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February 2005
Academics’ Experiences of

Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF):

Governmentality and Subjection

By Craig Ashcroft

A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Otago, Dunedin
New Zealand.
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ABSTRACT

In 2002 New Zealand's government set out to "accelerate" the nation's "transformation into a knowledge society" (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 16). Underpinning the development of this so-called 'knowledge society' was a new approach in the way tertiary education was funded. This included introducing a new contestable model of research funding called Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF). The research reported here was conducted at a critical juncture in the ongoing development and implementation of PBRF because it captures the experiences of fifteen academics as they encounter PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise for the first time. Their experiences of the inaugural 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise were examined using a discourse analysis approach informed by Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) ideas of 'subjection' and 'governmentality'. 'Subjection' occurs when individuals shape their identities by responding to the multiple discourses that are available to them at any particular time and within any historical context (Foucault, 1969). 'Governmentality' refers to a particular instrument, technique or activity that guides and shapes conduct by producing a compliant human subject capable of supporting the interests and objectives of the state (Foucault, 1994a). In the case of academics this might mean conforming to PBRF policies and practices and participating in the development and transformation of a new 'knowledge society'.

In this thesis I examine the potential for PBRF to reshape and redirect the nature of research and suggest that some assessment elements of the 2003 Quality Evaluation were flawed and, as a result, a number of participants in this study were now making decisions about their research that appeared contrary to their best interests. I also investigate PBRF as a field of compliance and argue that the Quality Evaluation exercise represents a technology of government that targets the activities
and practices of New Zealand's research academics with the effect of manifesting a more docile and compliant academic subject. I then question PBRF's impact on the career aspirations and opportunities of academics and claim that the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework has already shifted from being a mechanism for distributing funds for research to one that identifies and rewards the most 'talented' researchers via institutional appointments and promotions. Finally, I interrogate the pursuit and practice of academic freedom and argue that as a consequence of PBRF, a number of participants in this study have positioned themselves in ways that could diminish and constrain their traditional rights to academic freedom.

PBRF has the potential to locate academics within a new status-driven hierarchy of professional validation whereby the Quality Evaluation exercise will purportedly measure, evaluate and reward the most 'talented' researchers and the 'best' research. In this thesis I argue that the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework operates as a form of disciplinary power exercised as part of an international trend of intensifying audit and assessment practices in higher education. In this sense, I claim that PBRF exists as an instrument of governmentality capable of constituting a new type of academic subject by significantly shifting the way academics will have to think and conduct their professional selves in relation to their work and research.
Acknowledgements

My first debt is to those academics who were willing to talk freely about their careers. Without them there would be no story to tell. (Potts, 1997, p. ix)

I remember a time during 2005 when I found myself thinking, “No-one ever told me how hard this was going to be”. I was physically and mentally exhausted, had lost all motivation, and just wanted to sit down in a corner somewhere and cry. But I had been told how hard undertaking a Ph.D. would be. It was just a case that like all those before me, I never quite understood what they meant until I had lived it for myself. This journey has taken four years of my life and it has been a journey of great highs and incredible lows. It has nonetheless been a most worthwhile experience. However, it has not been an experience lived in isolation. Along the way I have been supported, encouraged, guided and nurtured by a vast number of individuals and it is only fitting and proper that I acknowledge and thank them for that.

I begin by thanking Dr. Karen Nairn, my primary supervisor. Karen has endured my company for almost five years now, having supervised my Master of Arts thesis as well. Karen has been a wonderful inspiration, an excellent supervisor and a good friend. Karen has encouraged me to reach heights of excellence that I thought were beyond my grasp, and she has created opportunities for me to grow and mature as an academic. I owe you so much Karen and simply saying “thank you” fails to express the true depth of my gratitude.

Working alongside Karen has been Dr. Judith Duncan, my second supervisor. Judith has been a wonderful source of encouragement and affirmation. It was Judith who made ‘discourse analysis’ something that I could understand and work with, and she was so good at correcting all my referencing indiscretions. However, during my greatest low when I could have so easily walked away from this journey, it was Judith who found the words of support that enabled me to pick myself up, regain my
motivation and continue on. Again, “thank you” simply does not express the gratitude I feel.

There are also a number of other individuals who have provided direct assistance with this project. I thank Dr. Mark Olssen for mentoring my early academic career and opening the door for this study, Dr. Peter Rich for being a friend as much as a colleague, and Professor Alan Jenkins for his ongoing encouragement and support. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Elizabeth Grierson for taking the risk of publishing my first journal article, Professor Peter Roberts for his words of encouragement in Auckland back in 2003, Dr. Richard Smith for the book and his enthusiasm about my project, and Dr. Anthony Potts for his support, interest and feedback on my published works. I would also like to thank Professor Keith Ballard who provided some great feedback on earlier drafts, Associate Professor K. Wing Lai for his welcoming presence and Dr. Bruce McMillan for his part in helping me get my interview technique right.

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Then there are those from my personal life who have always been there during my long and seemingly unending time as a student. My parents-in-law Barbara and Gary Ritchie, my Grandfather Ray Shurmer, my good Aussie mate Paul Andreatta, my ‘Auntie’ Koa Mantel, my Doctor Ali Gaston, my guide Paul Hemmingsen, and all my Dunedin friends: I thank each and every one of you. I would also like to make a special mention of my Mum, Margaret Ashcroft. She always said I could do it, threatened to make my life a misery if I backed out of it, and was there every step of the way - even with the Tasman Sea between us. Thanks Mum, thanks for everything.
Most importantly, it would be remiss of me not to thank those 15 individuals who contributed as much to this study as I have: the participants. You not only gave me your stories; you gave me your hopes, your dreams, your fears and your anxieties. I am forever indebted to each and every one of you.

Finally, I wish to thank my partner, Janine Ritchie. Janine has been a source of inspiration from beginning to end. She kept the food on our table and a roof over our heads, made sure I always maintained a firm grip on reality, gave me the confidence I never had and helped me overcome my many anxieties and insecurities. Well Janine, my days of being a perpetual student are almost at an end and I guess it is time that I start paying it all back. I am nothing without you and you are everything to me, I love you.

Again, I thank you all,
Craig
Another turning point
A fork stuck in the road
Time grabs you by the wrist
Directs you where to go
So make the best of this test
And don’t ask why
It’s not a question
But a lesson learned in time

It’s something unpredictable
But in the end it’s right
I hope you had the time of your life

(Greenday, 1997)

This thesis is dedicated to the one person who inspires me every single day
And the two people who make each day an inspiration...

My partner Janine Ritchie
And my two children Hanna-Rose and Tobias John
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Safe in the permanent gaze of a cold glass eye
With their favourite toys
They'll be good girls and boys
In the Fletcher Memorial Home for colonial wasters of life
and limb
Is everyone in?
Are you having a nice time?
Now the final solution can be applied

Waters (1983)
CHAPTER 1
Performance-Based Research Funding and Academic Identities:
An introduction

The future will not depend on what the PBRF does to us as a professional community but on what we do to ourselves. (Middleton, 2005, p. 186)

A brief introduction to Performance-Based Research Funding

In 2002 New Zealand’s Labour/Alliance Coalition Government (1999-2002) introduced a new Tertiary Education Strategy. This new ‘strategy’ outlined the direction and policy framework that would shape New Zealand’s tertiary education system for at least the next five years, with an expectation well beyond that (Ministry of Education, 2002a). According to the Ministry of Education (2002a), the Tertiary Education Strategy recognised the need for New Zealand to have “high level generic skills in much of the populace, and more highly-specialist skills in areas of comparative advantage” (p. 16). This would enable New Zealand to “accelerate its transformation into a knowledge society” (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 16).

Underpinning the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government’s desire to develop this so-called ‘knowledge society’ is a new direction in the way tertiary education is funded and this has included the introduction of a new contestable model of research funding that focuses primarily upon research outputs (Ministry of Education, 2002b). This new funding allocation system directed towards research is called Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF).

