal preference and accepting a token drink at professional and corporate events. However, professional opportunities for women had improved, as borne out by her claim that the Indian Institute of Engineers had specifically considered professional issues involving women over the previous two years.

Some male MBAs in India were more sympathetic to the situation of women than the female students seemed able to recognise. However, many males expected women to shoulder domestic responsibility in deference first to their fathers and then to their mothers-in-law, and to a lesser extent, all the males in the family. A minority of men wanted to restrict women's behaviour, especially after they had children. Religion, family experience and social beliefs were used to justify traditional roles and practices.

At the same time, many recognised that multi-national corporations created employment opportunities for women. One MBA student in India conveyed the difficulty of blending modernity with tradition:

> Moving towards more ... participation of women in organisations, but still in households, the lady is seen as the one who takes care of the household and the children. Women have been going more and more to work, ... but still do all the household work. The man comes, goes, rests.
>
> [In] my year, [there were] 246 students, and 25 women. Marriage for them will be important, more than to become a CEO, [or] top management. [We] need to have more recognition of women ... Women have a much tougher time.

> ... multi-national corporations coming into India, they try to implant their own successful methods of operating. Recruiting women for sales is difficult, especially with a predominantly male sales force. ... And yet Seagrams recruited a female last year in sales. She did well and they are looking for more - maybe no Indian company would have thought of doing that. ITC [Indian Tobacco Co] would not take a lady for marketing cigarettes. I am more traditional, I am not a typical member of my group. Most of the others would not mind, neither themselves nor women working for these companies [liquor, tobacco]. Indian tradition is 'no to meat, no to tobacco, no to liquor'. That means these things have a certain stigma, I shouldn't do it; women shouldn't do it (In8).

This MBA student's perception of gender moulded his understanding of marriage, domestic responsibility and career opportunities. His beliefs reflected a culture where women formed a minority of MBA students, a culture that was being changed by foreign transnational companies. For example, these companies had increased the social acceptability of industries such as alcohol or tobacco and had recruited women into roles previously considered inappropriate, namely marketing such products. This comment also reflected the generational divide. Most MBAs, in contrast to this particular student, indicated they were less traditional than their parents.

Was it possible to predict whether an individual MBA student in India would pursue the 'modern' or the 'traditional' attitude to gender concerns? *Pushpa*, for example, whose story is told in more detail at the end of this chapter, displayed a nostalgic longing for the past, combined with a pragmatic pursuit of non-traditional career options. She deserved to be 'successful', yet worried about the consequences of that success. Gender provoked complex and sometimes self-contradictory opinions.

Perspectives on gender overall

Gender was associated with the capacity of women to access fair treatment within both the business and university worlds. But for many there was also a realisation that dominant masculinist models precluded the discussion of important social and business issues, such as equity. And there was also varying demonstrations of a gendered perception of management. This, competition was constantly raised as

203

an aspect of management style. Gender stereotypes describe males as competitive and females as cooperative. Some took these assumptions for granted, while others, largely women, were more critical. But this perspective highlighted another possible strand of dissent within the MBA experience.

The following three individual narratives have been chosen because they convey the complexities associated with relating gender to personal, organisational and social concerns. They elaborate sub-themes, such as, the nature of universities and management style, which emerged from the overall research.

The individual narratives

Emma

Before she became a management lecturer in her thirties, *Emma* had worked for an international management-consulting firm. She aimed to promote an open and flexible learning style, and so she distributed notes prior to lectures and modelled the critical style which she wanted MBA students to adopt, for example, when she cautioned them that the American text she had chosen might not always apply to Australian conditions. *Emma* believed that successful business required an understanding of both principles and culture. She enjoyed postgraduate education which she saw as a microcosm where individuals, including academics, would learn when they tested personally-held beliefs. She described it as an opportunity for interactive-learning, where students should be taught to be 'critical and analytical'. *Emma* stated that this experience would challenge students who came from 'compliant' cultures.

She largely portrayed her academic life, with its occasionally discordant notes, in terms of gender. She recalled when she had failed a demanding international student who had then approached the program manager to have his exam results reassessed. She believed that the student had been affronted when he was failed by a young woman, and stated that management had labelled her as 'a

troublemaker' as a result of this incident. She portrayed her experience as a lesson to other staff that it was 'easier just to pass them [international students]'. She also described a classroom when she had encouraged a Thai woman to speak, and had consequently been accused of 'being inflexible' by several international male students, on the grounds that she would 'not listen to other people's opinions'. Her perception was that her attempt to be inclusive had been interpreted as dogmatic and opinionated.

Emma had portrayed the first incident as one where a male student had protested at being failed by a woman, despite having failed the academic criteria. She criticised the program manager's retreat from conflict with a full–fee student which she felt did not respect her academic integrity. The message was that international students, especially those who could forcefully promote their rights, should receive different treatment from resident students. The second event illustrated the importance of group dynamics, which included expectations of class interactions between males and females of different ethnic backgrounds. She indicated that this was potentially more complex than the previous incident because she had defended the right of a woman to hold an opinion which was contrary to a man. The involvement of Indian male students and Thai women highlighted the risks of challenging gender constructs when different cultural groups interacted. She especially saw this as problem for the MBA, as it attracted much larger numbers of international students. *Emma* recognised the pressures raised by high fees and the expectations associated with family businesses. These additional responsibilities added an extra layer of difficulty to a culturally diverse class environment. While she acknowledged that insight into gender was an important aspect of MBA education, she did make this explicit to students because such a comment would stop the potential for 'any cross fertilisation of ideas' between males and females. She feared to discuss gender, especially when students' views differed from her own, because she was concerned that she would not be 'able to manage' a 'good interaction'. When such situations evoked tension in a class, her reaction was to 'just leave it'. She would act against gender norms, but she was not prepared to openly discuss them.

Emma also worried that female international students risked being exploited by male staff outside the classroom because these males were perceived to have high power and status. On the basis of her limited knowledge, she claimed that these young women would be reluctant to approach university services, staffed by strangers, if there were problems such as sexual harassment or exploitation. *Emma* doubted that many of her female Asian students would seek professional help from an unknown counsellor.

These incidents had distressed her. Perhaps *Emma* was overly sensitive to the university's procedures for dealing with students' complaints about exam results. It is also possible, as she herself had acknowledged, that she lacked the group skills to fully resolve conflicts between students of different cultural backgrounds. Despite these considerations, she believed that both incidents reflected the central importance of gender to MBA teaching and administration. *Emma*'s personal sensitivity to issues associated with gender may also have increased her willingness to raise taboo issues such as sexual harassment.

Emma was most vocal in depicting the tensions between family and professional responsibilities, especially those experienced by female staff with young children. She perceived a double standard; more senior male staff would leave early or defer meetings because of family commitments, whereas a similar request from a woman was seen to indicate priorities outside her career. *Emma* stated that males with family responsibilities were seen as ambitious and having long-term career aspirations, whereas women with children were labelled as 'mothers' who by definition were not ambitious.

For her, these interactions demonstrated the essentially masculine style of the university which contrasted with that adopted by female academic colleagues, who generally were 'more interested in taking the group with them'. Several of these women had demonstrated a 'more collective approach', such as promoting staff development programs, in contrast to the male academics 'who seemed to be

out for themselves'. She spoke very strongly of a gendered culture, both within the classroom, and also within the management structure of the university. *Emma* described these issues with keen interest. But she judged her family and social concerns as equally important to her work preoccupations. While she stated that values were 'most definitely defined' by an individual's culture and family, she also indicated that there would be issues, such as bribery, which were not appropriate for classroom discussion. While she acknowledged that tension was an important element of the MBA educational experience, she believed that the public exploration of such tensions could be seen as undesirably provocative.

Her identity reflected a gendered conception of the world, expressed through a style which was at once sensitive, assertive and diffident. She experienced tensions within herself. She was serious about testing notions of certainty, while she was also ambivalent about verbalising uncertainty. Within the classroom, she seemed as protective of the students' sensibilities, as she was of her own. Outside the classroom, she placed her trust in women and used gender as a lens which helped her to interpret the world. In Sinclair's terms, while she recognised the norms associated with issues of leadership, her actions indicated that she was prepared to test these norms when she confronted them. But she was reluctant to verbalise her dissent.

Pushpa

In contrast with *Emma*, *Pushpa*'s comments expressed the concerns of a less experienced young woman as she anticipated a career after graduation. As an MBA student who was studying in India, she was aware that cultural beliefs, which included those about gender, influenced her immediate sense of self and her future ambitions. As one of twenty-five female students out of a total 'batch' of two hundred and fifty, her short skirts and constant smoking which flaunted social customs, added to her visibility and defied the norms imposed on well-born young women. Many of *Pushpa*'s beliefs seemed initially incompatible. She stated that she was extremely competitive and would not have gained an MBA

207

place without that quality. She presented her success in a quantitatively-based program, dominated by males, as a possible prelude to a career in tobacco or liquor, which were socially denigrated industries which had previously excluded women. Her proposal to market products at odds with Hindu religious beliefs – with consequent strong social taboos – in some ways contested the beliefs of her parents and her grandparents. She recognised her present and future behaviour was a conscious rebellion against traditional elements of Indian culture. *Pushpa* acknowledged that she would have to delay marriage so as to succeed in a marketing career. As an MBA, she would have to accept 'postings' all around the country in order to gain promotion. This sort of mobility would be incompatible with marriage, especially as she expected that her future spouse would also be ambitious. So she quickly moved beyond these problems and imagined the child whom she would educate in a traditional way, different from her own childhood.

Pushpa stated that she felt deprived because English was her primary language and she knew little of her family's regional language, dance, music, or the traditional Indian texts. She experienced conflict when she attempted to reconcile career, marriage and family with her Indian identity. *Pushpa* was ambivalent about tradition. She seemed nostalgic for what she had not experienced while she rejected what she had; she was young and rebellious and, possibly, confused. She was also adamant about her right to pursue the future which would emerge from her education. She stated that she 'deserved' a successful career because she had struggled to gain an MBA, yet, she doubted whether she wanted to pay the personal costs to achieve this success.

Relatives who had migrated to the USA were to be pitied because they were neither Indian nor American. Yet, she conveyed a complex and fragile sense of self. Modern urban India had not provided her with the cultural, religious and spiritual experiences which she claimed to prize. She saw herself as a middle-class Indian who had inherited the language, formal education and literature of British colonial history. There was a paradox associated with her desire that her future child should be 'more traditional'; she neither articulated what this meant

nor proposed how it could occur. Her life was very different from the majority of poor, inadequately educated rural women. Her concerns about identity, combined with her passion for a tradition outside her experience was framed within modern cities. She, like her parents, had been schooled in a British education system, yet she confidently anticipated that she would bridge the cultural gaps when she became a parent. Perhaps she could be seen as nostalgic for a past which she had romanticised.

Her tensions and confusion can be interpreted against the rise of a sense of nationalism, of India for Indians, which equates tradition with Hinduism. This has been associated with a resurgence in national pride which has seen the BJP come to national power[72]. The tradition of secularism and Indian unity espoused by the Congress party, Nehru and Gandhi has been eroded into a more partisan religious and regional perspective. India is not alone in pursuing certainty, based on a belief in traditional identity, culture and religion (see Morley, 1996, pp 346-49). This new influence is being experienced from an individual level through to regional, and national, aspirations and fears.

Pushpa explicitly recognised the personal tension in her current student life. She conceded that her smoking would 'shock' both her parents, just as her father would disapprove if he knew that she drank alcohol on social occasions. Her personal style, which included a rather aggressive manner, indicated a rebelliousness which sat uneasily with her claim that her convent education had caused her to be culturally deprived. At the same time, her English -language-based-education had provided access to the MBA world which underpinned her anticipated career. Yet, when she spoke of her future success, it was in terms of status and financial rewards, not the pleasure or satisfaction, or sense of personal fulfilment which she which she anticipated as a mother. Despite her enthusiasm

---

[72] Gandhi (1999, pp 372-385) analyses 'identity politics' based on the distinction between 'self and other' which promoted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India's major Hindu party.

for modernity, *Pushpa*'s preoccupation with her future maternal role demonstrated the power of one of India's strongest traditions[73].

The role of the 'mother' as perceived by males[74] and females, educated and uneducated, holds enormous sway in India. It is a role strongly associated with child bearing and the home which may confer both power and status on a woman. For example, *Pushpa* described how her highly Westernised father had smoked for thirty five years, but would never admit this to his mother, let alone smoke in front of her.

Young Indian women who had experienced various conflicts associated with gender within the MBA – such as being a very visible part of a small minority – also recognised the strong pressures to marry and have children. Their career expectations had to chart a course between traditional paternalistic companies, the opportunities offered by multi-national corporations, and the newer Indian companies which espoused 'professional management' structures. This particular female student conveys the complexities which face young middle-class women throughout the world. She represents those women who seek to balance the conflicting demands of society and their chosen profession with their personal and family aspirations.

So, *Pushpa*'s sense of personal ambiguity and tension related to her sense of being female, well-educated, well-born, competitive and North Indian – aspects of identity which she wished to bequeath to her future child. Her desire to pursue career and wealth made it difficult to choose when, how and whom to marry. *Pushpa* had praised tradition, then stated that, unlike other female MBA students, she would 'not want to sacrifice' her career for marriage, as 'Indian culture would say that you had to do'. She recalled recent conversations where other women

---

[73] The 'mother' remains central to Indian life. Kakar's Freudian analysis of Indian women as either 'mothers or whores' (1989, pp 14-17) is akin to Summers (1975). Indian tradition believes this is due to the need to 'protect' women from their sexuality.

[74] Kakar reviews literature, film and psychoanalytic theory to argue Indian men's reliance on their mothers; the need to balance maternal expectations with their own worldly ambition, leads to deception and hypocrisy (1990, pp 137, 143-4).

students confessed to being 'absolutely lost' as to 'what to do' about marriage. *Pushpa* had chosen MBA study in preference to an arranged marriage after her first degree. She desired a successful career because her 'slogging' effort, plus the financial cost, had convinced her that she 'deserved it'. However, the demands of a marketing career could mean that by the time she had a child, she would be 'too old to enjoy it'. She envisaged her future more in terms of pressure than pleasure.

Pushpa's comments indicated the complexity of India norms. She conveyed the regional diversity of Indian norms which governed women; she contrasted 'Calcutta which is more female oriented' where it was 'easier to move away from the traditional female role' with Delhi, 'where society is not so accepting'. This social constraint had made her choose to conceal the fact that she smoked from her parents. She supported the traditional role of the mother when she stated that although alcohol was 'becoming far more acceptable', and although her mother knew that she did, she 'wouldn't want to drink in front of [her] mother, out of respect'.

Her comments evoke themes and tensions raised by several Indian students, for example, when parents and their daughters (and sons) had to choose whether or not to conform with the older traditions, such as, arranged marriages and a limited role for women. But there was insecurity, as the rejected rules were not replaced by new principles of action. *Pushpa* recognised the difficulties of achieving her personal expectations; her newfound freedom seemed cumbersome. Her dilemma of how to reconcile her needs with a future partner's is shared by young professional women throughout the world.

Pushpa also highlighted the complex relationship between parents and children where duplicity is rationalised. It could be asked whether this behaviour shared by the two generations demonstrated respect or hypocrisy. Or perhaps it reflected a new world characterised by a sense of uncertainty and confusion, where subterfuge allows incongruent beliefs and practices to coexist.

Jeremy

It was expected that women would speak of the hopes and tensions experienced by those of their sex. But, the views of a man who had espoused the feminist cause added insight into the role played by gender in the MBA. Although *Jeremy* was the most forthright male on this issue, to a lesser extent other male academics and a minority of male students upheld his views. While the above two women spoke about career and the pressures associated with partnering and raising children in personal terms, *Jeremy* espoused Sinclair's (1998) belief that 'feminine' values provide the basis for a more sensitive, inclusive and socially concerned world.

Jeremy had been successful in the 'city' prior to his academic career. He stated that the tensions of modern society were exacerbated by rigid gender-based roles which effectively excluded the majority of women from political and business life. In his belief, business education had to promote new social models through MBA teaching which was sensitive to differences of gender, culture and power. For this reason, his used cultural examples from various countries, typically not those of enrolled students. For example, he used examples of the African Bushmen to teach negotiation in a way which encouraged students from all cultures to 'think critically and to know the limits'. Because he was conscious that critical analysis was potentially problematic, say, for students who would return to countries without freedom of speech, he skirted around specific national issues which could cause embarrassment or future complications for these students.

Examples which involved his family were frequent during this interview. *Jeremy*'s social awareness and sense of responsibility as a business educator were coloured by his family's future. Students should understand that Western masculinist styles made business leaders more selfish; selfishness damaged society.

As an academic who taught the more conceptual management side of business, he emphasised that language dictated how individuals interacted with the world. His attitude to society and his own teaching role Gender issues was dominated by equal opportunity which involved 'accommodating fifty percent of the population' – to discount women was akin to 'making sandwiches without butter or filling'. But, *Jeremy* also promoted a feminine management style because he believed that women were more cooperative and unselfish:

> I think that if we could have a society that was equal, where women and men could feed into the society in equal proportions, the worst excesses ... would be moderated and [we] would have a democracy where Aboriginal rights would not be trampled on. ... So we need gender concerns in the workforce to be of paramount concern, because when there is gender bias, you'll end up with real conflict. You end up with structures in which the males create a working environment that's intolerable for the females to work in.... And it produces a fairly sick society.

Jeremy partly blamed economic rationalism, 'a mechanism for achieving a very strong power base for certain people', for this 'sick' pattern. He decried the 'philosophy of individualism' which prioritised competition and 'the profit margin' because the power elite did 'not take people into account'. His comments implicitly shared Sinclair 's criticism of the 'heroic male'; his teaching aimed to promote more consensual models.

He advocated the use of Plain English to prevent 'corporate chiefs' from misleading the public. This would improve business negotiation and clarify issues of social justice. MBA students, and those in business, should respect 'other people' because 'the value of their existence was contingent on the way they treat them'. In his opinion, a healthy society considered 'all perspectives' and nurtured 'counter veiling forces'. Society should provide 'safety nets' for the weak and poor, use clear and open language and promote values such as cooperation. In common with Sinclair, he advocated new models and new ways to understand and resolve problems. Students should be taught not to 'see everything from the point of view of ... money and ... power'. 'Human values' should be taught to students so as to 'contribute to society at large':

> If women had the same degree of social influence as men have ... and if you could mesh women's values and men's values together then you could produce a democracy that was functioning and healthy. But it's not, because of what men are doing to try and stay in power. It's the maximisation of male values.

Jeremy wanted to influence business people who would then change society.

He 'deplor[ed]' the emerging 'work place agreements' which pitted individual workers against the 'combined wit of corporate lawyers'. He believed this unequal match undermined the egalitarian nature of Australia and promoted unfair profits for corporations. Power should be distributed on the basis of 'human values' not held 'solely through economic force'.

There were three elements of *Jeremy*'s philosophy. He criticised the corporate language which allowed business to undermine established Australian work force practices. He also wanted public debate of social concerns so as to promote communal cooperation above the pursuit of profit. He acknowledged the importance of profit, but wanted MBA students, and consequently society, to see it as one factor amongst many. And thirdly, he believed that feminine values were an essential component of a just society. *Jeremy*'s conception of feminine values was highly idealised. It represented a pure and altruistic model which was unachievable; and yet, he posed it as an attainable solution to existing problems.

Jeremy criticised a corporate language of certainty, and the economic rationalism which he believed emerged from this perspective. However, he used the paradigm of 'female values' as a shorthand for a framework which would benefit all. Perhaps he expected students to criticise his stance; he presented an extreme position which appeared to be designed to gently confront both ideas and behaviour.

Emma and *Pushpa* reflected on the present and future experience of gender. Both recognised their strong opinions provoked criticism. Both felt that being a woman made them more visible. A major difference between them, possibly

214

because *Emma* was older and had a family, was that she explicitly appreciated other women in her life and tried to emulate their inclusiveness. Yet *Emma* shied away from class discussions of gender. She avoided such confrontations partly out of her desire to maintain an expert role and partly because she feared divisiveness within the class. In contrast, *Pushpa* seemed a more solitary figure. She enjoyed confronting the expectations of other students when she challenged female stereotypes, yet she behaved so as to seemingly conform with many parental expectations. Both women recognised gender as a significant personal and family influence on their daily lives.

Jeremy related to the idea of gender at a more conceptual level. He acknowledged his maleness, and his family relationships, but then conceptualised gender as the touchstone for his teaching and his vision of society. *Jeremy* discussed power in an unthreatened and depersonalised way; he presented as an academic at ease with his students. He aimed to increase students' sensibilities in a way that was non-judgemental and non-confronting.

Conclusion

Many academics and MBA students interviewed in Australia appeared to accept a style of leadership compatible with Sinclair's 'heroic male'; some asserted this stance with confidence, while others indicated an implicit acceptance of this idea. A minority of staff and students questioned the tradition of male dominance and were committed to gender equity; of these, some chose to publicly flag their ideas, while others felt too uncomfortable or vulnerable to voice such comments, even within an MBA classroom. Those students who accepted gender equity rarely raised ideas about how to make it happen. Their failure to re-conceptualise gender issues matched Sinclair's (1995a) findings about management education. These students did not confirm Yeatman's (1990b, 1993) hopes that universities would produce revolutionary ideas which would invigorate the pursuit of equity. An overview of gender conveys an implicit sense of women's marginalisation which reflects Sinclair's (1993, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1998) findings.

But, of equal importance, a consideration of the feminist critique of organizational theory (Calas and Smircich in Larson and Freedman (eds) 1997, p 51) demonstrated that much of the MBA did not encourage students to address 'difficult questions'. Discussions which included gender related themes were often prompted by students' experiences gained outside the formal program. Many students, both Australian and international, recognised 'areas of social concern', but, only a minority of MBA subjects prompted students to consider ways in which they could engage with such problems.

Given the MBA's brief to produce effective managers, it is appropriate to examine the style which such people are expected to acquire. Sinclair, in particular, has researched the culture of Australian leadership (1994, 1998) and specifically related the education of managers to the MBA (Sinclair, 1995a, and Sinclair and Hintz, 1991). Her writings have consistently argued that a strongly gendered management culture, within Australia, celebrates the 'heroic male'. MBA students, to a greater extent than staff, expressed their beliefs that business was a male domain. A significant minority of academics personally challenged this assumption; they varied in how they translated their convictions about gender into their professional roles. The sense of marginalisation associated with both the process and content of the MBA expressed by many women reflected Sinclair's MBA research (1995a).

Staff, more than students, demonstrated the influence of management theorists such as Clegg (1997), Handy (1998), Covey (1992), Hofstede (1980,1991) and Solomon (1997) who recognise the importance of a 'softer' style of management. These theoretical perspectives on a more feminised style of leadership and management support Sinclair's desire to 'do leadership differently'. Sinclair criticised the invisibility of male gender in the workplace. Much of the discussion about career development, balance between work and family, management style and competition tended to confirm her vision of Australian

216

leadership (1998), in which 'gender' is attributed only to females and those males who do not conform to a heterosexual stereotype. As Sinclair states:

> ... masculinity remains invisible and unnoticed ... [because of] unconsciously held attributions and assumptions ... because leadership as masculinity resonates so deeply with wider cultural mythology: our experience of history, religion and politics; our upbringing and experience of families, schools and workplaces (Sinclair, 1998, p 27).

This quote helps to explain the tension and ambivalence of women who attempted to confront the system within the MBA. Those men who raised these issues did not feel as personally endangered as women did. But for many male MBA students, the topic of gender highlighted the interaction of theory, organisational practice and personal ambition at a time when opportunities for middle managers had declined. Some male students raised issues such as the implementation of equal opportunity and affirmative action policies as a personal threat. It was not surprising that the issue was initially avoided by many men, and then seen as provocative when discussed. Sinclair highlights the challenge of changing business and society. The adoption of a new and more inclusive model will require a general recognition of the power wielded by an 'invisible' masculinity.

Gender raised the aspect of personal identity associated with child rearing. Older Australian males in this study, in common with the majority of Indian males interviewed in both Australia and India, tended to consider that parental duties should be delegated to wives. In contrast, the Chinese MBAs demonstrated a more sexually inclusive attitude to parenting. Both *Emma* and *Pushpa* reflected on the difficulties of women who seek to combine a career with children. They expected to work, not to 'trail' a partner relocated for work. Business educators generally advocated that merit rather than gender should influence whether women were promoted, but none acknowledged the problems caused by couples being separated by work in different cities. Sinclair is one of the few educators to recognise such conflicts within the MBA and professional life (1995a, 1998). For most others this remains one of the 'black holes' of management education. MBA programs accept that the world is different, and that graduates will

217

experience new problems; however, very few academics encouraged students to address personal concerns such as personal relationships and the risks of divorce.

Sinclair (1998) raised the possibility of incorporating the role of motherhood into a paradigm of leadership[75]. Australian women, who were studying the MBA, felt that they should deny their sexuality, especially their fertility, in order to succeed in business. In India, the maternal role is associated with power and prestige. For example, since her death Mother Theresa, although a religious rather than a biological mother, has assumed almost the status of a deity. In this she follows an established Hindu tradition[76] which shares similarities with Anne Summers' depiction of Australian women as *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975) that is, as either sinners or saints.

The archetypal role of the mother continues to influence India. The beliefs elicited through this research stressed the complexity of the role of women in India. There were sanctions against young women who sought to pursue non-traditional arenas; higher-level education created greater possibilities and also tensions. Many Indian men who described themselves as supportive of women, argued that females, including MBA graduates, could be compromised if their work involved late hours, or long distance travel. Families had to protect their wives and single daughters; work place possibilities had to be weighed against the honour of the household. But the Indian students, interviewed in both Australia and India, interpreted the role of the Indian woman in many ways[77]. They recognised a range of career choices, for a range of reasons, from social justice, in line with the feminist perspective of Calas and Smircich and extending to the female face of personal career success as discussed by Sinclair.

---

[75] Interviewed on ABC Radio's (May 26, 1998) and by (Faulkner, 1999) Sinclair inferred that 'woman as a mother in public life' was seen as positive in India, and insulting in Australia.
[76] Such as that demonstrated by the Mothers of the Pondicherry and Ramkrishna missions.
[77] Kerala and West Bengal give women more freedom and independence than the northern states. Education, supported by elite schooling, and the extended household, allowed middle-class married women to pursue higher studies.

Analysis of these various perspectives indicates that a new paradigm of gendered leadership is both possible and desirable. Sexual identity would not be destiny, associated with the pressure which many Indian women had experienced, but neither would it be denied, as was the case for many Australian women. The absence of discussion about children and child rearing by Australian women associated with the MBA confirmed Sinclair's comment about the organisational taboos against combining a professional career with motherhood.

Comments from male academics more often than students, indicated that a new model of leadership would also liberate men, by allowing them to enjoy a range of roles, emotions and experiences within the workplace and beyond. It was clearly stated that such opinions did not conform to the norms associated with the MBA. Men's level of self-confidence influenced when and how they would share their beliefs about gender, role and management style.

Those who found fault with their personal situation, or business and social practices, often censored themselves because it seemed risky to question the dominant frame. This caused them to be frustrated, but also denied others access to their ideas. Speaking in a way which reflected only part of personal identity and values led to feelings of inauthenticity. Many recognised the 'macho' style of the workplace environment. While some aspired to it, many, perhaps in their attempt to escape it, kept public silence.

Several of the passive dissenters stated that their personal, including family, responsibilities stopped them from being openly critical. Both men and women found fault with the male-dominated ethos of their organisations. However, more staff conveyed this attitude than did students.

In terms of gender, the MBA reflected the claims made by Calas and Smircich that management theory was preoccupied with organisational performance (in Larson and Freeman (eds) 1997, p 50). In line with their analysis, only a minority of those interviewed raised, let alone addressed, 'difficult questions' which

involved social concerns. Management educators were more likely than MBA students to critically reflect on management style and consider values other than business efficiency and effectiveness. Many considered these concerns to be outside the scope of their teaching. The perspective of gender confirmed that the experience of the MBA was complex and textured, and marked by self-censorship, especially by those who questioned the dominant ethos.

Student interactions, especially those which involved students from different cultures, raised norms associated with gender. Staff who recognised the importance of such interactions used them to promote student learning. Considering the MBA from a feminist theory perspective raised issues of power and fear which reflected the role of Sinclair's 'heroic leaders' (1998) in Australian culture. Sinclair's thesis resonated with the cultural norms of India; in both countries, although to different degrees, men were seen as the natural holders of power and authority. Mostly within the MBA, gender was a private concern which affected career, family and career aspirations. Those who critiqued the dominant management paradigms, often considered their doubts as personal and idiosyncratic. *Jeremy, Catherine* and *Helen* were amongst the few who were able to verbalise their critique in systematic terms. And of the students, only *Parveen* and *Yun-wei* actively combined their espoused values associated with gender, including management style, and their actions.

This sense of coherence allowed such individuals to raise difficult issues. But mostly it was within the relative safety of the classroom. Female academic staff chose not to question the norms of efficiency and effectiveness in the larger arena. Such findings confirm Calas and Smircich's recognition (in Larson and Freeman (eds) 1997, p 51) of the need to apply feminist theory so as to address those 'difficult questions' which are typically ignored in management education. Critics largely censored their own beliefs, allowing difficult problems to remain unvoiced in the public or administrative sphere.

Many female, and some male academics, doubted the certainty associated with the persona of the 'heroic male', but few were prepared to take the risk of stating their doubts in the wider public or professional arena. How to relate these fears, a sense of social responsibility and civic identity to the MBA is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 5 The MBA and civil society

Introduction

Ralston Saul contends that the 'anaesthetising' context of the MBA would preclude any discussion of civil society and promote self-interest and the pursuit of profit. To what extent was his claim supported by this research? This chapter explores how the MBA was perceived to influence moral and social responsibility. It builds a cross-disciplinary perspective based on economics and sociology. Economists such as Galbraith (1992), Etzioni (1988) and Koslowski (1992) aim to integrate economics with a sense of social responsibility. They question the importance given to self- interest and the affect of market forces on the social fabric. Australian writers Pusey (1991) and Cox (1995) expand this focus through the concepts of 'nation building' and 'social capital'. Their common desire to apply ethical principles to the relationship between business and society.

How did MBA students and staff characterise their responsibility to society? Was the focus within the workplace or external to it? For some it involved a desire to help other people by increasing safety, justice or dignity. An analysis of the stories, comments and responses of those associated with the MBA indicates that many recognised social and community responsibilities. Work done for the community is judged within this thesis as proof of social concern. However, individuals varied in how they expressed and acted upon this commitment. This chapter explores how students and staff engaged in the MBA described their relationship, and that of business, to society.

As more people seek to gain an MBA, it becomes increasingly important to understand how it influences individuals' commitment to civic responsibility. Did the MBA, as experienced in both Australia and India in the later 1990s,

encourage or allow students to explore their sense of civic identity? How did the MBA influence perceptions of personal or corporate responsibility?

Several major themes, which related to the construction and maintenance of a civil society, emerged in the context of the MBA. They included how the MBA linked responsibility, beyond self-interest, to the pursuit of profit. Many staff appeared apprehensive when they were asked to discuss the relationship between civil society and the MBA. While this was recognised as an admirable goal, many indicated that it was beyond the scope of their teaching. Some became defensive and stated, almost wistfully, that business educators were constrained by their subjects to ignore this important topic.

Chapter two addressed the tension which many academics associated with the split between their professional and social responsibilities. A recognition of this rift underpins those themes which students and staff described as either promoting or discouraging a sense of civic responsibility. These themes include how competition, consumerism, globalism and the relationship of profit to social justice were conceptualised within the MBA. Where these influences seen in one way or many? Was the MBA perceived to convey the relationship of business to society with an unambiguous certainty?

