

The Moving Subject: Shifting Work(ers) Across and Beyond Organisational Boundaries

Hermine Scheeres and Nicky Solomon

Contemporary changes in what constitutes work are producing different kinds of people in organizations and thus workers can be understood as engaging in ongoing identity work (Scheeres 2003; Solomon 2005). In this chapter we examine how this is played out in two workplaces focussing on one worker in each organisation. The first workplace is a further education institution that is increasingly commercialising its services. The second workplace is a large manufacturing company that is moving from being an autocratic hierarchical organisation to one where all workers are deployed in teams as part of the new participative management structures. Drawing on our ethnographic research and discourse analysis we foreground some of the complexities involved in worker-learner identity work, and in doing so problematise the idea that this identity work is transparent and that new identities are homogenous and easily produced. Further, work as a source of 'learning self', and as meaningful and as essential to self fulfilment (du Gay 1996; Usher and Solomon 1999) is seen as leading to a maximisation of people's capacities in the workplace. This can be understood as a kind of identity work that incorporates desires as well as disciplines. For Foucault (1988), this entails the complexities of technologies of the self and we use this theoretical idea to discuss how the two workers govern or take care of themselves.

6.1 Introduction

Contemporary changes in what constitutes work in both private and public organizations and, more specifically, what constitutes work for particular people in these organizations, is producing different kinds of people at

work. The point of departure of this chapter is that the changing demands on workers in the 21st century post-bureaucratic workplace (Heckscher and Donellon 1994; Iedema 2003) have led to a significance being placed on governing the self. Workers are required to engage in on-going change and learning and much of the learning involves workers becoming subject to and subjects of various organisational practices. This process can be understood as identity work (Scheeres 2003; Solomon 2005).

In this chapter we examine how this is played out in two workplaces concentrating on two individual workers. The first workplace is a further education institution that is increasingly commercialising its services. Here we focus on one employee, an experienced teacher within the education sector, who is now also engaged in entrepreneurial activities with industry as part of her everyday work. The second workplace is a large manufacturing company that is moving from being an autocratic hierarchical organisation to one where all workers are deployed in teams as part of the new participative management structures. The focus here is on an employee who has been a production line worker for many years and who is now a team leader and facilitator.

Drawing on our ethnographic research and discourse analysis we foreground some of the complexities involved in the worker-learner identity work, and in doing so problematise the idea that this identity work is transparent and that new identities are homogenous and easily produced (Hall, S. 1996; Usher, R. and Edwards, R. 1994; Bhabha, H.K. 1994).

6.2 Understanding Identity

The theoretical understandings that underpin our discussion draw on a number of writers that can be described as taking a discursive approach to identity (Foucault 1988; Gergen and Kaye 1992; Hall 1996; Usher et al. 1997; Rose 1998). Their approach differs from theorists of the self who are concerned with the individual and social binary and the relationship between the two. Notwithstanding the importance of understanding the relationship between the individual and society, the approach taken here removes itself from understanding this relationship as a dichotomy or a dualism that needs to be overcome (Chappell et al. 2003).

Our interest is in understanding the self as configured contingently as it is subjected to, but also contributing to, continuing social and historical transformations. Identity, in our terms, is taken to be an ongoing discursive process that is neither quite complete nor ever unified. Identities comprise multiple processes that come about through different and often intersecting discursive practices that produce particular kinds of identity constructions. Further, much of the struggle around

identity is a struggle for closure, a desire to 'be' a specific kind of individual, such as, for example, an effective team facilitator/leader or a committed teacher. This struggle for closure leads to a homogenising and over-determined process of identity (re)formation which in turn leads to an engagement with issues of power and positioning; and a way of understanding identity in terms of subjects and subjectivities. For Hall (1996:6) identity refers to

the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions, which discursive practices construct for us.

The suturing of a subject to a subject position is not a simple process of hailing a subject into place through the hierarchical or hegemonic operations of power. Rather, it includes people recognising their investment in a subject position, and enacting their productive power to capitalise on this realisation. It incorporates an acceptance of selves that are able to act as well as be acted upon differently in different contexts. Identities can therefore be seen as the positions that the subject takes up: a kind of naming or location for subject positions at some point in their life and/or work trajectory. These constructions should not be understood as enduring ones, rather as connected to current social concepts and contexts. In other words, certain kinds of identity do particular kinds of work that are productive in a particular contemporary moment. Deetz (2003:125) describes this flexibilisation of the self as:

Identities in contemporary society are increasingly fragmented as the sequestering of experiential realms is reduced (we are simultaneously workers, managers, parents, children, calculators and lovers) and the inadequacy of presumed historically derived identities and category makers becomes more evident.