Prior to the introduction and implementation of PBRF, public funding for research in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector was based primarily upon student tuition subsidies and therefore, upon each institution’s ability to capture and sustain a competitive share of the nationwide student population (Hall, Morris Mathews &
Sawicka, 2004). According to Boston, Mischewski and Smyth (2005), this model received significant criticism during the 1990s whereby it was claimed that the model did not encourage research excellence (Kerr & Irwin, 1998) and failed to ensure that academics were properly funded for their research (Peters & Roberts, 1999). In 1998 under a National-led government, the New Zealand Ministry of Education released *Tertiary Education in New Zealand: Policy directions for the 21st Century*. Also known as the *Tertiary White Paper*, the Ministry of Education document recommended establishing a new single regulatory authority to monitor New Zealand’s tertiary education sector in accordance with the government’s various aims and objectives, and offered new alternatives for tuition and research funding. This included advocating a more contestable approach to the way that research was funded by replacing the existing system of student tuition subsidies with a contestable grant assessed and funded by the proposed regulatory authority (Ministry of Education, 1998; Olssen, 2001). According to Peters and Roberts (1999) the recommendations made in the *Tertiary White Paper* represented “a synthesis of neoliberal ideas developed and applied over more than a decade of social policy reform” (p. 37). They believed that the *Tertiary White Paper* presented an impoverished ‘commodified’ view of education as a product that could be bought and sold within a market setting.

The concept of ‘neo-liberalism’ referred to by Peters and Roberts (1999) is one that represents, to some extent, a renewal of early liberal philosophies developed from the seventeenth century. These earlier ideals, advocating individual autonomy, freedom and meritocracy, were ‘reinvented’ in the twentieth century by a number of economic commentators, the most notable being Frederich Hayek (Olssen, 2001). Hayek believed in the power of the market as a mechanism capable of constructing and ordering the ‘natural’ shape of society, thus making the market a more effective regulating force than the traditional state apparatus. His main objections to central governance were that it was generally inefficient and therefore, ineffective, and that it impacted upon the freedom of the individual. The definition of ‘neo-liberalism’ that is central to this thesis is conveyed as an economic discourse that promotes the primacy of the individual by allegedly minimising government intervention. Neo-liberal
policies support the unrestricted movement of goods, services and capital, and promote the use of market forces in allocating resources and regulating individual human behaviour (Codd, 1999). Within this context, neo-liberal discourses argue that by removing the intervening hand of government, individuals are able to shape their own conduct and work by pursuing competitive pathways of opportunity and success in a quasi-entrepreneurial, self-invested and meritocratic way.

Although the ‘synthesis of neo-liberal ideas’ promoted as part of the 1998 Tertiary White Paper never saw fruition because of a change in government in the following year, many of these recommendations would soon re-emerge as part of a new dialogue of tertiary education reform. After the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government was elected in 1999, it formally announced its own intention to reform New Zealand’s tertiary education sector and seemingly followed a number of the Tertiary White Paper’s original recommendations. For example, in 2003 the Coalition Government established a new Tertiary Education Commission as a Crown Entity responsible for monitoring and allocating funding to New Zealand’s tertiary education sector. It also established PBRF as an alternative to funding research via student tuition subsidies. PBRF policies were developed and implemented by the Tertiary Education Commission during 2003 and the conduct of the first PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise took place between July and September of that same year (Hall et al., 2004, see also Chapter Two of this thesis).

In order for New Zealand’s tertiary education institutions to be eligible for funding as part of the 2003 Quality Evaluation, individual academics were required to account for the research they had completed during the six years prior to assessment. The various departments within the institution were also required to report the number of their postgraduate student completions for that same period (Hall et al., 2004). In terms of individual academics, they were required to submit an Evidence Portfolio containing details of their research outputs (published work), evidence of their peer esteem and examples of how they had contributed to the research environment during the assessed period (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a).
These Evidence Portfolios were examined as part of the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise by ‘expert’ subject-based peer-review panels.

The implementation of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise not only represented a major change in the way research would be funded in New Zealand, it also represented a significant shift in the way academics would have to think and conduct their professional selves in relation to that research. Framed in a discourse of competitive assessment and hierarchical ranking, PBRF appears to undermine academic collegiality by constituting academics as competing neo-liberal subjects (Jesson, 2005; May, 2004; Middleton, 2004). This alleged neo-liberal disintegration of academic collegiality, along with other perceived changes in academic practice, has resulted in widespread skepticism and anxiety amongst academics and this is evident in the number of critical commentaries that have since been published about PBRF. For example, Curtis and Matthewman (2005) have argued that the introduction of PBRF epitomises the dominant role that neo-liberal discourses have played in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector since the mid-1990s. They contend that PBRF promotes a new model of competition within New Zealand’s tertiary education sector that continues, on one hand, to advocate neo-liberal necessities for decreasing public expenditure in higher education while, on the other, introduces renewed levels of statutory intervention into the lives and practices of academics. Curtis and Matthewman (2005) claim that PBRF’s focus on the individual as the unit of assessment supports their contention that PBRF is a managerial imperative underpinned by neo-liberalism.

This study

This study provides a qualitative investigation of how 15 academics from various subject areas within one New Zealand university experienced the introduction of PBRF and the implementation of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. The study was designed to investigate and analyse the PBRF experiences, perceptions, hopes

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1 Key theoretical terms such as ‘discourse’ and ‘subjection’ are defined and explained in Chapter Three of this thesis. The concept of a ‘neo-liberal subject’ is discussed in Chapter Two.
and anxieties of the participants within their institution over a twelve-month period. The following two research questions provided the starting point for this investigation and analysis. Firstly, “How were the participants conceptualising their roles as academics within New Zealand’s constantly changing tertiary education environment?” followed by, “What would be the likely impact of Performance-Based Research Funding on participants’ approaches to research?” These two research questions would form the basis of this study and provide a means to investigate how the participants had felt about the implementation, conduct and assessment of the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation. They would also provide an insight into how the participants were being constituted as particular types of academic subjects due to their engagement with the discursive practices of PBRF, and the extent to which the participants contributed to their own ongoing subjection.

Prior to beginning my study (in 2003) most of the research undertaken in respect of PBRF had generally been presented in the form of policy analysis at the macro-level (for example, Hall et al., 2003) or scholarly commentary from individuals’ perspectives (for example, Duncan, 2002). In these forms, most of the critical discussions about PBRF had highlighted the arbitrariness of the assessment regime, inequalities of outcomes (particularly in the case of new and emerging researchers, Māori and women), disparities between actual quality and evaluated quality, issues relating to employment and academic labour, decisions affecting research, and questions about academic freedom. However, given the significance that PBRF is likely to have in shaping the professional identities of academics, there are to date relatively few systematic studies about PBRF that includes multiple academic perspectives.

There are, of course, a few exceptions to this. In 2004, Dew interviewed 15 Health Science researchers from a range of New Zealand institutions regarding their work, their research findings and issues pertaining to publishing and academic freedom. He suggested that within the current tertiary education environment “researchers are vulnerable to political pressures, pressures from other interest groups
and even self-censorship (Dew, 2004, p. 202). Middleton (2004) has interviewed 36 academic staff who submitted Evidence Portfolios to the Education subject panel as part of the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation. She claimed that the "collective story" told by her participants demonstrates how PBRF was:

"[A]ffecting Education academics' senses of professional identity, the substance and methods of their research priorities, their choices of how and where to disseminate their findings, and their willingness to participate in collegial and institutional activities and responsibilities. (Middleton, 2004, p. 20)

Curtis and Matthewman (2005) are currently engaged in a project that explores the attitudes of Social Science academics in respect of a variety of recent changes to tertiary education policies including those relating to PBRF. In 2003 617 academics across New Zealand completed questionnaires circulated by Curtis and Matthewman (2005) and the researchers intend to follow their analysis of this data with a series of interviews involving academics, university managers, union representatives and government bureaucrats.

This present study explores the normalising role that particular discursive events such as the introduction of PBRF can play in constituting academic subjects by shaping their professional identity and practice. In order to understand how academics respond to discursive events like PBRF, it is essential to examine the way academics construct their own particular knowledge and experience of those events. This study has been conducted at a critical juncture in capturing the experiences of 15 academics as they encounter PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise for the first time. Although some of the participants expressed prior knowledge of similar assessment regimes abroad (such as Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise), all the participants of this study were able to consider how PBRF was changing their academic identities and practices relative to how they had been shaped prior to a PBRF environment.
An overview of the chapters

There are nine chapters in this thesis including this introductory chapter. The next chapter of this thesis details some of the issues that arose in Britain as a consequence of the introduction and implementation of the Research Assessment Exercise and it contextualises the political environment in which PBRF has been introduced in New Zealand. The chapter also examines the various discourses that governments and policy makers have used to support their rationale for change when introducing policies and practices like PBRF. In particular, Chapter Two identifies the various discourses in crucial documents of reform such as the Ministry of Education’s *Tertiary Education Strategy* and *Investing in Excellence* (2002a and 2002b respectively).