Does the MBA consider civil society?

The core educational aims of the MBA were described as promoting critical thought and competitive advantage, applying new technologies in a globalised world. New skills and capacities were to improve individual careers by assisting organisations to meet their goals. However, concepts which were generally perceived to be at the core of the MBA[78] were interpreted by students and staff in diverse ways. Expressions often used within MBA education displayed a range

---

[78] This claim reflects concepts drawn from the analysis of core MBA subjects, as discussed in ch 2.

223

of meanings and allowed an exploration of how students balanced corporate goals against broader civic and social issues.

Interviews with students indicated that many had enrolled in an Australian MBA because of a desire to change their lives. With regard to Australian students, some expected promotion within the organisations for which they worked, while others hoped to move to companies which provided greater personal opportunities. Because most students from China had needed to raise their own fees, the majority possessed significant professional experience before they undertook the MBA. In contrast, the majority of students from India received supported from their families; they regarded the MBA as the start of their business careers. From a theoretical perspective, Hall's concept of domains[79] helped to explore whether those students and teachers, who perceived that business goals had social costs, experienced conflict when they studied or taught MBA subjects.

Competition and the MBA

Most staff and students associated with Australian MBA programs stated that the concept of competition was central to the program. Competition was noted in the individual's immediate work environment, the larger corporate arena and within national and international market-places. In relation to internal competition, many students indicated that those who had political insight and complied with organisational norms had the best chance of personal success. They felt constantly watched and indicated that promotion came to 'team players', not 'loose cannons'. Australian MBAs generally indicated that they should be self-protective and minimise risks to their own careers. Many felt that organisations largely ignored employees' technical or academic skills which could improve corporate outcomes. Australian students emphasised being managed themselves, more than their responsibility for subordinate staff, project work or decision making. They largely denied any sense of personal power or responsibility

associated with being middle-level managers. However, in contrast, several Chinese and Indian males were positive about competition. These international students individually stated that the theory which they had learned would assist them to introduce competitive practices which would benefit both the staff for whom they were responsible, and the company overall. When males and females were compared overall, the female students were more self-focused in their approach.

A Chinese international student expressed admiration for an Australian entrepreneur who had been gaoled for fraud. He felt the entrepreneur's cleverness – as demonstrated by his ability to become rich – far outweighed his cavalier disregard for the law. This provides an example of how discussions of competition raised issues of compliance and desirable outcomes. Most students described it as a personal motivator which would also benefit their employers. Their world was typified as a struggle to survive where the Darwinian concept of the 'survival of the fittest' applied to both organisations and individuals.

Stewart, an Australian MBA student, exemplified several concerns about competition and the insecurity which it engendered. He admired the courage of a senior manager, but felt too vulnerable to emulate him. *Stewart* demonstrated a chasm between the belief in change espoused by management theory, and taught within the MBA, and how most students understood their own corporate roles. His Australian public sector employer supported his belief that work should benefit society, at the same time as it cultivated a 'dog eat dog' environment which involved individuals 'sticking the knife' into others for personal survival. *Di* also acknowledged that the internal competition associated with climbing the corporate ladder required similar survival strategies. Australian MBAs indicated that individuals needed the support of their managers in order to survive 'bouts of downsizing' within organisations. As a result, many experienced and seemingly successful managers were preoccupied with their personal career prospects, not their organisational goals.

---

[79] Hall's use of 'domains' is elaborated in Morley and Chen (eds) 1996 and discussed in ch 1.

In contrast, several Chinese international students, such as *Yun-wei*, anticipated that they would improve management practices, especially those which related to staff, when they returned home. *Yun-wei* admired those 'modern' management practices which promoted staff on the basis of merit, not nepotism. He planned to introduce participative practices in China as a means to increase production, efficiency and competition. However, other Chinese students, such as *Wendy*, also saw the negative side, when competition pitted individuals against each other. She acknowledged her ambivalence:

> ... in the Western organisation I feel that people are more open to competition, to compete for everything. It's the opposite in China. If I work the same way in the Chinese culture company I will be the person that maybe everybody hates. Maybe people will dislike you or not accept you. You could easily become separated from the rest.

Wendy experienced competition as a magnet. She saw that its attraction was more compatible with Western company structures, and dreaded the prospect that her personal needs would put her into 'hot water' in a traditional Chinese organisation. *Wendy* feared being alienated from fellow workers as she pursued company objectives through competitive practices.

Not all students who studied in Australia were happy with the consequences of competition. For example, another Chinese student stated that rivalry between companies would cause major losses, such as in international steel markets:

> Yes, I find competition very cruel, very, very cruel. ... BHP lost the competition, so they have to cut ... 2000 workers (A22).

In contrast to this concern for the fate of sacked workers, the majority of MBA students were relatively phlegmatic about the negative consequences of competition; they were optimistic that Australia's major players would survive the rigours of an open off shore market. Some students stated that Australia's small population increased the risks of external take-overs, for example, the major Australian telecommunications companies could be 'swallowed up'. Others considered that open competition was dangerous; they believed that

consumers gained real advantages when government controlled certain markets. For example, the government monopoly of essential services was desirable – costs were saved because of new technology, not competition. In other words, different students recognised the complexities of the privatisation debate.

Open competition was not perceived to always produce the best goods or services for Australian consumers. Several students stated that governments should mitigate the negative outcomes. And yet it was recognised that law could not provide all the answers. An employee who worked in a foreign country or for a transnational company could experience conflicts between corporate and legal responsibilities. This comment implicitly accepted that individuals would put company ends before legal and ethical considerations for their career. It implied that transnational-companies which operated off-shore existed outside society. This belief blinkered social responsibility.

The high premium which trans-national companies placed on MBA graduates was a major motivator for many, especially international, students. However, not all students in India or Australia were attracted to companies which focused on short term profit more than staff. Companies which offered high salaries would also discard individuals who did not add to the 'bottom line'. Both MBA students in India and Australia stated that junior staff who wanted to progress in such companies should not publicly criticise the ideas of senior staff. Those who dissented were at risk. There was an expressed belief that one worked for trans-national companies out of self-interest and that these organisations would neither give nor receive loyalty. It was expected that employees would move whenever it improved their financial position.

By implication, an employee who stayed for a long term was a failure. This perspective was particularly notable in Indian MBAs, whether studying in Australia or India. Relatively inexperienced students anticipated problems when they had to manage long-term employees. These students tended to be dismissive of 'front line staff' who had 'only' completed undergraduate degrees. Discipline

of these long-term employees was seen as a problem; Indian MBAs felt torn between the prospect of pursuing a competitive advantage which increased company profit, and demonstrating respect for 'elders'. Some anguished over this choice; others were more cavalier and implied that traditional values would be over-ridden by high salaries

Overall, a minority of students across different groups criticised competition policy. Few criticised market competition which caused companies to sack large numbers of employees, or raised the social cost of high unemployment. One academic (A110) expressed dismay at how few Australian MBAs empathised with workers who faced redundancy. Such criticism more often came from older students who had worked for long periods, or, in a minority of cases, from relatively inexperienced students whose critique reflected both Marxist and technological arguments.

Within the Australian MBA programs, the Indian students were more likely to interpret large-scale competition in terms of the distribution of wealth and power – they recognised broader social debates about equity and social justice. The Chinese students expressed enthusiasm for market theories and less inclined to discuss Marxist ideas. Students assumed that companies should compete within the laws which applied. At the same time, there was a sense of tension about those who would lose out; a sadness that natural justice, in terms of issues such as loyalty and need, would take second place.

Some international students who had studied Marxism implied that the success of capitalism contained the seeds of its destruction (A19, A22)[80]. Many Australian students seemed uncritical of the system of capitalism. Overall, few students described capitalism as a process with both desirable and undesirable consequences. Those who appreciated both perspectives indicated that they were

---

[80] Soros (1997) criticised capitalism while profiting from speculation on currencies. Due to such action, Malaysia's Dr. Mahathir described these speculators as 'powerful predators' (Brummer, 1997).

politicised by their family and undergraduate experiences (A7, A12, A 26). Australians mostly interpreted competition to mean that the individual must compete for personal success. Yet, various students worried that such competition would have negative consequences for workers, companies and potentially poorer countries.

The students generally seemed disempowered. Regardless of whether individual students saw a problem associated with competition, their major preoccupation was to invest energy into their own careers. They stated that they were motivated by personal wealth and power. Those who wanted to achieve social justice did not expect to contribute through their work.

With regard to the public sector, an MBA student employed in a hospital (A87) stated that the introduction of competition into the health sector had improved services which were previously 'not only inefficient but also ineffective in identifying and supplying' customer needs. He stated that the use of market forces ensured that government funds were spent more effectively; services improved when individuals were given the right to choose. However, he was concerned that some unprofitable essential services might be lost because of the inappropriate use of competition. In other words, he represented those students who recognised both the positive and negative consequences of the market model. Another public sector worker criticised the impact of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). He described the tensions provoked by managing in a changing legal, social and political environment. He expressed concern for staff and clients, and believed that competition policy had captured the public sector and changed its focus away from public service.

> Economic rationalist styles such as CCT and National Competition Policy are being used to neutralise local government's provision of traditional 'core services'. ... My management style has shifted dramatically from a social justice orientation to one that has adapted to the new CCT environment in and around the local government industry. It is difficult under CCT for business units to be sensitive to the needs of staff who have family priorities. ... The sense of community that was articulated during the 'community development' phase of the 70s and mid 80s has disappeared. Communities of interest are redefined in

different ways and diversity is often used as a means of 'pitting' one set
of interests against another (A 55).

Several Indian and Chinese international students in Australia warned of the dangers which large scale competition policy posed to their countries. A small number of these students feared the negative impact which could result if their countries' essential services were changed. Although China and India dealt differently with, for example, education and health, Australian solutions were judged as inappropriate. These comments acknowledged disparities between the rich and the poor, the city and the countryside. Once again, there were sharp distinctions between those who discussed these problems and those who did not. Of the latter group, some seemed unaware, while, others dismissed these as problems which 'government' had to resolve. There was a strong sense that social concerns were not within the realm of 'modern' 'professional' management. Although many Indian students admired the social responsibility practised by Indian family businesses, many anticipated that the introduction of foreign business signalled the end of this culture.

Competition was seen to affect an individual's experience at work, the corporate context, the nation and beyond. Most students placed most importance on personal career, time for one's self and possibly family. A number of students discussed the difficulties of finding the right balance; they worried that the fear of failure prompted them to focus only on work.

Competition at work provided many Australian male MBAs with the justification of passing the responsibility to manage the family to their partners. Tensions experienced in their business careers often involved limiting the demands of personal or family time. Most MBAs who succeeded in this area did so by giving up or delegating their community based activities. The students experienced tensions and choices associated with the pursuit of a business career. *Parveen*[81], an Indian student who had worked in marketing, stated that family life and work had to be balanced. He decried those firms who 'exploited' their staff by the use

---

[81] See ch 2 for previous comments and a more detailed narrative in ch 5.

of financial incentives. Many older students wanted to set limits so as to establish an equilibrium between the personal and family sphere and organisational demands. However, some perceived these limits as risky, as organisations might judge that an employee lacked commitment.

Many Australian part-time MBA students felt powerless in their organisations. They conveyed a sense of being watched and judged. *Stewart,* who admired courage, recognised the danger of pursuing principles. He was disappointed at the disparity between what he believed and how he acted at work.

The majority of Australians felt that they could do little to improve the conditions of their subordinate staff, let alone resolve larger problems. In contrast, several Chinese and Indian students in Australia stated that competition would benefit staff and the company overall. *Wendy,* who was enthusiastic about the value of competition, commented that:

> ... in the Western organisation I feel that people are more open to competition, to compete for everything. It's the opposite in China.

Wendy felt that competition made her more creative, in contrast to many Australians who indicated that it would make them more cautious. Many students recognised the positive and negative consequences of competition theory. However, a sense of personal insecurity inhibited many Australians students from raising social concerns in the workplace. If their companies espoused international trade who were they to question the outcomes?

Stewart raised equity and social justice issues involving loans funded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which were reported by the mass media. These concerns were perceived as not being easily accommodated within the MBA; for example, some Indian students expressed ambivalence about whether it was appropriate to use Marxist and socialist perspectives. An Indian student described how justice, underpinned by law, pertained to the overall community:

> not just the individual, but the large group [for example] if there were no
> minimum wages, employers could exploit labour ... In Australia ... adults
> have to get a minimum [rate]. Because of the competition, if there were
> no laws then employers could exploit workers (A6).

Thus he interpreted the theory taught in the MBA through his experiences in Australia. Competition was important, as long as it was tempered by laws which operated for the overall good. In contrast, the majority of Chinese students seemed to favour a free-market governed by law in preference to political ideas. Australian business practice reflected that law generally protected business and individuals in society.

Students overall reflection on competition

Competition demonstrated that students were not persuaded by theoretical frameworks which do not match their knowledge of organisations. Students interviewed in Australia seemed most influenced by the pragmatics of organisational behaviour. Compliance was more the catch cry than courage. National and global arenas differentiated those who believed in theoretical discourse such as the 'level playing field' and those who did not. Students recalled case studies of inappropriate marketing or debt-repayment situations which produced 'disastrous' outcomes. Those who praised globalisation assumed that an increase in profits and production would benefit all. Competition and other concepts associated with global trade raised deep philosophical questions and highlighted cultural differences.

The Indian MBA students on competition

Most MBA students interviewed in India described competition in negative terms. Several stated that companies needed to temper the introduction of technology so as to maintain employment. Efficiency was seen as secondary to employment by some, while others criticised Indian-owned companies which 'carried' too many workers. Indian MBA

232

students, regardless of affluence, status or social connections, seemed overwhelmed by high population numbers which they claimed promoted unethical behaviour. Companies which struggled to survive could not 'afford' to be honest. Ethical business practice was perceived as too costly in a competitive environment.

How academics saw competition

Staff also related competition to personal, organisational and social spheres of action. The major changes within the university sector prompted comments about personal survival, let alone promotion, and the need to conform. Some stated this opinion in a matter-of-fact way, others were timid, and a third group challenged many of the changes within higher education. Some aired their opinions at meetings, or within classrooms. The most anxious only discussed this concern under the assurance of confidentiality.

However, not all staff shared this critical perceptive. An alternative perspective was that all societies would change, characterised as a form of social Darwinism. This meant that academics had to pragmatically follow the 'rules of the game'. Many staff, often those with overseas experience, stated that an understanding of national contexts was a necessary prerequisite to any sensible discussion of competition. Australian academics from densely populated countries understood competition; they typically stated that a good standard of living relied on the best possible education.

Consumerism

The concept of consumerism was of central importance to the MBA. One student group agreed that consumerism was 'the foundation of capitalism'. Corporate profitability was judged to rely on new products. Marketing was described by both students and staff as a means to generate business growth. Market research would increase corporate profit through the production of desirable new products.

The student who stated that 'the customer is always king' meant that customer-needs were paramount.

Yet across various group discussions, consumerism was associated with two distinct meanings. One aspect related to the encouragement of greater consumption of goods and services; this idea of consumption provoked debates about whether needs were inherent or created. Others understood consumerism to mean that individuals had the power if they united in a common cause. In this latter understanding, consumers could, for example, lobby to improve the safety of goods[82]. Some individuals believed that marketing fuelled materialism as companies pushed the belief that higher self-esteem would be derived from consumption. For others, business needs existed; marketing merely helped individuals to fulfil their requirements. The goal of business was to 'win market share', either through developing a new product or by taking the custom of existing companies.

Techniques used to create corporate growth were criticised in a way which indicated cynicism about the role of marketing. These included comments that 'creating label allegiances' might 'not have an awful lot to do with need' or that marketing involved 'creating demand within society'. Another stated that 'if consumerism ruled what was produced. you wouldn't need a marketing section in your company'.

But this competitive aspect of a consumer-based society reflected individual behaviour. Consumption had a personal dimension. Many students wanted to complete the MBA to achieve their own goals such as earning an income sufficient to purchase superior goods and services. As *Parveen* said, people had to satisfy their material needs; he linked self-esteem to the quality of goods and services which individuals could afford to buy. Social status was equated with purchased goods; the ethos of the MBA supported a goal of individual

---

[82] In the 1970s Ralph Nader advocated for and promoted consumerism, namely consumer power, as a form of responsibility, see Nader (1973) and Nader, Green and Seligman (1976).

consumption. *Pushpa*, (ch 4) represents those who felt that they 'deserved' the material success which MBA graduates were expected to achieve. The academic and financial demands were seen as 'costs' of the program and that they should reap the rewards of their investment. This was not universal; a minority of students disagreed with the goal of increased consumption. They wanted to encourage a more equitable distribution of goods and services.

Some claimed that consumer pressure would improve practices and products in both the private and public sectors. *Ian* optimistically recalled citizens' action groups and successful class actions[83] where consumers had counter-balanced corporate power.

These two perspectives can be summarised as the marketing perspective versus the Ralph Nader conception of consumer power. Those who openly promoted the good of society rather than personal gain were a minority of students within the MBA. All the same, the two themes vied side by side with each other within the MBA.

Academics and Consumerism

Academics who taught in the MBA generally differed from students in their understanding of consumerism. The dominant theme for this group involved the traditional view of consumerism promoted by economics, as demonstrated by an academic with prior experience in the federal public service who contrasted public and private sector organisations:

> When ... I returned [to Victoria] I was struck by the similarity of large
> organisations, whether public or private sector. The underlying
> principles are much the same in terms of internal bureaucracy or
> motivating principles, for example regarding the major banks.
> Consumerism underpins a lot of micro-economic thinking in terms of the
> role of demand in influencing outcomes, privatisation and
> internationalisation. The guiding principle in economics is individual
> choice and the rational consumer (A107).

---

[83] These were movements which *Genevieve* (ch 3) saw as potentially countering the power of companies which straddled national jurisdictions.

This comment reflected the economic principle that the rational consumer would always seek to maximise self-interest. As seen in chapter two, several economists were among the academic critics who questioned this assumption. The contrasting stand was that it was important 'not to get side tracked from the information which you must get across'. However, even those academics who criticised self-interest experienced difficulties in teaching economics to MBA students, especially those:

> ... who have done none before and often [come] with a negative perception of [economics], because in many of the countries that they have come from, it has become politicised and they are suspicious of anything which has an economics tag. [In contrast for those who] are predominantly Asian, it is seen as a fundamental management tool (A107).

He perceived that students from Eastern block countries came to management education with 'negative' preconceptions of economics. He contrasted communist and non-communist understandings of economics and envisaged Asia as a non-communist region, despite having taught students from Vietnam and China. While it was undesirable that Asian students should return home preoccupied with efficiency, this would 'clearly be the underlying principle for ninety-nine percent' of them. He indicated that that various political contexts influenced students to pre-judge his subject before they undertook it. In contrast, another academic stated:

> We have to get people to criticise the other side of consumerism – the idea that we are what we consume. We have to get them to realise that, really, what's important in the world is other people (A99).

He primarily wanted to promote 'the rights of consumers'. He believed that consumers had the ability to be strong and gain results by 'protesting'.

How academics differed from MBA students

The differences between the sense of social responsibility demonstrated by MBA students and the academics who taught them seemed to reflect both generation and professional culture. Many academics were older than their students, and had

generally met their security, housing and family needs. The general implication of financial security reflected older males who had been in the system for some fifteen years or more. This group tended to dominate MBA teaching and program management[84].

Perhaps, more importantly, the academic culture tended to regard other non-material aspects of living as more important than consumption. Most staff did not aspire to the expensive lifestyle desired by many students; they expressed more interest in autonomy and the ideas associated with their disciplines. However, some shared the material aspirations of their students.

Students were more likely than academics to ascribe to the Nader version of consumerism, namely that consumer power would improve goods and services. When consumerism was typified as focused on consumption, some individuals wanted more, while others were happy to accept what they had. Some criticised the idea that individuals should be judged on the basis of their goods and stated that this materialistic attitude fuelled greed and conspicuous consumption. But consumerism was understood within existing life-styles and products. A minority of students (such as *Buddy* in ch 6) and staff (such as *Neal* in ch 2) questioned the current norms of material wealth.

Social justice and the pursuit of profit

Many MBA students seemed uncomfortable when they were encouraged to discuss issues of social justice. Perhaps, few volunteered to address such issues in class because they felt they lacked the appropriate knowledgable. Others indicated that it was irrelevant to their MBA study, and so its mention produced a certain unease. What did their discomfort indicate?

---

[84] Many younger academics, and older staff who had entered an academic life later in life, had lower status, tenure and income. In addition, the decrease in permanent positions and the growth of short term contract work had diminished the prospects of more recent academic recruits.

This topic evoked a greater sense of ambivalence than did any other. A minority of student groups enthusiastically discussed issues around social justice, while others stated that few MBA students would understand the concept. One Australian student who initially presented as cynical and self interested, later portrayed social justice as:

> Providing a true and fair system in a social context by understanding the values of the social system (A88).

He had initially described profitability and competition as the only valid focus. Which of these contradictory viewpoints did he espouse? His ambivalence could be interpreted as an indication of what he judged he should say within the MBA context which contrasted with privately held opinions. Alternatively, he could have desired to be controversial, because MBA students he had known for two years' accused him of overplaying his commitment to corporate profit. Or, he could also have been reflecting the male dominated and competitive culture of the industry in which he worked.

His response contrasted with the Australian student who struggled to 'think of a context' to explain social justice (A25), but who then hesitatingly decided that it was 'whether the common people have rights'. Her use of 'common' questioned perceptions of Australia as a classless society. Many students expressed a more socially inclusive perspective, for example that social justice was 'relevant to the distribution of wealth within any society' such as 'how well all members of that society are looked after [in regard to] basic needs such as housing, education, health and adequate food' (A12). She regretted that this concept had been largely ignored within the MBA. Her perception parallelled the description of social justice as 'an effort to right the wrongs, to make up for the shortcomings in the capitalist market and to level the playing field for those people who are disadvantaged' (A89). This self-employed mature-age student felt that MBA education did promote a discussion of values; for him, this was central to the program.

238

Many MBA students expressed support for community values. Older Australian males were frustrated that their studies detracted from such activities. Many stated that their partners maintained the families' commitment to school, sporting and community activities such as, working-bees and fetes. MBAs with children were the ones most likely to associate satisfaction with community-based activities.

One Chinese international student described his perspective

> Although we were taught in school 'study hard, work hard, fit in with communism, your life will be better' - the society is not like this. Sometimes the environment is stronger, [it] can manipulate your future. Sometimes even an incident or one person in power can change your life (A35).

He described the increased decentralisation of government activity and how the 'open door policy' had 'changed [things] for the better'. He also commented that those who worked with 'joint venture companies' in China received high salaries, and were 'free', some travelled 'abroad ... every year' because their 'pockets were deep enough'. In contrast, those who worked for 'the ministries' had to abide by 'strict rules', had to 'listen to orders' and did 'not have much flexibility'. He recognised growth in the disparities of wealth and status between individuals, the public sector and private business, and between coastal and regional areas. He indicated that since Deng Xiaoping (Salisbury 1992, p 391) had encouraged individuals to pursue wealth, China was less unified and more unequal.

Another Chinese international student (A34) felt that 'over the past twenty years everything [had] changed so dramatically' that even someone like herself, with university education, could not 'always understand' these changes. Although she disliked much of this new world, she planned 'to cope with it' by becoming a 'strong person' who could 'change the environment'. She worried that society was now 'so commercial' that intellectuals had lost 'respect' and their traditional 'contribution to society ' had been 'devalued'. This loss of respect for intellectuals diminished their ability to influence social 'programs' for the overall country; a loss of which she considered far more significant than the decline in

239

the income of teachers and other intellectuals. But in a society which had forgotten 'all the important things', she believed that people had come to attach higher status to money than to respect.

In contrast, a third Chinese student (A5) described the changes in family terms and criticised only those which would seem to impede her career progress. During an individual interview and a previous group discussion, she explicitly denied that there were disparities associated with geography or party allegiance. It was impossible to determine whether she was being open or self-protective, but she mainly commented on personal and family issues. She side-stepped questions of justice, equity and government responsibility, apart from her stated support for Chinese Government schemes which encouraged the disabled to become self-sufficient in small business. The promotion of self-sufficiency seemed to be her primary message; those with wealth would be able to fulfil their family responsibilities.

An Indian international student in Australia believed that:

> Social justice means keeping balance in the society. People should get what they deserve, and also take care of community values. Because it doesn't matter how much you earn, at the end of the day, you are going to live in that particular community where you were born. And if you don't help that community, then your earnings are useless (A75).

Social justice was described by another Indian student as 'providing some services for the needs of the elderly members of society, [which was] more relevant to the government, less to MBA students' (A85).

Perhaps the most alarming comments about social justice came from students from the previous Eastern block countries. One (A81) stated that social justice 'does not exist'. For him capitalism was about profit, but profit bore no relationship to social justice. He stated that 'profitless activities and profitless periods' generated 'general crisis in society'; his major community value was 'surviving together'. Yet, despite these bleak understandings of social interaction and his cynicism about business, he stated that there should be debate about

values and citizenship issues within the MBA. Perhaps these comments prompted an Australian MBA student (A83) to state how, despite his 'strong financial and commercial bias', he had recognised that the 'haves owed an obligation to the have-nots'. He believed that a 'dysfunctional society' would be created if the majority ignored 'the needs of the underprivileged'.

There was a recognition of a more polarised world where the 'elite becomes rich, the majority becomes poor to the point of being denied basic food, shelter and safety'. A greater distribution of wealth was 'essential so as to bring justice and some form of equality into society'; if not, there would be a risk of 'total societal disintegration'. These comments represented those who were concerned about the risks associated with increased social disparities. Their fears could perhaps indicate that a loss of social justice would disadvantage both the poor and the affluent. However, several went on to discuss how retrenchment was a greater threat to the least successful. As one student stated, this had caused many poorly paid workers to believe that 'unless they worked harder, longer, cheaper' they would have no jobs. This perspective on social justice involved the needs of all workers and conveyed a more inclusive, less tribal perspective of society.

An Australian student of Vietnamese background (A71) expressed ambivalence about social responsibility. On the one hand, he said that 'all efforts to maintain and exercise social responsibility must be done in a manager's own time'. However, he also stated that businesses had begun 'to learn that in order to take, they had to give as well'. He believed that individualism and 'the invisible hand' of the market were used to justify an essentially selfish stance which seemed 'to fail in solving many serious social problems'. He presented the need for individual and social responsibility as well as an interdependency between business and society. In contrast, one student stated that the 'sole focus' of companies was 'the profit margin', which was similar to another Australian who commented:

> ... that corporations and businesses don't run out of the goodness of their
> hearts, they're in there to make a dollar. It's up to governments to ensure
> that there is a social justice side to the running of business (A16).

His comment provoked the reaction from another student in the class (A18) that governments would protect their own interests by the pursuit of 'fashionable policies' which would win them votes. Thus, social justice was a reflection of what the majority would accept; this included the right of unions to lobby for sectional interests and voice their concerns to government. This process should occur 'without the fear of being frowned on' or having 'their rights jeopardised' as long as they did not 'allow their rights to infringe' on those of other people.

Students of the MBA in Australia had various understandings of the relationship of business to social justice. It was difficult to encourage students to explore a relationship which many claimed not to have associated with MBA studies. Given that most enrolled in the MBA in the search for personal business success, this reluctance was probably not surprising. However, it is worth noting that once the discussions began, many students expressed beliefs and opinions outside those which might be expected from MBAs. Overall, the groups accepted the diversity of beliefs which were put forward for discussion. One student reflected on the values which motivated him:

> [E]ach of us, as individuals, has qualities which are often hidden from view. It is not until we show an interest in one another and attempt to peel back the layers of protection, that we really begin to see and understand other people and their motivations. And it is then, and only then, that we can learn to be truly participating members of society (A88).

His comment underlined his recognition of the importance of cooperation and respect as core elements of a civil society.

The concern for social justice in India

Many MBA students who studied in India, while they admired the sense of 'parental' responsibility demonstrated by older companies, focused primarily on their own futures. Many hoped to be able to fulfil a broader sense of 'duty' later in their lives. When Indian students described their lives they separated the

242

present phase with its self-centred need for money, status and material goods, from a later phase, when they would have fulfilled the responsibilities of a 'householder' and be able to address more social concerns[85]. They, like most Australian students, did not anticipate that they would satisfy their broader obligations through their business careers.

Australian academics and social justice

Helen was pessimistic about the maintenance of social justice in society:

> I think we'll continue down the track which seems to be the bottom getting worse and those at the top getting better ...

She envisaged that an ideal society would be cooperative and also encompass economic well-being, justice and equity. The MBA, as she perceived it, encouraged a limited reflection on social ideas, and provided even less likelihood that students would consider themselves as civic beings. While she felt that academics recognised the importance of teaching both competition and cooperation, she felt constrained within a model of business activity. Another Australian academic of Anglo-Celtic background expressed similar constraints:

> ... competition and cooperation ... need to be balanced in a civilised society. ... People can only cooperate up to a point. They like competing against each other but also only up to a point. ... [for example teaching about purchasing] you've got a choice between single sourcing and multiple sourcing. Multiple sourcing is using the market, it's using competition - and that's desirable if your purpose is to get prices down, however you're not going to be able to pursue some other objectives such as quality.

> There are dangers, however, with single sourcing and with cooperation, and that is that it depends on trust. The more than you rely on cooperation with people, the more that you move towards relationships being more important than economic transactions. To that extent you can become dependent on a supplier and that can be dangerous as well as beneficial. So, there's a choice, I believe there's always a choice in business about competition and cooperation (A93).

---

[85] This refers to the traditional concept of the ages of man, each associated with particular responsibilities. For an analysis of these influences on Indian business see Sekhar (1997, pp 96-99).

He focused on a business management framework, namely the desire to balance competition and cooperation so as to maximise corporate outcomes through supply, quality and price. Nonetheless, this academic conceded that a good manager could be a good citizen – although he understood that this concept had different connotations in different societies. He believed MBA educators should encourage students to be good managers who were socially responsible in terms of the big questions:

> I mean who needs the white slave trade or who needs arms trading?

Such concerns, which he acknowledged as beyond dispute, fell outside his teaching and he felt that other subjects should cover them. His dominant reasons for teaching matched those of an academic of Asian background who stated:

> ... if you can't improve yourself, you can't contribute to your family or to your country as a whole (A96).

Both of them represented management educators who believed that their role was to equip students to earn an independent living and behave as law-abiding citizens. They considered individuals, together with their families, as the basic atoms of society.

In contrast, another academic, who had been involved in the class based discussions, expressed dismay at the inability of MBA students to discuss social justice:

> ... to me equity and equality are fundamental. Students seemed to be bereft of the idea ... of social justice being violated. ... The pursuit of social justice depends on recognising the difference between values as things we want, and values as things we should do. And with that move, we go from describing our wants and feelings to justifying value judgements. ... The students' language seemed to be captured by a structuralist understanding of business, which was that business exists solely to make a profit. This assumption is not open to criticism (A110).

She perceived that these MBA students possessed neither the theoretical understandings to conceptualise social justice, nor the language which would enable them to discuss it. She judged that they lacked the capacity to go outside

244

the frame of business and management theory. Their apparent inability to criticise the role of profit caused her deep concern. Although she had praised the ability of MBA students to cooperate with each other in group-work, she feared that they lacked the ability to apply non-competitive ideas such as, cooperation and mutuality, in a larger social arena. Another responded in a similar, if less critical, vein when she supposed that business was like any profession where things were 'take[n] for granted' and 'you don't stop and question until someone checks you'.