Multiplicity of identities or flexibilisation of self/ves has been taken up by writers particularly interested in the workplace and organisational studies. For example, Champy (1995) Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996) du Gay (1996) Rose (1998) Chappell (2003) Scheeres (2003), whose attention is on the post-bureaucratic workplace, and understanding people in these workplaces as workers who are asked to bring more of themselves to work and invest more of themselves in work. Indeed they argue that the management of subjectivity, that is, the discursive construction of workers as 'subjects' of a particular kind, has become one of the central tasks of organizations. This management is not in the form of a top-down, overt, coercive policy; it is more subtle and

capillary-like (Foucault 1980). One way this occurs is through the current emphasis on culture and self through the discourses of belonging, and governing the self and self-change:

In the new vocabulary of group relations, the intersubjective life of the enterprise could be construed as a vital mechanism upon which government should operate, not only binding the individual psychologically into the production process, but also, through work, linking the worker into the social order as a democratic citizen with rights and responsibilities (Miller and Rose 1993:96).

Workers are led to see work as a source of ‘learning self’, and that this is meaningful and essential to self fulfilment (du Gay 1996; Usher and Solomon 1999). This in turn works to help maximise people’s capacities in the workplace. This can be understood as a kind of identity work that incorporates desires as well as disciplines. For Foucault (1988), this entails the complexities of technologies of the self.

This chapter goes on to explore these ideas through the case studies of two workers, Mary and Carol, who spoke to us about their work and, either explicitly or implicitly, their learning at work, and thus about their constructions of their identities.

6.3 Case Study 1

6.3.1 Mary: Moving Around an Educational Institution

The subject in the first case study works in a further education institution. The context of the case study is a research project that focussed on everyday learning at work. It was funded through one of the Australian Government’s industry linkage schemes, where the university’s research collaborator and partner was a large further education institution. While the business of both partners is education, the focus was not on teaching and learning in programs or classrooms. The further education institution is a workplace, and like most workplaces today, it is concerned with the professional development of its employees, and the various ways these employees and the organisation itself learn. It was these kinds of learning that were the focus of the study.

We explored four work groups across two colleges: a group of work-based learning teachers who worked in the commercial arm of a college engaging in entrepreneurial activities, a group of clerical and administration workers in the Human Resources Unit, a group of trade teachers, and a group of strategic planners. The purpose of the study was to ‘uncover’ existing everyday learning practices and to suggest how to

strategically take them up to promote more learning. Early in the study our research centred on finding and examining the employees' existing learning practices. However, during the study the researchers' focus moved from practices and activities towards a focus on exploring the identity work of these employees. This shift emerged as a result of (among other things), the rejection by the participants of the label 'learner' (Solomon and Boud 2003). Importantly, the shift can be attributed to the research methodology, that is, the theoretical resources of the researchers as well as the dynamics of the unfolding research process (which is discussed below).

The research methodology was a fairly conventional one. The researchers conducted one to one semi-structured interviews that explored how each individual learned and continued to learn their work, and on how they understood workplace learning. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed. The analysis was brought back to each of the groups, who were given the opportunity to explore the various issues raised. The aim of these group explorations was to identify a learning theme that was relevant to the professional issues of the group. For example the theme would then provide a site of collaborative work for the researchers and the particular group, and this work would involve the development of strategies that would improve some aspect of their everyday learning and work practices. The theme of the work-based learning group was 'learning through becoming'; the title exemplifies how the research became focussed on the formation and becoming of the participants rather than on their practices. This is not to say that identity and practices are separate entities, but rather it draws attention to the way the research process highlighted that these practices are subjectifying ones. In other words, when workers engage in different kinds of work practices they are also forming different social relationships and different understandings of what constitutes work: that is, they are becoming different kinds of workers.

The focus in this chapter is on one employee in the work-based learning group. Mary, an experienced teacher, is engaged in entrepreneurial activities with industry as part of her everyday work in the education institution. The discussion draws heavily on an analysis of the transcript of the initial interview with Mary, and is also informed by observations and other interactions with Mary during the research process.

The analysis concentrates on the way Mary positioned herself as she was at the same time being positioned by others within the workplace. The commentary draws on the discourses that Mary used to articulate the various struggles and pleasures that she experienced in her everyday work. The discourses demonstrate a management of self, that is, a particular set of technologies of self are drawn upon as Mary manages to

straddle teaching in the college in conventional classroom programs, at the same time as engaging in entrepreneurial activities where she acts as a learning consultant for other organisations. This latter set of activities incorporates an additional challenge in that the systems of the further education institution were organised around conventional teaching activities. The management of herself means that she has to navigate the various identities and discourses so that she doesn't 'lose herself' in the process: she has to care for herself.