Chapter Three draws from the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984) to explain the theoretical framework used to inform this study. The chapter begins by defining a number of key conceptual terms including ‘governmentality’, ‘subjection’, Foucault’s three disciplinary technologies of ‘surveillance’, ‘written examination’ and the ‘normalising judgement’, and four discursive operations: technologies of ‘production’, ‘sign systems’, ‘power’ and ‘the self’. The chapter also defines ‘discourse’ and provides an explanation of the techniques of discourse analysis used in interpreting the narrative data collected as part of this study.

Chapter Four presents the methodology of this study. It begins by outlining the qualitative interview approach that was designed to gather the data for analysis. This includes a reflexive acknowledgement of myself within the study, a description of the ethical concerns and how they were addressed, the recruitment and description of the participants, and a detailed explanation of the interview process. The chapter also explains how the data was managed through transcription and the actual analysis process itself.

The fifth chapter of this thesis examines and critiques the PBRF definition of research used during the 2003 Quality Evaluation and compares this definition to the
various definitions expressed by the participants. The chapter also discusses participants’ experiences concerning the allocation of PBRF quality scores, the status of different academic journals, the emphasis given to the four Nominated Research Outputs presented in their Evidence Portfolios, and the way that some participants felt that PBRF made their research activity characteristic of a factory production line.

Chapter Six investigates how some participants in this study felt that PBRF required them to “dance to someone else’s tune” by positioning themselves as compliant subjects attuned to the expectations of university managers and government bureaucrats. The chapter also describes the various tensions that exist between ‘being compliant’ and ‘being agentic’ in that these two seemingly binary positions co-exist and inform each other as part of the subjection of academics.

Chapter Seven examines the potential for the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework to shift from being simply a mechanism for distributing funds for research on the basis of implied quality of research outputs to one that identifies and rewards the most ‘talented’ researchers via institutional appointments and promotions. The chapter discusses the various ways that PBRF could be used to shape the professional conduct and subjection of academics. The chapter also provides evidence that, as a consequence of the inaugural 2003 Quality Evaluation, a number of New Zealand universities have already made changes, or are in the process of making changes, to their internal appointment and promotion procedures. Finally, the chapter investigates the effects that those changes are having on the participants of this study.

Chapter Eight discusses academic freedom as it relates to New Zealand’s academics and their changing experiences regarding PBRF. It begins by exploring various ways academic freedom has been conceptualised in the research literature and by the participants of this study. The chapter then examines the relationship between PBRF and academic freedom and draws on the concerns and experiences of participants regarding the type of research PBRF appears to legitimate, the kinds of constraints it imposes upon academics, and the distrust it generates between academics and their employers.
The final chapter of this thesis, Chapter Nine, provides a summary and conclusion of the main arguments of this study and makes suggestions and recommendations for further research in this area.

Chapter summary and conclusion

In 2005 Professor John Hattie stated that the effects of PBRF were only just beginning to become apparent. He suggested that PBRF was becoming a “game” and that in order for academics to succeed in that ‘game’, they would need to learn the “rules and constraints” that accompanied it (Hattie, 2005, p. iv). Smith (2005a) claimed that he had already identified a number of colleagues who were beginning to respond to PBRF by playing “the game” in preparation for the 2006 Quality Evaluation round (p. 52). He believed that even those colleagues who had been dismissive, nonchalant or even subversive towards PBRF now appeared obsessed by the idea of needing to do well in the exercise (Smith, 2005a).

A number of commentators (Jesson, 2005; Middleton, 2004; Olsson, 2001; Smith 2005a, 2005b) have highlighted that the Quality Evaluation framework, as an exercise in examination, may perpetuate a new normalising judgement that has the potential to alter academic practice. This study serves as a timely exercise because it examines PBRF at the critical juncture of its installation as a new contestable model of research funding for New Zealand’s tertiary education sector. It may take some time before the full long-term implications of PBRF are known. However, the experiences, perceptions and thoughts of the 15 participants regarding PBRF and its potential effects on their own professional status and career provides a useful way to understand how policies and practices like PBRF can be conceptualised as possible instruments of governmentality capable of guiding and shaping academic behaviour.

2 See also Burawoy (1974, p. 10) who describes how game playing facilitates compliance and consent.
CHAPTER 2
Framing PBRF in neo-liberal discourses:
Developing New Zealand’s tertiary education strategy

The word ‘strategy’ has its origins in a military context. Military strategy is about making the best use of one’s resources to achieve a desired military objective. And in this sense ‘strategy’ is an appropriate term for describing the Government’s approach to tertiary education. (Hon Steve Maharey, 2002, p. 4)

[Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education) 1999-2005]

Introduction

Between July and September 2003 over 8000 academic staff employed across 22 tertiary education institutions in New Zealand took part in the inaugural Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Quality Evaluation exercise (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). Their experience of that exercise has the potential to alter the way a significant number of New Zealand’s academics conduct themselves in relation to their research. However, the introduction of PBRF and the implementation of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise cannot be seen as a unique or isolated event that is distinct to New Zealand. A number of similar contestable funding models abroad have already demonstrated the potential for an instrument like PBRF to bypass its primary role as a mechanism designed to facilitate the allocation of institutional research funding to become a major factor in shaping and directing the identities and work of individuals. The most notable of these is Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the context in which PBRF policies were developed in New Zealand. This includes examining various discourses that governments and policy makers have used to underpin their rationale for change. The definition of ‘discourse’ that is central to this thesis is conveyed as ‘language in
action’, a set of ideas, statements and assumptions that exist as part of our language that allow us to make sense of, and perceive, the world around us (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000; Foucault, 1978).³

This chapter begins by detailing some of the issues that arose in Britain as a consequence of the introduction and implementation of its own contestable research funding model, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The RAE provides a useful model against which potential outcomes of New Zealand’s PBRF might be forecast.⁴ The chapter then describes the political environment in which PBRF was introduced in New Zealand by specifically focusing on the discourses evident in crucial documents of reform such as the Ministry of Education’s Tertiary Education Strategy and Investing in Excellence (2002a and 2002b respectively). The chapter identifies the seductive capacity of those documents in promoting a benign sense of inclusiveness and examines the coercive capacity of those same documents in generating a perception of consent by effectively silencing any critical discourse. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the discourses that have been used in designing and implementing PBRF have the potential to reshape the conduct and work of New Zealand’s academics.

Creating a discourse of research assessment: An English tale

Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was used to assess and evaluate the research output of universities and polytechnics in the United Kingdom for the first time in 1986 (Velody, 1999). Like New Zealand’s PBRF, the main objective of the RAE was (and is) to target and reward the most ‘productive’ research institutions as part of a broader desire to strengthen Britain’s position within the global context (Department of Education and Skills, 2003). The assessment process of the British exercise focuses on research grants obtained by higher education institutions and on

³ A more detailed description and definition of ‘discourse’ is offered in Chapter Three of this thesis.
⁴ As a postscript to this thesis, on 22 March 2006 the British Government announced its intention to disband the RAE, 20 years after its introduction, as part of an attempt to “radically simplify” the method of distributing research funding to British higher education institutions (Education Guardian, 2006, p 1). It is forecast that the 2008 round of the RAE will be the last.
the quality of research outputs produced within each ‘unit of assessment’ (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2006). A ‘unit of assessment’ in the RAE is constituted as each subject area (with 70 units of assessment included as part of the 2001 RAE), and these are ranked by subject-based peer-review panels (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2006). As part of this process, academics are required to submit their four best research outputs for the assessed period but these are assessed at a departmental level rather than at the level of the individual (as in the case with PBRF).