Many Australian academics stated that profit was the prime consideration of how corporations related to society. Once again, this demonstrated how language evoked different reactions and interpretations, as one who one had prioritised the 'global maximisation of profit', then went on to explain that:

> profit... doesn't only mean money ... when you look for the individual benefit ... your health is one aspect (A96).

His explanation indicated that profit included everything worth pursuing. While his initial comments seemed to promote only financially-based analysis, he also recognised broader responsibilities. For example, a company which exploited its staff for short-term gain risked industrial action – expenditure on health and safety would ensure staff loyalty and consequent mutual future gains.

Overall, more staff than students demonstrated the need to relate corporate goals to social justice. One discouraged students from having a 'fixed idea about business', because 'you can't allow them to believe that business just exists for money'. However, those who tried to promote a broad understanding within the MBA had difficulties:

> You can't complicate MBAs with that sort of stuff [for example stakeholder theory]. You know you can't go beyond the basics until they have got the basics. ... There are underlying ethical implications that could be in conflict with other things that a business has to do as well. But one is teaching one's subject. But I don't think we actually do have the opportunity and I'm not sure that we should draw some of these things out. Perhaps you've got to be careful not to blow their minds, and particularly in my subjects I have enough to do just to handle the empirical content (A93).

However, as previously indicated in chapter two, staff varied in how they described their professional responsibilities; while some believed that the relationship of business to society involved more than profit, many felt they should keep their opinions private. Some described MBA teaching as:

> ... tending to produce a student who is fairly myopic and very technique orientated and motivated for making a quid, for whom the social aspects are not of any great concern. I'm sure that is true of MBA students almost to a tea (A97).

These comments indicated problems about the goals of the MBA program and how students interpreted the theory and techniques which they were taught. However, the above interview concluded with the comment that:

> an educated society is a more enlightened society, judgement is improved, minds are broadened. ... I don't think I would make a big distinction about vocational training... We provide them with the skills and techniques which help them to think in a disciplined way (A97).

Although MBA education overall was open to criticism, this final comment indicated that the intellectual rigour which it promoted would benefit society. This reflected an ambivalence about the pursuit of 'enlightened society', at the same time as it recognised the constraints and benefits of vocational education programs such as the MBA. Intellectual rigour was desirable, but the risk of 'myopia' raised doubts about the pursuit of goals which could be detrimental to the world beyond business. These comments reflected a dilemma for MBA academics who felt constrained to focus on business success, while they personally believed that education should contribute to society overall. It questioned a focus on techniques and processes which disregarded broader objectives; while the rationality associated with how to best achieve outcomes was valued, the MBA provided little room to question business goals. The goal of 'social justice' troubled those academics who felt constrained by the pragmatism of the program.

Attitudes to globalism in Australia

Many students in Australia believed a world-wide perspective offered personal career options which contrasted with decreased local opportunities. One Chinese student decried the job losses which resulted from global competition, at the same time as he accepted their commercial necessity. Some students envisaged the emotional dislocation of being wedded to international corporations more than their homes or families. This unappealing lifestyle was the price paid for relative job security. Others, including *Ian*, recognised problems which the majority did not consider. He feared that globalism did not create new wealth, but merely concentrated it in fewer hands. For this reason, he wanted the 'ideological elements' which concerned 'race and power' to be more openly questioned. Some students criticised debt-repayment schemes where rich countries had caused the loss of sustainable farming by imposing the need for poor countries to plant monocultures as cash-crops. Despite these criticisms, many students seemed to assume that the profits associated with globalisation would benefit all; few questioned whether the resources for increased production were equitably distributed and equally accessible. In summary, globalism was perceived to cause personal and social problems. However, many students felt that these drawbacks were somehow subjective and invalid; those who stated them clearly could damage their prospects in the main race, namely their own careers.

More students than staff embraced the promise that globalism would increase wealth by providing new opportunities for corporations. This approach was summed up by the Indian student who perceived the 'pursuit of profit' as 'a major force which drives individuals and organisations towards globalisation' and 'a prosperous future'.

Academics tended to conceive the pressures for internationalisation as either positive or negative. The following quote from an academic indicated uncritical acceptance:

Globalisation - internationalisation, very important, and dominating the scene, I think. There's no question that we're becoming a global economy with global values. I think the differences between countries and between people, are becoming less. Because of TV, as much as anything, it's not such a novelty to see people dressed differently and speaking differently (A98).

The belief was that global practices and global values would lead to an undifferentiated world. There was no sense of choice or direction; this was portrayed as an inevitable outcome. Internationalised business would increase wealth and benefit human understanding. This perspective was shared by various staff and students who felt that globalism was a positive influence.

Other staff pragmatically interpreted that it concerned choices such as, 'trading partners', where the difference between internationalism and globalism was merely a matter of scale. In contrast, another academic (A110) without having heard the above comments, condemned the sense of 'uncritical thought [about]...globalisation' because it was 'such a massive topic and one which impacts on business'. She was disturbed by those who characterised it 'as a normal development in business and trade relations'. An academic (A92) used a metaphor from television namely 'going live unrehearsed and without a director' to emphasise the unknown consequences of such rapid global changes.

Jeremy praised the changes in communication which had allowed him to 'communicate with people around the world using e-mail'. As a result of this trend, he believed that the insularity which 'had led to problems ... such as the White Australia policy' would cease. He also acknowledged the negative side when he stated that developments in technology could promote either 'extreme capitalism' or social good throughout the world. He was one of the few who indicated both a positive and a negative attitude to globalism.

Indian perceptions

The concept of profit provoked an immediate response from MBA students in India. They routinely recited that 'profit is the goal and competition the means to

248

achieve it'. Initial comments on this topic were not deeply considered, but presented as facts or as ideology. A greater depth of interpretation developed later in individual interviews or group discussions. As one student expressed it, 'moral character and the profit motive' were the two major values in the MBA course which he had studied.

Further comments reflected students' backgrounds and experience, and ranged across a number of issues. Most students indicated that the pursuit of corporate profit would be incompatible with total honesty; competition pitted personal values against corporate goals. The comment that ' competition is healthy, [but it] involves both pushing and pulling which might create conflict in one's own mind' (In8) recognised that individuals would experience several reactions, both positive and negative.

This comment alluded to the pressure of feeling pulled in two different directions; the comment aligned with the idea of 'healthy' conveys both ambiguity and tension. Students expressed similar concerns in various ways. For example, some noted the increasing disparity between the urban and rural sectors in India. There was an overall impression that MBA programs were too broad and generalised to address national problems, such as social justice, which neither MBA graduates, nor industry, could resolve. The importance which students gave to this issue generally reflected their personal experience. Perhaps it is not surprising that those from affluent urban families raised it less than those from less developed regions, and males less often than female students. However, several praised MBA schools which organised 'summer placements' to help privileged students understand the difficulties experienced by those in the poorest and remotest areas of India.

Many students stated that altruism would be pursued later in life as a form of charity. The expression 'doing good' was primarily understood in terms of the relationship between manager and worker; the chance to promote the general

good of India seemed beyond the scope of most working lives. One summed up his aspirations:

> At the start of my career I want to work hard and earn as much as possible. To do something for the poor you need a high platform to stand on. The goals of professional success are always in terms of money [but] personal success is not in terms of money. Many professionally successful [people] have a ruined life with broken homes. To me professional success and achievement are more important than personal success [In7].

The above comment sums up the paradox which many of these Indian students expressed. To portray an MBA as potentially leading 'a ruined life with broken homes' indicated an undesirable outcome in a country where divorce is socially unacceptable, and yet the following statement implied that the high price of 'professional success' would be paid. This comment recalled the belief that MBA graduates had 'earned' both the difficulties and the rewards which flowed on from the degree.

These themes which emerged around civil society provide insight into how specific individuals characterised their experiences.

The individual narratives

The following individual narratives amplify how individuals involved with the MBA perceived civil society. These three Australians, two students and one academic, galvanise many commonly shared ideas and demonstrate MBA themes of relevance to society. Although each was distinctive, together they raised significant issues which reflected the groups being studied.

Ian

Ian was an Australian who had enrolled in the MBA because his not-for-profit organisation needed an employee who could master the language and constructs of business. The centre where he was a manager promoted environmentalism and community participation. Although his post-graduate background in science had

250

equipped him to deal with the quantitative aspects of management, the decline in government funding had increased the centre's reliance on external funds. *Ian* was the staff member chosen to develop proficiency in planning, managing and reporting on community-based activities based on the study of law, accounting, finance and project management.

Ian enrolled in the MBA to ensure that his organisation could continue its broad educational goals. The centre needed these skills to survive new challenges and continue to be effective. A former teacher, he was motivated to promote both social justice and sustainable development and he also believed that new models of social, national and international interaction were both desirable and achievable. In contrast to many other students, he had constantly raised issues which involved values in the MBA classroom. And, students had supported his right to speak, even when they disagreed with him:

> I was careful not to impose my ideas. I ran with their topics. I would put my perspective into analysis or conclusions, but I would also be ready to pull it out if people disagreed. For example, in a number of instances, where the analysis at the end of a topic could have related to a conflict of interest between ... the profit [focus of] business, against an issue of the economic system meeting the needs of the people. I would tend to bring this in as an overview, and they would tend to say, we have done that line already. And I would tend to accept that, and we would either go with their conclusion on the topic, or with a combination.

He stated that his values had been crystallised by those who protested against the Vietnam war. His sense of social justice, although nurtured in a Christian working class family, had been activated by the peace movement of that time. Subsequently, and before they had children, he and his wife had decided to live in India for six months so as to experience a less affluent life than Australia's. From his twenties, *Ian* had been motivated by the ideas of international social justice and sustainable development. He strongly believed that not-for-profit organisations, such as his, could assist companies to pursue these goals. For example, negative publicity about pollution had made several chemical companies aware of the need to recycle their waste. However, some members of his centre had stated that an environmentally conscious organisation would be exposed to many conflicts of interest if it assisted large transnational corporations

251

to improve their industrial processes. 'Greenie' members, motivated by concern for the environment, feared that their organisation could become tainted if its staff consulted with companies like global chemical manufactures.

But *Ian* believed that a 'stakeholder' style of philosophy was necessary to achieve major change. Community members had to make their concerns known to companies. *Ian* stated that large corporations were becoming increasingly aware of how environmental factors influenced their reputations. But he recognised the risks for community-based organisations which consulted to large-scale industry, while they sought to maintain the support of their subscribers. *Ian* characterised this process as one in which both sides needed to believe that they were achieving their goals; his image of 'dancing with the devil' conveyed the delicacy required to sustain relationships between groups with seemingly contradictory aims.

Motivated by a sense of social justice, interconnectedness and joint responsibility, he worked in a community centre which he believed provided a model of cooperation between industry and local people. He stated that such new solutions were required to foster equitable outcomes in a corporate world where governments could no longer control the flow of money, goods or employment.

He aimed to advise industry about community concerns so as to improve corporate behaviour. He used the concept of stakeholders as a way to conceptualise this approach to change. *Ian* possessed an international perspective, combined with a desire to improve life in his local community. He had been prompted to study the MBA by his organisation's need to compete, not by a desire for personal financial gain. *Ian* said he was not a religious person, despite the acknowledged influence of Christianity on his values.

In contrast to _Ian_, _Bernadette,_ a medical technologist, had undertaken postgraduate study to increase her personal satisfaction. She had chosen to study the MBA because:

> I almost have to move if I want to have future challenges. I thought the MBA would be great, and it has been even greater than I thought it would be, mainly because of all the interaction with the different people, the exposure, because it has made me realise that I don't fit the norm of a dedicated scientist. They are right into their science, they love it, but I have blossomed as I have gained more staff. The challenge of managing [a group] of women is exciting. Most of them are really good because I got them young.

In other words, she had reached a stage of her career where she would need to leave her organisation if she wanted further promotion and 'challenges'. For this reason she had chosen to undertake the MBA rather than a post-graduate degree in science. She proudly stated that her managers had noted 'improvements' in her 'management skills' although, her comment, that these managers were 'dreadful actually', reflected her belief in her own superiority. She valued the social side of work and claimed that MBA study had helped her to redefine her life. Because she had 'divorced virtually as it started', she studied and played sport with fellow students; they had become her new friends, even her flat mate was an MBA student.

Bernadette's world was individualistic. She portrayed individualism as:

> ... responsibility to yourself. When I was eighteen I was very much as I am now, then in getting married I lost track of who I was, now I am coming back to that.

She thrived on a world based on competition yet she contested primarily against herself in the knowledge that she could 'outwork anyone else'. _Bernadette_ prized a world where 'everyone has their own rights and the right to be free'. She wanted to balance personal responsibility against the need to 'look after everyone'; she described the 'big picture' as needing a 'safety net'. Although she

253

could achieve her goals, there should be government support for those who could not.

She valued balance and criticised her industry for the inequities between the high salaries of senior managers and the inadequate compensation which junior technicians received. Her comments reflected a sense of social justice where individuals possessed both rights and responsibilities. All individuals should produce what they were expected to achieve:

> It would be more equitable if we all had to reach certain goals, and we all had to work a bit harder. For me, it's a real sense of responsibility. And then I think everyone would work harder and there would be general improvement all the time, rather than just reach a level and sit back. From a government point of view I don't think that is productive. In the corporate world that is what happens. People need a challenge, they should work to deserve what they get.

Bernadette felt that competition helped to increase both the quantity and quality of work. She was a public servant who hated complacency and wanted her staff to be productive and creative. However, she also wanted to manage work so that it was enjoyable and personally rewarding; she refused to accept that senior management should gain all the benefits of good work as her concept of justice involved subordinate staff. Bernadette perceived work and sport as arenas to prove her mettle; she maintained this attitude within her studies. For example, her frustration when a 'ring-in' to her project group had not contributed fairly and her pleasure when her group decided not to allow him to pass. She was gratified when her staff described her as 'firm but fair' as she was prepared 'to do the hard things' which were 'justified'.

Since her divorce she had felt somewhat estranged from the formal body of the Catholic Church but still believed in 'people's goodness'. It was significant that she described her staff as her family because if she had remained married she would have expected to be raising her own children. *Bernadette* was proud of her group's achievements and felt she should nurture them. Her rewards included unofficial leave days, as she had no discretionary budget. She appeared unmotivated by material needs, for example, her major pleasure came from being

seen as a 'constructive' model by her subordinates. However, she was studying the MBA so as to move on in her career.

'Management style' was the key concept which 'encompasses everything, from private life, social, family business'. She embraced the idea that an individual's example could 'lead to good' and could not understand those who separated work life from personal feelings. Nevertheless, despite her claim that 'if we don't care about the environment, we don't have a future', she could not envisage how MBA 'subjects could address these issues'. She also lacked political interest; her dominant responsibility was to be generous, concerned and just to her staff. She felt that the MBA had increased her assertiveness and her ability to deal with difficult issues. She had enjoyed those MBA subjects which encouraged her to take time out for reflection, even though she had found it a difficult task.

One of these reflective subjects had prompted her to acknowledge that her 'core values' were 'honesty and being true to yourself'. She had 'loved' the 'greater perspectives' which she had gained from 'the interactions' within the MBA. *Bernadette*'s image of 'sparks coming off [the MBA]' described her perception of how students reacted to the experience. The image of sparks evoked both energy and light, attributes which fired *Bernadette*'s enthusiasm. In common with *Wendy*, *Bernadette* had written poetry when she was younger. And she, like *Wendy*, captured images which conveyed an engaged and vibrant respect for life.

In the midst of a 'diverse collection' of MBA students, *Bernadette* had joined a group of young single students. They were at a similar stage in their careers; they shared ideas, studied and went skiing together in a shared 'camaraderie' which seemed to shield them from a tougher and meaner world. *Bernadette* recognised problems for the environment and those who were less privileged than herself. But she did not indicate how she should act on this awareness. Her responsibilities mirrored her personal interconnections.

Lee

Lee taught a systematic approach to management education which used a quantitative framework and drew on his professional background. He was born in Asia and had completed most of his education after he migrated to Australia with his parents. Married with children, he had chosen to 'be an academic because of the flexibility and the life-style'. He also 'enjoyed the interaction with students' and the chance to learn from them; he was 'not attracted by the formal corporate' way of life. His teaching focused on how results should be sought, rather than the pursuit of set goals. *Lee*'s belief that management should meet the needs of people was also part of his general educational philosophy:

> We should concentrate on process in education, not just outcome, and
> then we [will] achieve good results.

Lee felt that competition was the key to corporate success, while teamwork was also essential. From his perspective, the MBA had to help students to recognise that success required the dual contributions of competition and cooperation through the course content and group-work. He expected his students to be able to demonstrate that they were 'able to work together and individually', but he also wanted them to learn 'how to manage' in a strategic way. Responsive management meant that:

> You must be market driven, rather than just technology driven, you must
> make sure that you can fully utilise the technology which you acquire
> and that you gain real benefit from it. A lot of people mistakenly believe
> that technology will fix problems; it must be part of strategy.

His perception of 'benefit' focused primarily on the company. Many of his students came from Asian countries such as Thailand and Malaysia which had suffered from the economic recession. However, *Lee* expressed no concerns that the new labour intensive technologies might have adverse effects. As he said:

> I think they have full employment in those countries. And, if there is
> very cheap labour, why do you need to worry about problems with jobs,
> as they have growth? The machines will take some of the jobs but then
> they can do something else. I don't think that these countries have a
> problem of introducing technology. ... In Australia new technology is
> more of a concern; in Asia, labour is virtually a commodity.

Globalism was presented in mostly positive terms. He stated that Asian countries need not fear unemployment problems because they had 'full employment', 'cheap labour' and 'growth. While he acknowledged that mechanisation would 'take some of the jobs', he also stated that those who were affected could 'do something else'. He appeared unused to considering topics outside the technical process-orientation of his subject, such as the social consequences of his MBA subject. Consequently, he applied the spiritual principles espoused by his family in order to address whether business had responsibilities to society. At the same time, he portrayed himself as an Australian who viewed Asian 'growth' in terms of economic indicators – in this context he described 'labour' as a 'commodity'. Yet *Lee* was worried by the loss of jobs in Australia:

> In Australia, we can not afford labour intensive work, because we can
> not compete with countries which have low salaries.

There is an implicit criticism of globalism in this comment. While he did not worry about the situation which was provoked by international pressure and new technology in countries with low labour costs, *Lee* believed that Australia had to 'concentrate on high tech stuff' in order to be internationally successful. He did not question concepts such as the market, competition, globalisation or the distribution of wealth. He pragmatically accepted the constraints of covering specific management theories in a limited time and largely saw his discipline as technical. He personally believed that certain issues, such as cultural and environmental concerns, should be related to business, as long as other subjects and other academics addressed them. His perception of MBA students was that:

> I don't think they [the students] worry about the company or anybody
> else. I may not be right, but I see them looking after themselves first and
> the company after that.

He stated that he enjoyed teaching because 'you learn so much' from students. Yet, despite the fact that he had expressed a responsibility to balance what was desirable for society against the needs of the subject which he taught, he appeared not to think about the social implications of his subject to the Asian region. He

stated that he could not change his subject as its content was given. His responsibility for promoting civil society was to help MBAs to be 'productive contributing citizens'; if they were 'educated, able to manage their own lives' they would 'become better citizens all round'.

Lee's wife and family were the core of his life. He wanted to balance work and family responsibilities, with enough time to pursue his hobbies. He appeared relatively uncritical and absorbed in a life which centred around family and sport. He respectfully recalled being raised to follow his parents' non-Christian religious practice. Although he perceived differences between local and international MBA students, he discussed this difference primarily in terms of the frustrations expressed by local students when they were paired to work with younger less experienced overseas students. When he acknowledged the importance of MBA fees to university revenue, he also recalled why students chose to study this program:

> ... most of the MBAs want to be managers and to make money, they want to be a big shot in the company. They do the MBA so that they can make money. That's not wrong.

In other words, he felt responsible to meet the needs of students who had enrolled in an MBA so as to improve their chances of wealth and power. Having previously worked in business, he accepted that this was the contract which could not be changed once it was undertaken. The university had entered a competitive market and had to accept the consequences. When he stated that he had never previously reflected on how the MBA program related to citizenship, he volunteered that he considered this degree was 'more rounded' than other professional masters programs.

However, he commented at the end of the interview:

> I think life is made to do a lot of things, not just to make a profit, that is too narrow.

In some ways he was like *James*, (chapter 2) who felt that society would benefit when graduates became financially self-sufficient and

professionally educated. *Lee* believed in the value of the 'process' approach of his teaching. He gained professional satisfaction from teaching his technical subject and believed that the growth of full-fee places would make students demand practical courses designed to help them increase profits. He appeared very Australian in his sense of national commitment, indicating no allegiance to the country where he was born. He demonstrated, along with *Bernadette* whose parents had also migrated, no sense of responsibility to another country. Like her, he gained satisfaction from those around him. In *Lee*'s case it was his family, for *Bernadette* it was her subordinate staff and fellow students. Their sense of motivation contrasts with *Ian*'s concern to promote social justice and maintain a sense of community. *Ian* believed that consumer advocacy could be a positive force in a global world, such as improved production and recycling practices. He wanted to promote inclusive, cooperative decision-making at work. *Ian* was delighted when his ideas were heard within the MBA. He had found that the program provided professionals with the opportunity to reflect on where their lives were leading. *Ian* had been surprised and delighted that students and staff were ready to discuss the social responsibilities of business.

He, of all the students and staff interviewed for this study, most effectively integrated the domains of his life (in the sense of the concept as elaborated by Hall[86]). He had been validated beyond his expectations by his experience of the MBA. Perhaps because his organisation supported social issues, he demonstrated the greatest coherence between his work and personal principles. *Ian* was the most politicised. He expressed subtle and complex connections which incorporated not only his family and colleagues, but also wider communities. He perceived ideological components of social change, both in a local and an

---

[86] This theory anticipates that individuals would segment areas of their identity so as to minimise personal stress. Hall's use of domains (as elaborated in – Hall, 1996a, 1996b and 1996c – and analysed in ch 1) discusses how identity involves beliefs and activities, including complexities and ambiguities and the dissonance provoked by commitment to contradictory sets of values.

international sense. While noting the importance of individual differences, he believed that resolving poverty and environmental degradation required cooperative practices. His understanding of both individual and organisational behaviour recognised that while democratic process assisted small groups to negotiate with international organisations, there were frustrations associated with its practice. And he had continually sought to work with diverse groups so as to understand both problems and opportunities.

These stories highlight themes involved with a 'civil life' which demonstrate the relationship of personal and work life to consumerism. The role played by competition cuts across these themes. In counter point with cooperation, it patterned the way that individuals involved with the MBA related their personal lives to their understanding of society. Many of those interviewed recognised the complexity of integrating such diverse concerns.

Conclusion

To what extent did MBA academics and students relate ethical principles to their business and social responsibilities? Did these discussions reflect Ralston Saul's expectation that MBA students and educators would only respond to corporate stimuli? Or, did they demonstrate the ambitions of Galbraith (1992), Etzioni (1988) and Koslowski (1992) to integrate economics, or management studies more generally, with a sense of social responsibility? Was there evidence of the promotion of 'nation building' and 'social capital' espoused by Pusey (1991) and Cox (1995)?

Ralston Saul's expectation that discussion of civil society would be incompatible in the 'anaesthetising' context of the MBA was not born out. Although there was, as he would predict, great attention paid to self-interest and the pursuit of profit. Raising questions about the relationship between civil society and the MBA was, for many, both threatening and unexpected. A common theme among

business educators was the 'disciplinarian' argument, raised by *James* in chapter two, that they were constrained by their subjects.

However, in response to topics prompted by the research process, there was a significant voice, of both MBA staff and students, which affirmed the importance of society which echoed the theme of 'social capital' in Cox's Boyer lectures (1995). The argument is best summed up in her own words:

> We need to build a store of trust and goodwill as part of our social capital - a collective term for the ties that bind us. ... An accumulation of social capital enhances our quality of life and provides the base for the development of financial and human capital. With an adequate level of social capital we can enjoy the benefits of a truly civil society (Cox, 1995, p 11).

Cox has built on Putnam's recognition of the importance of 'generalised reciprocity ... [which] generates high social capital' and the 'role and obligations' of a citizen seen as a 'form of cultural cement' (from Putnam, as quoted in Cox, 1995, p 20).

The concept of social capital was useful in addressing how MBA students and staff believed that life should be lived. There were those who implicitly agreed with Cox, Etzioni (1988) and Theobald (1987, 1999) that the social consequences of the pursuit of personal-gain through competition were often negative. Community-based activities were prized, to a surprising extent, by Australian males with children. But conflict between their beliefs and their capacity to act was raised by the time given to work and study.

Many students also recognised conflicts between personal career success and the well-being of society. The image conveyed by older, more experienced students was of a net which dragged them and others into dangerous waters. However, younger MBA students interviewed in India anticipated conflicts between personal and social values in their future jobs. Their personal choices would probably have undesirable social consequences. Chinese MBA students in

Australia also stated that some managerial practices would enrich them at the expense of the less educated and powerful.

Academics, more than students, expressed concern that globalism eroded the capacity of national governments to manage their budgets and social systems. Students were more inclined to assume that the growth of trans-national companies and global trade would increase and redistribute wealth. However, very few students or staff reflected Martin and Schumann's claim that uncontrolled capitalism threatened democracy, social justice and international stability (Martin and Schumann, 1997, p 28). Perhaps their reluctance can be explained by the close links between the MBA and industry, where practitioners are interested to see immediate business outcomes and are critical of 'ivory tower academics' who are judged to be insufficiently interested in practical problems (Beck, Cox, Radcliff, 1980, p 354). So both educators and MBA graduates perceived dangers associated with proclaiming civic concerns. Both personal career success and program desirability were linked to judgements of potential employers, who might also commission research and consulting.

Those more politically sensitive Indian and Chinese who studied overseas, understood the teachings of the MBA in the social and civic context of Australia, which many described as typifying their ideals of an affluent, clean and relatively equitable country. Because they lived in this society, the contrast with their home country was more influential than much of the theory they studied. However, most of the course subjects which they studied ignored the social and political context. Few academic subjects were designed to integrate business theory with social responsibility as promoted by Galbraith (1992), Etzioni (1988) and Koslowski (1992).

Helen, an academic who shared the insights raised by international students, recognised the risks when students valued only the ideas which were captured in prescribed texts. She critiqued the perception that society was primarily a base for business on the grounds that it endangered both the broader infrastructure and the

262

values which maintained it. She claimed that her MBA students did not share her belief that this erosion of values would threaten social justice and democratic process. Many staff, including *Helen*, typified MBAs as narrowly self-focused in the pursuit of personal success.

Most Australian and international MBAs prioritised personal and family interests. They acknowledged a sense of tension about capitalism as a process with both desirable and undesirable consequences; a process which was dominated by competition. A minority of students stated that this had negative consequences for the least-skilled workers, small companies and potentially poorer countries. But most students felt personally disempowered because of their need to polish their own career prospects. A minority saw a sense of social justice as central to their life but found it difficult to see how they could bring about change. They considered business as the major player in the public domain. If pressed, many expressed concern, but judged it to be outside their responsibility or influence. They relied on the law to control the big picture.

Environmentalism was widely appreciated, but seen as an inappropriate goal for those who wished to succeed in the corporate world. It was a strongly held, but private concern. The following chapter explores why students and staff perceived these beliefs should be kept secret.

Was there one perception of how the MBA influenced moral and social responsibility? Did the MBA encourage individuals to consider the ethical aspects of the relationships between business and society as proposed by Galbraith (1992), Etzioni (1988), Koslowski (1992), (Pusey 1991) and (Cox, 1995)?

Findings relevant to the above questions chart a split between social and individual needs. Most students, and many staff, felt the pressure associated with competition at personal, corporate and social levels. Many Australian academics questioned the social and civic implications of policies, such as competition,

which permeated the MBA curriculum. Some criticised both specific subjects and the overall MBA on the grounds that education should promote broad social improvements. They conveyed a sense of being alienated from students who they perceived as motivated only by personal success or obsessed with the maximisation of corporate profit. However, this awareness evoked fears of what would happen to those who criticised competition.

It was surprising the extent to which MBA students expressed support for community activities. The claim that study restricted community involvement had to be weighed against the MBA program's focus on personal success. Many students and staff recognised the importance of community-based activities involving small groups. Yet, few felt they could engage more broadly; few perceived opportunities to address social and civic issues. Australian Academics recognised the risks of raising such concerns in their teaching, and MBAs generally indicated that the pursuit of social justice was at odds with a career in business. In contrast, a significant number of Indian and Chinese international students compared the wealth and equity they experienced in Australia with that of their home countries. For some of these students, Australian life, as lived outside the classroom, had increased their commitment to inclusive social goals.

Proposals to address problems took various forms. For some academics, social concerns were political and to be addressed by voting at elections; others feared seeming polemical by relating social concerns to business practice; while others encouraged debate and critical analysis within their subjects. The last approach, proposed by 'the devil's advocates', supports the claim made by George Soros (1997) that democracy must be nurtured, as it will not spontaneously fill the void left after communism. The fact that Australian academics, more than their students, appreciated the need to critique the MBA curriculum raised tensions involving responsibilities to students, the university and beyond. Several academics raised the need to balance how to assist students and business to achieve their goals, against their broader academic responsibility to promote civil society.

A central concern involved academics' perceived need to bridge the split between the private and the public. This split applied not only to themselves but also to their students. *Lee* and *Bernadette* had addressed this conflict by focusing on those closest to them, adopting a parental attitude of responsibility to either a real or surrogate family. In contrast, *Ian* accepted responsibilities for, and to, people whom he was never likely to meet. His integrated approach reflected that promoted by David Wheeler and Maria Silanpaa (1997)[87] which was developed for The Body Shop. According to its founder, Anita Roddick:

> ... commercial success will increasingly favour the community-based,
> stakeholder inclusive companies of the twenty-first century (Wheeler
> and Silanpaa, 1997, p vii).

Wheeler and Silanpaa have applied the concept of 'stakeholders'' audits to promote good corporate governance and protect the reputation and viability of an organisation[88]. Roddick's foreword (cited above) claims that the stakeholder corporation values its employees, its investors, customers, significant others and the environment. The stakeholder concept provides a framework to balance the private and the public within the MBA. It allows academics and students to conceptualise themselves within a civic domain.

Stakeholder analysis is a currently-used process based on the inter-dependencies between business and society. It provides a way to implement and evaluate the 'triple bottom line' approach to financial, social and environmental management.

In the end, personally-held beliefs were perceived to be the major influence on how business should interact with society. A minority of staff and students aimed to be critical, exploratory and community focused; they pursued objectives not usually associated with the MBA. However, comments made by this group

---

[87] Wheeler and Silanpaa (1997), as part of a Body Shop project, have documented the use of social audits to promote the incorporation of all stakeholder interests into company practice.
[88] This perspective supports Dunlop's principles for boards of directors (1987), specifically the need to ensure company viability over the long term.

conveyed different beliefs from the communitarian principles associated with 'seeking and maintaining the balance between individual rights and social responsibilities' (Etzioni, 1995, p121). Their concerns were associated with religion and spirituality, and demonstrated that these individuals pursued goals beyond the material and the civic. The belief systems which these individuals used to prioritise their lives are considered in the following chapter.