6.3.2 Mary: Work/Life Discourses and Care of (Her)self

The interview transcript reveals that Mary is learning to successfully navigate the multiple identities that are required in her work. Her main strategy is to disentangle these identities by separating out the various discourses within which she operates. These discourses include those to do with her conventional teaching role and those to do with her entrepreneurial and commercial activities. Her work where these two discourses align is to do with the bureaucracy that manages and organises her workload, her pay and her hours. This is an uneasy fit in terms of her management/consultant identity and she manages this through working with the system. However, she also challenges it in small ways. In addition, or perhaps as a consequence of these tensions, one of the most interesting kinds of identity work that can be seen is the way Mary constructs herself through another discourse, a discourse where she articulates a way of sustaining herself as a person with a particular life trajectory that is both to do with work, but also one that is distinctly outside of work.

This life trajectory and the way she spoke about it, is marked by talk that suggests that life and work occupy different spaces, in that her 'life' identity is intact and is not in conflict with her identity as a committed over-stretched worker. There are, however, some tensions as she learns to do new work and to be a different worker. This is a person who came to this further education institution with the idea that it would be a shift into an easier, less intrusive space, and therefore it would be unlike her previous jobs. She understands it as a space that allows her to more fully engage with her home and family:

It allowed me to control my hours better. [Data Extract 1]

While at times Mary spoke of the many stressful challenges of her job, she doesn't understand her soul as being governed (Rose 1993) by her workplace. Rather she understands herself as a person who is still on track. This is a track that keeps her desires of the future intact and is therefore one that still enables her to 'be herself' in the present.

Mary uses ‘my life as a place outside of work’ discourse at frequent points in the interview. These kinds of references to life outside of work were unusual in the sample of interviews with twenty eight employees. For Mary, it seemed to be a discourse that worked for her. We suggest that it was a technology that Mary drew upon in learning to take care of herself.

One example of this interest in her life trajectory can be found in Mary’s responses to questions about taking up this particular job, such as:

Just a conjunction of opportunities at a *particular point in my life* [Data Extract 2]

as well as in her description of the changing nature of the organisation:

Mm. Evolving. Very definitely evolving into something quite different. When I first came here it was all mainstream teaching, most of it in the daytime, *which was great, because I could get home at night*. Now it’s evolving and there’s a great deal more ambiguity because we’re dealing with new customers, new ways of teaching new courses. So evolving. It was good because I was starting to feel like I was becoming complacent and lazy from doing the same thing over and over again.

But on the other hand you deal with the uncertainties and insecurities, ‘is this really what you wanted?’ *I’m very conscious that in my career at this stage of my life*, I want to be in control of it and what I do, rather than just go along with the tide and be controlled by somebody else’s decisions. So I’m always assessing ‘is this what I want to continue to be doing?’ because it is evolving so much. But it’s because it is evolving that I’m still here, I think. [Data Extract 3]

These quotes illustrate the useful alignment that Mary makes between her work and her self. It seems that she assesses opportunities in terms of their usefulness to herself and ‘this stage of her life’. Note here also her concern for control, and this control of herself and her choices are manifest in the pronouns that she uses. Early in the interview, in response to a question about what her job entails, Mary replied with:

It’s a combination of what *we* call mainstream, where *we* teach students who come into learn any of the management type disciplines, including human resource management, and that’s through normal face-to-face teaching in the classroom. It also includes some flexible delivery with some of those mainstream students. And then most of *our* work is dedicated to workplace learning. Which is actually going out into the workplace for clients who pay *us* on a commercial basis and doing, not so much training, but more facilitated learning with them, and their individual staff members, and accrediting and assessing them. It’s a combination. [Data Extract 4]

Apart from the clear differences in vocabulary choices that Mary makes to talk about the different parts of her work – ‘*normal face-to-face teaching*’ and ‘*workplace learning*’ – the quote is also interesting in terms of her use of the word ‘*we*’ (and the accompanying ‘*our*’ and ‘*us*’). Who is ‘*we*’? It is likely to be Mary and her work group but it also possibly refers to Mary and the institution. This suggests an identification with the group and the institution which is symptomatic of a sense of belonging and ownership to the various activities. This use of ‘*we*’ is repeated in all sections of the transcript that relate to talk about her actual work practice.