It is assumed that the subject-based peer-review panels are expertly capable of identifying and evaluating the quantitative evidence of individuals’ submitted outputs (at a departmental level) as well as the qualitative evidence of their peer esteem (also at a departmental level) (Velody, 1999). The current mode of assessment used by the RAE ranks departments on a five-point scale with various sub-categories. These rankings are 5*, 5, 4, 3a, 3b, 2 and 1 (Department of Education and Skills, 2003). These rankings are used to allocate the research funding that each university receives from the government. According to the British Department of Education and Skills (2003), a ranking of 5* or 5 signifies that a department has a world-class research capability and therefore, is eligible for a higher proportion of the research funding made available. However, according to Velody (1999), any institution with a ranking of 2 or below is “doom laden” because “such departments have little future in their institutions” (p. 112).

One of the ‘unexpected’ but ultimately unsurprising outcomes of the British RAE has been a concentration of research funding in the older, more established universities with 72% of all research funding secured by those institutions with medical schools (Bruneau & Savage, 2002). The consequence has been devastating for departments of other higher education institutions. For example, in 2004 Exeter University announced its decision to close its chemistry and music departments to improve its research profile for the next RAE round in 2008 (British Broadcasting Commission, 2004). An estimated 130 academic and administrative positions would
be lost as a consequence of the Exeter closures. However, the Exeter closures cannot be seen as an isolated event. According to the British Royal Society of Chemistry (Education Guardian, 2004a), 28 chemistry departments in the United Kingdom have closed since the 2001 RAE. Newcastle University has set about cutting its physics degrees to focus on subject areas where the institution’s research capabilities are deemed stronger (Education Guardian, 2004a). As much as 73% of all physics departments across the United Kingdom have closed within the last decade (British Broadcasting Commission, 2004) and a total of 79 science and engineering departments have closed during the last six years (Education Guardian, 2004b). A survey of 73 higher education institutions conducted in 2004 found that at least a further seven institutions were intending to close academic departments as direct consequence of the RAE (British Broadcasting Commission, 2004).

Another issue evident from the experience in the United Kingdom is the impact that performance-based research funding models can have on university teaching. As a consequence of the RAE, the importance of research as part of an academic’s appointment criteria has increased significantly and this increase has been at the expense of teaching (Association of University Teachers, 1998). It became apparent that by 1995 most appointment and promotion routes available in the United Kingdom emphasised the importance of research above all else (Association of University Teachers, 1995). In a survey among academic staff across Britain, the British Association of University Teachers (1998) found that in terms of either appointment or promotion, “success in teaching was seen as the least influential factor” (p. 43). According to Britain’s Association of University Teachers (1998), a direct consequence of the RAE’s pursuit for ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ was that it became the prime factor in determining the careers of academic staff via the opportunities made available through institutional appointments and promotions. Further, that with the approach of each successive RAE round, academic staff deemed unproductive within their institution were often encouraged to move on while institutions attempted to target and appoint ‘higher quality’ staff (Dobson, 2004).
Bekhradnia (1999) identified three concerns for academia as a consequence of the British RAE. The first was the potential risk that academics would adjust topics and directions of research and even go so far as adjusting research outcomes in anticipation of the perceived predilections of RAE panels. The second concern was a new 'publish or perish' ethos that accompanied the RAE panels. While it could well be argued that the universities in Britain, as well as those in New Zealand and elsewhere, have always promoted a degree of the 'publish or perish' culture, the RAE model discriminated between types of publications. Different journals and the status of different authorship arrangements attracted different levels of prestige within the RAE evaluation system and this created a situation where research quality often appeared to be secondary to the concern about where information on the research could be published. Finally Bekhradnia (1999) suggested that academics might avoid work not assessed by the RAE (such as editing journals, serving community interests, teaching, collaborative writing and so on) in order to focus upon RAE assessable material.

According to Broadhead and Howard (1998), the introduction of the RAE represented a new commodification of academic research whereby the publications and outputs of academics became their 'academic currency' and could be used by university departments to compete for government funding. Broadhead and Howard (1998) present an interesting analysis of possible pathways for compliance inherent in Britain's RAE. They claim that academics may find themselves constrained because of the way their research is legitimated by the validating measures of the RAE. In other words, the assessment function of the RAE may constrain academics by seemingly encouraging them to pursue particular areas of research and not others, and by discouraging academics from undertaking more philosophical 'critic and conscience' research. Further, Broadhead and Howard (1998) argue that because the emphasis of the exercise is given to four publications, any distinction between one academic and the next is now determined by any contrast that may or may not be made evident between one set of four publications and the next. As such, Broadhead and Howard (1998) assert that evaluation systems like the RAE enables management
structures within tertiary education institutions to more readily identify and value some forms of research output over others. They suggest that when institutional managers value academic staff solely in terms of their output, this could potentially lead to a situation whereby those institutional managers may expect academics to perform in certain ways by only producing the specific kinds of outputs valued by the assessment exercise (Broadhead & Howard, 1998). In other words, Broadhead and Howard (1998) are claiming that the RAE has the potential to set the parameters that define what a ‘good’ academic and a ‘bad’ or ‘poor’ academic is.

Broadhead and Howard’s analysis of Britain’s RAE provides a useful guide for examining New Zealand’s PBRF Quality Evaluation framework. However, when considering the relevance of Broadhead and Howard’s (1998) analysis in respect of New Zealand, it is important to acknowledge that the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise is not the same as Britain’s RAE. Although there are similarities between the two funding models, the New Zealand exercise is a much more individualised exercise than its British counterpart that only assesses academic departments within each unit of assessment. Even though some critics in Britain (Association of University Teachers, 1998; Bekhradnia, 1999) have argued that the RAE allows individuals to be identified via their departmental affiliation, New Zealand’s academics are made more visible because they are the unit of assessment. As such, they are more vulnerable to the pressures of conformity and change associated with their assessment because the focus of the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise is on the conduct and productivity of individuals.

Tertiary education, a knowledge society and the neo-liberal subject

In campaigning the 1999 general election, New Zealand’s Labour Party made a political commitment to widespread economic and social change by advocating a ‘Third Way’ approach of rebuilding the nation, strengthening community partnerships, and developing a knowledge society (Kelsey, 2002). This particular approach was significantly influenced by the work of British Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1998), writer of The Third Way: the Renewal of Social Democracy. Giddens
(1998) argued that neo-liberalism failed because it emphasised individualism and neglected the community. Alternatively, Social Democratic Keynesianism failed because it segregated and stratified communities as part of its redistribution philosophy. According to Giddens (1998, 2000), ‘Third Way’ discourses provided the most coherent alternative. Giddens (2000) claimed that they achieved this by restructuring social democratic principles to account for the contemporary need to foster a strong and vibrant knowledge economy in response to the effects and impact of globalisation, and by facilitating a greater degree of cohesion between the market and civil society (Giddens, 2000). Olssen, Codd and O’Neill (2004) describe Gidden’s ideal of a ‘Third Way’ as “an amorphous amalgam of irreconcilable values, based upon an attempt to steer a middle way between a free market and a traditional welfare state” (p. 201). They claim that ‘Third Way’ discourses merely create new tensions between neo-liberal notions of choice and localism, and Keynesian values of social democracy and centralisation. In this thesis, the concept of a ‘Third Way’ is understood as a transitional progression of neo-liberalism whereby the breakdown of community and collegial relationships and the subjection of individuals as rational economic agents has allowed for the reintroduction of new managerial processes capable of regulating and controlling the activities and practices of individuals by undermining their agency in a “redefined world driven by performance and accountability” (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004, p. 45).5

Despite winning the closely contested 1999 general election on a platform of ‘Third Way’ nationalism, participation and inclusion, Labour, in coalition with the minority Alliance Party, seemed content to follow the philosophies of its neo-liberal predecessors: the 1984 Labour Government and a succession of National-led Governments during the 1990s. This soon became apparent immediately after the general election when the new Coalition Government announced its formal intention to reform tertiary education in New Zealand and set about establishing the Tertiary

The Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) for that purpose (Codd, 2002). Within the space of the next 18 months the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission produced four reports: *Shaping a Shared Vision* (2000), *Shaping the System* (2001a), *Shaping the Strategy* (2001b), and *Shaping the Funding Framework* (2001c). These four reports represented the most significant and expansive government driven reviews of the tertiary education sector undertaken in New Zealand for more than a decade (Roberts, 2003). That said, the reports did not succeed in providing a coherent alternative to what had gone before. Rather, they continued to adopt an underlying neo-liberal discourse promoting performance, accountability and competition, overlaying this partly obscured subtext with various rhetoric-driven social democratic discourses designed to foster a sense of participation and agreed consent (Codd, 2002). According to Codd (2002), it was this continuation of applied neo-liberal discourse, shrouded beneath a bombast of benign social inclusion, that truly characterised the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government’s ‘Third Way’ approach.