In relation to the above issues, many MBA staff and some students recall the values, such as social capital, promoted by Cox and Putnam. Their beliefs matched the arguments of Theobald, Koslowski and Etzioni that too great a focus on competition damages society. Many felt, as *Stewart* did, that the public espousal of civic causes could be detrimental to one's career and secure income. He was in the minority who disliked this nexus; the majority who focused on family and friends, seemed to take it as given. Few considered that MBA graduates could, and should, influence society. Their attitude reflected Ball's analysis of policy changes in English secondary education when 'decisive shifts' involved moving:

> ... from public debate to private choice, from collective planning to individual decision making. Together, management and the market remove education from the public arena of civil society, from collective responsibility, and effectively 'privatize' it. ... We have the closure and atomization of civil society (Ball, 1994, p 55).

Perceptions of how the MBA related to civil society could also be interpreted as an example of 'closure and atomization'. The major focus was individual – seen positively as the pursuit of personal success, or negatively as the fear of failure – which largely ignored 'the public arena of civil society'. Many academics indicated that debates about civic concerns would be judged as either digressions or acts of disloyalty in a period preoccupied with survival. Many academics seemed timid, as if they were being watched. Community involvement was segregated from the role of teacher or student. Many categorised such responsibility as private, in line with their primary duty to their families. *Ian* stood as a notable exception.

266

Environmentalism was widely appreciated, but many saw it as an inappropriate goal for those who wished to succeed in the corporate world. It was a strongly held, but private concern. The reasons used to justify why these perceptions should be kept private are also explored in the following chapter.

In relating these findings to the central question of whether there was one perspective, in this case to civil society, within the MBA, competition and the pursuit of profit were seen as dominant influences. But, individual dissent from this position, and the extent to which individuals felt free to voice such concern, was another important theme within this conversation about values and certainty. As adults, many Australian students displayed a secular outlook on education and society. However, many who espoused social justice recalled that they were religious as children.

How students and staff publicly discussed spirituality was influenced by their understanding of individualism. The concept of self, or personal identity, can be perceived as perhaps the most telling divide between the public and the private within the context of the MBA. The penultimate chapter considers how individuals associated with the MBA recognised the values which guided their public and private behaviour.

Chapter 6 The MBA and individual identity

Introduction

The previous chapter considered whether discussions within the MBA, of how management practice affected society, produced a sense of certainty. An emerging question involves the relationship between this program and personal responsibility. The following analysis discusses how those associated with the MBA understood their individual identity, specifically how they related their beliefs to their actions.

The writings of Hall on personal identity and culture (see 1992, 1996a, 1996b and 1996c) provide a way to inter-relate how individual MBA students and academics perceived their personal sense of identity and the responsibilities connected with the making of business decisions. Hall's concept of the domains of identity (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) provides a means to relate this professional management degree to an individual sense of identity. Sinclair's claim that MBA students need and desire 'moral sensibilities' which allow them to explore alternative business practices (1999, p17) raises the question of where those sensibilities reside. A broader perspective on how values are translated into action in education is provided by Ball's (1994) sociological study which aligned a fall in 'civic virtue' with the rise of a managerialist culture in British education. This general viewpoint was supported by Jackall's (1988) conclusions that corporations were 'moral mazes' which provoked ethical confusion in their employees.

In order to assist individuals to maintain personally-held values in the context of business Solomon (1992) proposes a reworking of Aristotle's Virtue Ethics. In the context of this thesis, perhaps the most important is 'holism', namely the integration of personally-held values with professional decision making. The

possibility and desirability of a personally sustainable ethics is supported by Carroll (1998) and Greenleaf (1998) on transcendental or metaphysical grounds.

These writers present a way to explore how MBA academics and students in the 1990s perceived the concept of individualism. Not only how students and staff understood identity and responsibility for business outcomes, but also - to return to the core question - whether their experience was one of certainty or doubt. In other words, did they experience the MBA as the 'Babel' described by Collin, or a process producing Ralston Saul's 'corporate anaesthesia'? Australian education reflects the national tendency to a secularity grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition (Australian-Asian Perceptions Project, 1994, p21).

The concept of spiritual beliefs raised many issues within this research context. Is there space for religion in MBA programs taught within culturally diverse societies? What of Australian secularism; does it exist on a platform of denial, where academics and students can believe what they will, but not discuss it the classroom? The fear of divisiveness is strong in Australia, formed by waves of migration where theories of assimilation were followed by multi-culturalism. In this context fears of proselytising might constrain academics from making comments which threatened the right of conscience. A further concern was that beliefs based on faith, especially those described as spiritual, would not be open to intellectual analysis. For many, spirituality evoked risks of emotionally-founded and potentially divisive beliefs. Perhaps this is why non- theological courses avoid such topics. A focus on the values associated with personal identity raised both non-secular and spiritual beliefs. Individuals' self-perceptions provided a way to explore whether the MBA encouraged the disclosure or the masking of such personally significant convictions.

The complex, diverse and critical understandings revealed by students and staff flag distinct beliefs about identity, integrity and appropriate behaviour. Individualism – recognised as a core theme of the MBA – held multiple meanings which were variously either espoused or criticised.

269

The impact of the religion or spiritual traditions, within families and transported from other countries, was an important theme. For some students and staff, spirituality primarily concerned the environment. The strength of this perceived relationship to nature led to the inclusion of ecological beliefs in this chapter. For others, the environment was a duty.

There were acknowledged differences in the ability and readiness to discuss personally-held values within this study. Staff were more reluctant than students to discuss their personal values in an academic context. The three styles of academic behaviour outlined in chapter two elaborate various approaches. Some academics perceived pressures and tensions associated with students and university constraints; both academics and students felt they were pulled in different directions by conflicting responsibilities. Others described their lives in more compartmentalised ways; this latter group was less likely to acknowledge personal tensions and conflicts, at least within the context of this research. They were quite dispassionate about their work, portraying values as personal and private.

The following themes record how those associated with the MBA described themselves and their consequent responsibilities. However, both academics and students varied in how they integrated their convictions with their professional behaviour. Individuals with similar values differed in how these values should influence their actions.

Individualism

The concept of individualism overarched those beliefs described as central to personal identity. This concept was largely portrayed as the pivot around which the MBA revolved. Yet, analysis revealed it as a complex notion espoused with an almost religious fervour. And, as with religion, there were both the convinced and the sceptics.

Generally, those interviewed alone felt an individualistic stance was desirable, for example, that individuals studied the MBA to achieve professional success. However, this motivation assumes one meaning of individualism. In fact, both students and staff expressed multiple understandings of this concept.

Two broad continua provided insight into the discussions about individualism. The first continuum concerned power and influence, on which the most common position involved an isolated self – concerned with power, ideas and autonomy – contrasted against the self which was conceived as the basic element of the democratic state. The middle position of this power continuum related to those who defined themselves within a group smaller than the state – this position conveyed both commitment and a sense of personal identity. The second continuum represented the self in terms of context; one end believed that personal identity could be 'polluted' through inappropriate experiences, counter-posed against the idea that the self would persist through all experiences. The majority of students initially described an isolated sense of self associated with the idea that one would think, act and achieve alone; they often linked this style to material success. However, this conception was not automatically admired. Although students presented this as the goal to which they were expected to aspire, many, especially Asian students, felt this ambition was flawed (A4, A5, A6, A16, A21, A34, A55, A118, A83, In10, In13, In14, In15, In16). These students feared that strongly individualistic beliefs might threaten the bonds which made life worth living, such as commitments to family and friends. They experienced ambivalence raised by conflicting expectations between themselves, their families and their teachers in relation to individualism. Many conceptualised the MBA as the means to consolidate a singular self which pursued power, autonomy and financial rewards. Some students accepted this goal, whereas others questioned the price of such success. *Wendy* indicated culturally influenced positions along a continuum of individualism when she described the difficulties of being an employee of a foreign company in China. In contrast, a minority of students from Australia, China and India described their

own identity in terms of civic responsibility; *Ian* was the most notable example of this group.

Initially, there was typically one meaning associated with individualism and apparent agreement about the values associated with it. Further analysis produced more complex meanings. However, it was largely considered inappropriate to raise such complexities within an MBA characterised as a means to enrich the corporate world and themselves. This focus made it difficult to explore a personal sense of self within the MBA program.

Staff perceptions on individualism

Academics conveyed two different perceptions of individualism within their MBA teaching in Australia. Either they seldom analysed this concept even when it was central to subjects like marketing and economics, or they perceived that personal identity was complex and encouraged students to confront the tensions provoked by this recognition. In the same way, there was a perception, not held by all staff, that MBA students were strongly individualistic, shorthand for selfish, egotistical, uncaring and overly materialistic.

Academic staff tended to characterise individualism in terms of personal autonomy, competition and success. And, like the students, they also varied on whether this was desirable, or understandable, or destructive. One academic (A101) attributed his personal tensions to changes in the universities. Academics were 'not well paid compared to their counterparts in industry', but his individual satisfaction did not rely on material rewards. He criticised the changes in work norms; his sense of self had suffered because universities had increased their focus on competition:

> The compromise in the standards, the chase for this all-mighty dollar ...
> the story is that we will just take people who can afford to pay. [The
> universities] will compromise on the entry standards, and then on
> assessment standards. And this will unfortunately breed cynicism and
> scepticism. And my personal concern is the loss of self-esteem. My fear

> is the loss of meaning and cogency in my academic life ... that it will be just work for money (A101).

The goal of education was to assist individuals to become more critical and analytical, however, achieving this balance within the MBA was complex:

> We are acknowledging and indeed delivering some of the experience that will enable [students] to ask different questions, but I don't know that we do it very easily yet, because the whole MBA world is in transition [A115].

> [T]here is a kind of template that makes the MBA and you can't stray too far from that, but ... there is a bit of a process change going on in the way it's delivered ...it's less doctrinaire and less orthodox ... and there's greater tolerance of diverging opinion and we are encourage that now [A105].

While it was argued that this program would incidentally promote broader social goals, one academic stated that 'the community gains from education' and 'society should see that education provides wider benefits and not just to the individual who is studying'(A100).

MBA teachers expected relative autonomy in their working lives; this was described as one of the most appealing aspects of university life. One who had published widely stated that the academic life gave him the 'flexibility to choose what research he did and to publish the truth' (A112); his independence was the 'most important' aspect. In comparison to industry, academic life had more autonomy and 'not so much pressure' (A111).

However, an increased dependence on funding from students and employers placed constraints on personal identity within the academic role. Many academics in Australia who taught business techniques, softened their critical approach because they perceived MBA students had values different from their own:

> [In my opinion] there's a very well developed sense of self-interest, in career prospects and probabilities of success, in the corporate world, associated with most of the MBA students. We [only] get the occasional one who is looking for an education (A115).

> I think [MBAs] are after a credential for their job and they're after certain skills that will help them in that respect, so I think we've got to very seriously balance what we'd like to do in ... making them better human beings and meeting their needs (A102).

[I] see individualism and cooperation together. That is the classic dichotomy. To what extent do you pursue the personal or the corporate? Team building? But if you look at the rewards system of most organisations, it is still individually based. In many ways competencies development is a very selfish thing- it is almost about identifying your developmental needs and then pursuing them. I say it is very selfish... Somebody has to lose, if I win, you lose (A101).

[Regarding] student values, some will just take the money and run... you have to be self centred, tough, harsh to survive in the modern environment ... no long term security. I realise that [their values] do not represent my values, or my preferences (A100).

The above quotes demonstrate a range of opinions. MBA teachers in Australia were concerned for their students, but these concerns took a variety of forms.

Student perceptions of individualism

The observations made by Australian staff were largely confirmed by a group of Australian graduate MBAs who had worked for several years. The degree had assisted them in their individual careers; they emphasised it as a way to gain confidence, expertise and market credibility. The graduate MBAs spoke in pragmatic career terms about gains in their careers and salaries. They conceptualised individualism in terms of personal consumption. They doubted they could contribute more to their corporations than efficiency and profitability.

Current students in Australia expressed a range of beliefs. These indicated that individuals should hold an independent viewpoint, be recognised as unique, and gain material advantage. The materialistic understanding of individualism was often associated with a sense of alienation. Several students who espoused this belief were Australians who felt at odds with their workplace (A26, A27, A55). In contrast, some international students criticised individualism as a Western concept which was inappropriate to their own cultures. This criticism, which reflected a strong sense of group allegiance, was expressed by several Asian students - especially those from Thailand (A59, A63, A66, A75, A76).

Chinese international students expressed diverse opinions about individualism (A6, A21, A22, A34, A35, A50, A118). For example, *Yun-wei* contrasted his past and present understandings of individualism and collectivism. *Yun-wei* described how in China, individualism was 'a bad word' which equated with 'a person being selfish'; yet his experiences as an MBA student had reversed his previous opinion. China needed to 'balance ... individualism and collectivism'; by 'too collective' he meant the expectation that one should give up everything for the general social good:

> I think it is related to our country's history. After liberation, they promoted collectivism, so they asked people to give everything to the society, and to the party, [it was] a very hard life, but they still believed. But after the economic reform, a lot of leaders get big money and they change to individualism, they just want to give more for themselves. They do not pay a lot back to the society and community. I think that is very common social behaviour in China at this moment.

Chinese government officials now placed their personal interests before those of the least privileged. In comparison, he felt that Australia showed more care for its disadvantaged. *Yun-wei* valued that form of individualism which empowered citizens to pursue social equity; individuals needed to receive rewards, either from society or from their company. His goal was to balance individual needs, and rewards, against those of society.

Yun-wei, in common with *Willow* and several other Chinese students, had initially opted to study the MBA out of personal ambition. During the program, he became aware of others' needs, not just his own. Many Chinese students felt motivated by a sense of group allegiance and the capacity to make a difference. The latter related to a sense of power and control; for some students it reflected a sense of responsibility to one's self only, and for others to the broader community. Both interpretations valued personal autonomy.

Interpretations of individualism reflected ideas such as:

> The person who doesn't like a warm social life
>
> Individuals concern themselves only with their own interest

> An act done by one person who cares about himself and nothing else
> (A39, A48, A75)

These comments indicated that people should be concerned for others; these students equated individualism with selfishness. More enthusiastic interpretations of individualism were expressed by comments such as:

> Promoting individuals to care about themselves first
>
> The right to have a view and for others to respect that view
>
> Individualism - the essence of life, the ability to choose, feel, express, evolve, be, join, love, hate, fear, grow
> (A46, A17, A39)

The following indicate another concept of individualism:

> ... trying to hold your own opinions even though there is pressure to conform, say within a company. For example, I imagine that within BHP it would be very hard to maintain your belief in environmentalism
>
> ... not conforming to group behaviour or peer pressure
>
> ... how much of the manager in me is me and how much is what the organisation wants me to be?
> (A16, A39, A55)

One comment anticipates the theme of environmentalism. More importantly they all acknowledge the personal tension experienced by employees who disagree with the activities promoted by the corporation.

Many students in the Australian MBA espoused a belief in personal rights. They understood individualism as the foundation of personal autonomy. Some accepted and enjoyed this belief, whereas others felt that it promoted selfish behaviour. One above quote highlighted values-based conflicts between individual goals and those of employers. This MBA student experienced a dissonance between the self he felt himself to be, and the manager required by his organisation. In contrast with this, an older student saw that his individual 'desires and goals' might have to be suppressed for 'the benefit of the community

as a whole'. He referred to the privatisation of his health care employer and recognised tensions between community and individual needs (A87). He stated that privatisation would improve community service and disadvantage specific health-care professionals. This same student also stated that remuneration systems which benefited supervisors could be unjust to their team members. As the manager of a public sector unit, he acknowledged the contributions of junior and less-well-paid employees. He, like a minority of MBA students in Australia, reflected on individualism in a less self-interested way.

Most felt that individuals should be free to plot their life despite external pressures. Personal identity was seen to exist apart from the experiences of life. However, *Parveen* did not conceive his individuality in this way. He sought to avoid experiences which could 'damage' him spiritually or psychologically. *Parveen* described selfishness as his 'highest virtue'. His sense of self combined 'physical, emotional and a bit of spiritual [influence]'. Believing that 'whatever is written will be', he acknowledged the influence of karma, the theory of predestination as described in the Gita[89], yet stated that 'an individual must be responsible to himself'. He, that is all humanity, must first understand his 'strengths', his 'weaknesses', his 'shortcomings' so as to 'control' himself. Thus selfishness was the self-control required before one could 'worry about others'. *Parveen* indicated that his identity was threatened by employment which intruded on family time.

Hindu tradition promotes the pursuit of 'purity' as the true experience of 'self'. Individuals are responsible for their own identity (Ranganathananda, 1997, pp 59-61), so life should be a continued refinement of self. This understanding involves a fear of 'pollution'. In this understanding of personal identity, an individual is not fixed and is open to external influence. One's identity at death reflects the life one has led. And *Parveen* acknowledged the influence of karma, his belief that his next reincarnation would be determined by his previous life; to become

[89] For many Hindus, the *Bhagavad-Gita*- the story of Krishna- is their moral guide.

polluted would threaten his future existence[90]. The company he had developed had strong community involvement. He sought to balance responsibilities to employees, and beyond, with the competitive nature of his everyday reality.

Individualism was frequently described in terms of the ability to consume, compete and influence. Those who rejected this narrow conception expressed ambivalence about the contesting gains and losses associated with a self-centred goal. For example, as noted above several Thai international students criticised Western individualism, while they also accepted the desirability of competitive business objectives. Some Chinese international students questioned the desirability of being motivated by personal gain; recall *Yun-wei* and *Wendy* (chapter three). They hoped to contribute to China and improve conditions for their work colleagues. In contrast, several students from previously communist states appeared to have rejected any form of communal thinking. They were cynical about the ability of the state to promote altruistic or just ends (A57, A81). Those with power were portrayed as seeking benefit for themselves and their own families. Indian students in Australia displayed various understandings of individualism. Some, like *Parveen*, understood this goal by reference to a Hindu framework of personal and family goals. Other Indian students took a more socialist or Marxist perspective (A11, A14, A19). Individualistic goals were required for personal success, but provided a doubtful basis for living.

A minority, like *Ian*, wanted to use their individual strengths to maximise community and international benefits. He acknowledged the influence of religion, family, politics, education and work; in this he was more explicit than many MBA students, but not alone. Generally, understandings of individualism were expressed in terms of culture, religion or politics. Perhaps, given that

---

[90] In Hinduism 'pollution' threatens caste membership and therefore identity. 'Untouchability' involves the fear that those in 'unclean work' would 'pollute' others . See 'purity' and 'caste' in Paz (1997, pp 56-62). Ghandi (1999, p 394) states that the *Gita* ' may have promoted a horror of caste "pollution" '. The Western 'self' is seen as stable, not as group dependent.

discussions and individual interviews took place within the context of MBA programs, it was not surprising that some students and staff were reluctant to elaborate tensions between personal and corporate worlds.

The perspective on values in the Australian MBA

The Australian MBA provided the chance for diverse students to discuss whether, as graduates, they could reconcile conflicts in values. International students who had studied in Australia commented on the potential for a conflict between the needs of their private and corporate lives.

Australian students expressed concerns about how to balance the different aspects of an MBA's life. Those students with families often felt alienated because their personal beliefs conflicted with corporate priorities. They seemed to be juggling different value sets. Companies ranked market share and profitability above 'family friendly policies'.

MBA students or graduates without children seemed more enthusiastic about a corporate world of tough competition and status symbols. They accepted that indicators, such as the maximising of profit, should justify individual rewards. The group of MBA graduates who had worked for several years felt that such measurements were just. They espoused a world of clear-cut and unambiguous objectives. For example, one MBA graduate criticised 'two lecturers [for] presenting different points of view on the same topic' as this was 'not fair' to students who were 'there to pass and get a degree' (A30). He believed that the MBA existed to promote corporate financial success and that academics should teach students how to achieve this goal. He recalled a management report on personnel-levels commissioned by his employer during his MBA studies. When he reflected whether his proposal considered factors other than finance, he stated:

> I had no choice with this. The financial option was the one I had to run
> with. The focus was on the bottom line and financial viability. The
> company did not want to consider any other. I knew that when I wrote

the report. They had options which they had to address and discuss with the union (A30).

As the financial outcomes were all that mattered to the company, they were the only ones to consider. He displayed some discomfort when he described this incident, but it was not his job to consider those who would be made redundant. Both his work and the MBA had confirmed that one should not question the expectations of senior management. Raising value concerns within the MBA complicated students' search for outcomes. His comment provides an example of why *Robert,* the academic, had decried those disciplines within the MBA which ignored social concerns, such as pollution, because they were 'externalities'.

In contrast to this apparent acceptance of the distinctions between relevant financial criteria and 'externalities', an Australian MBA student, whose 'family [was his] first priority', described how he had shifted a factory's production-facilities offshore (A59). Though he had 'not [been] happy' overseeing the loss of over two hundred jobs, he had been financially 'well rewarded'. It was preferable to be 'the one retrenching people, rather than the ones being retrenched'. He empathised with those who lost their jobs, but felt powerless to contest decisions provoked by global pressures.

Within Australia, international MBA students could look at their home life so as to consider their values and individual identity. Several from China described major changes – associated with new government practices, centralised control and power exercised by elites – which made it difficult for an individual to uphold personal beliefs. A Chinese student felt her primary responsibility was to herself (A5). As a result of her MBA she hoped for a well-paid career which would ensure a better life and good education for her child. She planned to be 'loyal' to a future employer, because people who changed jobs 'too much' were not trusted; loyalty meant the intention to stay with a future employer 'for at least two years' before she moved on. She conveyed a self-centred pragmatism at odds with the altruism shown by *Wendy* and *Yun-wei* in chapter three. Several

Chinese students stated they had come to Australia to improve their families' material wealth and security.

Younger Indian students in Australia hoped to maintain family values despite the pressures of the workplace. Both Chinese and Indian international students indicated that individuals who had grown up in privileged nations could not understand the organisational systems of populous countries. In their view, those who had grown up in different cultures with different systems would not perceive personal potential in the way that, say, Australians would.

Religious and spiritual beliefs within the Australian MBA

Australian MBA students were less likely to discuss religion or spirituality than were those in India. This may have been due to the fear, which *Buddy* expressed (below), that religious beliefs could be divisive. In contrast, other Australians raised religion as a positive influence on secular values:

> I think, because of my Catholic background, that education should be
> about equality of opportunity (A100).

In a similar way, *Neal* (in chapter two) had also integrated the religious belief system of his childhood into a humanistic style of living and teaching.

While religious experiences within families were seen to shape personal values, most staff believed that spiritual topics were inappropriate for the MBA:

> Certainly religion and spirituality is important on a personal level. But I
> don't see an impact [on MBA teaching] in any major way. I'm teaching
> techniques, I'm teaching skills (A102).
>
> The less baggage [such as spiritual values] we can take into a classroom
> with us the better ... it's better for the students to decide what's
> appropriate for them, not what's appropriate for me ... (A 106).
>
> As a general rule, I would be surprised if any [MBA] students were to
> ask about my religion ... I don't think it would be appropriate [for me as
> a teacher to discuss it] and I think for most of them it wouldn't be
> appropriate behaviour (A98).

281

Many Australian students were equally reluctant to discuss religious or spiritual values within the MBA context.

Australian MBA academics and students were more likely to espouse values based on community, sometimes linked to church-based experiences of school and sport, such as *Genevieve* had described in chapter three. One academic stated that MBA group-project work instilled the need for values such as integrity and cooperation:

> It was a case of a [student] wanting to take a certain line, an unethical line, to get a project moving, and that person was advised about what the consequences of that action would be. [Only because of his] suggestion of a certain kind of approach, [he] ended up being advised on the ethical approach to the project (A94).

Helen, whose story is told at the end of this chapter, related how students from different cultures had made her realise that Christianity was the foundation of Australian values. Her judgement raised questions about MBA education – such as whether secularism is able to promote an inclusive approach to religion and culture; how secularism relates to multi-culturalism and diversity; whether a secular MBA could accommodate discussion of 'good', let alone 'evil'. Many Australians involved with the MBA found it difficult to present a Christian perspective to those who professed, for example, Hindu, Buddhist or humanist beliefs. The concern was that the practice of inclusiveness and tolerance might erode the cultural framework which made them possible.

Although religious principles have universal application, the practice of religion might be divisive. *Helen* found it difficult to balance religious principles and practice within a culturally-diverse classroom:

> I think we're denying spirituality, in a broader sense, and society is missing a sense of spirituality. It's difficult ...because we institutionalise religion, which is different from spirituality. In all the major religions, including Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, even Confucianism or Taoism, if you get down to the essence, there's not much difference. The universal is about responsible care of others and compassion, especially compassion.

In recognising the differences between religion and spirituality, *Helen* believed that universal principles were important to business education.

Some students declared strong spiritual, religious or philosophical commitments, while others did not. The Anglo-Celtic Australians often stated that religion was important to their past more than their present life. In contrast, even those Indian students of Hindu background who stated that they were not particularly religious, depicted their values and expectations through a language grounded in religion. However, there was a strong possibility that Indian international students perceived this religious influence as cultural, especially when they were studying in a country with a Christian heritage.

Perceptions of spiritual values within India

Spirituality is often discussed in India. So it was not surprising that Indian MBA students openly shared their religious and spiritual convictions. Those involved in Indian MBA programs discussed these beliefs more openly than students and staff in Australia. Although there were strong similarities in the courses taught in the two countries, many Indian students in the sub-continent – which included those who had undertaken a subject which highlighted traditional Indian philosophy – expressed their Indian identity as quite separate from the study which they were undertaking. They portrayed objectivity and critical thinking as the defining characteristics of the MBA. However, this strength coexisted with the program's failure to provide sufficient local insights (In2, In4, In14, In16).

Several Indian academics at a meeting which addressed the values of Indian MBA students (Bangalore, 15 February, 1997) suggested that MBA students from powerful and influential families would be more likely to dissent from business decisions which conflicted with their personally-held values. They stated that MBA students from less influential backgrounds would feel greater pressure to conform and be less willing to assert their values in the work place. This perspective supported the critique of Bharatiya Indian Management School

283

philosophy. Those who criticise the implementation of Indian management theories based on traditional vedantic texts, argue that the privileged members of high castes, possess greater social and corporate authority and consequently would seek to promote 'traditional Hindu' values and practices so as to maintain existing distinctions (D'Mello, 1999, p174). However, students interviewed in India, who fitted this elite category, described clear distinctions between what they could and would say in the workplace. Even MBA students from powerful Indian families acknowledged a gap between their privately held ethical values and those which were espoused within business.

Many Indian students, regardless of their personal circumstances, stated that the objectivity promoted by the MBA style of management education would equip them to deal with diverse people and situations in their future lives. Western management's focus on behaviour rather than individual motivation was seen to promote tolerance and desired outcomes (In8). Yet, many students, especially those who had not worked prior to their MBA study, seemed uneasy with the notion of management 'universals'. They wanted to learn how to apply business management the theories through local case studies, not exclusively American ones. Many students – both those who espoused Indian values derived from traditional texts and practices, and those who described themselves as more influenced by 'Western' values and beliefs – were sceptical of the usefulness of imported, non-contextualised business principles (In2, In 4, In6, In13, In15). They struggled to balance ethical justifications derived from Hindu, Christian and humanistic principles against Western management theory. The paradox – namely that the objective 'universal' aspects of MBA education was portrayed by students as both its strength and its weakness – is discussed more fully in the concluding chapter.

Indian perceptions of conflict between individual and corporate values

Companies recruit MBA graduates, whether in India or Australia, in an awareness of institutional hierarchies; students from elite management schools anticipate

being highly successful. Indian students, on the verge of graduation from prestigious Indian MBA programs, balanced their hopes of personal achievement against the expectations of their families and potential employers. Individual identity was discussed in terms of the values which influenced work and social responsibility. Students expected to experience value conflicts when they have to balance personal, family, business and social concerns.

Most of the MBA students in India gave highest priority to the responsibility which they had to family, parents and grandparents. While some expressed frustration, many accepted making their decisions on this basis. Friends were described as the second most compelling consideration after family. Personal aspirations would clash with the expectations of the work place and hopefully, some approaches learnt within the MBA would help to resolve these conflicts. For example, an older female engineering graduate (the prestigious degree held by many students in the elite Indian management schools) discussed how during the MBA, she had studied industrial relations (IR) which had prompted her to help employees and make workplaces more humane. She stated:

> Engineering [is] not a human point of view. [When one works] in IR –
> [one] can listen to people's troubles, they range from personal to work
> centred. [I am] naturally idealistic, IR can help address certain labour
> problems that have not been solved (In9).

She hoped to gain an IR role because she, unlike most male professional managers, wanted to help 'assembly line' workers. She described herself as both practical and altruistic; her role would increase staff loyalty in a company and therefore improve its profitability. Her MBA studies would give her the skills to manage workers as an end in themselves, not as a means to profit.

> Many perceived a potential conflict between balancing their private and
> corporate lives, their values with their ambition. As *Pushpa* said:

> [If I were to] join Seagrams, and then I say I am not going to give a
> bribe, then I'll be a misfit. ... So it is my responsibility to be aware. And
> I know I am expendable for a big company. If I start making comments
> about ethics, and all this, then they will shunt me off to some small place
> and ignore me. ... I would much rather join an organisation where I want
> to fit in ... a company which is predominantly ethical.

Several Indian students acknowledged that while they hoped to maintain family values, they would also be influenced by study and work:

> During the engineering degree I had a friend who was excelling in everything. He was the best student ... He had what I would call the killer instinct. ... That person was in a way very selfish ... treading over certain other people. ... I think both of us influenced each other's lives ... But after my first year [of the MBA] ... I rediscovered my father ... how he would react ... I found out that there is another right path. ... Plus we [were] also [helped] by a course [on self management in organisations] (In15).

The idea that graduates might have 'to suppress individual beliefs and values to compete' (In7) was distressing. The workplace would dictate the individual's capacity to conform (or not) to practices which students considered desirable:

> [It's a] problem when the values of home are not practised in the work place, need inner strength combined with value base. The complacency is bad; the tolerance is good (In13).

This student believed that individuals needed courage to pursue deeply-held values, but that they should also respect the rights of others to hold different views. He distinguished between tolerance and complacency. His MBA studies had taught him to tolerate different beliefs in the work place, but not to be complacent about undesirable actions.

The values which individuals applied at work came from their homes; the difficulty was in knowing when, and how, to apply them. A widely held belief was that 'mothers – [are] the source of personal values'. But how should MBAs apply such learnings in the workplace:

> ... the problem of conscience is knowing but not being able to follow through ... [because] sometimes the system dictated that undesirable behaviour ... was inevitable (In 2).

Personal conflicts were also related to the MBA. A group agreed that students 'would have to [cheat], in order to compete' (In 4). They described the reaction of their mothers, seen as ethical arbitrators, which ranged from 'being upset' through to 'pragmatic acceptance'.

The significance of personal responsibility was demonstrated by those students who hoped to work for local companies which supported a family lifestyle. Many traditional, family based, Indian corporations had 'colonies', namely employee residential estates, with quarters which could accommodate the extended family, and which provided a range of facilities including education, transport and medical services. The comment that 'parents [should] sacrifice their own needs for those of their children' recognised that loyalty to an employer might grow out of family responsibilities. The benefits of traditional 'colony' life might outweigh the pursuit of personal-promotion and status. Some students valued this appeal above that of transnational companies, which were portrayed as using financial rewards to motivate staff. In contrast, others saw that companies with clearly established outcomes and procedures would promote the personal integrity of their workers. This group disliked the prospect of employers who inferred their employees' morality from their behaviour, for example, equating smoking or drinking with moral decline (refer to ch 3 - a cultural perspective on the MBA).