In Extract 3 Mary uses the pronoun ‘*I*’. This suggests that she (the ‘*I*’) is both separate and embedded in the workplace, and while at times there is a sense of conflation of these two, the ‘*I*’ is also distinctive, particularly at decision making moments about taking on new opportunities. Once an opportunity is taken up the ‘*I*’ becomes the ‘*we*’, but not beforehand.

This clarity for Mary about her desires, the significance of her ‘*life*’ plans and trajectories and how these are played out in her relationship to work and the workplace are highlighted in the following quote:

Yes, because I’m at that stage where I could retire tomorrow if I wanted to. I can’t imagine being out of work totally, I’d still have to be doing some form of work, because I need to keep up with some interest, but I’m still evaluating whether I want to be here for the hours, doing what I want to do, or whether I’d be better off getting into something else. But it’s a double-edged sword in that it’s evolving. As I said, if it hadn’t of evolved, I think I would have died of boredom by now. Just teaching mainstream, particularly the day students. Because it’s evolving, I’m still evaluating whether it’s going in the direction that I want to stay here for. But so far it’s ok. [Data Extract 5]

Mary’s ‘*evolving*’ constitutes ongoing learning – not only learning material work but learning to manage herself. Her analysis and self-evaluation use her life trajectory as their point of reference, and indeed it is her ‘*life*’ that helps her make decisions, for example:

Well the last time I did any casual work, I stopped doing because it was just too much. See, *my objective is to keep my home and work life very finely balanced*. I found I was getting drawn into too much work. And the last time I did any casual work at uni, I actually did it on contract because the casual pay rates have deteriorated too. *It just wasn’t worthwhile*. So they let me do it on contract, or otherwise I wouldn’t have been interested. But the casual pay rates here, attract people, but they don’t tend to keep them for very long. Or keep the very good ones. *It worries me a bit, what’s going to happen. And then I think, why should it worry me, I’ll be retired by then. But I’ve got children, and you know*. But I do believe the calibre of

teaching at this place is probably pretty good generally. [Data Extract 6]

The way Mary chooses to manage her work and life distinctions and their overlaps is in some ways very clear-cut, but an interesting set of complexities also emerged in one set of exchanges. These exchanges were about how to name herself in relation to her job. She first offers *TAFE teacher* then adds that she has *Education Manager* on her business card, adding that she finds this embarrassing. She feels that it was placed there because *TAFE teacher* doesn't have a commercial orientation. She felt that this kind of thinking is '*like a cultural cringe*', yet Mary cringes when using the *Education Manager* card. It is not a name that she identifies with. After discussing other examples of difficulties in being named at work, she decided that '*the nomenclature thing.... was just a familiarity thing*'. However, without any prompt this was closely followed by:

Mary: If you ask me what I'd like to be called, I really couldn't say – 'retired' perhaps, 'lady of leisure, tourist, traveller'.

Interviewer: Yes, the traveller would be nice. Do you think there's been a shift in the way you think of yourself from when you first started here?

Mary: No.

Interviewer: Same?

Mary: Semi-retired. That sounds like I'm not putting the hours in. But this is my semi-retirement job.

Interviewer: That was a quite a conscious decision.

Mary: Yes, I got out of a job that was using up just about every minute of my waking hours, into a job where I had the time to be with my family and do other things that I wanted to do. Sometimes when I've dragged home after three twelve-hour days, I question that. [Data Extract 7]

This talk around wanting to be called a '*lady of leisure, tourist, traveller*' sits comfortably with Mary. There is no apparent tension for her in wanting to name herself as someone who doesn't work, in response to a question about an appropriate name for herself in her job '*lady of leisure*' is a label that is forward looking, yet at the same time it works for her '*now*'. It is part of what constructs Mary's subjectivity. This comforting narrative is a technology that sustains a comfortable sense of self, a self that is 'life outside of work'.

However the talk about being a lady of leisure and the fact that it is where she wants to be, triggers further discussion of retirement and reminds her of the need to regain control of her life, that is, to have work work for her, in contrast to work governing and controlling her. Thus:

Yes. I intend to, as soon as I can, cut it back to two days a week. Just to keep it as an interest. The problem with holding this job is that when I most want to travel, is when I can't, with this job. And I'm really restricted by the school holidays, because that's when I can do what I want to do, but everybody else does too. So I'm looking forward to being off the season with the TAFE holidays if we possibly can. So that sort of flexibility would be wonderful for me, and I was able to get a bit of that, whereas I'm going to take leave when TAFE is in session to make up for the work I did during the Christmas holidays. [Data Extract 8]

These quotes and the discussion around them illustrate the various technologies of self that Mary employs. On the surface Mary's job is a complex one. Mary operates within two overlapping professional discourses – each has its own set of practices and identities. At times these coexist, while organisationally they intersect. Her practices are filled with uncertainties, contingencies, problems and headaches. But Mary learns to manage herself by invoking a life discourse – a discourse that is familiar and has a perceived 'predictability' and 'certainty'. These give her a sense of control, a sense of governing herself.