As a consequence of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission’s deliberations, the Ministry of Education’s (2002a) new *Tertiary Education Strategy* was published in May 2002. This new *Strategy* was portrayed by the Ministry of Education (2002a) as the “centrepiece” that would reshape New Zealand’s tertiary education sector to enable it to better contribute towards achieving “our” goals of encouraging life-long learning and developing a globally competitive knowledge society (p. 5). In presenting the *Tertiary Education Strategy*, the Ministry of Education (2002a) elected to use the inclusive language of ‘our’ throughout the entire document to imply that a genuinely active public consultation process preceded its release. In particular, The Ministry of Education (2002a) claimed that the *Strategy* would help “our development as a prosperous and confident nation” (p. 9) because “there are opportunities [in New Zealand] for achieving prosperity by applying our skills and knowledge on the ever increasingly global stage” (p. 12). As such, it was suggested that “we need to reinforce existing strengths... we need to build upon these existing strengths... [and] we need to create new strengths” (p. 11). According to the Ministry of Education (2002a), “the challenge [was] to ensure that New Zealanders,
in all their diversity, are valued and included as part of our knowledge society” (p. 12).

The first formal references to the concept of a ‘knowledge society’ in New Zealand were presented as part of the Foresight Project undertaken by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology in 1997 (Harvey, 2002). The purpose of the Foresight Project had been to identify areas of ‘strategic’ research likely to be beneficial to New Zealand’s economy so that the government could better target its science-based funding (Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, 1998). Central to this exercise was an apparent philosophy that science, technology, knowledge and the economy could be connected (Harvey, 2002). Within the Foresight Project and its accompanying literature, the concept of a knowledge society was repeatedly linked to technological change and globalisation. According to the Foresight Project, technology was “the key driver for knowledge societies” (Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, 1998, p. 5).

Peters (2002) claims that much of what has been described as ‘the knowledge society’ in the majority of policy documents bears a striking resemblance to what earlier neo-liberal governments of New Zealand referred to as ‘the knowledge economy’. Harvey (2002) has argued that the basis of any distinction between the terms ‘economy’ and ‘society’ has had more to do with politics than meaning. She asserts that in the lead up to New Zealand’s 1999 general election, both main parties (the National Government and the opposition Labour Party) supported the idea of developing the nation’s knowledge capacity. Therefore, in order to distinguish itself from the National Government who continued to promote the idea of building a knowledge economy, the Labour Party adopted the more ‘people friendly’ term ‘society’. By focusing on the idea of a ‘knowledge society’ rather than a ‘knowledge economy’, and by continually promoting the participatory aspect of ‘society’, the Labour Party was able to advance a series of policy initiatives that were seen to be “politically neutral, beneficial and therefore uncontestable” (Harvey, 2002, p. 65).
Peters (2002) offers an interesting analysis of knowledge society discourse and its implication for education. He claims that the language that has permeated various policy documents to espouse or support the knowledge society discourse is designed to emphasise a focus towards the future. Peters (2002) describes this as the "language of futurology" and argues that it represents a rhetoric of exaggeration, prediction and celebration (p. 41). Peters suggests that after the advent of the term 'knowledge economy' there followed a period of invention where a continuity of new meta-narratives appeared to offer bright visions of the future. Such terms as 'postindustrial society', 'information society', and 'global information economy' were early examples with 'knowledge' and 'learning', 'economies' and 'societies' becoming evident in more recent policy documents (Peters, 2002, p. 41).

Peters (2002) also claims to have identified two dominant strands of knowledge society discourse. The first, underpinned heavily by 'knowledge economy' discourse (although Peters concedes the difficulty distinguishing 'economy' from 'society' in some of the associated literature and policy documentation) exists within a social democratic tradition. In this particular reading, the economy is seen as subordinate to issues of state and national sovereignty and as such, the knowledge society provides the basis for understanding education as a welfare right involving social inclusion and informed citizenship (Peters, 2002, p. 41). The other reading of knowledge society and its precursor, knowledge economy, places economy at the forefront. Therefore, this reading represents nothing more than an extension of neo-liberal ideals that perceive education as an instrument used by industry and government as part of developing the nation's competitive edge in the global economic order (Peters, 2002). A number of critics including Peters (2002), Ashcroft (2002), Codd (2002) and Roberts (2003) have argued that it is this neo-liberal reading of knowledge society discourse that came to dominate the four Tertiary Education Advisory Commission reports and the development of the Ministry of Education's (2002a) Tertiary Education Strategy.
Within this particular neo-liberal reading of knowledge society discourse, the nation’s ‘collective’ and ‘consensual’ desire to foster its human capability allows the state to develop social and educational policies designed to produce individuals who think in terms of the costs and benefits associated with their actions and participation in society (Brown, 2003). In this sense, Larner (1998) suggests that although neo-liberalism prescribes a reduction in centralised state practices of interventionism, this does not mean that there is less governance within a neo-liberal context. On the contrary, according to Larner (1998), although neo-liberalism critiques the state’s role in limiting the rights of individuals to autonomy and choice, neo-liberalism also promotes the use of various instruments and techniques of governance that encourage individuals to conform to the norms and expectations of the market (p. 12). Foucault (1994a) suggested that one of the great ironies of neo-liberalism demonstrated itself when the first liberals attained power in Britain in the early nineteenth century and actually increased government legislation and intervention rather than decrease it.

Olssen (2001) contends that neo-liberal discourses serve to promote the sovereign rights and freedoms of individuals based on the assumption that within a deregulated economy and society, individuals possess an innate desire to pursue self-opportunism by way of rational decision making and earned meritocracy. However, because neo-liberal discourses assume that individuals are inherently predisposed towards the pursuit of self-interest, those same discourses also advocate the need for certain levels of individual accountability and personal responsibility, and these are supported and encouraged through the application of Public Choice Theory and the use of incentives (Olssen, 2001). Public Choice Theory, primarily developed from the work of James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, encourages the application of neo-liberal/market-based economic theories to public-sector organisations (including universities) so that those organisations become subjected to the same competitive market-based forces that impact on private-sector organisations (Jones and May, 1999). Public Choice Theory argues that individuals working within public-sector organisations (like universities) will pursue their own private interests ahead of the public interests of their organisation and as such, their conditions of employment and
conduct should be governed by incentives and accountability monitoring that prioritise the interests of their organisation (Olssen, 1997).\footnote{For a more detailed description and analysis of Public Choice Theory, see Olssen (2001) The neo-liberal appropriation of tertiary education policy: Accountability, research and academic freedom.}

Fitzsimons, Peters and Roberts (1999) argue that neo-liberalism has become a form of government rationality that depends on the façade of a minimalist state infrastructure and the mechanisms of the market to regulate society. According to Fitzsimons et al. (1999) this emphasis on economic prioratisation became the meta-narrative that defined all aspects of New Zealand’s public policy by the end of the 1990s, effectively silencing, or rendering invisible, any alternative discourses along with those who espoused them.\footnote{I have provided an example of this elsewhere (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004) by referring to Peters and Roberts’ (1999) analysis of the effects of New Zealand’s market-driven 1991 Employment Contracts Act. Peters and Roberts (1999) argued that the Employment Contracts Act served to disenfranchise large sections of the workforce by depleting their collective bargaining capabilities. They also claimed that it had redefined the nature of employment by creating a new ‘casualised’ workforce for whom job security and protection from exploitation had been seriously eroded (Peters & Roberts, 1999). By depleting collective bargaining and undermining a sense of job security, the Employment Contracts Act represented a technology of power capable of effectively silencing one of its two intended beneficiaries: New Zealand’s workforce (with the other intended beneficiary being New Zealand’s business sector and industry – those who employed that workforce).} Miller (2002) claimed that this served to promote the individual as an autonomous and rational economic agent whose success, according to neo-liberalism, existed in their capacity to compete against other autonomous and rational economic agents within this minimalist (and allegedly non-interventionist) market-based infrastructure (Miller, 2002). According to Gordon (1991), this represents the construction and ascendency of a neo-liberal subject and has allowed for a universal “managerialization of personal identity and personal relations [and] the capitalization of the meaning of life” (p. 44).