How change affected personally-held values in India

Change could produce conflict. An MBA student in India stated that 'family values' were challenged by the individualism promoted by specific Western authors. He respected his parents, but he suspected that his father's values, which had prevented him from accepting bribes, had disadvantaged the family. This student wanted to live a good life, yet, felt caught between pressures that seemed impossible to balance in an ethical way:

> I expect and want [to seek my potential]. Picked up mostly from Western thought, Ayn Rand, Richard Bach. That is the kind of values that these books bring. I think the Indian culture has taught me to be more responsive to the needs of the society. I think I owe something to the society, which I think may not be very applicable as far as the West is concerned (In 16).

Like *Wendy*, in chapter three, he was influenced by imported fiction. In common with many students, he believed that Ayn Rand's form of individualism typified Western ideas. He felt responsible to himself (to achieve his own 'potential') and

to his family, but he stated that this goal should be pursued in an ethical way. The prospect of not being able to trust those whom he would have to negotiate with in business and society was distressing for him. Lacking his father's faith in people, he struggled to find a replacement. To him 'Indian values' were socially oriented, altruistic, but insufficient for planning one's life. In confusion, he appealed to 'sincerity' as his 'guiding principle'. He conveyed the stress of weighing private responsibilities against perceived public and corporate demands and swayed between a commitment to received-values and the individualism promoted by 'Western thought'. He ambivalently claimed to value peer recognition more than self-esteem, at the same time as he stated that Indian culture did not promote personal identity. His pragmatism about achieving an employer's ends was incompatible with his ethical values; he floundered between his rejection of traditional Indian culture, as it was too altruistic, and the Western choice of self-interest before social well-being.

Objectivity was perceived as a key goal of Western management theory. Some argued that it denied the relationships which underpinned Indian business. In contrast, others claimed that objectivity created opportunities because Indian society would become more open if competition were to be based on merit. An alternative perspective was that the model of 'the extended family transported into business' was both traditional and desirable. However, this paternalistic model was threatened by the extended influence of multi-national companies (MNCs). These different understandings of the influence of change, and how individual students would relate to them, were seen as themes which were important for MBA students. Being away from home and studying post-graduate management provided:

> the opportunity to rebel, to go towards things which you regard as more
> progressive, more in tune with the future. A future based on a more open
> economy, more capitalistic ... more objective (In16).

The West's desire to objectively judge behaviour was seen to help in managing people from other regions, classes or castes. But the dominant reaction to caste issues was that governments caused difficulties for the high-born when they set

employment quotas for the low-born or 'backward' castes. A contrasting viewpoint considered paternalism as valuable and that well-run organisations could be regarded as extended families. A third perspective, that bureaucratic hierarchies were immutable, often reflected a deterministic acceptance of caste.

Western writers might help students to develop personal values, or, Indian culture might promote respect for those who were neither family nor friends. These two viewponts might coexist in seemingly contradictory ways. For example, *Pushpa* stated that Western ideas, though often idealised and misunderstood, were at odds with traditional Indian culture. She stated that India's long engagement with the West, and its adoption of language and education, had deprived her of her cultural heritage. Western influences had become part of the Indian fabric; she half wished to return to an unsullied past.

Ethical and spiritual beliefs in India

Several in Indian management schools expressed strong religious convictions, while others stated that only a small minority of students would practise, let alone understand, the religious precepts which related to life beyond the family. Each student interviewed readily listed personally-held values, which included sincerity, gratitude, forgiveness, honesty, and loyalty; often loyalty and honesty were specified in a family context. These values bound self to family and friends. They often reflected stories told to children by grandparents.

MBA students in India doubted they could apply their ethical beliefs to a business world, although a course in Indian values had helped several to recognise that this was possible (In7, In10, In14). Acknowledged sources of inspiration included Gandhi, the great Indian epics and Western novels. Some discussed ethics in a broad social, political and philosophical context which included allusions to Marxism and regional culture (In2, In3, In5).

However, Indian academics[91] stated that different perceptions of autonomy between students from various universities could reflect class and financial advantages; students from poorer families would feel less empowered because of the major hurdles which they faced in a competitive business world. Indian MBA students calmly, if rather despondently, addressed the constraints they faced in pursuing values which were important to their identity.

A male student (In7) felt that traditional values, such as sharing, were difficult to maintain in modern society. Yet, successful modern business needed to acknowledge long-term relationships; he felt that profit had to be understood in this context. Ethical beliefs would assist work groups to be honest and industrious. Many students felt more able to influence their immediate work environment than society or the belief systems held by others. There were issues associated with blending the 'dispassionate' aspect of Western management theory with the happiness associated with traditional Indian teachings and the exercise of spiritual values.

The need to become mature adults and to resolve potential business conflicts raised issues of traditionalism and modernity. Some students discussed their own beliefs and commitments in an indirect way:

> I would frankly refuse to believe that there are 15 –20 % of us who are aware of [traditional] Indian thought. Most of us are urban Indians, have gone to convents, or public schools. I went to a convent and we didn't study Indian thought; really there are very few people who can access Indian philosophy on an intelligent level regarding life or work. Western philosophy is not something which we have been suddenly exposed to, it has been there and we have been incorporating it for quite a long time. In fact, frankly I feel more at home with that, than I do with Indian, because I have not been exposed to the Indian thing, nor [have] my parents. It is so diluted, [I] don't think as a spiritual tradition it is strong [*Pushpa*].

The perceived nexus between Indian and Western values was open to various interpretations: objectivity would help to resolve future conflicts between personal values and corporate life; the insight gained into Western values helped

---

[91] Bangalore meeting with MBA academic staff 15 February 1997

in the appreciation of Indian values. Several students praised the study of traditional Indian philosophy within the MBA:

> Our Indian values have not been publicised, they have not been taught down to us... As a matter of fact, 'til Indian values had been exposed [through an MBA study course on Indian culture and values] I did not know that they existed...While the West is becoming more aware of Indian values we are losing them (In14).

> Before ... I thought that many traditional Indian practices were ritualistic in nature rather than offering anything and I [still] think to a degree Indian culture has degenerated to this level (In8)

> [I] don't want to separate my personal and professional life. [I] don't want to be in the 'rat race'. But I am not typical. I would like to be satisfied both in my personal and professional life. Satisfaction will not come from a house, a car. [It] does not mean that I don't want them, but there will be a stage that whatever comes to me I don't want to fight for more (In15).

The final comment above recognised the tension between the public and the private domains. While he felt different from other students, he still had basic needs. The issue was how individuals defined sufficiency:

> [I am] not able to think about duties and responsibilities to society and the world at large. ... I am pessimistic about the future, breaking away from the past, going towards capitalism... even if there is a change I believe it should be capitalism with a human face, with a human and social objective. The human face is being denied, that is why I am pessimistic. I am a loner in that sense of my generation. ... It is my challenge to try and promote that social kind of face ... Facilitation [bribery] definitely I would not do it, but maybe in the context, the pressures would be so much, it might influence the price that I have to pay, maybe involve a conflict with company policy (In7).

His comment that India should not lose sight of the first independent government's vision of the 'human face' of democracy conveyed a social responsibility which sat uneasily with his ambivalence about unethical practices, such as bribery, in the future.

Indian traditional values were described by some as 'backward' and inappropriate for competitive MBAs, while others speculated that affluent 'middle' and 'upper-class' students reflected an international life remote from Indian circles. Success in business would detract from a life well lived because of the clash between

corporate and individual values. Generally the students anticipated that the pressure to succeed would take priority over personal and family values in their careers. Some looked to the law to provide ethical guidelines, while others recognised that there would always be 'legal loopholes' which individuals would have to personally interpret. The hope was that if MBAs had to initially compromise their values at work, as they gained autonomy they would be less pressure to behave unethically. Yet no students conceded that initial experiences could erode their values.

The overall discussion of values, spirituality and religion demonstrated the diversity of experience and belief – which testified to traditional culture, colonial history, religious, regional, class and caste differences – in a society where most students left home to undertake MBA studies, and were exposed to powerful media influences. However, students from both Indian universities hoped their future lives would accommodate personal values.

Environmental concerns - students in the Australian MBA

The distinction between private and public values was a source of tension within the Australian MBA. There was not so much a sense of certainty, as a confusion as to what could be publicly expressed. Both students and academics espoused a strong belief in ecological issues; a belief which many felt disinclined to openly share. Some expressed an almost spiritual conception of environmentalism. There was a perception that environmental concerns were subservient to the demands for business growth and profitability. This value was often seen as private; Australian students tended to equate environmental concern with a privately held religious or spiritual belief – to be seen as 'green' would be 'a career limiting move'. Australians largely ignored their country's recurrent droughts; perhaps their urban background blinkered them to the need to balance conservation with development. One group defined the 'essential meaning' of sustainable development in terms of economics. These students did not consider that business should adopt an ecological perspective. Few Australian students

felt that business should address long-term sustainable development; most were more doubtful and critical. The general issue of 'sustainability for future generations' produced agreement with little indication of how this could or should apply to business.

The following MBA comment represented a minority opinion in this context:

> The concentration of wealth has allowed a minority to plunder available resources. Those groups which protested were 'treated as the enemy' while those who polluted used public relations to convey themselves as 'the saviours, the providers of jobs'. Environmental ills were caused by 'our selfishness, our appetite for material goods and our greed' ... We are using up the world. As we are trying to satisfy our unlimited material desires, we make very serious threats to the world's ecological system ... The cost associated with pollution, as a result of rapid economic development, may far outweigh the benefit of economic development (A86).

An older student praised an Australian company which had produced acid batteries above the environmental requirements set by government, and also increased its profit. He attributed this change to a paradigm shift about how to address environmental concerns (A82). The dominant need was to increase company profits, as expressed by the following:

> Most students who hear a lecture from a 'Greenie leftist' say, 'this isn't helping our business skills'. Most don't want to hear about alternatives. They want to increase profitability. You need to have skills. This is not an ideal world. I believe in the environment, I'm passionate about green-house gas emissions. It's not going to get me a pay rise though ... I have to balance my personal life and concerns with my ... working life (A30).

To which another responded with, 'we listen, but we say, "that's life" '.

A graduate turned MBA teacher wanted companies to turn threats, such as those created by the Environmental Protection Authority, into business opportunities. This represented his stated environmental convictions (A32). Whereas a female graduate wished that the MBA had addressed and 'proper[ly] follow[ed] through on [environmental] issues'(A29).

Ian was one of the few MBA students whose work involved clear ecological goals. For the majority, environmental consciousness involved personal practices, such as recycling glass and paper or using cotton bags so as not to collect 'thousands of plastic [supermarket] bags'. These were the only influences an individual could have. Globalisation was characterised by some as rich countries exploiting the people and the physical resources of the least powerful. In this perception, the rich used economic pressure to force poor countries to trade their natural resources for short-term gains. The problem of exploitation had no solution. Many students felt disempowered by large, immutable and unstoppable systems.

An Indian international student in Australia (A11) stated that foreign capital should be harnessed to improve technology and contribute to a more efficient use of Indian resources and less polluting industries; foreign companies should assist India to generate power in environmentally sensitive ways. Multinational companies should not be licensed to compete with Indian foods and drinks.

Traditional cultures which prized 'the policy of giving something in return' and showed 'respect and concern for nature' were under threat (A72). This Indian student anticipated that concern for the environment would become 'the principal determinant ... of business enterprises'. Both stated that leaders in business and society should address environmental issues.

In contrast, *Parveen* expected that increased power consumption would parallel the degradation of India's air and water quality; he described this as a predictable side-effect of development and progress. He, like several Australians, recognised environmental protection at a personal level of behaviour. but he, like most, ignored the structural and societal issues, such as the depletion of resources and the displacement of communities to produce electricity. Broad environmental protection policies would emerge only when a company's reputation was threatened. Only a minority believed that consumer pressure could address, and consequently resolve, such issues.

Several Chinese international students explicitly differentiated themselves from the majority of their fellow students, who, in their opinion, ignored the environment; they described their own generation as more concerned with personal gain than long-term considerations. Some international students acknowledged that Western education, and the experience of clean air and drinkable water, had helped them to realise the importance of sustainable development. *Yun-wei* commented that larger issues, such as caring for the environment, would not be addressed in China until the loss of trust, caused by the Cultural Revolution, could be overcome.

Australian academics and the environment

So what of the academics who taught these students? Their comments ranged from 'sustainable development was 'the issue of the age' to a criticism of education 'which works in a mechanistic way'. One academic condemned the use of a financial model 'created last century by economists to excuse themselves from the problem of ... the consequences of waste and degradation created by organisations' (A97). He recalled how this model had caused the Yarra River in the nineteenth century to become 'an open sewer...a free zone in which to exit waste'. He encouraged his students to adapt this financial model so that – the previously ignored – environmental 'externalities are [considered as] internalities'.

Another academic who taught a social issues program reflected:

> I have only ever seen [sustainable development] in terms of
> environmental issues, which they [MBAs] were seeing only in corporate
> and economic terms - what you can afford to do and keep on doing.
> Well I suppose it can mean that... And it seemed that it was a phrase that
> they were familiar with, but with a different meaning from the way that I
> interpret it (A110).

Many perceived the environment to be outside the scope of their subjects; this compartmentalisation distressed some, was accepted by others.

The academic who stated that 'environmentalism – to some people it's religious. ... but it's not a fad, it's here for the long haul'(A100) reflected a view which was not his personal conviction. A minority of academics and students disclosed deep environmental convictions with reluctance, as if they were expressing religious beliefs in the context of business education.

General environmental attitudes in Australia

Several staff and students espoused the promotion of ecology as long as it was compatible with personal, corporate and political practices. Perhaps there was an implicit fear that to be labelled as an environmentalist could damage career progress; the creation of laws to stop the degradation of air and water provided an acceptable solution which did not involve individual heroism. In contrast with the few who declared it was the most crucial issue for business and the world, many indicated that their MBA education had not raised questions relating to the promotion of consumption, the distribution of wealth or the limitations on water and arable land.

These concerns were summed up by the student who conceptualised sustainable development in its economics guise; for him it related only to the supply of finance, return on investment and the availability of markets. The underlying assumption implied an ever-growing wealth based on infinite resources; it did not question the desirability of lifestyles based on acquisition and material consumption – in either Western or so-called less-developed countries – for the sake of long-term sustainability.

Environmental concerns in India

Environmentalism was portrayed as a Western preoccupation by MBA students in India. Television and print campaigns run by the UN and the World Wildlife Fund provided reliable information. Students felt frustrated and powerless by

their expectation that employers would largely ignore the environment. Some religious Hindu students expressed dismay at the denigration of traditional Indian insights about the relationship of humankind to the landscape.

These students wanted a life of material comfort, but several planned to 'leave the rat race' in the future so as to pursue values which would satisfy their lives. One student reflected on how the MBA program addressed values:

> [re] these issues of society and the world in our education ... Maybe ... we are ... taking something like Adam Smith's theory of the invisible hand ... to some degree that works, and to quite some degree it doesn't. Maybe in India, mostly it doesn't ... We're not obeying pollution norms, providing bad quality products to the consumer, cheating on tenders and so on. That ... is happening quite often. We are not being taught these things, we are not developing our orientation towards these things. Some companies have developed a very strong sense of ethics, a very strong sense of contribution to society and the world. ...We are not dealing with them in any courses...maybe ...[some specific courses in ethics] are trying to make people aware of what they should be thinking while they are making decisions, aware of the responsibility which they have to society. ... as of now, I feel we are quite insensitive to the whole issue (In14).

This student believed that management education should promote the human element in business. A reliance on mechanistic decision making and economic concepts such as markets and competition ignored the environment.

Environmental matters were important, as were labour market considerations and the recognition of the need to adopt labour intensive approaches rather than expensive machinery which utilised less labour (In1). Business should not harm other fellow beings or the environment. Consequently, managers were responsible to care for the environment; yet, this student realised that if the company 'spews waste, his job demands that such activity be continued for productivity'. His environmental beliefs would have to be sacrificed because good managers had to pursue profitability.

A female MBA student in India (In9) commented that everyone recognised issues such as pollution, damaged biosphere, loss of trees but believed that they could

not act alone. Her solutions lay with people in 'the big multinationals' or perhaps it was 'time for another Churchill or Gandhi'.

Students believed in the need to respect the environment and constrain consumption. Some had found these ideas in Western theory and others had rediscovered their existence in traditional Indian thought. In either case, despite the priority of such values, the pressures of a corporate world would constrain them when they were first employed as MBA graduates.

Individuality and spirituality in the MBA

In relation to MBA education, religion and spirituality were provocative issues. However, as individuals' deeply-held beliefs influenced not only their sense of identity but also their relationships to their communities and the broader world it was a theme which justified attention. Both academics and students varied in their convictions about whether religious or spiritual beliefs should inform decisions made within the MBA or in management more generally. For many, the environment was neither a passion, nor an internal touchstone. Individuals considered their commitment to the environment in a range between legal compliance within a strictly business framework, a sense of social or civic responsibility and beliefs which defined how personal identity related to all creation.

The individual narratives

The following narratives include *Parveen*, an international student who planned to return to India after his MBA studies, and two Australians. One of the Australians, *Buddy*, was a student who had grown up in North America. The second, *Helen*, was an academic whose life and work reflected the influence of Asian values. These three illustrate how those involved in the MBA portrayed their personal identity, including how individuals perceived themselves as civic

and social beings. All three demonstrate what Carroll (1998) typified as 'soul' by how they integrated work with their overall life and identity.

Parveen

Parveen held a Master of Arts in English literature from a prestigious Indian university. He had decided to study the MBA as a result of a business-relationship with an academic who taught at the university where he eventually enrolled. He had embarked on the MBA to gain 'technical' skills, such as accounting and business computing, which would help him to achieve business goals. Self-sufficiency, described as his most important value, was seen to reflect both his family's beliefs and Indian culture; he demonstrated a robust sense of individualism and accepted competition as part of life, as long as it accommodated his family. Parents were to be loved and respected and, as a consequence, sons had duties to fulfil. The loss of balance between work and family life had led him to establish his own business in India, despite the fact that he had taken his child on occasional client visits when the grand-parents were unavailable. His wife also worked, and they had both decided that their daughter's formative years were too important to be spent in a creche.

Parveen recalled a quote from 'Wuthering Heights', namely 'the world without my family would be a mighty stranger', to describe how he treasured his wife and daughter. He could not imagine how one could live well without a family. *Parveen* conveyed a world-view where traditional Hindu practices had been moulded by the military tradition of his father and grandfather, and influenced by the experience of English-style education. He acknowledged a concept of karma, which recognised that one's being would continually be influenced throughout life[92]. His own business promoted balance between work and family for both himself and his employees. *Parveen* believed that managers' duty to staff came before profit. There was a moral responsibility for workers' safety, especially

---

[92] Defined by Sri Aurobindo (1997, p 201) as 'action; work; the principle of cause and effect in human life; accumulated seeds of past action'.

when the law did not preclude dangerous work-practices. He contrasted his management style, admittedly within a white-collar environment, with that demonstrated by other Indian companies:

> [Regarding] workplace safety. It's very important for government to be involved ... If organisations are left [on] their own, ordinarily, they wouldn't worry much about that. If there is a body constantly monitoring, you certainly have a better work environment for employees.

He criticised companies, such as his previous employer, which pressured their workers to work excessive hours. He had chosen not to offer bonuses, or threaten lay-offs when he had run his own small business in India because he considered such actions played on workers' insecurities and needs.

According to *Parveen*, 'healthy competition' was 'good for everyone'; one had to 'compete at school, compete to get a house ... [as] society is based on competition'. The world involved 'the survival of the fittest'. Each adult had the responsibility to become 'strong', to 'keep [one's] self fit and healthy, mentally and physically ...[so as to be] capable of ... achieving those goals'.

Individuals must first be 'selfish', because only self-interested individuals could fulfil their primary family responsibilities:

> In terms of responsibility, selfishness is the highest order, [but] not at the cost of others. How can you work without self? I have never accepted the idea of being selfless.

People had to be physically, emotionally and spiritually developed before they could 'do good' for others. He shared a conviction, common to 'most religions', that one should 'do good to your neighbour'. From the perspective of being in the middle phase of life, he believed that work should acknowledge human, social and environmental responsibilities[93]. His duties and responsibilities to his immediate and extended-family as a 'householder' involved concern for material

---

[93] In marking these transitions in his life, *Parveen* demonstrated a Hindu conception of the periods of man. See Chetanananda (ed) (1994) pp 247-54

possessions, but this would change in the future. As a husband and father, he accepted his duty to provide the appropriate clothes, housing and education which matched his family's social status, yet, he hoped to die in a way which acknowledged the supremacy of his spiritual concerns. *Parveen* acknowledged a traditional Hindu conception of the role of the aged and the last stage of life[94]. Despite the fact that he was 'not particularly Hindu', *Parveen* anticipated that the 'the most important thing' at the end of life, would be his knowledge and practice of spirituality.

Parveen had sponsored public rubbish bins because he wanted his company to contribute to society. He did not share staff fears that people would spit in these bins, thus, defile the company's logo and, by implication, its reputation. Yet, on the larger scale, he accepted that the environment would deteriorate as a result of increased demands on energy and water. Progress meant increased urban populations, more high-rise buildings; as urban populations grew, they required technology, such as air-conditioning, to compensate for a lifestyle divorced from nature. *Parveen* believed individuals should consider the environment, but he did not address threats beyond the level of the streetscape.

Even though he had felt that twelve years' work should mean that he 'did not need' to learn more about business, *Parveen* was glad that his brother-in-law had encouraged him to study the MBA. The first and major 'appeal' was the opportunity to study in 'such a beautiful country'. However, after he commenced the MBA in Australia, he realised that there was 'a lot which [he] needed to know which would be really useful', such as accounting.

This subject had helped him to recognise that companies had to know how to 'go about making profits over a period of time'. As someone who was older, experienced in business, and strongly committed to the pursuit of human values, he believed the program would help him to operate his business both successfully

---

[94] Smart (1996, p185) notes the Hindu tradition of supporting marriage for the nurture of children, followed by a period of greater spiritual focus as a prelude to death.

and ethically. The technical skills which he hoped to develop through the MBA would assist him to achieve both goals. For *Parveen*, good business relied on appropriate business skills and knowledge, combined with ethical judgement. Success in business required both.

Buddy

In contrast, *Buddy* was a self-employed management consultant with an engineering degree, whose future wife was studying the MBA at another university. *Buddy* wanted the degree because 'those three letters' would help him to compete for consulting work. He personally supported community groups such as the St John's Ambulance, and cycled to conserve both the environment and his finances. He had mounted a campaign to involve MBA students in volunteer work for charities. *Buddy* was frustrated because MBA students did not understand the 'idea of community'. Yet, at the same time, he described himself as highly individualistic, which he defined as:

> ... not being afraid to stand out and say 'no', and saying 'this is the way
> that it should be done'... being an individual even though you are a
> member of a team... you can't really be a valuable resource if you don't
> make any individual contribution.

This suited the consulting-style of work which he claimed did not promote team-skills or value interdependence. As he said:

> ... cooperation - that's been a big issue, I know I have problems with
> that, I've been an individual most of my life, and I've consulted most of
> my life, but I have difficulties dealing with people, accepting other
> people's ideas.

The MBA should not only help his career, but also improve his ability to relate on a personal level. Because 'the MBA has a reputation of breaking up relationships' he also viewed his studies as a way to protect his relationship with his partner. He presented as a highly independent person, who worked alone, and who hoped to improve the way he interacted with others. He depicted successful interactions in terms of 'flow' and stated that the MBA had taught him that he

302

needed to 'censor' what he said at times in order to promote cooperation. As a consultant, he had never needed to make a long-term commitment to an organisation, and consequently he had never learnt the necessity of 'getting along' with those he disagreed with. He described himself as someone with few friends of his own age.

Many people saw him as 'right wing' and essentially conservative. For example, *Buddy* had alienated an MBA academic when he had presented material from the H R Nicholls society in a major assignment. *Buddy* had criticised the extremist views of this group, yet he recognised that some of their ideas merited consideration. He was passionate about the environment, but preferred individualistic rather than systemic solutions to problems. He described his attitude to the environment:

> ... every time I fill up my car I think about fossil fuels. I like to drive
> [but] ... I prefer walking or riding my bicycle, even against taking the
> tram, in fact I spend as much on tram tickets as I do maintaining my
> bicycle. But it is a break-even position, so I feel that I am doing the
> ecology thing. I try to recycle, but then you're left with too much stuff.

Some people, including his partner, stated that he was just being a 'cheap skate'. But for *Buddy*, the fact that these practices did not save money proved the strength of his personal belief. On a larger scale, he understood sustainable development as both an economic and an environmental concept, because 'to be realistic' it had to deal with both aspects. He most respected those people who practised responsibility to the environment. He described friends who saved roof water to make their back-garden 'a rain forest'; it was 'a real paradox' because it looked 'a mess' but was 'ecologically sound'. He found it a 'pleasure to go there'.

He criticised globalism for leading to the retrenchment of older Australian workers. But his broader international concern was expressed as 'compassion for people in third world countries' whose living standards were dictated by poor wages and conditions. *Buddy* claimed that he did not understand what economic

rationalism was about, but thought that it was probably associated with the deregulation of markets and finance, and the promotion of competition. He saw himself as a paradox, in a world of paradoxes.

Buddy, who had been educated in North America, expressed surprise that religion was largely ignored in social and business interactions in Australia. But he perceived that religious differences could still provoke underlying hostilities. He attributed the arguments which he observed in Australian pubs and at the football, to long-standing tensions between Catholics and Protestants. He did not consider himself as religious, but he felt that this heritage may have caused academics and students to fear any acknowledgment of religion in the MBA. *Buddy* felt the MBA program should promote values, not merely a narrow economic focus; for example, MBA courses should involve students in volunteer work which exposed them to the problems of the poor. For his own 'self respect' he had undertaken such work with a group of elderly men in a hostel. He combined a self-professed right-wing agenda, which included a belief in national conscription, with a critical perspective on corporate values, and a passion for the environment and the community.

In *Buddy*'s view religious affiliations could cause social divisiveness within Australia. Perhaps he was reflecting on the social norms which discouraged Australians from discussing politics, religion or sex. He presented his sense of social duty as divorced from religion, but based on charity. His personal motivation to contribute to society seemed quite distinct from his expectations about the social responsibilities of business. He seemed highly individualistic, but also somewhat isolated.

Helen

This MBA teacher recognised different social constraints from those which *Buddy* assumed. *Helen* characterised Australia as a Christian country, displaying its religious heritage. Overseas teaching had given her the opportunity to explore

Asian religion and philosophy. *Helen* declared that her personal beliefs were at odds with the culture of the MBA.

Asian philosophy and practice had rekindled *Helen*'s belief in the dignity of all human beings. Yet, she stated it was important for Australia to maintain its Christian foundations because the core Australian values of equity, openness and social justice could lose currency if they were disregarded by management education. Even though most Australians 'would not consider themselves religious', *Helen* described it as a country where 'we draw strongly on Christian values'. Australia was more influenced by the idea of 'fairness' not the 'puritanical sort of notion' which flavoured America. *Helen* felt the concept of individualism was crucial because it underpinned 'most of the management theory which came out of the United States'. Australia was also individualistic, but in a different way. But when she came to teach management theory to international students, she felt they confronted 'a huge gap' between 'the theory and what is reality for them'. This resulted in her:

> ... trying to spend most of my time bridging that gap, which is almost impossible without some more theory being developed. ...It seems to me that there are lots of people in transnational companies, who are from different cultural backgrounds, where they are experiencing these gaps between reality and theory.

Management theory was inappropriate for many students, and for international business practice, because it built on individualistic assumptions which were essentially American. She used the example of Buddhism in Thailand, which involved a 'different notion of connection to people'. She felt that the religious 'undercurrent' was as strong in Australian culture as it was in Thailand. She admired those countries where modern realities were interpreted in the light of traditional religious philosophies. The Australian government should promote 'fairness', in the way that Buddhist economics had addressed the need to look after all parties and to promote 'non-consumption and moderation'. She was concerned that in Australia:

> We're denying spirituality, whatever that might mean in a broader sense,
> and society ... is missing out. ... Whatever they're saying individually, I
> think that what's missing is a sense of spirituality. ... institutionalised
> religion, for me anyway, is different from spirituality.

Helen was clear that her understanding of spirituality was not church-bound. There was 'not much difference' in 'the essence' of all the major religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. In essence:

> ... the universal thing is about responsible care for others and
> compassion, I suppose, not sympathy, but compassion ...

Problems arose when 'shonky people' used religious rituals to 'rip people off'. She separated what she saw as universal from 'institutionalised' religion, because she felt the latter could be misused. For her, teaching was a daily experience of 'treating others with kindness and breaking down the power notion that we are so enmeshed with'. Yet, at the same time, the search to find personal 'dignity in respect for others' remained 'a continual struggle'. As a result of teaching international students, she had discovered that 'personal relationships were much more important than other things'. She wanted to promote that insight 'at a business level ... [to encourage MBA students] to have respect for people as people, not as a mechanism for getting more money'.

Helen felt frustrated that the academic business culture of Australia considered it was inappropriate to discuss spiritual values. She was also concerned that:

> ... when push comes to shove there is some notion that there will be some
> fairness. People seem to know when someone has gone too far. They
> may not do anything about it, but there is a ... taken-for-grantedness
> about what is acceptable, which may not get conveyed. ... It's implicit
> and it's culturally understood, but not explicit. So when we are teaching
> this stuff, that is one of the themes which gets lost.

These comments reflected her two central preoccupations. The first was that American theory did not present or confirm Australian values. Many 'taken-for-granted' Australian values were 'not even recognised' and could be, consequently, lost. But she was also concerned, with regard to teaching international students, that the implicit would be ignored. Those students who

306

had not grown up in a culture could misunderstand the context in which the theory operated. She used the example of:

> ... promoting business and management as competition above all, and yet the reality is that's not the case. [Competition] was not simply an economic concept ... And so a great deal of energy is put into trying to make that concept more like reality... but all it's doing is creating another set of inequities down the track ... between the private and the public.

In other words, *Helen* feared that MBA education gave students false perceptions of the values which made Australian society desirable. Outsiders could not detect the difference between what made the society operate and the theory which they were taught. If international students admired aspects of the Australian lifestyle, they could return home in the belief that the theories studied in the MBA produced desirable outcomes. And *Helen* believed that many desirable aspects of Australia, such as a respect for individuals, resulted from a philosophy which was threatened by the simplistic promotion of economic models. She anticipated that the denigration of spiritual heritage would lead to future inequities. *Helen* had:

> 'take[n] the line that it is no longer appropriate for business to take just an economic focus. ... [Students] need to move beyond believing that economics is the only responsibility that they have to society.

Her teaching style was 'fairly interactive, at times as a facilitator, especially on contentious topics such as ethics [and the] behaviour' of managers. Experiencing how other societies related religious principles to business had prompted *Helen* to consider whether Australia could do the same thing:

> Just as for those international students whose culture is structured on religion, so is ours. In Thailand much of the way they do things is done in the context of ... Buddhist philosophies. I found a book on Buddhist Economics [in a Thai airport] ... saying there needs to be a middle way ... to look after all parts of societies, not just increasing economic value. It talked about non-consumption, moderation, contentment. It's saying 'yes, we all need economic growth but a small amount will be sufficient for all of us'.

Yet she doubted whether a book on 'Christian marketing' would be a best seller in Australia or America. *Helen* feared that Australian core-values were at risk of being lost. She expressed these concerns as someone, raised as a Christian, whose personal values and spiritual practice were influenced by Asian

philosophies. She wanted to 'incorporate' some of her 'own values' into her teaching because she felt that MBA teaching should promote social concerns. Yet, it would be 'very difficult' to step outside the ideas which were 'currently in vogue' both within the university and society more broadly. As she said:

> I think my most difficult tension is in my administrative meetings role ...
> It's much more difficult in an organisational sense of promoting those
> sort of values; they get over-run so easily with this economic paradigm.