6.4 Case Study 2

6.4.1 Carol: Moving Around a Manufacturing Company

The subject in the second case study works in a large manufacturing company. The project explored one Australian manufacturing company while it was in the midst of restructuring. It focussed on the changes in work and work practices and was concerned with changes in worker identity, and how the tensions produced through change processes constructed struggles about learning new ways of 'being' at work.

The organisation was developing from an autocratic, rigidly hierarchical enterprise to a workplace where the flattened hierarchies and operations of teams, and an emphasis on core values, hailed in management and organisational development literatures, (Peters and Waterman 1982; Champy 1995; Handy 1996; Kanter 1997) shaped what the organisation could and should be in a globalising marketplace.

Although the organisation in this case study was not an educational workplace, it was, nevertheless, concerned with the professional development of its employees and their learning, and it wanted to name itself as a learning organisation (Marsick and Watkins 1999). For example, all employees were expected to attend 2-day training

sessions to 'learn' the core values of the organisation and how to implement these values. As they were all to become members of teams they were also participants in half day training sessions on 'Becoming an Effective Team'. Thus, the investigation of changing work and changing workers included exploring how people learned new work practices and roles.

The research methodology was an ethnographically oriented case study that included semi-structured interviews with managers and production-line workers that were taped and transcribed; observations of work and analysis of company documents. There was also extensive taping of team meetings over an eighteen month period. During the research time one employee, Carol, became a key contact, and the discussion in this chapter focuses particularly on her using both interview and observational data, and team meeting transcripts. Carol has worked in the organisation for about 5 years. She began as a production-line worker; at the time of the project she had been a team facilitator for about a year.

Carol's two major 'jobs' in the organisation have involved taking up positions and being positioned by others as various kinds of subjects. What follows is an analysis and discussion of some of the discourses and practices Carol employed within her work and talking about (her)self and her work. The discourses produce Carol's multiple identities; like Mary she can be seen to draw on particular technologies of the self as she moves around the organisation and (re)locates herself in a new social space: the space of team meetings and facilitation, constructing new social relationships and learning ways to 'be' at work. Carol needs to do more than manage herself in organisational terms – she has to care for herself.

6.4.2 Carol: Work/Life Discourses and Care of (Her)self

Carol struggles to position herself in the organisation's staff structure. When outlining her previous jobs as production-line worker and leading hand, she was unequivocal about what the reporting lines were – the organisation had a traditional hierarchy. Now the senior managers were following contemporary management directions outlined in popular business texts, in particular, the suggestions regarding flattened hierarchies and participative management achieved through the instigation of teams, teamwork and team meetings. However, the new organisational unit, consisting of a manager and 5 facilitators, charged with implementing these changes did not fit neatly into the existing company structures. This is exemplified by Carol, who demonstrates some uncertainty regarding her 'level' in the organisation in comments such as:

I come under [the production manager] um like [the facilitators' manager] comes under [the production manager] so he's higher than like the plant managers and then we're supposed to obviously come off him but we're no higher. We are not higher than the managers and we're not higher than team leaders and really I don't think we're higher than people on the floor. I mean I see my level there on the on the factory floor with those that...with the teams. I don't...I don't see...plant manager any higher like he has any authority over me which he sort of does but I...it wouldn't work if he could boss me around. [Data Extract 9]

Carol struggles to articulate where she 'sits' in relation to the more traditional positions of production manager and plant manager, while at the same time she recognises that she is now part of the new facilitative unit. Notably she also wants to keep her identity as a worker at the same level as others '*on the factory floor*'. Her language moves between definitive statements: '*I come under*' and much more tentative ones: '*supposed to*', '*I don't think*', demonstrating her attempts to make sense of her positions and social relationships at work.