Yurchak (2003) suggests that a neo-liberal subject has gradually evolved as a consequence of the ongoing development of western market-based practices and has emerged as the basic social unit of most western societies. Larner (1998) claims that the widespread application of neo-liberal strategies in areas of education, health, welfare and work has created individuals who “see themselves as active subjects
responsible for their own wellbeing” (p. 12). Brown (2003) describes neo-liberal subjects as calculating subjects rather than rule-abiding subjects. She asserts that neo-liberal subjects are characterised as autonomous rational decision-makers capable of articulating calculated judgements about their own wellbeing in a context where the state and social institutions operate as the sites that frame the possible calculations and decisions that individuals are able to make (Brown, 2003).

By drawing on the work of Potter and Wetherell (2001), it is possible to view discursive texts such as the Ministry of Education’s (2002a) Tertiary Education Strategy as instruments for constructing a neo-liberal subject. They achieve this by playing a significant role in establishing one’s identity, constituting one’s role in society, and distributing power in respect of these. Trowler (2001) claims that within policies of higher education, certain policy discourses have the ability to reshape the social reality within a field by manipulating language in ways that support and encourage consensus, and diminish opportunities to think about and describe alternatives. In New Zealand the discourses evident in documents such as the Tertiary Education Strategy play a significant role in shaping the professional identities and work of academics by characterising academics as rational decision-makers and establishing boundaries that frame the possibilities available to them when making their own rational decisions and acting on them.

**Tertiary education policy as an ‘inclusive’ discourse**

Codd (2002) claims that the discourse of documents like the Tertiary Education Strategy (he is referring specifically to the four Tertiary Education Advisory Commission reports 2000-2001) assumes consent but fails to present any genuine case for reform. Roberts (2003) argues that the Tertiary Education Strategy, despite its attempt to make ‘us’ (those who read the document or are deemed to be tertiary education ‘stakeholders’) feel somehow included, continues to promote a neo-liberal discourse. Like the market orientated neo-liberal discourses of the 1990s (Ministry of Education, 1994, 1997, 1998), the Strategy contains frequent references to “providers”, “performance indicators”, “consumers”, “outcomes”, “strategic
planning” and so on. The call for accountability and efficiency also remains. In critiquing the Strategy Roberts (2003) goes so far as to argue that neo-liberal discourses have been used for so long in New Zealand and have become so deeply embedded within policy documents and processes that they are now a part of those processes.

Although Roberts (2003) critiques the Tertiary Education Strategy as a document promoting a neo-liberal discourse, he also concedes that there are, in fact, fewer references to “competition” and “choice” in the Strategy document than in traditional neo-liberal reform documents of the 1990s. There are also a set of new terms like “co-operation”, “inclusion”, “stakeholder” and “collaboration”. But even these terms seem to carry hidden or underlying neo-liberal meanings and subtexts. Broadhead and Howard (1998) identified examples of this in their examination of the way inclusive language had been used as part of promoting the RAE in Britain. For example, they argue that the way the term ‘co-operation’ has been represented in policy discourse has shifted its meaning from that of ‘working together’ to one of ‘conforming one’s behaviour to’. According to Broadhead and Howard (1998), the real meaning of ‘co-operation’ within the various discourses that accompany the British RAE is as an activity that endorses and legitimises the assessment exercise. In New Zealand the term ‘stakeholder’ was used in policy discourse throughout the 1990s to describe a third party who held a monetary interest in a particular enterprise. In the new policy documents of the 2000s ‘stakeholder’ refers to a non-financial investment in certain outcomes relating to a particular enterprise. More explicitly, using the inclusive language of ‘our’ and linking it to the notion of ‘collaboration’, stakeholders are now identified as freely consenting bodies directly affected by the reform process (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004). In other words, ‘stakeholder’ can now be perceived as meaning ‘any member or section of the affected population’. So although emphasis is given to terms like ‘co-operation’, ‘collaboration’, ‘citizenship’ and ‘inclusion’ throughout the Strategy document, Roberts (2003) concurs with Codd (2002) by suggesting that these terms actually serve to foster compliance from the
population via ‘consent’ rather than producing any real inclusive participatory change.

What is evident in recent tertiary education policies in New Zealand is that the language of reform used in virtually all policy documents is now being couched in words that seem familiar and benign (Brenneis, Shore & Wright, 2003). Individuals can be seduced by their inclusion as ‘stakeholders’ in ‘our’ tertiary education strategies or by the common-sense logic of ‘co-operation leading to greater efficiencies’. The connection between terms like ‘collaboration’ and ‘inclusion’ to that of ‘consent’ becomes more disconcerting when one considers that the Tertiary Education Strategy fails to acknowledge any place for critique within the tertiary education system (Roberts, 2003). In fact, the only reference to the notion of academic freedom or the legislated role of academic as “critic and conscience of society” (Education Act 1989, s. 161.2) appears in one sentence on page 55:

Excellent basic research will underpin the tertiary sector’s contributions to the creation of new knowledge and understandings, to teaching, to the achievement of national goals, and to supporting the universities’ role as critic and conscience of society. (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 55)

But there is no further elaboration as to what being a ‘critic and conscience of society’ might actually mean. Roberts (2003) argues that an “unwritten discourse of acceptance” permeates the Tertiary Education Strategy and that within this discourse, “the very idea of being ‘critical’ persists only in the form of ‘skills’ statements” (p. 9). More importantly, as critical thought is domesticated into the shared national vision that the Ministry of Education (2002a) claims the Strategy represents, any reference to being able to think or act against this new orthodoxy is either abandoned or was never considered in the first place.

According to Trowler (2001), the conditions for subjectivity presented in the various discourses of higher education and made evident through documents such as the Tertiary Education Strategy are often presented in an alluring way. Because of this, Trowler (2001) believes that institutional managers often adopt and present those
same conditions for subjectivity in their own policy documents. For example, the
discourses presented in the University of Auckland’s draft *Strategic Plan 2005-2012*,
released on 27 June 2005, bears a striking resemblance to those within the Ministry of
Education’s (2002a) *Tertiary Education Strategy*. Like the *Strategy*, Auckland’s
*Strategic Plan* (University of Auckland, 2005) is couched in an inclusive language,
using the term “our” 64 times in the 26 page document. Expressions such as “our
commitment”, “our performance”, “our goals and objectives” are repeated throughout
the document, often placed alongside other familiar terms such as “stakeholders”,
“international and global capability” and “business and economic development”. It is
stated that “the University of Auckland has a responsibility to foster New Zealand’s
identity and advance its economy through its teaching, learning and research”
(University of Auckland, 2005, p. 2), reiterating the Ministry of Education’s (2002a)
‘knowledge society’ discourse.

While the inclusive language inherent in documents like the *Tertiary
Education Strategy* and Auckland’s *Strategic Plan* represent a discourse directed
towards creating co-operative and compliant subjects within the tertiary education
population, there are other aspects of policy language that also deserve attention. As
part of Strategy Six of the *Tertiary Education Strategy*, PBRF is identified as the
means by which research capability in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector will
be recognised and rewarded through future funding (Ministry of Education, 2002a). It
is argued that tomorrow’s researchers will “need skills that enable connectivity with
users; adaptability, communication, and management skills; and, where appropriate,
commercialisation and business skills” (p. 60). “Knowledge” becomes the
‘buzzword’ of the *Strategy* and appears 112 times throughout the 72-paged document.
“Research” appears 252 times. Interestingly, throughout the entire document there is
only one place, on page 61, where research and knowledge are connected:

After more than a decade of education policy and reviews in which
little or no mention has been made of their distinctive role, it is
gratifying to see recognition of the key role of universities and their
staff in basic research, knowledge creation and dissemination, the
fostering of economic growth and the creation of a knowledge society.
(Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 61)
Roberts (2003) asserts that most references to the term 'knowledge' within the Tertiary Education Strategy suggest that it is 'for something' rather than something that might exist or occur for its own sake. In particular, most references to 'knowledge' in the Strategy are connected to 'growth', 'development' and 'competition', especially in relation to New Zealand's role within the global economy. Beyond this, the Strategy offers virtually no conceptual analysis of what 'knowledge' is, or any historic context for the term (Roberts, 2003). Rather, 'knowledge' is linked to other terms like "skills", "information", "production" and "uptake" (Ministry of Education, 2002a). Foucault (1991) argued that within modern western societies where the accumulation of capital was seen as a primary concern, the reconstitution of knowledge as a commodity available for accumulation and dispersal makes sense. Lyotard (1984) had predicted that knowledge would become something that could be fought over as governments and industries tried to gain advantage over their rivals and competitors. Peters (2002) asserts that the way knowledge is being reconceptualised in documents such as the Tertiary Education Strategy constitutes knowledge as an end in itself, a commodity that can be produced and consumed. It is given an exchange value and is perceived as a product that can be owned, traded, shared, stolen or fought over.