She judged that if she voiced her disquiet, she would be grouped with those who were regarded as naive. Those like her, who critiqued business on social grounds, evoked the reaction within the university that 'we need to get real, [because] we're in the real world now'. She was not alone - 'whole groups of us in universities are having to conform'. But those who thought differently were perceived as 'disloyal'. Academics who espoused critical beliefs could be excluded from the 'team'. One significant difference between the university and business was that academics were meant to have freedom to disagree, but she doubted that universities —which had become dominated by the pursuit of economic growth – would listen to dissidents.

She feared that voicing her beliefs could provoke negative implications for herself, the course and the university. Issues relating to values represented potential 'conflicts between public and private' where she judged that she was out of step and would have to 'tip toe quietly'. The relationship between spirituality and social justice was very important to her, but like *Neal* (in chapter two) she had decided to voice these beliefs largely within the classroom. But she had seen that the personal was political, and had become self-censoring about how decisions were made within the faculty and the university. Because of the risks associated with disloyalty, human dignity and social justice were raised only within her teaching. *Helen*, who was mid-career, also illustrated generational influences on Australian academics. She had security of tenure, but aspired to progress further within the university hierarchy. Some staff, who were older and more demonstrably political and spiritually aware, displayed these convictions in their teaching and administrative roles. Perhaps these older academics were more

prepared to demonstrate a sense of a purpose, in and beyond the university, because they sought no further promotions.

Conclusion

Of the three, *Parveen* stood out as the most traditionally religious. He acknowledged the importance of his religious background in the framing of his goals; his sense of personal identity reflected India's complex history and culture. The precedence which *Parveen* gave to family responsibilities conformed with traditional Hinduism. However, his belief in a non-traditional role for women, was at odds with those who promote Indian 'Brahminical systems and assumptions of knowledge' (D'Mello, 1999). *Parveen* merged various cultural influences. He constantly used English literature to convey his emotions, at the same time as he drew on traditional Hindu principles. As an Indian, it was perhaps not unexpected that his view of religion would differ from that of Anglo-Celtic Australians. *Parveen*'s attitude to spirituality recalled Ralston Saul's perception that Eastern religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, 'are still carried by strong belief', in contrast to 'Christianity in the West [which] has been reduced to a social phenomenon' (Ralston Saul, 1993, p32).

Parveen's beliefs influenced his roles as a parent, a husband and a manager. He wanted to balance work and family commitments. *Parveen* was a man with a strong sense of personal identity who recognised his spiritual needs. Although he praised selfishness, he was not narrowly self-interested. He desired material success for himself and his family and well-being for those he managed, and in his old age he aspired to spiritual goals; these goals reflected that his sense of self would change over his life. *Parveen* placed emphasis on the increased technical proficiency he would gain through the MBA, yet he managed his own life, business and community involvement in ways which demonstrated respect for others.

Buddy – who distrusted espoused-religion –had tried to introduce voluntary community work and charitable support within the MBA. He had hoped that if such behaviour became routine for MBA students, they would introduce it within organisations after they graduated. He espoused business philanthropy.

Helen conveyed a blending of East and West which parallelled that of *Parveen*, but in the opposite direction. While she recognised that religion could evoke tensions, she did not avoid it in the way that *Buddy* did. But her comments about identity within the university recalled Duncan's (2000) comments about those academics who felt alienated by the preoccupation with economic theory, specifically competition.

Individualism was important for all three. For *Parveen*, it represented that essential 'selfishness' which meant that only he could manage his life and fulfil his responsibilities. *Buddy* struggled to balance his desire to become cooperative against the difficulties he associated with being personally 'too individualistic'. For *Helen*, individualism had strong cultural overtones; she understood nuances of difference between its implications in Australia and America, and worried that Asian students could be misled by management theories which ignored such subtleties.

But all three conveyed a strong sense of self, and perceived that their identity involved giving to, and learning from, others. All three, in varying degrees, reflected Greenleaf's and Carroll's belief that meaning involved the search for fulfilment beyond the material.

These narratives indicate that there were individuals within the MBA whose sense of personal identity and beliefs about business responsibility reflected Carroll and Greenleaf. A sense of spirituality compatible with Greenleaf's (1998) servant leadership was evident in several academics and students. As likewise was Carroll's (1998) claim that spirituality in the West was being experienced through community associations and the celebration of nature.

How did the MBA influence a sense of identity and personal responsibility? Hall's ideas about the domains of identity (1996) were especially reflected by those mainland Chinese students whose experience of the MBA was enriched by students from throughout the Chinese diaspora. The conjunction of management studies, the Australian lifestyle and the freedom to explore traditional beliefs promoted an integration of spiritual and philosophical beliefs with their expectations of how they would take on their management responsibilities. This contrasted with those Indian MBAs in India who found it difficult to anticipate how they could apply their spiritual beliefs to the competitive world of business. And Australian MBAs, although coming from several different religious traditions, largely experienced the same sort of split between the spiritual identity associated with their childhood and their desire for a secure career. On the whole, the strength of business pressures discouraged the integration of personal beliefs within corporate roles. Perhaps it was most surprising that students who had been discouraged from exploring traditional philosophies, such as the Chinese, gained insights into the beliefs which underpinned family and social practices. But, in contrast, other Chinese students largely maintained their pursuit of family wealth and security which had initially drawn them to the MBA.

Hall's concept of personal domains helps address Sinclair's claim that MBA students need and desire 'moral sensibilities' which promote alternative business practices (1999, p17). Broadly there was a recognition that values-based beliefs such as spirituality and environmentalism were important to personal identity. However, both staff and students were reluctant to associate these values with their MBA persona. While several expressed such values within the classroom, the majority considered this to be an essentially private aspect of personal identity. Even if these beliefs were strong, discretion and ambition caused them to remain unheard.

The findings reflect a denial of Solomon's (1992) 'holism' more than a confirmation of Jackall's (1988) corporate 'moral mazes'. There was a

demonstrated lack of the commitment, or courage, to apply personally-held values to management issues. The minority exemplified the personally sustainable ethics which Carroll (1998) and Greenleaf (1998) argue are derived from transcendental or metaphysical insight. There was a widespread feeling that the values associated with personal identity did not apply to the MBA, and corporate, life. And many felt saddened and frustrated by this split. Only those such as *Ian* (see chapter five) exhibited the integrity, the courage to voice their opinions, which allowed them to dissent. But he was fortunate because his beliefs were congruent with his workplace.

Even the concept of individualism reflected that there was no singular sense of certainty within the MBA. The 'Babel', described by Collin, although muted, was apparent when individuals were given the private opportunity to express it. Deeply-held convictions, which reflected higher, or spiritual, belief systems were widely considered inappropriate to be raised within the MBA.

The spiritual beliefs, described as centrally important to personal identity by some MBA students and staff, were typically neither traditional nor conformist, and distinct from those held by their parents. They reflected Carroll's (1998) claim that new understandings of spirituality were evolving to provide a sense of meaning and purpose. The staff who expressed such beliefs were reluctant to present anything more than a humanist perspective within their teaching or administrative responsibilities. Their fear of provoking any form of religious division, or being labelled as religious or spiritual, seemed a significant deterrent to open discussion.

Many staff and some students, especially Anglo-Celtic Australians, stated that the public examination of religious or spiritual beliefs could be socially divisive. There were acknowledged difficulties in discussing such beliefs within universities in a culturally-diverse society. This raised the question of whether Australian secularism exists on a platform of denial, where individuals may believe what they will, as long as they do not introduce their beliefs into the

classroom. Australia's history of immigration was acknowledged by comments which characterised divisions in terms of religious differences, such as those between Protestants and Catholics. There was a fear that society was threatened when individuals sought to promote beliefs, especially those pertaining to doctrine. In this perspective, the expression of strong spiritual belief in the classroom could appear to use academic authority to oppress students' right of conscience.

But, perhaps the most compelling concern of academics was that beliefs based on faith, especially those which are described as spiritual, could be held in fundamentalist and potentially anti-intellectual ways. Academics generally believed that education should promote calm, measured deliberation; there was a fear that discussion of spirituality could evoke emotive, ill-considered and divisive comments. Many students and staff seemed to prefer to sequester spiritual beliefs from academic life. The implicit threats to civilised debate and secular principles seemed to justify university staff from avoiding such topics. In fact, both 'disciplinarians' and 'devil's advocates' (as discussed in chapter two) stated that personally-held religious or spiritual beliefs should only be discussed within the MBA when failure to do so could have negative management consequences. For example, the disciplinarians would consider religious beliefs on the grounds of pragmatism, such as how to negotiate a business contract in a Muslim country, while the devil's advocates might feel compelled, in an MBA class discussion, to raise spiritual beliefs which differed from their own beliefs. Both groups were keen to avoid the charge of 'proselytising'.

Carroll's concepts of ego and soul (1998) provided insights into *Parveen, Buddy* and *Helen*. Their activities, whether associated with the MBA or not, demonstrated a strong sense of their identities, or egos. Perhaps of these three, *Helen* was the closest to Carroll's description of withdrawal and compliance (1998, pp 63-70) which parallels Ralston Saul's characterisation of the conformity of late capitalist societies. But she knew what she was doing; she was not 'unconsciously' motivated, but aware of the organisational values which she

313

did not share; she engaged with her students, but chose not to go public in those arenas where she regarded displays of courage as futile.

These three individuals typified a sense of personal identity and values actively pursued within the MBA. Each engaged in social activity, at the same time as he or she accepted that others did not necessarily share such views. In Carroll's terms, they conveyed an awareness of 'soul', namely, a sense of connectedness with people who were neither family nor friends; they demonstrated an individualism marked by a dispassionate concern for others.

Hall's concept of domains was useful in analysing how *Parveen* integrated the various aspects of his personal, educational, cultural and professional life. The statement that he was primarily responsible for his own self-development reflected *Parveen*'s understanding of individualism. In this he combined traditional Hindu thought with changing Indian traditions, such as a greater involvement of men in parenting and their wives' careers. He mixed a pragmatism about competition in society and business with a readiness to discuss values and spirituality. Work and study promoted new interpretations of spiritual beliefs and cultural practices.

Buddy believed that individuals gained respect through belonging to institutions which existed for community aims. He saw the advantages and the dangers of being independent. He did not express personal religious convictions, but admired those who were passionate about conserving the environment; *Buddy*'s bicycle was a symbol of his commitment. He promoted altruistic activities to fellow students and challenged educational orthodoxies through his MBA assignments. However, he considered formal religion to be a dangerous, and potentially divisive, influence.

Helen was critical that Australian society – both generally, and specifically within the microcosm of MBA programs – denied the importance of spirituality. She prized the opportunities to learn about more spiritually-attuned societies which

she had gained through her MBA teaching. She was admired the way Buddhist societies applied their principles to management theories. She wanted the Christian principles inherent in Australian culture to be related to management theory and teaching. *Helen* criticised the ideology of competition which had permeated the universities, so that staff, such as herself, risked the label of disloyalty if they voiced social concerns. Gender equity was another issue to be avoided. In terms of Hall's concept of domains, *Helen* demonstrated conflicts between how aspects of culture and spirituality should be reflected through her professional role.

Buddy and *Helen*, in common with many Australians in the MBA, conveyed a passion for privacy, discussing beliefs normally expressed only in private life. There was a desire to segregate religious, spiritual or humanistic beliefs from public life; the roles of teacher and student were seen as public; even humanism was considered as private, although it did not raise the spectres associated with metaphysical beliefs. Environmentalism was clustered with the concepts of religion and spirituality; most who expressed deep concern for the environment considered it inappropriate for a management classroom. The majority indicated that, within the MBA, they should be self-censoring on topics which could be divisive, confronting or self-revealing. Their underlying fear was that individuals with 'dangerous' ideas would not succeed in either business or the university.

It was understood that these limits would also fireproof the classroom. Religion or the environment might evoke dangerous emotions. There were risks not only for individuals who broke such taboos. Those normally shielded by secularity and objectivity feared that such expressions of belief could attack social inclusiveness and tolerance. In Australia, individuals did not expect to be judged or excluded because of beliefs which remain unstated. However, many of those who expressed these views conveyed a sense of loss. There was frustration that the values which promoted human dignity were being disregarded and potentially denigrated. This is especially true of those academics who felt their core identity could not be expressed in their work life because it reflected beliefs which would

be seen as inappropriate. Such self-censored ideas involved environmental sustainability, philosophical or religious traditions including Buddhism, and rediscoveries of Christian beliefs. Such traditions were often interpreted in a highly personalised way.

Many Indian MBA students, especially those who were studying in the sub-continent, felt that religious belief should be separated from management theory and practice. They admired the 'Western ' ability to criticise behaviour without judging an individual's spiritual state. This kind of tolerance could accommodate India's diverse, and intensely held, religious beliefs. These students were reluctant to work for organisations dominated by religion and tradition, and preferred 'modern' firms which embraced objectivity. Corporate culture was perceived as a major constraint on graduates; many expected to suspend their spiritual beliefs until they had greater personal autonomy. These students, whether motivated by traditional Hindu beliefs, political, environmental or humanistic perspectives, indicated a conflict between their personally-held values and the practices which employers would expect them to follow during their early business careers.

Several staff in India[95] saw dangers in promoting religious belief in the academic context. Their comments were telling in a period when social discontent was increasingly being played out within a framework of religious divisions. Other Indian academics[96] stated that management education should pursue objectivity and modernity. They believed that the promotion of traditional, and therefore religious, beliefs in the public arena endangered Indian secularity and democratic process. They opposed the development of 'Bharatiya management' (D''Mello, 1999) academic programs, financially supported by companies, which encouraged a formal recognition of spirituality within the MBA. They questioned the

---

[95] At presentation to Indian MBA staff, Bangalore, 15 February, 1997.
[96] Comments made at a symposium on Ethics in International Management in Calcutta, February 1998.

desirability of relating 'Brahminical' Indian traditions to business, on the grounds that they disadvantaged the lower castes, non-Hindus and women.

Indian international students in Australia also expressed a diverse range of opinions. Some males seemed to conform to Hindu traditions, especially traditions associated with the superiority of certain castes and the inferior power of women. In contrast to the Indian males, but conforming to the female MBA students in India, many female Indian MBA students in Australia criticised the traditional religious beliefs which they perceived to disadvantage them. A minority publicly criticised those constraints on women's roles which were justified by Indian religious beliefs.

Several mainland Chinese international students appreciated that student from the Chinese diaspora had provided opportunities to discuss religious and cultural traditions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism. This had helped them to voice the tensions between modernity and tradition, the public and the private; they were excited to explore beliefs which their parents had seemed reluctant to share with them. The experience of being in another country had caused them to recognise how Buddhist and Confucian thought had influenced their parents and their own lives. This insight made these students keen to return home, rediscover this aspect of their heritage and put it into practice.

In contrast, other Chinese international students expressed no affinity with religious influences. This group described themselves in terms of family, and espoused values associated with ensuring the family's physical security, comfort and prosperity. Generally, the Chinese MBA students were more like Australian students in terms of their reluctance to raise religious or spiritual matters. They indicated that values, especially those which related to personal integrity, were private and not for open discussion.

The analysis of the values held by several Chinese international MBAs, as described above, is supported by findings of the Australian-Asian Perceptions

317

Project, which attributed Chinese attitudes towards business to the influence of group allegiance, reflecting Confucian thought. They quote Yeo-chi King (1991) on the nature of individual identity in Chinese society:

> The focus is not fixed on any one individual but on the particular nature of the relationships of individuals who interact with each other. The focus is placed upon the relationship (Australian-Asian Perceptions Project, 1994, p 15).

The study (cited above) states that although the Communist Party endeavoured to 'stamp out' the cultivation of personal relations, known as *guanxi,* this campaign failed. They claim that the 'distrust and cynicism which permeated most relationships' during the Cultural Revolution, was turned back by the government's promotion of commercial activity within and beyond China (op cit, p15), which, in turn, prompted a return to Confucian values. These comments do not reflect the comments made by *Yun-wei* (chapter three), who stated that he had learnt to respect Confucian tradition through fellow MBAs who had ethnic Chinese backgrounds. *Yun-wei* had also noted that cynicism and distrust, which had grown during the Cultural Revolution, continued to plague Chinese society, including business relations.

Family relationships were important to international Chinese MBA students in Australia. However, they differed from each other in how they felt they should relate to strangers. The Australian MBA context fostered various ideas about individual identity and responsibility. Some Chinese MBA students drew on Confucian traditions or Western individualistic beliefs to describe their responsibility to fellow citizens, while the majority stated that competition meant that they should prioritise the needs of the family. Those preoccupied with competitive pressures, like *Willow*, indicated that government should be responsible for social concerns.

The inter-relationship between personally-held beliefs and the role of business is important in understanding how those involved with the MBA perceived personal identity and responsibility. Various individuals associated with the MBA

described great differences in these interconnections. Many individuals defined themselves in contrast to the culture in which they were living. Some Chinese students learnt to appreciate the implicit spiritual traditions of China through the experience of being an MBA student in Australia. In contrast, the way in which Indian students discussed their ideas about spirituality indicated – to themselves and others – its central importance in their lives.

MBA students varied in relation to their readiness to discuss spirituality; for some, this topic provoked great tension. Most Australian students were reluctant to describe themselves in terms of their religion. Those staff with overseas experience were more likely to recognise the Christian aspect of Australian culture, even if they did not conform to it through their own religious practice.

Individualism was generally descibed as being central to the MBA. Yet, the complex and diverse interpretations of this concept indicated a range of beliefs about identity and consequently how those involved with the program interpreted personal responsibility. The variety of espoused beliefs conveyed a range of convictions. Perhaps the most telling distinction was whether individuals felt able to address their most significant beliefs within the context of the MBA. Many described themselves as self-censoring. The implications of this finding are discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 7 The MBA – which values, whose voices?

What emerges from this journey through the MBA? What do its narrators tell about its values? These key questions are discussed in this concluding chapter. An imagined debate – between Collin's promotion of the MBA as Babel, and Ralston Saul's argument that it is a tool for anaesthetising individual consciousness – can be addressed through the perspective of each chapter. In a world where ideas and commerce flow so rapidly, there is a great need to know and understand the values which underpin individual and institutional decision making. Given the international demand for the MBA, this imagined dialogue provides needed insight into how such future managers consider they should relate their values to business and society. The influence of values on corporate and civic behaviour provides an important perspective on management theory in a time when corporate social responsibility is gaining recognition.

The introduction framed the issues, methods and questions specific to this thesis, while the review of literature in chapter one discussed contesting views of how values relate to management education. The findings of this research were considered from the perspectives of several disciplines. The first was the influence on values from an academic stand such as, the role played by schools offering the MBA within universities, the affects of changing government policies and the cultural expectations relating to academic and social norms. This central theme of the relationship of values to the MBA was further characterised in terms of gender, seen as both biology and an expression of style, then by issues about civil society and positive social responsibility, and finally through exploring the program as an occasion to interpret personal identity.

Chapter two considered the values surrounding the MBA within a university system buffeted by social and political change. Academics did not act out a singular set of values. The 'academic lions', whether considered as brave or

foolhardy, held strong convictions which they were prepared to debate in public arenas. The 'devil's advocates' promoted critical thinking as an educational and social good. In contrast to the previous two academic styles, the 'disciplinarians' were less inclined to provoke debate, either within their subject or in the broader arena. Many alluded to beliefs about values but quarantined them from their professional activities. These three styles allude to distinct values. The academic lions desired public debate around issues of significance. The devil's advocates prioritised critical thinking as their major educational goal, while the disciplinarians relied on the authority of their academic background, and were inclined to consider failure as punishment due to those who did not master their subject. In contrast to this attitude, the academic lions and the devil's advocates acknowledged that some MBA students would struggle to gain the required knowledge, but they seemed less judgemental of those who failed. They sought to modify assessment tasks which they considered discriminated against students who were unfamiliar with the program's academic norms. These staff tried to maintain the program's international reputation, based on its appeal to industry, while demonstrating the academic values, including respect for difference, which they espoused. Some felt this latter value was under attack in an administrative environment which seemed more preoccupied with student completion rates, than difficulties experienced by students and staff.

The three groups of academics described their MBA responsibilities within the context of a competitive market, moulded by financial pressures, which included the student payment of full-fees. Many academics disliked the emerging 'audit culture'. The priority given to academic publication was seen to threaten their professional identity and to undermine the satisfactions which they had previously gained from graduate business education.

The issue of changing cultures (chapter three), using Hall's conception where culture involves members of a group producing and exchanging meanings (Hall, (ed) 1997, p 3) highlights not only how MBA programs operate within different universities but also the importance of the country in which a university operates.

321

Students from countries other than Australia brought their expectations with them. The MBA was portrayed as influenced by academic process and the cultural norms of Australian life. Students, and some staff, were prompted to review their country of birth and the theoretical content of the MBA. In contrast to many Australians, those from overseas often demonstrated a curiosity beyond business concerns. Many enjoyed the challenge of integrating what they learned -from living and perhaps working, in a society with different norms- with their MBA studies. Australians with overseas experience were more likely to raise social questions, to critique the theory which they taught or studied and to re-explore the relationships between business and society.

Both students and staff were forced to accommodate difference. Those academics who embraced difference designed their teaching and assessment to nurture students facing new challenges. Others saw diversity as a threat to academic standards. This broader perspective on the MBA as studied in Australia involved complexity for both students and staff. The diversity of students within Australian MBA programs reflected that of the overall population, plus a further complement of overseas students. Australia, a settler society, has a tradition of accommodation, as does the USA where this program originated. The Australian MBA presented three major opportunities for cultural interplay. Firstly, MBA staff, like their resident students, reflected the country's history of immigration; secondly, the international focus of business teaching had involved many academics in teaching offshore; and, finally, during their stay, international students added further to this cultural mix. However, academics were more likely than students to acknowledge the influence of national culture on the delivery and interpretation of the MBA.

The ways in which students in Australia and India perceived the MBA reflected their national contexts. Indian students demonstrated insights into regional and religious complexity, but these were often seen as secondary to the MBA's corporate focus. The program's culture, its focus on maximising individual and organisational wealth, was typically characterised as over-riding other priorities.

MBA students in India, more than all international students- including Indians- in Australia, recognised and accepted their inability to contest the dominant corporate norms.

Individual students varied in whether they believed they could bring about change. A minority linked this goal to their essential sense of purpose. The majority expressed less passion; they accepted the constraints of the corporate world which were enmeshed with MBA study. How individuals discussed their sense of individual identity is discussed below. However, in the context of culture, international students were more likely to voice tensions between corporate and social goals. This recognition was often associated with living in a different country, away from family and friends.

The Australian staff and students interviewed in this study seemed to accept the dominant culture of the MBA, which related to competition, the maximisation of profit and the presumption of legal remedies. For many, the national context was considered as isolated from the responsibilities which linked them to the MBA, namely, personal success through the promotion of organisational goals. Many recognised tensions between corporate and national goals, but over the course of their studies felt unable to address them either through the MBA or their workplace. In contrast, for international students in Australia, the different national context seemed to prompt an interrogation of beliefs. The MBA provided an occasion for these students to question, reinterpret, and assimilate cultural heritage in various ways. The classroom became a laboratory in which self and other could be viewed from new perspectives. The stories of *Jenny* and *Yun-wei* demonstrate the differences exhibited by individuals from similar cultural contexts. These experiences reflected Hall's concept of identity being negotiated between conflicting domains, so that the language which emerged to describe a sense of self was both 'descriptive and constitutive'[97]. Concepts were 'articulated' in ways which demonstrated Hall's perspective that circumstances

[97] See Morley and Chen's (eds) (1996) major analysis of Hall's work which includes articles by and about him which amplify and explain the concept of domains.

which involve cultural norms facilitate both the dissemination and the creation of new meanings. These insights also confirmed the findings of Chalmers and Volet (1997) and Sinclair and Britton Wilson (1999) which recognised the fallacy of stereotyping students according to their country of origin.

Students who contrasted the value frameworks of their home countries with those espoused within the MBA were more likely to discuss the influence of ideology. This led some to reject the conceptual tools which they had refined through previous study; they experienced discomfort and uncertainty as they developed a way of thinking appropriate to the MBA. In contrast, few Australians expressed this critical attitude to national or cultural norms.

Gender (chapter four) serves as an example of how a culture influences roles. The MBA contextualised the values associated with role expectations in education and business such as the bearing and raising of children, and the relationship of individuals and families to community activities. A feminist perspective on management style created possibilities of running organisations in diverse ways. Were such issues discussed within the MBA? Women typically saw themselves in less powerful roles and expressed more concern for such issues. Some addressed gender with energy, while others were reluctant, if dissatisfied. A few male staff and students promoted an inclusive attitude to gender in management and society; they seemed more at ease than did women. The gender which felt constrained by role stereotypes, appeared more threatened by the consequences of protesting against these constraints.

Few Australian women MBA students raised the issue of gender. In contrast, it was a major concern for several female Indian and some Chinese MBAs. Students who criticised exclusive gender based roles also recognised the interplay of private and public life. They shared their personal aspirations and beliefs about the interdependency of business with society. Women would often censor their own comments on gender. A number of male students raised biology as the essence of gender concerns, but in a way which encouraged their fellow students

to adopt the supportive family role typically played by the wives of MBAs. Their comments were directive, not questioning or guided by the perceived needs of women who wanted to succeed in business. This approach confirmed Sinclair's analysis that the dominant maleness of managers is 'invisible' and that only females have gender (Sinclair, 1998).

Gender was a topic which evoked both differences and similarities between cultures. Indian and Australian men either acknowledged or dismissed the desirability of changes which would allow women to choose how they would live and work. Some empathised with the difficulties experienced by women, whereas the majority indicated that women's role was to support men, especially in the raising of children. Overseas students were more likely to position beliefs within culture; consequently, they recognised that behaviour had to be interpreted within a cultural context. Thus behaviour linked to gender roles which one society accepted, could be undesirable in another.

Australian women academics expressed more awareness than did students; they described occasions when their authority had been challenged by students from other cultures. The resolution of these conflicts caused several to criticise male managers in the MBA who gave priority to the student 'as customer' above academic integrity. Women academics were more inclined than men to discuss management style, especially as it was seen to impact on them. Many seemed to support Sinclair's claim that Australia requires a more representative range of management options. Female academics often used the concepts of power and competition to characterise the academic world, business and society. While some women accepted this as a desirable reality, the majority did not.

Male academics also criticised the external world's focus on competition. But few wanted new models of management, or stated the need to balance work and family responsibilities. The male exceptions, notably *Jeremy*, discussed both. They presented an integrated sense of self, where business, social, political and family considerations were all reflected within an individual's sense of identity.

Consequently, he expected that emotions, such as empathy, should influence decision-making.

A more inclusive, or feminine, style of teaching cut across accepted norms of management education. It promoted an academic environment which accepted emotions, uncertainty and self exposure. This style of management educator differed from those who espoused a sense of certainty about their academic discipline, but also from those 'devil's advocates' who promoted debate and critical thought, while choosing not to declare their personal commitments. Unlike these, the academic who sought to be gender inclusive provided a more self-divulging model for managers. But this style accepted the constraints of context, such as returning to a communist country, and discouraged students from declaring beliefs which could disadvantage them at a later time. All aspects of being human were regarded as relevant, from the most personal to the most public. Individuals were treated with dignity; they were encouraged to raise issues of concern within the MBA. This minority 'feminist' perspective demonstrated Sinclair's claim that the 'prevalent economic discourse' considers values-based issues as non-business or feminine (Sinclair, 1999, p12).

Such examples can be proposed to demonstrate that the MBA gained from engaging with feminist management styles beyond recognising the need for women in management. This approach- when adopted- changed the process of teaching and assessment. Students were given the opportunity to recognise and discuss deeply held beliefs in class. If this change became the norm, the biological differences between men and women could be discussed openly and new solutions could emerge to resolve both individual and systemic problems. Female academics were often frustrated by their universities' inability to address personal and family needs, which they characterised as issues which could not be discussed. Important aspects of their identity were both invisible and unspeakable. A recognition of the 'unspeakable' confirms the claims by Calas and Smircich that a feminist perspective on management theory promotes a discussion of 'difficult questions' because it values those 'areas of social concern'

which are typically ignored (Calas and Smircich in Larson and Freeman, (eds) 1997, pp 50-51).

Thus, gender within the MBA provided insights into how individuals felt about broader concerns, especially those values – which according to Cox, promote 'social capital' – which are associated with maintaining a 'civil society'. This raised questions linked to values, such as whether the MBA advocated a sense of inter-connection between those in the course, between business and society, and between the affluent and the poor. This focus was addressed in chapter five, which related the MBA to civil society (see Cox, 1995) and focused on how academics related to their MBA teaching, and to the students they taught. This entailed distinguishing between the theory as laid down in course guides, and its relevance to the students enrolled in the program. But more broadly it also encompassed how staff, and students, related the aims of the MBA to society. This involved boundary-setting, risk-taking and understandings of purpose. Purpose was constantly addressed in both individual and corporate terms.

Thus the penultimate stage of the MBA traversed the field of 'civil society' as raised by Cox in terms of social capital (1995) and Pusey (1991) as concerned with nation building. Chapter five considered the distinction between the public and the private addressed by both academics and students. Those who had integrated this polarity expressed greatest personal satisfaction. Many who recognised the split, but felt unable to bridge it, expressed anxiety and tension. But the minority of academics who ignored this distinction within the MBA framework also divulged least about themselves. Their circumscribed language often disguised significant beliefs. The pursuit of civil society was portrayed as a goal outside their academic vision and responsibility. This group demonstrated little desire to integrate social responsibility with market forces as has been proposed by Galbraith (1992), Etzioni (1988) and Koslowski (1992). They also seemed least able to harmonise their significant values with their professional role.

A final perspective on the MBA was how those engaged with it reflected on their sense of personal identity (chapter six). Thus, considering the MBA as a journey, those who travelled best expressed a sense of inter-connectedness – between various aspects of their personal identity, the MBA as a course of study, and the program's relationship to business and the wider world. These sanguine individuals gained pleasure from sharing with others and satisfaction from giving. They demonstrated a clear sense of purpose through an interconnection with strangers; they displayed what Carroll described as 'soul' (1998) or Greenleaf as 'servant leadership' (1998). The MBA contained a significant group of both academics and students who could be characterised in this way. Not only did they have the courage to voice their beliefs, they were also the most vibrant. They form the majority of the individual narratives because they had such strong stories to tell. They were sustained within the MBA because they integrated a clear and powerful sense of self with work and study. But not all were like this; many were seeking the clarity, and perhaps the courage, which would enable them to voice values-based beliefs.

So, in conclusion, the MBA, as offered in several Australian and Indian universities, seemed far better explained by Collin's allusion to Babel, than by Ralston Saul's argument that it 'anaesthetises' those who seek success in business. At the same time, Ralston Saul's image of corporate players seduced by consumer baubles (1993, p370) was supported by those MBA students who knowingly self-censored criticisms of business goals and practices. Many recognised their silence; they were not unconscious, but felt constrained in an atmosphere governed by competition. Students from India and China constantly reminded Australian students that the ability to voice criticism varied between countries. Australian MBA students felt powerless to make a difference; most sought a middle-level career, not fame and fortune. They desired long-term security, with either current or potential employers.

Hall's conception of 'domains' (as elaborated in Morley and Chen (eds) 1996) provided insight in the MBA experience. The sense of split associated with so

328

many aspects of MBA study – through culture, or gender, or civil society, or beliefs about religion or spirituality – discouraged many from discussing significant values within the MBA. The language of its study and teaching predominantly reflected a secular, rational and professional society. The rules of business were perceived to preclude the raising of important issues. Academic subjects which operated outside this boundary – such as those that focused on individual, ethical or social concerns – showed that students were able to raise non-financial concerns, but students and staff largely felt this was an inappropriate focus for the MBA.