Carol's main job is to organise and develop teams of mainly production-line workers, and facilitate their weekly meetings. Even though employees had experienced a team training session, most of the learning for these new roles occurs on the job, that is, in the team meetings themselves with Carol as the facilitator / leader / teacher. When interviewed, Carol defines her work as:

I look after teams within Plant 3. Um my job really is to try and change their culture, to try and um look at their work situation and improve on that using various tools and techniques like Problem Solving Plus and Station Control, and these can be improvements to the quality ... to like the system, the procedures, um, streamline things. [Data Extract 10]

Carol appears quite sure of what her new work is and recognises that it is involved with the formidable process of changing workplace culture. In describing this work, she uses the language of the managerial programs that have been supplied: her '*tools and techniques*' include '*Problem Solving Plus*' (PSP) and '*Station Control*', both of which are highly structured, step-by-step procedures designed to guide meeting talk in such a way as to lead to tangible production improvements. After all, increased productivity is the overall goal of the company, and any work changes implemented have this goal as their key concern. However, implicit in her description of her work is a pedagogical dimension – she is familiar with the tools and techniques, and her job entails passing these on, teaching them, to her teams.

Observing Carol 'at work' during team meetings sees her doing managing and teaching work where she takes up these positions through the discourses and practices of the specific problem-solving procedures. Most of the team meetings open with Carol 'taking the floor' (Edelsky 1993). The meetings foreground meeting room discourses that are aligned with the texts on the table: tally sheets with production figures and numbers of faulty machines, copies of previously written problem statements, and definitions and models of target statements. For example, in the extract from a team meeting below the team is focusing on a particular missing component, and they have spent the last two meetings talking about the 'problem' (describing, reporting and explaining), and translating the talk into a written text called a 'problem statement'. Carol introduces the next step, the writing of the 'target statement' (discussing and negotiating) as the current task. She encourages participation, and in particular she works to elicit responses. The target statement is expected to be composed by the workers as an outline of what they had previously agreed was a problem, and then include suggested ways of 'fixing' the problem:

We're going to go on with the PSP. You have the tally sheets. Now the PSP, we follow the PSP. We've written our problem statements and now we're about to write our target statements and then we're up to stage two. [5 seconds] Okay? So, what should a target statement have? It says there the target statement is a written description of the results that you expect to achieve. Yeah. We wrote last week, the week before last, what the problem is. From there what do we want to achieve, what's our goal? Okay? The target statement must be specific and the target statement describes the following. Number one, what is it that you are going to achieve? So when we look at what we want to achieve, what did we have? [Data Extract 11]

Carol sets the agenda and her talk consists of a series of statements about what '*we*' have done and what '*we*' now need to do, interspersed with questions encouraging input from the team members. Carol's immediate task, then, is to produce new kinds of talk: not only the talk of a range of identifiable genres, but also talk that shifts interpersonally from following orders to offering knowledge, expertise and services. Through these discourses, she is teaching and learning - enacting new ways of 'being' a worker. The '*we*', used in the meeting room, draws the process workers into new work as new kinds of workers - ones who, for example, devise and write problem statements and target statements, and ones who solve problems for the company. Her pedagogic self is moving these employees from the comfort zones of their production-line selves to the more uncomfortable team meeting selves.

Carol's work can be understood as moving from the 'doing work' of the factory floor to 'talking work' of training/meeting rooms; (Iedema

and Scheeres 2003) and also from production-line colleague to facilitator/teacher or even a kind of manager and teacher. Like Mary in the earlier case study, Carol's shifting work entails identity work. Carol and her team members are learning to negotiate their way through, and discursively producing, new identities.

Another way Carol negotiates these shifts – and the struggles – is through the construction of herself as an autonomous worker with strong views that she plays out in her work practices. During the time spent with Carol, both observation time and in interviews, she told stories about her work experiences. Many of these could be described as moral tales where a manager – often the plant manager – for example, tries to implement something which she insists won't work, then when it doesn't work, she is quick to say 'I told you so'. Carol positions herself as someone who knows about the work and workers, and as someone who is not afraid to say what she thinks or knows. In the extract below, Carol demonstrates how she deals with these situations:

you know, sometimes I'd like to turn around and just say 'well, I'm not doing it and what're you goin' to do about that', you know, sometimes I do, sometimes I just and I've said it to [my manager] He'll say 'we're goin' to be doing this' and I'll say, 'well you're going to be doing it on your own because I'm not 'cos it won't work, you know'. *I think that helps me*, sometimes I probably, speak out of place with him but it's ... I don't know [Data Extract 12]

Carol's talk is provocative in terms of lines of authority and social relationships. More interesting for this discussion is how it brings together work and life discourses. Carol introduces this anecdote as a desire, as something she would like to say to her boss that includes an ultimatum (probably a scenario that we are all familiar with), then she immediately moves on to describe how, in fact, she has played out this very scene more than once. When she follows up with '*I think that helps me*' we are unsure if she is referring to actual past instances, or to reflecting on what she would like to say, or indeed both of these possibilities. It does nevertheless, lead to a further reflexive comment that shows Carol is aware of and perhaps concerned about how others might read her, and how she is learning from these kinds of experiences and / or reflections.