'Research' is also rendered in instrumentalist terms in the Tertiary Education Strategy. The majority of references to 'research' in the Ministry of Education (2002a) document align it with such terms as "strategies", "product", "output", "performance", "users", "providers", "leadership" and "capability". Further, according to the Ministry of Education (2002a), concepts such as "research output", "research product", "research performance" and "research capability" can all be measured or compared to an international level of excellence. This rendering of research as a product or activity that can be measured and evaluated and therefore, rewarded or penalised, has remained firmly embedded in the discourse of reform that
has accompanied the establishment and implementation of PBRF in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector.

The first step towards developing and implementing PBRF as a contestable form of research funding in New Zealand involved the establishment of the PBRF Working Group in July 2002. The main function of the PBRF Working Group was to report back to the Ministry of Education and the Transition Tertiary Education Commission regarding the design and implementation of PBRF (Ministry of Education, 2002b). The PBRF Working Group only ever produced two reports: A Performance-Based Research Fund for New Zealand: A discussion document for stakeholders, released by the Ministry of Education in September 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2002c) and Investing in Excellence: The report of the Performance-Based Research Fund Working Group, released subsequently in December 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2002b). In their latter report, the PBRF Working Group described a potential for researchers to be definitively measured and valued in accordance with the Ministry of Education’s stated goals and priorities. According to the PBRF Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002b) academics were employed in a system where everything they did could be monitored for its outcome and usefulness, and where their research existed as an activity of production that could be perpetually increased.

Like the Tertiary Education Strategy, Investing in Excellence contains language that appears to be inclusive, familiar and benign. The opening statement presented in the Ministerial Foreword (Ministry of Education, 2002b) asserts that “knowledge creation, application and dissemination are the lifeblood of the knowledge society” (p. 2). It is then suggested that if “we” are to successfully transform New Zealand into “a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas”, ‘we’ need to be able to push the boundaries of knowledge and understanding (p. 2). Later, in the report itself, it is argued that PBRF will make “a major contribution to the development of our knowledge society” (p. 4).
Having established an aura of inclusiveness and common sense logic in the early part of the report, the PBRF Working Group then adopts, from page six, an authoritative approach whereby the language is couched in an assumed universal consensus. The PBRF Working Group claims they have consulted widely with “their” unspecified networks, while the Ministry of Education and the Transition Tertiary Education Commission (the precursor to the Tertiary Education Commission) has consulted more widely with providers and various representatives, Māori and Pacific peoples, and other sector stakeholders (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 6). It is alleged that the final report of the PBRF Working Group has been informed and enhanced by widespread community interaction and involvement, implying that the recommendations made by the PBRF Working Group have been reached, in part, by a transparent and open process of consultation (Ministry of Education, 2002b). In the Ministerial Foreword, Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education), the Hon Steve Maharey, thanks the “many institutions and individuals who contributed their ideas and support to the PBRF design” (p. 3).

In *Investing in Excellence*, the PBRF Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 7) recommends that PBRF should encourage and reward research performance and excellence, strengthen institutional accountability, increase global connectedness and mobility, target financial investment to enhance world-class and specialised research, and provide support to new and emerging researchers. According to the PBRF Working Group, PBRF would measure and evaluate research degree completions at a departmental level, the capacity of an institution to attract external research funding, research publications, how academics were perceived by their peers, and contributions to the research environment (Ministry of Education, 2002b). The latter three components would be presented in the form of individual Evidence Portfolios submitted by academics as part of a new Quality Evaluation exercise. The formula that would be used to allocate funds in accordance with an institution’s research performance was defined as 60% on the basis of Evidence Portfolios, 25% for research degree completions and 15% for externally generated research income (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a). In the Ministerial
Foreword of *Investing in Excellence* the government accepts all the recommendations put forward by the PBRF Working Group, stating that the implementation of PBRF would begin immediately (Ministry of Education, 2002b) and the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise took place between July and September 2003.

The inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise required all academic staff whose duties involved research or degree level teaching and who had been employed by their institution in a 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) position or greater to submit an Evidence Portfolio representing the last six years of their research activity. Academic staff who had been on contract to an institution for at least a year during the specified period were also required to submit an Evidence Portfolio (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). Every tertiary education institution was required to contribute 10% of its degree top-up funding as an investment in the exercise, and the government added a further sum to these ‘top-ups’ to create a contestable pool of around $18.4 million. In respect of academics, the Quality Evaluation was claimed to be capable of measuring their research performance and then fund their institutions according to a ‘level of excellence’ associated with that performance.

The results of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise were published by the Tertiary Education Commission in April 2004. Spanning 227 pages including appendices, the 2003 assessment, entitled *Performance-Based Research Fund: Evaluating Research Excellence*, discusses the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise, provides a guide for interpreting the results, presents the results, discusses other elements of PBRF (that is, external research income and research degree completions), and indicates the preliminary funding allocations that would follow (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). The results are presented in tables in the appendices ordered by institutional rankings, subject area rankings, subject/departmental rankings across institutions, and rankings between academic units. The appendices also include a detailed analysis on research degree completions. In terms of the various rankings, staff participation and the allocation of quality scores are given in all categories. Although the primary purpose of *Evaluating
Research Excellence is to provide the overall results and findings of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise, the data analysis presented in the document continues to be couched in a language of inclusiveness. According to the Tertiary Education Commission (2004a), the Quality Evaluation exercise has produced results that “we” can celebrate because it has shown that “our” universities contain large numbers of world-class researchers (p. viii).

‘Official’ discourse and the place of critique

In order to address any issues that may have arisen out of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise, the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission proposed an evaluation strategy that would provide independent feedback and recommendations ahead of the 2006 PBRF round (Web Research, 2004). The evaluation strategy would be undertaken by the Centre of Research on Work, Education and Business Limited (also known by the acronym of ‘Web Research’), and would involve three phases. Phase One would evaluate the implementation of PBRF (particularly focusing on the 2003 Quality Evaluation), the short-term impacts of PBRF and their likely implications over the 2004-2007 period. It would also provide an analysis of the general meaning, validity and outcomes of the first PBRF Quality Evaluation. Phase Two would take a longer-term view of PBRF, reviewing and evaluating its wider impacts on New Zealand’s tertiary education sector. Phase Three would not be undertaken until the completion of the third PBRF round in 2012, and would examine whether PBRF was achieving the goals and objectives it was designed for (Web Research, 2004). In terms of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise, the Phase One report, entitled Evaluation and implementation of the PBRF and the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation, provided the most comprehensive feedback in the first year.

Established in 1994, Web Research identifies itself as a research-based consultancy company capable of transforming organisations by “releasing the full intellectual potential of the people in them” (Web Research, 2005, n.p.). The company’s profile is couched in language that is similar to that used by the Ministry
of Education (2002a) in the Tertiary Education Strategy. For example, terms such as "innovation" and "knowledge" are used repetitively and 'knowledge' is frequently connected to terms like "management", "strategies", "instruments" and "solutions" (Web Research, 2005). The company promotes a research tool that it calls The Knowledge Laboratory and claims to have used this tool in work completed for New Zealand's Department of Labour, Accident Compensation Corporation and Education Review Office. The so-called Knowledge Laboratory is described as "a process technology linked directly with the strategic direction of your organisation. It helps your organisation turn the competing tensions it faces into opportunities for innovation" (Web Research, 2005, n.p.).

Web Research released its Phase One report in July 2004, with the Tertiary Education Commission presenting it as the 'official' discourse on the outcome and effectiveness of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. However, Phase One no longer contained the inclusive and benign language evident in the earlier examples of 'official' discourse. The language adopted by Web Research was more instrumental and technocratic in its general application and more direct and affirmative in the way that it purported to 'speak for all' as a document of authority.