Management writers such as Handy (1998), Sinclair (1998, 1999), and Greenleaf (1998) argue that it is possible and desirable to bridge the public and the private. In Hall's terms, the personal identity of individuals, including those involved with the MBA, were to some extent 'constituted' by the language they used (see Chen, in Morley and Chen (eds) p 407). Educationalists need to consider what becomes of the identity of students who are actively discouraged from voicing their beliefs within the context of management education. The MBA should promote language and frameworks which address the split between private and public concerns. Given the enthusiasm and creativity demonstrated by *Wendy, Ian, Bernadette, Jeremy* and *Helen*, both the universities and the business world would benefit from encouraging staff and students to integrate their sense of self. Those who were productive and vibrant felt entitled to acknowledge their doubts and seek new solutions. They knew who they were and sought to pursue that identity. Their reality was different from those who experienced a great deal of tension and uncertainty within the MBA.

So the preference for Collin's portrayal of the MBA as Babel over Ralston Saul's notion of it as a psychological anaesthetic raised the overarching question of how this program addressed issues relating to values. The pursuit of a business life requires individuals to prioritise values. Such priorities need to be discussed in management education, and in the workplace, so that individuals might consolidate and pursue them. This concerns attitudes and motivation, but more

significantly the language which individuals adopt in business, that is in organisations. But it became apparent that those involved with the MBA experienced their identity as complex. Many indicated a discomfort and consequent reluctance to voice their beliefs and values in their places of work and study. This indicates not merely self-censorship, but also Hall's contention that language is constitutive of human identity, not merely descriptive. Recall *Wendy*'s fears about personal identity which she faced so as to explore her convictions. A reluctance to raise relatively impersonal issues, such as environmental sustainability within the classroom, questioned the potency of education which many academics gave as their reason for teaching.

The question lingers as to whether unexpressed values might lose their power to influence perceptions of environmental issues and consequently how individuals should and could act. This reluctance, with regard to a relatively benign concern, highlights that individuals were further disinclined to raise more contentious issues such as culture, gender, the pursuit of social convictions, or spiritual beliefs. The perception of self separated personally-held beliefs from the pursuit of competition, specifically as this related to an individual's career in education or in management. It is significant to recall that the academic 'disciplinarians' largely ignored worlds outside their professional language, although critical thinking was cited by many MBA teachers as a major academic goal which was also underpinned democracy.

A further research focus would be to explore the direction in which such change is occurring. As the future generations of MBA academics take their place, will there be an increase in the disciplinarians, with their self-curtailed attitudes to broader social issues? Will there be an ongoing commitment to debate and critical thinking, especially in environments which assume that published research guarantees good pedagogic practice? Will management academics continue to acknowledge the interdependency of business and society, and will business people recognise the importance of both domains? Self-censorship

might erode the language on which 'civil society' and democratic practice are based.

There are significant risks of forfeiting values which individuals feel are not open for discussion. Hall's materialistic philosophy attributes a formative role to language. MBA graduates and teachers will be judged by the words which they choose to discuss responsibility and purpose. The feminist critique of management theory suggests that the values which underpin social and individual well-being are threatened by an MBA preoccupied with avoiding legal wrongdoing. The espoused language of the MBA influenced not only to the construction of individual identity, but broader issues such as the protection of tolerance within diversity.

Such issues can not be addressed when a powerful group, such as MBA graduates, feel they have been discouraged from disclosing deep convictions. Should academics encourage their students to discuss emotionally charged topics in a culturally complex environment? The MBA has a role within business, but business has social responsibilities also. Many of those engaged in this study questioned Friedman's bequest (cited in Solomon, 1992, p272) that business should maximise the wealth of shareholders. But their capacity to challenge his assumptions reflected not only courage, but also the ability to integrate deeply-held beliefs with their work. Such a task requires the ability to juggle personal career ambitions with individual fears, doubts and uncertainties: to embrace a personal sense of self.

The ability to publicly express doubt requires a recognition of the interconnectedness of the public and the private aspects of self. There is a need to honour the domains of personal identity and to nurture a sense of complexity within individuals, in class and the overall MBA program. Such complexity centres about the relationship of business to society, in a world seeking material progress, which is marked by decreasing boundaries and increasing fragmentation. The role of business people, such as MBA graduates, within

331

society, is increasingly addressed by management writers such as Handy (1998), Covey (1992) and Greenleaf (1998) who recognise the need to accommodate 'spirit' at work. Their stated goal is not to increase profitability, but to celebrate the essential interdependency of human beings. They want business to be seen as both an integral, and a positive, influence in the world.

Solomon has chosen to focus on 'virtue ethics' to promote this end. He states:

> It was Aristotle who insisted on the virtues, or 'excellences', as the basic constituents of individual and collective happiness. The underlying assumption was that a person is who he or she is by virtue of his or her place and role in the community, and the virtues of the community, in turn, nurture and encourage each of its members to be a good person. It takes only a little leap of philosophical imagination to recognise this same relationship between the individual employee, manager or executive and the modern corporation (Solomon, 1999, p xxiv).

Management education should improve business practice by developing 'good people'. Solomon advocates 'virtue ethics' as a business language which promotes individual happiness based on the fulfilment of corporate and social responsibilities. Aristotle's equation of civic identity with human dignity, is used to prioritise collective responsibility over individual rights. Solomon describes integrity as the virtue which encapsulates all the other virtues:

> Integrity means 'wholeness', wholeness of virtue, wholeness as a person, wholeness in the sense of being an integral part of something larger than the person – the community, the corporation, society, humanity, the cosmos. Integrity thus suggests a holistic view of ourselves [but] ... In the current climate of cynicism, both terms have come to seem all but archaic, overly idealistic, unrealistic (Solomon, 1999, p 38).

Thus, in promoting this ethical framework, Solomon recognises the role played by language, by fashions in language, including the influence of emotions such as cynicism. He promotes a human perspective on how to discuss and practise business. Solomon acknowledges the relevance of cultural diversity and gender to the interdependency of business with society. The ethical framework is premised on the belief that humans gain dignity through good business practice, where corporations are communities built on broadly-held values, such as cooperation. Solomon reflects Carroll's recognition of the interconnected nature

332

of human beings. Both Solomon and Carroll describe people as communal beings whose identity is a social artefact, not one solely constructed by birth.

Ideas about the nature of humankind raise the role of language usage within the MBA. The majority of staff and students perceived individualism as a core concept. Yet, this seeming agreement concealed complex and often contradictory meanings. The concept of individualism revealed cultural overlays at odds with the norms presented by MBA subjects, norms which academics often criticised. For example, the idea of individualism encapsulated various understandings regarding say, materialism or responsibility. Language used within the MBA appeared to have a singular meaning, but, in reality, often disguised diverse understandings.

The world of the MBA can be interpreted as a shadow play, much like Plato's cave, or a performance of Javanese shadow puppets, where language takes the place of the shadows. Words were spoken and heard but can be seen to hold greater complexity than was acknowledged in the exchange. When staff and students reflected on the role of language within the MBA, they described differences between use and understanding, as well as gaps between public statements, such as in class, and personal beliefs. The individual use of language in the MBA conveyed cross-tensions, for example, when an academic would describe students as customers and at the same time embrace academic duties and responsibilities. Language was acknowledged to reflect culture. Students' cultural norms could conflict with Western ideals of dispassionate rationality and equal opportunity.

Many staff recognised the assumptions and stereotypes implicit within the MBA. Some students, typically those from overseas, understood this at a distance from their own culture. This distance allowed them to recognise ideas which many Australian students – interviewed during this research – took for granted. In contrast, even local students who were critical of business practices – which may or may not have been promoted by the MBA – rarely believed they could affect

positive change. When questioned, they were critical of some business practices, but stressed their concern for personal well-being. The corporate world was often portrayed as fixated with profit, not the place where a career conscious employee should voice social or environmental concerns. These Australian students indicated a desire to guard future prospects rather than an inability to be critical.

Comments made by Australian students' recalled, but also refuted, Jackall's claim that corporations are 'moral mazes', namely places in which anxious managers lose all sense of moral direction. Jackall, in common with Ralston Saul, claims that the pursuit of material rewards makes middle managers and executives compliant. Ralston Saul states that corporate executives have lost the capacity to judge the implications of their decisions and actions. In contrast to Ralston Saul, Jackall states:

> Bureaucratic contexts typically bring together men and women who
> initially have little in common with each other except the impersonal
> frameworks of their organisations. Indeed, the enduring genius of the
> organizational form is that it allows individuals to retain bewilderingly
> diverse private motives and meanings for action as long as they adhere
> publicly to agreed-upon rules. Even the personal relationships that men
> and women in bureaucracies do subsequently fashion together are, for
> most part, governed by explicit or implicit organizational rules,
> procedures and protocol. As a result, bureaucratic work causes people to
> bracket, while at work, the moralities which they might hold outside the
> workplace or that they might adhere to privately and to follow instead
> the prevailing morality of their particular organizational situation
> (Jackall, 1988, p 6).

Thus, Jackall argues that corporate managers have learnt to segregate their moral beliefs from their place of work, in contrast with Ralston Saul's claim that corporate life anaesthetises the moral consciousness of its members. This research into the MBA indicates that students reflected the constraints of bureaucracies, exacerbated by those periods of rapid change, such as takeovers, or sackings of staff, which Jackall believes destabilise managers' capacity to make moral judgments. This parallels those Australian and Indian MBAs who wanted employers to see them as 'promotable'; their desire to be considered high achievers caused them to be preoccupied with managing the perceptions of those

who influenced their career rather than judging how they should act (Jackall, 1988, p 64).

Jackall describes 'the ambiguity of not knowing where one stands' felt by managers who have not been promoted for several years (Jackall, 1988, p 67). In this environment, the need to succeed blinded many to what they should do. His perspective resonated with how middle managers, aspiring to climb the corporate ladder, characterised themselves in the context of their MBA studies. And Jackall's analysis may also help to explain why some of these students, once given the chance to reflect on their work-life, chose to leave the corporate sector. Jackall's exploration of the descriptive, rather than normative or prescriptive, nature of corporate ethics and morality (1988, p 4) led him to discover a split sense of self. This thesis relates personally-held values to personal experiences of the MBA and to how individuals believed they should behave in the various domains of their lives, including in their business or management education careers.

Hall's concept of identity provides a way to address the split between ethical beliefs and corporate life, a split which Jackall believes has turned corporations into confusing and disorienting 'moral mazes' for managers. If individuals live and work without commitment to values it is arguable that they, their organisations and society will suffer. In the sense of personal identity, surely academics have a responsibility to alert MBA students, and society generally, to such risks? Considering the domains of one's life as equal aspects of self, a continued and conscious denigration of deeply held beliefs can represent a major threat to personal happiness and social well being which Solomon ascribes as central to the 'good life'.

Management educators need to consider the implications of the disparities and tensions felt by MBA students between their beliefs about how business should be managed – including cultural diversity, gender and environmental concerns – and actual practice. These raise issues relating to the personal identity and

integrity of those who both teach and study the MBA. More broadly, should future managers be encouraged to relate the values which underpin human dignity and social justice to the corporate context?

Charlesworth noted (1993, p 193) that MBA students shared similar ethical values with many others in society, but many felt unable to express these beliefs in the arena where they would wield most influence. He states that their beliefs have consequences which should concern us all. A change in Australia's political and social focus was attributed by Pusey to the influence of economists schooled in econometric thought. What will happen if the next generation of managers become alienated from the ethical base of their subjective decisions? Unlike Ralston Saul's contentions, this study has not found that the majority of those engaged in MBA education, as either students or teachers, were unconscious of the implications of corporate ideology. Many saw negative aspects, of these the majority felt the undesirable aspects were balanced by the gains, and a minority did not. But their understandings were complex, diverse and demonstrated an ability to respond to new ideas. Neither did Jackall's metaphor of moral mazes convey their reality, as many were critical of corporate behaviour, either within or outside the university. How they perceived their values seems best conveyed by Hall's portrayal of the domains of individual identity. Values were seen to be espoused within the personal domain, while the need to succeed, to compete, to have a viable career was often associated with censoring one's significant beliefs and values. As with the academic lions, those who chose to be openly critical were often characterised as either brave or foolhardy. The majority of staff and students doubted the wisdom of pursuing this option. Fear caused compliance, a sense of frustration and isolation.

In terms of values, the MBA was Babel, in terms of business behaviour, most students indicated that they would rather self-censor than threaten the goal of material security which they associated with attaining an MBA. And many academics resented the fact that their students, and in some cases, they themselves, needed to be so cautious. The question remains – what happens to

the identity of educators and students who often feel unable to express their deeply-held beliefs and values. Many described the moral split which both Jackall and Ralston Saul stated they would not. Is there a role for courage within MBA programs, if not in business? What will happen to the values on which ethical judgements are made if ongoing generations accept that critical, values-based language has no place within either the MBA class room or the world of business? What happens to identity if individuals are discouraged from using, in Hall's terms, the 'constitutive' language of ethical values? These questions evoke Cox's appeal for the promotion and maintenance of a civil society. They also raise the need to experiment with new paradigms such as Sinclair's more inclusive model of leadership, or feminist perspectives which encourage discussion of 'difficult questions' as proposed by Calas and Smircich (in Larson and Freeman (eds) 1997, pp 50-51).

How is this to happen within management education? Some theorists propose that the secret to happiness and a life worth living involves a sense of purpose which transcends material needs. The need to integrate the spiritual within the context of business and management education is raised by writers such as Greenleaf (1998) and Chakraborty (1998). Both differentiate religion from spirituality, both identify spiritual insight as the recognition of a shared human nature. They promote principles of human integrity and cooperation.

In order to address key issues of sustainability, equity and appropriate globalism, management education needs to embrace more than competition. However, this would require management education to determine how to distinguish between religion and spirituality. *Helen* provided an example of how to acknowledge and respect spirituality in MBA teaching. While *Ian, Wendy, Yun-wei,* and *Robert* conveyed a sense of connectedness which provided them with both happiness and a sense of purpose. Each expressed the sense of self-in-other which Carroll described as a step towards knowing 'the grander sacred forces beyond' (Carroll, 1998, p 254).

Management theorists such as Handy (1998) and Koslowski (in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds) 1992) promote approaches largely unfashionable in business education. When those involved in this study expressed similar beliefs, most felt both singular and vulnerable. The MBA must encourage potential managers to voice their values so that concerns raised in classrooms can be addressed in both business and the world which sustains it. The experience of the MBA is as immersed in values as it is both complex and ambiguous. Current social and political circumstances validate both Koslowski's desire to 're-integrat[e] ethics, politics and economics' (see Wils, in Koslowski and Yuichi (eds), 1992, p 92) and Etzioni's struggle for a renewed alliance between economics and social responsibility (see Ossipow, in Lewis and Warneryd (eds), 1994, p 297). The findings of this research indicate that many students and staff recognised such challenges. The fact that few had the courage to act on them is cause for both concern and further exploration.

Primary sources

Bangalore meeting with MBA academic staff on 15 February, 1997

Symposium on Ethics in International Management, Management Centre for Human Values, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, February 1998

Interviews with students and staff in Australia: see Appendix B1

Interviews with students in India: see Appendix B2

Bibliography

Aaron H J (1994) Distinguished Lecture on Economics in Government: 'Public Policy, Values and Consciousness' in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol 8 No 2 Spring pp 3-21

Ainsworth M and Morley C (1993) *The Value of Management Education: Views of Graduates on the Benefits of Doing an MBA*, RMIT monograph, August

Amdam R P (ed) (1996) *Management Education and Competitiveness: Europe, Japan and the United States* Routledge, London and New York

Aurobindo, Sri (1994) *Essays Divine and Human: With Thoughts and Aphorisms.* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India

Aurobindo, Sri (1997) *The Psychic Being: Soul: Its Nature, Mission and Evolution: Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*, reprint, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India

Australian Asian Perceptions Project, (1994) Working Paper Number 3, '*Perceiving "Business Ethics"* ' A Joint Publication of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and the Asia-Australia Institute, University of New South Wales

Balasubramanian N (1998) 'In Conversation with Henry Mintzberg and Jonathon Gosling', in *Management Review* IIMB, Vol 10 No 1 & 2 pp 163-173

Balasubramanian N (ed) (1998) *Corporate Boards and Governance,* Stirling Publishers, New Delhi

Ball S (1994) *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-structural Approach*, Open University Press, Buckingham and Philadelphia

Beard P R (1992) *The MBA Experience: The Reality Behind The Myth*, Assoc of MBAs, London

Beauchamp T L and Bowie N E (eds) (1997) *Ethical Theory in Business*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey

Beck J Cox C and Radcliff P (1980) 'Reflections' in *Advances in Management Education*, Beck J and Cox C (eds) Wiley and Sons, Chichester

Beck U (1992) *Risk Society*, Sage, London

Berger P L and Luckmann T (1966) (reprint) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge,* Anchor Books, London

Bhagavad-Gita, The (1973) Introduction, notes and translation by Radhakrishnan S, Harper Colophon, New York

Bhatt E (1998) 'Empowering the Poor through Micro-Finance: The SEWA Bank', in *Social Change Through Voluntary Action* Dantwala M L Sethi H and Visaria P (eds) Sage, New Delhi, pp 146-161

Bishop D H (1985) 'Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese Tradition' in Bishop D H (ed) *Chinese Thought: An Introduction*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 392-421

Bishop D H (ed) (1985) *Chinese Thought: An Introduction*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Blackmore J (1992) 'More Power to the Powerful: Corporate Management, Mergers and the Implications for Women of the Reshaping of 'Culture' of Australian Tertiary Education' in *Australian Feminist Studies*, No15 Autumn

Bond M H and Hwang K–W (1986) 'The Social Psychology of the Chinese People' in *The Psychology of the Chinese People*, Bond M (ed) Oxford University Press Hong Kong, pp 213-66

Bornstein D (1996) *The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank and the Idea that is Helping the Poor to Change Their Lives*, University Press - under arrangement with Simon and Schuster, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bourdieu P (1990a) *The Logic of Practice*, trans R Nice, Polity Press, Cambridge

Bourdieu P (1990b) *In Other words, Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans M Adamson, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California

Bourdieu P (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*, Randal Johnson (ed) Polity Press, Cambridge

Bourdieu P and Wacquant L J (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Brady F N (ed) (1996) *Ethical Universals in International Business*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York

Brokensha P (1993) *Corporate Ethics: A Guide for Australian Managers,* Social Science Press, Adelaide

Brick J (1991) *China: A Handbook in Intercultural Communication*, National Centre for English Language, Macquarie University, Sydney

Brummer A (1997) 'Markets Turn Savage on a Tiger Dictator' in *The Age*, September 1, p B18.

Bruner E (1986) 'Ethnography as Narrative' in Turner V and Bruner E *The Anthropology of Experience*, University of Illinois Press, USA

Bryson L (1986) 'A New "Iron Cage"? A View from Within' in *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration*, Vol 13 No 4 Summer pp 362-369

Bumiller E (1991) *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India*, Penguin, New Delhi

Calas M and Smircich L (1997) 'Predicando la Moral en Calzoncillos?' in Larson A and Freeman R E (eds) *Women's Studies and Business Ethics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, pp 50-79

Cameron S (1991) *The MBA Handbook: An Essential Guide to Effective Study*, Pitman, London

Camilleri J and Muzaffar C (eds) *Globalisation: The Perspectives and Experiences of the Religious Traditions of Asia Pacific*, International Movement for a Just World, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

Carroll J (1998) *Ego and Soul: The Modern West in Search of Meaning*, Harper Collins, Sydney

Carroll J and Manne R (eds) (1992) *Shutdown: The Failure of Economic Rationalism*, Text Publishing, Melbourne

Cascio W F (1995) *Managing Human Resources* McGraw Hill, New York

Chakraborty S K (1987) *Managerial Effectiveness and Quality of Worklife: Indian Insights* Tata McGraw Hill, New Delhi

Chakraborty S K (1991) *Management by Values*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Chakraborty S K (1993) *Managerial Transformation by Values: A Corporate Pilgrimage*, Sage, New Delhi

Chakraborty S K (1995a) *Human Values For Managers*, Wheeler, New Delhi

Chakraborty S K (1995b) *Ethics in Management: Vedantic Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Chakraborty S K (1998) *Values and Ethics for Organisations: Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Chalmers D and Volet S (1997) 'Common Misconceptions about Students from South-East Asia Studying in Australia' in *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol 16 No 1

Charlesworth M (1993) Ethical Reflections and Business Practice, in Coady A and Sampford C (eds) *Business, Ethics and the Law*, The Federation Press, Annandale, NSW, pp 187-205

Chen K-H (1996) 'Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalization: An Interview with Stuart Hall', in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York pp 392- 410

Chen M and Martin D (1996) 'Mountains of Gold', in *China Business Review*, May/June, Vol 23 No 3 pp 26-29

Chen K-H (1996) 'Post-Marxism – Between/Beyond Critical Postmodernism and Cultural Studies' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* Routledge, London, pp 309-325

Chetanananda Swami (ed) (1994) *Swami Vivekananda: Vedanta-Voice of Freedom* (second ed) Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

Clark D Ross L and Shackleton J R (1993) *Organisational Framework*, Certified Accountants Educational Projects Ltd, London

Clegg S (1989) *Frameworks of Power*, Sage, London

Clegg S (1995) 'Business Values and Embryonic Industry: Lessons from Australia' in Stewart S and Donleavy G (eds) *Whose Business Values: Some Asian and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Hong Kong University press, Hong Kong, pp 247-266

Clegg S (1997) 'Management for the 21st Century', in Stone R J (ed) (1998) *Readings in Human Resource Management*, Jacaranda Wiley, Milton, Qld pp 147-151

Clegg S and C Hardy (1996) 'Representations' in Clegg S Hardy C and Nord W (eds) *Handbook of Organization Studies*, Sage, London

Clifford J and Marcus G E (eds) (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley

Coady C A and Sampford C J (eds) (1993) *Business, Ethics and the Law*, The Federation Press, Annandale, NSW

Collin A (1996) 'The MBA: The Potential for Students to Find Their Voice in Babel' in French R and Grey C (eds) *Rethinking Management Education*, Sage, London pp 132-51

Collins D (1996) 'The Voluntary Brainwashing of Humanities Students in Stanford's MBA Program: Student Complaints and Some Recommendations' in *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol 6 Issue 3 pp 392-413

Considine M (1988) 'The Corporate Management Framework' in *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 47 No 1 March

Considine M (1990) 'Managerialism Strikes Out' in *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 49 No 2 June

Considine M (1991) *The Politics of Reform*, Centre for Applied Social Research, Deakin University

Covey S (1992) *Principle Centered Leadership*, Simon and Schuster, New York, London

Cox A (1996) *Redefining Corporate Soul: Linking Purpose and People*, Irwin, Toronto

Cox E (1995) *A Truly Civil Society*, ABC, Sydney

Cunningham, J B (1991) 'A Proposed Programme for Developing Managers' in *Management Development*, Vol 10 pp 64-74

D'Mello B (1999) 'Management Education: A Critical Appraisal' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, (India) November 27, pp 169-176

Delahaye B A (1992) 'Theoretical Context of Management Development and Education' in Smith B *Management Development in Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, pp 118-140

Denzin N K (1996) *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21ˢᵗ Century*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Dessaix R (1997) *Rethinking Australia - Intellectuals and the Public Culture*, interview with Robert Manne, May ABC - Radio National

Donaldson T (1989) *The Ethics of International Business*, Oxford University Press, New York

Duke C (1997) 'Lifelong, Post experience, Postgraduate – Symphony or Dichotomy?' in Burgess R G (ed) *Beyond the First Degree: Graduate Education: Lifelong Learning, and Careers*, The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, Buckingham pp 81-96

Duncan G (2000) 'Notes from a Departed Dean' in James P (ed) *Burning Down the House, The Bonfire of the Universities*, Assoc for the Public University with Arena Publications, North Carlton

Dunlop J (1987) 'The Responsibility of Company Directors: Formulation of Major Policies of the Company' in *Dunlop on Directors*, Institute of Directors in Australia, Sydney

Engwall L & Gunnarsson E (eds) (1994) *Management Studies in an Academic Context*, Uppsala University, Uppsala

Etzioni A (1988) *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics*, Free Press, New York

Etzioni A (1989) 'Are Business Schools Brainwashing their MBAs?' in *Business and Society Review*, Summer No 70, pp 18-19

Etzioni A (1991) *A Responsive Society: Collected Essays on Guiding Deliberate Social Change*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco

Etzioni A (1993) *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*, Crown Publishers, New York

Etzioni A (ed) (1995) *Rights and the Common Good: The Communitarian Perspective*, St Martin's Press, New York

Etzioni A (1996) *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, Basic Books, New York

Evensky J (1993) 'Ethics and the Invisible Hand' in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol 7 No 2

Fairbank J K (1987) *China Watch*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA

Faris R E (1967) *Chicago Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Faulkner (1999) 'No More Iron Butterflies' *The Age* February 26, p A16

Finkielkraut A (1995) *The Defeat of the Mind,* Columbia University Press, New York

FitzGerald S (1997) *Is Australia an Asian Country?* Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW

Frank R H, Gilovich T and Regan D T (1993) 'Does Studying Economics Inhibit Cooperation?' in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol 7 No 2 pp 159-171

Freeman R E (1984) *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Pitman Series in Business and Public Policy, Melbourne

French P (1995) *Corporate Ethics*, Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth

French R and Grey C (eds) (1996) *Rethinking Management Education*, Sage, London

French W A and Granrose J (1995) *Practical Business Ethics,* Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Friedman M (1962) *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Friedman M in *The New York Times Magazine*, Sept 13, 1970, cited in Solomon R C (1994) *Above the Bottom Line,* Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth, p 272

Fukuyama F (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York

Galbraith J K (1992) *The Culture of Contentment*, Houghton Mifflin, New York

Gandhi L (1998) *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction,* Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW

Gandhi R (1999) *Revenge and Reconciliation: Understanding South Asian History*, Penguin, New Delhi

Gare A E (1995) *Post Modernism and the Environmental Crisis*, Routledge, London

Geertz C (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books, New York

Geertz C (1988) *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford University Press, Stanford

Geertz C (1995) *After the Fact: Two countries Four Decades, One Anthropologist*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA

Gemelli G (1996) 'American Influence on European Management Education – The Role of the Ford Foundation' in Amdam R P (ed) *Management Education and Competitiveness: Europe, Japan and the United States*, Routledge, London and New York, pp 38-68

Ghadially R and Kumar P (1988) 'Bride Burning: The Psycho-Social Dynamics of Dowry Deaths' in Ghadially R (ed) *Women in Indian Society*, Sage, New Delhi, pp 167-77

Giddens A (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity, Cambridge

Giddens A (1991) *Modernity and Self -Identity*, Polity, Cambridge

Giddens A (1999) *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, Profile Books, Hatton Garden, London

Grace D and Cohen S (1998) *Business Ethics: Australian Problems and Cases*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne (second edition)

Greenleaf R (1998) *The Power of Servant Leadership*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco

Grossberg L (1996) 'History, Politics and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) (1996) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp 151-173

Gui B (1994) 'Interpersonal Relations: A Disregarded Theme in the Debate on Ethics and Economics' in Lewis A and Warneryd K (eds) *Ethics and Economic Affairs*, Routledge, London, pp 251-63

Hall S (1988) *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, London

Hall S (1992) 'Our Mongrel Selves' in *New Statesman and Society*, June Vol 5 No 207 pp S6-8

Hall S (1996a) 'Cultural studies and its theoretical legacies' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies,* Routledge, London pp 262-275

Hall S (1996b) 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York pp 411- 40

Hall S (1996c) 'New Ethnicities' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* Routledge, New York pp 441-49

Hall S (1996d) 'What is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* Routledge, New York pp 465-475

Hall S (1997) (ed) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,* Sage in association with The Open University, London

Hall S (1998) 'Thatcher's Lessons' in *Marxism Today,* March

Hall S and Jacques M (eds) (1989) *New Times: the Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s,* Lawrence and Wishart, London, in association with *Marxism Today*

Halpin D and Troyna B (eds) (1994) *Researching Education Policy: Ethical and Methodological Issues*, Falmer, London

Handy C (1991) *The Age of Unreason*, Arrow, London

Handy C (1998) *The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism – A Quest for Purpose in the Modern World*, Arrow Books, London

Hardy C and S Clegg (1997) 'Relativity Without Relativism: Reflexity in Post-Paradigm Organization Studies' in *British Journal of Management*, Vol 8, Special Issue, June pp S5-S17

Hawley J (1994) *Re-awakening The Spirit in Work: The Power of Dharmic Management*, Tata-McGraw-Hill, New Delhi

Hilmer F G and Donaldson L (1996) *Management Redeemed: Debunking the Fads that Undermine our Corporations*, The Free Press, New York

Hodgart A W (1975) *The Faculty of Economics and Commerce: A History 1925-1975*, University of Melbourne monograph

Hofstede G (1980) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Sage, Newbury Park

Hofstede G (1991) *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*, McGraw Hill, London

Hofstede G (1993) 'Cultural Constraints in Management Theories' *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol 7 No 1

Hofstede G (1994a) *Cultures and Organisations: International Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*, Harper Collins, Hammersmith

Hofstede G (1994b) *Uncommon Sense About Organisations: Cases, Studies and Field Observations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hofstede G (1998) *Masculinity and Femininity: The Taboo Dimensions of National Cultures*, Sage, California

Hsu S P 'Hu Shih' in Bishop D H (ed) (1985) *Chinese Thought: An Introduction*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 365 - 391

Hubbard G (1990) 'Changing Trends in MBA Education in Australia' in *Journal of Management Development*, Vol 9 No 6 pp 41-49

Hurworth R (1996) 'Qualitative Methodology: Common Questions About Running Focus Groups During Evaluations' in *Evaluation News and Comment*, Vol 5 No 1 June

Hutton, W (1996) *The State We're In*, Vintage, London

Hutton, W and Giddens A (eds) (2000) *On The edge: Living with Global Capital*, Jonathon Cape, London

Jackall R (1988) *Moral Mazes*, Oxford University Press, New York

Jain P (1996) 'Ghandi on Women: Imaging a New Identity' in Jain P and Mahan R (eds) *Women Images*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, pp 238-255

James L (1998) *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, The Softback Preview, Great Britain

Johnson J C (1990) *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA

Johnstone H (1997) 'Lessons in Supply and Demand' in *Asian Business Review*, pp 58-9

Julien I and Nash M (1996) 'Dialogues with Stuart Hall' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York pp 476-83

Kakar S (1990) *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality*, Penguin, New Delhi

Kamis T (1996) 'Education for the PRC Executive' in *The China Business Review*, pp 36-9

Karpin D et al (1995) *Enterprising Nation – Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia-Pacific Century,* Report of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills, AGPS, Canberra

Kelly F J and Kelly H M (1987) *What They Really Teach You at the Harvard Business School,* Piatkus, London

Koslowski P (ed) (1992) *Ethics in Economics, Business, and Economic Policy,* Springer-Verlag, Berlin

Koslowski P and Shionoya Y (eds) (1993) *The Good and the Economical: Ethical Choices in Economics and Management*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin

Krause A (1997) 'Graduate School Education in Europe' in *Europe*, Sep, No 369 pp 30-31

Krishnaswamy S (1988) 'Female Infanticide in Contemporarry India: A Case Study of Kallars of Tamilnadu' in Ghadially R (ed) *Women in Indian Society*, Sage, New Delhi, pp 186-95