That Carol has pride in her work and wants to be seen in particular ways is made explicit at various times with remarks such as 'someone will say, *that was Carol's idea, she started that*'. Speaking of herself in the third person suggests a time when she is no longer part of the organisation. Similarly, Carol invokes a time when her (current) work is done – completed successfully – and she can move on:

I want to be seen as a hard worker...I just want things to work.....some days things start to go really well and .. you know .. I think we're really there. And then I think to myself *I can leave now*. You know it's like *I don't have to be here anymore* because they can do it by themselves [Data Extract 13]

Carol certainly wants to do a good job and be recognised as a '*hard worker*' but at the same time she imagines a time beyond this work of managing and facilitating teams. Notably, the time when she '*can leave*' and she '*doesn't have to be here*' is when this work and her position have become superfluous. At other times, Carol comments less benignly on her working life:

Sometimes I feel a bit trapped.... *I must always be able to have a choice* that I can..um.. leave this job if I want to go somewhere else or I can move on from that . I don't like to feel pressured or or or cornered into staying somewhere. This is why I had this thing with the money I think that...that can like if you've got a high mortgage um and you've got to work to keep that [2 secs] you don't have a choice then if you want to...but if it's almost finished if you want to leave you can just say 'well I've had it I want to leave'. [Data Extract 14]

Carol's practices all involve her taking up subject positions as well as being positioned by others whether she is leading a team meeting, or speaking up to a manager, or doing a good job and wanting to be remembered for it. All involve identity work that is characterised by struggles and negotiation. Through the working life discourses there is a sense of a life trajectory that involves but is not only to do with work. It is to do with a longer, broader life path beyond this organisation, and even beyond any kind of work. In the extract above, Carol admits she sometimes feels '*a bit trapped*' reinforced by feeling '*pressured*' and '*cornered*'. What is important is to feel that she '*has a choice*' about staying in the job or leaving – '*moving on*'.

To have this kind of choice has financial implications. Carol is thirty five and is paying off her house as quickly as possible. She has invested in shares and talks about being financially secure and being able to retire if she *wishes 'at forty five'*. Even at this point in her life, she needs to be able to say '*I've had it*' and leave. Although Carol is much younger than Mary it is interesting that she, too, employs discourses of retirement and moving on and out. She can be seen as being '*on track*' in similar ways to Mary.

Carol's work/life discourses can be understood as managing herself – managing her working life in terms of her '*whole*' life. In this sense she is taking care of (her)self. She is learning to navigate various identity positions at work as she struggles with being a 21st century worker in the

organisation. She is unsure as to how many of her former factory floor workers now position her: *'I don't know what they see me as'*. In her major work activities of organising, developing and leading teams and team meetings Carol positions herself as someone who knows what she is doing and what she wants her team members to do. Her pedagogic self, discursively constructed during the team meetings, is made explicit in the interviews when she states: *'I want them all to want to learn'*. On the one hand Carol directs the teams towards their goals of increased production levels by working through specific problem-solving procedures, and at the same time she employs a discourse of desiring that the workers not only learn new practices, but that they will *want* to learn. Carol has taken on Miller and Rose's (1993) *'intersubjective life of the enterprise'* where she and the team members/production-line workers are bound *'psychologically into the production process'*.

In terms of management Carol has a sense that managers generally see her as *'a pain in the bum'*. She demonstrates a strong sense of being an autonomous worker as she articulates clearly what she will and won't do. Similar to her confusion regarding her positioning by the factory floor workers, she also expresses confusion as to where she is located in the company hierarchy in terms of organisational status. However, she knows her immediate manager is the manager of the facilitators, and she has no hesitation in approaching him with exactly what she thinks and how she is feeling. For Carol *'it won't work'* if she positions herself as someone who simply obeyed directives, and she related a number of anecdotes of specific experiences to consolidate this position-taking.

At the same time Carol looks forward to a time when she has accomplished her 'tasks' successfully, a time when she has done her hard work and can leave because her job is superfluous. However, this would only be possible if she was financially secure – for Carol this means having paid off a mortgage. She sees herself as wanting to do a good job then moving out and on – perhaps to retire at forty-five.