Krueger R A (1988) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,* Sage, Newbury Park

Lewis A and Warneryd K-E (eds) (1994) *Ethics and Economic Affairs*, Routledge, London and New York

Locke R (1989) *Review of Management and Higher Education Since 1940: The Influence of America and Japan on West Germany, Great Britain and France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Locke R (1994) 'Management Education and Higher Education' in Engwall L and Gunnarsson E (eds) *Management Studies in an Academic Context,* Uppsala University, Uppsala pp 155-66

Locke R (1996) *The Introduction of Business Schools in the United Kingdom: Confusing Historical for Functional Events*, a keynote address, British Academy of Management Conference, Aston University, UK, September 17

MacIntyre A (1981) *After Virtue*, second edition, Notre Dame University Press, Notre Dame

Macintyre S (1999) *Behind the Lines: An Agent for Arts in the Occupied University*, Marion Adams Memorial Lecture, delivered at Melbourne University, 4 November

Malouf D (1999) 'Review of Brewer's The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the 18th Century', Harper Collins, in the *Australian Review of Books*, February

Management Review (1998) IIMB, Vol 10, No 1 & 2 (edition dedicated to MBA education in India)

Manen M van (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, State University of New York Press, New York

Manne R (1992)'The rift in conservative politics' in Carroll J and Manne R (eds) *Shutdown: The Failure of Economic Rationalism*, Text Publishing, Melbourne

Manne R (1998) *The Way We Live Now: The Controversies of the Nineties*, Text, Melbourne

Manne R (2000) 'The Death of the University' in James P (ed) *Burning Down the House: The Bonfire of the Universities,* Assoc for the Public University, with Arena Publications, North Carlton

Marcus G (1986)'Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System' in Clifford J and Marcus G E (eds) *Writing Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley

Marginson S (1993) *Education and Public Policy in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Marginson S (1997a) *Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, Victoria

Marginson S (1997b) *Markets in Education*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW

Martin H P and Schumann H (1997) *The Global Trap - Globalization and the Assault on Democracy and Prosperity*, Zed Books, London

MBA Promotional brochures and course guides (1997) of the 5 Universities involved in the research

McKern B (1997) 'MBAs Choosing from the Field' in *The Australian Accountant*, Sep Vol 67 No 8

McNally P T (1986) *The Legislative and Administrative Bases of Tertiary Education in Australia*, Darling Downs Institute Press, Darling Downs, Queensland

Micklethwaite J (1996) 'The Search for the Asian Manager' in *The Economist*, Vol 338 No 7956

Miles M and Huberman M (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*, Sage, Beverly Hills

Mill J S (1969) *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, Robson J M Priestley F E and Dryer D P (eds) University of Toronto Press, Canada

Mill J S (1987) *Utilitarianism and Other Essays* Ryan A (ed) Penguin, Harmondsworth

Mintzberg H (1990) 'The Design School: Reconsideration of the Basic Premises of Strategic Management' in *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol 11 No 6 pp 171-195

Mintzberg H (1995) 'Strategic Thinking as "Seeing" ' in *Developing Strategic Thought: Rediscovering the Art of Direction-Giving*, Garratt B (ed) McGraw Hill, London pp 67-70

Moorhouse G (1994) *Calcutta: The City Revealed*, Penguin India, (1983 ed) New Delhi

Morley D (1996) 'Euram, Modernity, Reason and Alterity: Or, Postmodernism, the Highest Stage of Cultural Imperialism?' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York pp 326-360

Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) (1996) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York

Murray-Smith S and Dare A J (1987) *The Tech: A Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*, Hyland House, Victoria

Nader R (1973) *The Consumer and Corporate Responsibility*, with assistance of J Carper, Harcourt Brace, New York

Nader R Green M and Seligman J (1976) *Taming the Giant Corporation*, Norton, New York

O'Neill G (1994) 'Framework for Developing a Total Reward Strategy' in Stone R J (ed) *Readings in Human Resource Management*, Jacaranda Wiley, Milton, Qld

O'Neill G (1995) 'Linking Pay to Performance: Conflicting Views and Conflicting Evidence' in *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, Vol 33 No 2 pp 20-35

O'Donovan G (2000) *Corporate Environmental Reporting: Symbolic or Substantive?* Paper presented at Business Ethics Research Unit, Victoria University, December 7

Ossipow W (1994) 'Niklas Luhmann's Sociology of the Economic System' in Lewis A and Warneryd K-E (eds) *Ethics and Economic Affairs*, Routledge, London and New York pp 297-312

Paz O (1997) *In Light of India*, The Harvill Press, London

Philip J and Narayan D (eds) (1989) *Management Education in India*, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore

Piper T R Gentile M C and Parks S D (1993) *Can Ethics Be Taught?* Harvard Business School, Boston

Poole M E and Spear R H (1997) 'Policy Issues in Postgraduate Education: An Australian Perspective' in *Beyond the First Degree: Graduate Education, Lifelong Learning and Careers*, Burgesss R G (ed) SRHE and The Open University, Buckingham

Popper K (1972) *Objective Knowledge*, Clarendon, Oxford

Porter L and McKibbin L (1988) *Management Education and Development: Thrust or Drift in the 21st Century*, McGraw Hill, New York

Pringle R (1988) *Secretaries Talk: Sexuality, Power and Work*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Pusey M (1991) *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation Building State Changes Its Mind*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Ralston Saul J (1993) *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, Penguin, Harmondsworth

Ralston Saul J (1995) *The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense*, Penguin, Harmondsworth

Ralston Saul J (1997) *The Unconscious Civilisation*, Penguin, Harmondsworth

Ranganathananda Swami (1997) *Science and Religion*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

Ray A (1994) *The Indian Manager Still in Search of a Style*, UBSPD Publishers, New Delhi

Rayner M (1997) *Rooting Democracy: Growing the Society We Want*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW

Reason P and Heron P (1988) 'Storytelling as inquiry' in *Human Inquiry in Action*, Reason P (ed) Sage, London

Reddy C M (1998) 'Business Education in India' in *Management Review*, IIMB, Vol 10, No 1 & 2

Reid I (1996) *Higher Education or Education for Hire - Language and Values in Australian Universities*, Central Queensland University Press, Rockhampton

Richardson J (1997) Economics: Hegemonic Discourse, in *Quadrant*, March pp 52-60

Robinson H A (1994) *The Ethnography of Empowerment: The Transformative Power of Classroom Interaction*, Falmer, Washington

Rorty R (1998) *Achieving Our Century: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

Rowse T (1997) 'Heaven and a Hills Hoist: Australian Critics on Suburbia' in White P and Russell P (eds) *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW pp 213-28

Said E W (1991) (reprint of 1978 edition) *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* Penguin, Harmondsworth

Said E W (1993) *Culture & Imperialism* Chatto & Windus, London

Said E W (1994) *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures,* Vintage, London

Salisbury H E (1992) *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng- A Dual Biography,* Harper Collins, London

Schmotter J W (1997) 'An interview with Robert H Atwell (President Emeritus of the American Council on Education)' in *Selections,* Spring/Summer Vol 13, No 3 pp 29-35

Sciuli D (ed) (1996) *Macro Socio-Economics: From Theory to Activism,* M E Sharpe Inc, New York

Secretan L H (1996) *Reclaiming Higher Ground: Creating Organisations that Inspire the Soul,* Sage, New Delhi

Sekhar R (1997) *Ethical Choices in Business,* Sage, New Delhi

Sen A (1987) *On Ethics and Economics,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford

Senge P (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation,* Doubleday, New York

Shelley K J (1997) A Portrait of the MBA' in *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* No 2 pp 26-33

Siemensma F (1995) 'The Match of Western Management Theory with Social and Political Norms in China - An Analysis of First year Student Case Studies in Shanghai', ANZAM Conference paper, Townsville, Queensland

Siemensma F (1996) 'The Teaching of 'Management by Human Values' in India. A Case Study of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, Focusing on the Implications for Developing Cross-cultural Management Curricula in Australia', ANZAM Conference paper, Wollongong, NSW

Siemensma F (1997) 'Voices from Business - Student Perceptions of Values in the MBA', British Academy of Management Conference paper, London

Siemensma F (1998), 'Ethics in Managerial Evaluation and Reward Systems', Invited paper for an International symposium on Applied ethics in Management, Management Centre for Human Values, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta

Siemensma F (1999) 'Hopes, Tensions and Complexity: Indian Students' Reflections on the Relationship of Values to Management Education' in *Journal of Human Values,* Vol 5 No 1

Siemensma F (2000) 'The Feminine Leader' in *Management Review,* IIMB, Bangalore, pp 107-12

Sinclair A (1994) *Trials at the Top: Chief Executives Talk about Men, Women and the Australian Executive Culture,* University of Melbourne, Australian Centre, Parkville

Sinclair A (1995a) 'Sex and the MBA' in *Organization,* Vol 2 No 2 pp 295-317

351

Sinclair A (1995b) *Gender in the Management Curriculum*, Equal Opportunity Unit, University of Melbourne, Parkville

Sinclair A (1998) *Doing Leadership Differently*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South

Sinclair A (1998) interviewed on ABC Radio's *Life Matters*, May 26

Sinclair A (1999) 'The Ethics of Managers; Cause for Despair?' in *Res Publica*, Vol 8, No1 pp 12-17

Sinclair A and Britton-Wilson V (1999) *The Culture-Inclusive Classroom*, Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, Parkville

Sinclair A and Hintz P (1991) *Developing Managers: Re-examining Ten Myths about MBAs and Managers*, University Of Melbourne, Graduate School of Management Working Paper, No 2, January

Singer P (1993) *How Are We to Live?* The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne

Singer P (1994) *Ethics*, Oxford University Press, New York

Sinha C (1989) Strategies for Networking of Management Educational Institutions in India, in *Management Education in India* Philip J and Narayan D S (eds) Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore pp 166-181

Smart N (1996) *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*, University of California Press, Berkeley

Smith A (1933-4) *The Wealth of Nations*, Dent and Sons, London (originally published 1776)

Smith B (ed) (1992) *Management Development in Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney

Smith N C (1990) *Morality and the Market*, Routledge, London

Smyth J (ed) (1995) *Academic Work: The Changing Labour Process in Higher Education*, SRHE/Open University Press, Buckingham

Sojka J and Wempe J (eds) (2000) *Business Challenging Business Ethics: New Instruments For Coping with Diversity in International Business*, Kluwer, Dordrecht

Solomon R C (1988) *A History of Western Philosophy: 7 Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Solomon R C (1992) *Ethics and Excellence*, Oxford University Press, New York

Solomon R C (1993) 'Corporate Roles, Personal Virtues, Moral Mazes: An Aristotelian Approach to Virtue Ethics' in Coady A and Sampford C (eds) *Business, Ethics and the Law*, Federation Press, St. Leonards NSW pp 24-51

Solomon R C (1994) *Above the Bottom Line* (second edition) Harcourt Brace, Sydney

Solomon R C (1997) 'Competition, Care and Compassion: Toward a Non-Chauvinistic View of the Corporation' in Larson A and Freeman R E (eds)

Women's Studies and Business Ethics, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, pp 162-73

Solomon R C (1999) *A Better Way to Think About Business: How Personal Integrity Leads to Corporate Success*, Oxford University Press, New York

Soros G (1997) 'The Capitalist Threat' in *The Atlantic Monthly*, February pp 45-58

Spender S and Hockney D (1976) *China Diary*, Abrams, New York

Stephens H (1998) *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh

Stephens J (1996) 'Cultural Dominance at its Most Benevolent: An Interview with Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak' in *Arena*, No 6 pp 35-50

Stewart S and Donleavy G (eds) (1995) *Whose Business Values: Some Asian and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong

Stout J (1988) *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*, Beacon Press, Boston

Stratton J and Ang I (1996) 'On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies: "British" Cultural Studies in an International Frame' in Morley D and Chen K-H (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York pp 361-91

Summers A (1975) *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Penguin, Ringwood

Taylor R (1991) *Virtue Ethics*, Linden Books, Interlaken, New York

Terry L (1995a) *Teaching for Justice in the Age of the Good Universities Guide*, Working Paper – Equity and Social Justice, Victoria University of Technology

Terry L (1995b) 'Not a Post-modern Nomad: A Conversation with Stuart Hall on Race Ethnicity and Identity' in *Arena* No 5 pp 51-70

Terry L (1997) 'Travelling the Hard Road to Renewal: A Continuing Conversation with Stuart Hall' in *Arena* No 8 pp 39-58

Theobald R (1987) *The Rapids of Change: Social Entrepreneurship in Turbulent Times*, Knowledge Systems, Indianapolis

Theobald R (1997) *Reworking Success: New Communities at the Millennium*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, British Colombia

Theobald R (1999) *We DO Have Future Choices: Strategies For Fundamentally Changing the 21st Century*, Southern Cross University press, Lismore NSW

Thomas J (1983) 'Towards a Critical Ethnography: A Re-examination of the Chicago Legacy' in *Urban Life*, Vol 11 No 4 January pp 477-490

Thomason R (1999) 'The MBA (Technology Management): The Product of Successful Alliances' in Neelamegham S, Midgley D and Sen C (eds) *Enterprise Management: New Horizons in Indo-Australian Collaboration*, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi pp 395-405

353

Ting-Toomey S (1988)'Intercultural Conflict Styles: A Face – Negotiation Theory' in *Theories in Inter-Cultural Communication Annual* Vol 12 Kim Y Y and Gudykunst W B (eds) Sage, Newbury Park, CA pp 213-35

Tomlinson D (1982) 'The Shift in Financial Responsibility for Higher Education' in Harman G and Smart D (eds) *Federal Intervention in Australian Education,* Georgian House, Melbourne

University of Melbourne (2000) *Faculty of Economics and Commerce, 1925-2000* University of Melbourne publication

Valecha G (1999) 'Management Education: The Emerging Trends in Training and Development' in Neelamegham S Midgley D and Sen C (eds) *Enterprise Management: New Horizons in Indo-Australian Collaboration,* Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi pp 585-95

Van Hooft S (2001) 'Overcoming Principles: Dialogue in Business Ethics' in *Teaching Business Ethics* 5; pp 89-106, Klewer, Netherlands

Velasquez MG (1992) *Business Ethics - Concepts and Cases,* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey (third edition)

Venkatesh S (1998) 'Management Education: In Prospect and Retrospect – A View from the Helm – IIM Directors' Perspective' in *Management Review,* IIMB Bangalore pp 65-114

Walter J (1996) *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW

Wang G-W (1991a) *China and the Overseas Chinese,* Times Academic Press, Singapore

Wang G-W (1991b) *The Chineseness of China: Selected essays,* Oxford University Press, Hong Kong

Ward R (1978) *The Australian Legend,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, new illustrated edition

Westwood R I (1992) *Organisational Behaviour: Southeast Asian Perspectives,* Longman Group-Far East, Hong Kong pp 296-298

Wheeler D and Silanpaa M (1997) *The Stakeholder Corporation: A Blueprint for Maximising Stakeholder Value,* Pitman,London

White P (1961) *The Tree of Man,* Penguin, Ringwood

Whitley R (1994) 'Formal Knowledge and Management Education' in Engwall L and Gunnarsson E (eds) *Management Studies in an Academic Context,* Uppsala University, Uppsala

Wils J-P (1993) 'Economy Bounded: Reflections About Peter Koslowski's Program of Ethical Economy' in Koslowski P and Shionoya Y (eds) *The Good and The Economical: Ethical choices in Economics and Management,* Springer-Verlag, Berlin pp 89-108

Wilson J F (1996) 'Management Education in Britain – A Compromise Between Culture and Necessity' in Amdam R P (ed) *Management Education and*

Competitiveness: Europe, Japan and the United States Routledge, London and New York pp 133-49

Woods P (1986) *Inside Schools: Ethnography in Educational Research,* Routledge, London

Wu D-C (1985) 'Neo-Confucianism' in Bishop D H (ed)) *Chinese Thought: An Introduction,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi pp 233-275

Xavier M and Ramachander (2000) *Beyond Competition: Business Strategies for the 21st Century,* Vikas Publishing, New Delhi

Yeatman A (1987) 'Public Management and the Australian State in the 1980's' in *Australian Journal of Public Administration* Vol 46 No 4 December

Yeatman A (1990a) *Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Democrats,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Yeatman A (1990b) A Feminist Theory of Social Differentiation, in Nicholson L (ed) *Feminism/ Postmodernism,* Routledge, New York

Yeatman A (1993) The Gendered Management of Equity-Oriented Change in Higher Education in Baker D and Fogarty M (eds) *A Gendered Culture: Education Management in the Nineties,* St. Albans, Victoria University of Technology

Yeatman A (1995) 'The Gendered Management of Equity-Oriented Change in Higher Education' in Smyth J (ed) *Academic Work: The Changing Labour Process in Higher Education,* SRHE/Open University Press, Buckingham, pp 194-205

Yin B-Y and Felley M (1990) *Chinese Romanization: Pronunciation and Orthography,* Sinolingua, Beijing

Appendix A1: Self-administered interview schedule for students

What responsibilities does the MBA program promote in its students?

This research forms part of a doctoral studies project which aims to explore how the MBA influences students to think about their role as citizens as well as their current or future role in business. One aspect of this process is to explore how key terms used in business are interpreted by MBA students.

The following questions seek to elicit your understanding of the outcomes promoted by the MBA and your beliefs of what society should be.

1. What is your understanding of the following expressions?

   a) Individualism

   b) Level playing field

   c) Competition

   d) Cooperation

   e) Family friendly employer

   f) Downsizing/ right sizing

   g) Social Darwinism/ survival of the fittest

   h) Capitalism

   i) Social justice

   j) Consumerism

   k) Community values

   l) Privatisation

   m) Globalisation/ internationalisation

   n) Sustainable development

2. What are the key expressions/ phrases which are used to justify business decisions?

3. Does business have a responsibility to society overall? If so, please give

examples.

4.   What are your perceived responsibilities in relation to yourself?

           "   "   "   "   "   to your family?

           "   "   "   "   "   to your employer?

           "   "   "   "   "   to society ?nationally?

                                                        Beyond?

Do you experience (or anticipate) tensions between the above roles?
If yes, give a significant example.

5.   Of the following, which **three issues** do you believe are most **important**? Why?

        gender concerns in the work force

        managing older staff

        managing where status or merit differences cause concern

        conflict between family and business values

        conflict between public and private values

        consumerism and materialism/ how much is enough?

        profit as a goal

        social good/ distribution of wealth

        religion/ spirituality/ spiritual values

        management style

        environmentalism

6.   What are the three key words which would describe your ideal society?

7.   Does studying an MBA help to promote that social ideal? Please elaborate.

8.   Does studying an MBA help students to be good citizens? Please elaborate.

Appendix A 2: Self-administered interview schedule for MBA staff

1. What are the MBA subjects which you have taught?

2. In what way do you see this/ these subject/s influencing students:

> Re: their personal life?
> Re: their business /corporate life?
> Re: their life as citizens/ community members?

3. To what extent (if any) do the following concepts relate to your teaching area? How?

a) Individualism

b) Level playing field

c) Competition

d) Cooperation

e) Family friendly employer

f) Downsizing/ right sizing

g) Social Darwinism/ survival of the fittest

h) Capitalism

i) Social justice

j) Consumerism

k) Community values

l) Privatisation

m) Globalisation/ internationalisation

n) Sustainable development

4. What style of teaching and assessment do you use?
   What style of knowledge/ skills do you hope students will develop or expand as a result of studying your subject?

5.   Of the following, which **three issues** do you believe are most **important**? Why? Which is least important?

        gender concerns in the work force

        managing older staff

        managing where status or merit differences cause concern

        conflict between family and business values

        conflict between public and private values

        consumerism and materialism/ how much is enough?

        profit as a goal

        social good/ distribution of wealth

        religion/ spirituality/ spiritual values

        management style

        environmentalism

6.   Are questions of values appropriate for debate within the MBA?

7.   Does the MBA influence students in their role as citizens? Should it?

Appendix B1: Table of all who participated in the Australian Study

Legend
Indiv Numbers = student/staff no's used in thesis
Gr Date = date of group interview
Gr = group number, doc = transcript of discussion
iv Date = date of individual interview
Iv = transcript of recorded interview
Written Response = participants who provided written responses.
Uni = Universities a, b, and c
Stud/Staff: u= student, a = staff
Text name = hypothetical names used in thesis

Indiv Numbers	Gr Date	Gr	IV Date	Iv	Written Response	Uni	Stud/ Staff	Text name
A 1	26/3/97	g 1 - doc			wr	a	u	
A 2	26/3/97	g 1 - doc			wr	a	u	
A 3	26/3/97	g 1 - doc			wr	a	u	
A 4	5/5/97	g 2 - doc		Iv		a	u	Parveen
A 5	5/5/97	g 2 - doc		Iv		a	u	Willow
A 6	5/5/97	g 2 - doc				a	u	
A 7	5/5/97	g 2 - doc				a	u	
A 8	5/5/97	g 2 - doc				a	u	
A 9	5/5/97	g 3 - doc				a	u	
A 10	5/5/97	g 3 - doc				a	u	
A 11	5/5/97	g 3 - doc	26/5/97	Iv		a	u	Paraswati
A 12	5/5/97	g 3 - doc	10/6/97	Iv		a	u	Genevieve
A 13	5/5/97	g 3 - doc				a	u	
A 14	5/5/97	g 3 - doc				a	u	
A 15	5/5/97	g 3 - doc				a	u	
A 16	5/5/97	g 4 -doc		Iv		a	u	Linton
A 17	5/5/97	g 4 -doc			wr	a	u	
A 18	5/5/97	g 4 -doc			wr	a	u	
A 19	5/5/97	g 4 -doc				a		
A 20	5/5/97	g 4 -doc				a	u	
A 21	5/5/97	g 4				a	u	
A 22	5/5/97	g 4		Iv		a	u	
A 23	12/5/97	g 4			wr	a	u	
A 24			30/6/97	Iv		a	u	
A 25	12/5/97	g 5				a	u	Di
A 26	12/5/97	g 5			wr	a	u	Stewart
A 27	12/5/97	g 5			wr	a	u	
A 28	5/5/97	g 4			wr	a	u	
A 29	3/12/97	g 6 - doc				b	u	
A 30	3/12/97	g 6 - doc				c	u	
A 31	3/12/97	g 6 - doc				a	u	
A 32	3/12/97	g 6 - doc				a	u	
A 33	3/12/97	g 6 - doc				a	u	
A 34	9/8/97	g 7 -doc	27/8/97	Iv		b	u	Wendy
A 35	9/8/97	g 7 -doc	20/8/97	Iv		b	u	
A 36	9/8/97	g 7 -doc			wr	b	u	
A 37	9/8/97	g 7 -doc			wr	b	u	
A 38	9/8/97	g 7 -doc			wr	b	u	
A 39	9/8/97	g 7 -doc			wr	b	u	
A 40	9/8/97	g 7 -doc				b	u	
A 41	9/8/97	g 7 -doc				b	u	
A 42	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 43	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 44	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 45	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 46	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 47	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 48	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 49	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 50	9/8/97	g 7			wr	b	u	
A 51	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 52	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 53	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 54	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	

Indiv Numbers	Gr Date	Gr	IV Date	Iv	Written Response	Uni	Stud/ Staff	Text name
A 55	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 56	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 57	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 58	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 59	22/11/97	g 8			wr	c	u	
A 60	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 61	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 62	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 63	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 64	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 65	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 66	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 67	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 68	23/11/97	g 9			wr	c	u	
A 69	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 70	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 71	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 72	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 73	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 74	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 75	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 76	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 77	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 78	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 79	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 80	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 81	23/11/97	g 10			wr	c	u	
A 82	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 83	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	Peter
A 84	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 85	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 86	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 87	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 88	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 89	29/11/97	g 11			wr	c	u	
A 90			10/3//97	I		a	a	
A 91	8/4/97	g 12 -doc				a	a	
A 92	8/4/97	g 12 -doc	19/5/97	i		a	a	Helen
A 93	8/4/97	g 12 -doc	28/5/97	i		a	a	
A 94	8/4/97	g 12 -doc	26/6/97	i		a	a	
A 95	8/4/97	g 12 -doc	8/8/97	i		a	a	
A 96	8/4/97	g 12 -doc	10/8/97	i		a	a	
A 97			11/6/97	i		a	a	Robert
A 98			25/6/97	i		a	a	Julia
A 99			20/6/97	i		a	a	Jeremy
A 100			20/8/97	i		b	a	
A 101	3/7/97	g 13 - doc	20/08/97	i		b	a	
A 102	3/7/97	g 13 - doc	20/08/97	i		b	a	
A 103			11/6/97	i		b	a	James
A 104			14/8/97	i		b	a	
A 105	3/7/97	g 13 - doc				b	a	
A 106	3/7/97	g 13 - doc				b	a	Helen
A 107			21/8/97	i		c	a	
A 108			27/8/97	i		c	a	Neal
A 109			3/9/97	i		c	a	Emma
A 110			5/9/97	i		c	a	Catherine
A 111			21/8/97	i		c	a	Lee
A 112			3/9/97	i	wr	c	a	
A 113			15/8/97	i		c	a	
A 114			7/8/97	i		c	a	
A 115	3/7/97	g 13 - doc				b	a	
A 116			8/12/97	i	wr	b	u	Buddy
A 117			9/12/97	i	wr	b	u	Genevieve
A 118			11/6/97	i	wr	b	u	Yun-wei
A 119			5/8/97	i	wr	b	u	Ian
A 120			31/3/98	i		b	a	
A 121			20/8/97	i		c	a	

Appendix B2: Table of students who participated in the Indian phase of the study

```
Legend
St. No. = student no's used in the thesis
Gr Date = Dates of group interviews
gr = interview group number
Iv Date = Date of individual interviews
Uni: University x or y
Text Name = hypothetical names used in thesis
```

St.	No.	Gr Date	Gr	Iv Date	Iv	Uni	Text Name
In	1	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	2	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	3	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	4	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	5	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	6	19/12/95 & 8/1 /96	gr1			x	
In	7			16/1/96	iv	y	
In	8			17/1/96	iv	y	
In	9			18/1/96	iv	y	
In	10			18/1/96	iv	y	Pushpa
In	11			17/1/96	iv	y	Radha
In	12			17/1/96	iv	y	
In	13	20/1/96	gr2			y	
In	14	20/1/96	gr2			y	
In	15	20/1/96	gr2			y	
In	16	20/1/96	gr2			y	
In	17			1/20/96	iv	y	
In	18			1/20/96	iv	y	

Appendix C: Key to hypothetical names used in thesis

Hypothetical name	Codes as per Appendix B
Bernadette	A117
Buddy	A116
Catherine	A110
Di	A25
Emma	A109
Genevieve	A12
Helen	A92
Ian	A119
James	A103
Jeremy	A99
Julia	A98
Lawrence	A101
Lee	A111
Linton	A16
Neal	A108
Paraswati	A11
Parveen	A4
Peter	A83
Pushpa	In10
Radha	In11
Robert	A97
Stewart	A26
Wendy	A34
Willow	A5
Yun-wei	A118

Appendix D : Example of coding analysis

No	Gr	m/f	Country	deg	Where Studied	Age	Yrs/wk Uni	Rt/pt	Yr of Stud	PR orS V	Relig/ns	Dom Phil	Stud/Staff	Cert/Ten Student	Comments
52	g	m	a	e	a	40	18 c	p	1 p	ns	c	u	t		Taoism, anglo celt, pro-private business Excellent quotes
53	g	m	a	s	a	35	12 c	p	1 p	ns	f	u	t/a		
54	g	m	a	e	a	45	25 c	p	2 p	ns	ng	u	t/a		conflict, martyr, Excellent quotes
55	g	m	a??	a	a	45	22 c	p	1 p	ns	sj	u	t/a		conflict CCT, l/govt, Excellent quotes
56	g	m	th	b	th	25	3 c	p	2 s	ns	pr	u	c		
57	g	f	sl	s	sl	35	15 c	f	2 s	ns	m, pr	u	c		pragmatic, socialist, good quotes
58	g	f	a	b	a	45	22 c	f	1 p	ns	c,b,in??	u	t/a		Intelectual rebellion, good quotes
59	g	m	a??	e	a	35	15 c	p	2 p	ns	f	u	t/a		sees east/west tension good quotes
60	g	m	la	s pg	r	40	15 c	f	2 s	ns	s & p	u	c		socialism
61	g	m	io	b	io	35	17 c	f	1 s	ns	v	u	c		good quotes, muslim
62	g	m	io	it	io	25	3 c	f	1 s	ns	pc	u	t/a		sees advantages and disadvantages
63	g	f	io	it	io	25	3 c	f	1 s	ns	b	u			harmony/business/family
64	g	m	io	it	nz	25	4 c	f	1 s	ns	p	u	c		efficiency
65	g	f	th	b	th	25	3 c	f	1 s	ns	p/st	u	t/a		gender, self, see two sides, good quotes
66	g	f	th	a	th	25	6 c	f	1 s	ns	d	u			buddhist, social
67	g	f	th	a	th	20	2 c	f	1 s	ns	f	u			social context both positive and negative
68	g	m	v	b	v	25	6 c	f	1 s	ns	s	u			sees advantages and disadvantages
69	g	m	th	b	th	25	4 c	f	1 s	ns	?	u			not written comments
70	g	m	a	b	a	30	6 c	f	1 p	ns	p, pers	u	t/a		travel leads to changed perceptions
71	g	m	a/v	e	r	35	12 c	f	1 p	ns	s	u	t/a		marxist, business in society
72	g	m	l	b	l	20	1 c	f	1 s	ns	rel, env	u	t/a		useful as an example of self contradiction
73	g	m	th	b	th	25 15???	c	f	1 s	h	b, r	u			coherent, conformist
74	g	m	l	b	l	20	2 c	f	1 s	ns	b, r	u			complex
75	g	m	l	it	l	20	2 c	f	1 s	ns	rel, env	u	t/a		values judgement, respect by and from society, good quotes
76	g	f	th	b	th	25	5 c	f	1 s	ns	sj, cu	u	t/a		strong on society, culture, complexity, strong personal focus, quotable
77	g	m	a	b	a	30	10 c	f	2 p	ns	p	u	t/a		complex, good key comments
78	g	m	th	vs	th	30	7 c	f	1 s	ns	ml, com,	u	t/a		good quotes, ambiguous - changes position
79	g	m	l	e	l	40	18 c	f	1 s	ns	v, s	u			
80	g	m	l	it	l	25	5 c	f	1 s	ns	pr, age	u	a		confused
81	g	m	ro	s, p/g	r	40	20 c	f	2 s	pr	pr	u	a		very good quotes, tought cynical complex, changing stance
82	g	m	a	a	a	45	25 c	p	1 p	ns	env	u	t		changes from questionnaire to essay
83	g	m	a	b	a	35	14 c	p	1 p	ns	f	u			ambivalent
84	g	m	io	b	io	25	2 c	f	2 s	ns	b	u			self identity, self reflective
85	g	m	l	b	l	20	2 c	f	1 s	ns	f, b	u	c		personal stress of family business, confused
86	g	f	mu	b	mu	35	15 c	f	1 p	ns	anti-b	u			pro spirituality, environment, and social justice
87	g	m	a	ms	a	55	35 c	p	2 p	ns	b, s, v	u	t		good quotes pros/cons of privatisation medical services
88	g	m	uk	o		30	12 c	p	2 p	ns	pol, m,	u	t		good quotes re family, labour, & marxist perspective
89	g	m	a	b	a	30	13 c	p	2 p	ns	env	u	t		good quotes re political and environmental focus.