Thus, Carol also operates within different work discourses – each with its own set of practices, social relations and identities. Her 'being' at work is complex involving ongoing learning and it is imbued with tensions, struggles and desires. Carol manages herself by invoking discourses of control at work - she is definite about what she will 'take on' and talks about walking out. She also sees herself as *'getting things going really well in the teams'* and then moving on. These discourses construct a predictability and certainty and contribute to a sense of caring for and governing herself.

6.5 Conclusion

The two women workers under focus in this chapter have different work/life histories and work in quite different organisations. Our discussion has explored aspects of their working lives in terms of how they learn to manage themselves through the shifts and struggles in their changing workplaces. Both women invoke discourses work/self management that construct control – being in control of their work and themselves. Mary’s discourses produce work and life (family/retirement) trajectories that, at times co-exist, and at times overlap and even conflict. Carol’s discourses also produce work and life (moving ‘out’/retirement) trajectories that appear somewhat more linear – moving to early retirement.

The discussion challenges views of contemporary work practices as oppressive and disempowering, particularly for women workers. Our analyses highlight some ways in which these women make use of particular technologies of the self to position themselves securely. Both Mary and Carol talk about their shifting work and identities as active subjects – they learn how to take up and resist various positions. Each woman constructs predictability and certainties about their work / lives as they negotiate and work on their identities. As they learn to take on the demands on workers of the 21st century, their identity work at work is constructed in part through thinking about and desiring ‘other’ lives. Together these work/life discourses are ones in which they take care of themselves.

6.6 References

- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Boud, D., & Solomon, N. (2003). ‘I don’t think I am a learner: Acts of naming learners at work’. In *Journal of workplace learning* 15(7/8), 326-331.
- Champy, J. (1995). *Reengineering management: The mandate for new leadership*. New York: Harper Business.
- Chappell, C. (2003). ‘Changing pedagogy: Contemporary vocational learning’, OVAL Research Working Paper 0312 RP128. Sydney: University of Technology, Sydney.
- Chappell, C., Rhodes, C., Solomon, N., Tennant, M., & Yates, L. (2003). *Reconstructing the life-long learner: Pedagogies of individual, social and organisational change*. London: Routledge.
- Deetz, S. (2003). Authoring as Collaborative Process through Communication in D. Holman and R. Thorpe (Eds.). *Management and language*. London: Sage pp. 121-137.
- du Gay, P. (1996). *Consumption and identity at work*. London: Sage.

- Edelsky, C. (1993). Who's Got the Floor? In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction* (pp. 189-227). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Gee, J. P., Hull, G., & Lankshear, C. (1996). *The new work order: Behind the language of the new capitalism*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Gergen, K. J., & Kaye, J. (1992). Beyond narrative in the negotiation of therapeutic meaning. In S. McNamee & K. J. Gergen (Eds.) *Therapy as social construction*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1996). 'Introduction: Who needs identity' in S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.) *Questions of cultural identity*. London: Sage.
- Handy, C. (1996). *Beyond certainty: The changing world of organizations*. London: Arrow Books.
- Heckscher, C., & Donellon, A. (1994). *The post-bureaucratic organization: New perspectives on organizational change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Iedema, R. (2003). *The discourses of post-bureaucratic organization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Iedema, R., & Scheeres, H. (2003). From doing work to talking work: Renegotiating knowing, doing and identity. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 24(3), 316-337.
- Kanter, R. M. (1997). *Frontiers of management*. Harvard: Harvard Business Review Books.
- Marsick, V., & Watkins, K. (1999). *Facilitating learning organizations: Making learning count*. Hampshire: Aldershot.
- Miller, P., & Rose, N. (1993). Governing Economic Life. In M. Gane & T. Johnson (Eds.) *Foucault's new domains* (pp. 75-105). London: Routledge.
- Peters, T., & Waterman, R. (1982). *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. London: Harper Collins.
- Rose, N. (1998). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Governing the Soul: the shaping of the private self*. London: Routledge.
- Scheeres, H. (2003). Learning to talk: From manual work to discourse work as self-regulating practice. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15(7/8), 332-338.
- Solomon, N. (2005). Identity work and pedagogy: Textually producing the learner-worker. In *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 57(1), 95-108.
- Usher, R., Bryant, I., & Johnson, R. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge*. London: Routledge.
- Usher, R. & Edwards, R. (1994). *Postmodernism and Education*. London: Routledge.
- Usher, R., & Solomon, N. (1999). Experiential learning and the shaping of subjectivity in the workplace, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 31(2), 155-163.