As a document designed to identify concerns that had arisen as a consequence of the 2003 Quality Evaluation and make recommendations about how these could be remedied, the Phase One report looks more like a government document advocating policy direction than an independent document evaluating it. The reference list accompanying the Phase One report shows a lack of critical literature related to PBRF with only three out 25 sources expressing any genuine concerns about the Quality Evaluation exercise or its associated assessment function. Of those three, the most significant in terms of providing a critique is presented by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Social Sciences Committee (2004) and is absorbed into the report in such a way that renders its critical arguments invisible. More interestingly, Phase One reproduces material from the Royal Society of New Zealand forum (2004) in such a way that is virtually verbatim but ignores standard principles of acknowledgement.
Were this to occur in an academic paper it would be viewed as an act of plagiarism. Another interesting characteristic of the Phase One report is the vagueness associated with identifying authorship. The authorship is presented under the acronym of ‘Web Research’ rather than by the registered company name of the organisation itself. Further, unlike the transparency associated with the authorship of academic papers, there is no overt attempt to identify the actual individuals who wrote the report and the only mention of the authors appears in paragraph eight at the bottom of page five in a brief “thank you” note.

The discourse of the Phase One report indicates the assumption that the unnamed authors are authorised to speak on behalf of all those who had been involved with the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise (although it is highly likely that the authors themselves were not required to participate in the exercise). According to Web Research (2004), the “implementation of the PBRF, including the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation, was carried out successfully despite a very tight timeline” (pp. 7-8). They go on to claim that although the speed from design to implementation had highlighted a number of problems, none of these problems were considered to be of a nature that might prove fatal to the policy itself (Web Research, 2004). Nor had any tertiary education organisation or other stakeholder advocated that significant changes to the design of PBRF were required. Web Research (2004) claim that everyone who had participated in the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise understood the difficulties in developing a funding model that was completely objective and error free, and the PBRF model was, by “consensus”, a positive attempt to resolve a plethora of complex issues. Further, Web Research claimed that the implementation of PBRF and the conduct of the first Quality Evaluation had been made possible in such a short space of time because there was a high-level of trust and co-operation between stakeholders, institutions and staff and that this level of trust and co-operation would only increase over time (Web Research, 2004).
Of course Web Research’s ‘official discourse’ of PBRF is not accepted by all those who were involved in the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. There are a number of critics who disagree with Web Research’s claim that “the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation, was carried out successfully despite a very tight timeline” (pp. 7-8). Some critics would argue that significant changes to the design of PBRF are required. For example, one of the most significant criticisms directed at the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise is the emphasis that it places upon the individual as its primary unit of assessment. May (2004) raised concerns that the individual nature of the system could have quite negative effects on the collegial aspect of academic life in New Zealand. Curtis (2004) is concerned about the possibility that institutions will now strategise in accordance with the PBRF Quality Evaluation, using their appointment and promotions procedures to reward academics deemed to be ‘winners’ and target those perceived as ‘losers’ (see Chapter Seven of this thesis). I have argued elsewhere (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004) that the individual nature of the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework appears to promote opportunities for academics as a means of gaining compliance from them by constituting academics as depoliticised tertiary education ‘stakeholders’. Web Research (2004) managed to minimise most of these concerns and recommended that future PBRF rounds should continue to use the individual as the core unit of assessment without giving any clear indication as to why the status quo should remain.

It is via an assumed language of consent that Web Research is able to minimise concerns for which it does not have an adequate solution. Like the Tertiary Education Strategy, the Phase One report prefers to take a ‘celebratory’ tone in its depiction of the conduct of the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation. However, while the Strategy document attempted to sway the population by expressing itself in an inclusive way, Phase One presents itself in way that assumes that the population is already in agreement with it. There are two potential ways to view Web Research’s approach. Firstly, it can be viewed as a technique intended to silence dissent by implying that the rest of the population has agreed with the messages of the report. As such, those who may wish to critique the report or issues relating to the Quality
Evaluation that do not actually appear in it are given the impression that their alternate view is one that is not shared by others. Therefore, it could lead to individuals questioning the merit of their own concerns or criticisms, perceiving that perhaps they are not as knowledgeable about such things as their ‘consenting’ peers must be. Secondly, it can be viewed as a technique capable of shaping individuals by presenting them with normalised expectations of academics’ conduct and behaviour. If all possibilities for critique appear to be abandoned (Roberts, 2003), then it is possible that individuals will take on the discourses of policy and constitute themselves in accordance with the discursive formations presented to them (Davies, 2003; Trowler, 2001). In other words, the language of documents like the Phase One report, while claiming to represent a consensus view of what is understood by the population in respect of PBRF, also constitutes what it claims to depict (Middleton, 2004). Phase One purports to represent a universal consensus and by doing so, ‘makes’ or constructs that universal consensus. As a consequence, any alternative possibility for perceiving the 2003 Quality Evaluation that exists outside the ‘official’ discourse as presented by Web Research can be minimised, made invisible, or negated.

**Chapter summary and conclusion**

The PBRF Quality Evaluation framework has the potential to reconstitute New Zealand’s academics in particular ways. It achieves this by imposing a form of government rationality that shapes the bodies and conduct of individuals in ways that are intended to enhance their productive contribution towards sustaining and enhancing New Zealand’s international position and status. This chapter has demonstrated the various ways that the language of various policy documents and government reports (such as the *Tertiary Education Strategy* or Web Research’s *Phase One Report*) has shaped the process of reform surrounding PBRF’s introduction. Firstly, a discourse of benign inclusion was constructed in a discursive field of assumed universal consensus whereby academics were constituted as freely consenting bodies who felt obliged to co-operate with the changes presented to them.
Then academics were confronted by an ‘official’ discourse of PBRF that was more instrumental and technocratic in its general application and more authoritative in the way it purported to ‘speak for all’ as though any consultation over its message had been abandoned. The way language is crafted and articulated within the various discourses associated with PBRF has served to minimise concerns about PBRF by celebrating its role in the tertiary education sector, claiming an apparent universal consensus, and presenting any alternative view as incompatible with that consensus.
CHAPTER 3
Foucault and Governmentality: 
A discourse analysis approach

Whether you are an academic, or a bohemian essayist, or a consultant to the Defence Department, you do what you do according to an idea or representation you have of yourself as doing that thing. (Said, 1993, p. xiii)

Introduction

In his co-edited book *Punishing the discipline: The PBRF regime* Richard Smith (2005b) describes the introduction and implementation of Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF) as a controversial system embedded in modern audit and accountability discourses that have come to permeate New Zealand’s tertiary education sector. He asserts that the conduct of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise in 2003 represented a huge imposition upon the professional integrity and practice of New Zealand’s “unsuspecting academics” (p. 3). In the same volume Smith’s co-editor Joce Jesson (2005) describes the potential for PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise to shape and reward academic work via a new official discourse that assumes to identify “what good [academic] research looks like” (p. 42). In an unrelated but equally significant paper Paul Trowler (2001) claims that government bureaucrats and institutional managers are placing the research-based practices of academics in most western democracies under increasing scrutiny. He argues that within this audit culture academics are experiencing increases in workplace pressures directed towards their professional status and conduct and as such, are influenced by the various discourses that underpin the growing plethora of government and institutional auditing systems and practices. Trowler (2001) concludes by suggesting that these discourses have the potential to “capture and fix”
academics by reconstituting what it means to be an ‘academic’ and normalising the characteristics and codes of conduct associated with the ‘new’ subjection (p. 183).

My purpose in undertaking this study was to examine the experiences of 15 academics from one New Zealand university who had participated in the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise. In order to achieve this, I set about cross-examining the various discourses and practices that these academics used to construct their professional academic identities within PBRF’s new discursive context. This included recording how each of the 15 academics responded to the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise and investigating the various ways that they had come to understand their academic identities as a consequence of it.

Drawing from the work of Michel Foucault, this chapter explains the theoretical concepts and tools that I have used to inform this study. The chapter begins with a description of ‘governmentality’ as the means by which a state can manage and regulate its population through its institutions and discourses whereby individuals within society learn to negotiate pathways through those institutions and discourses by governing their own practices. In this study ‘governmentality’ refers to a variety of instruments or techniques that are used to guide and shape conduct by producing a compliant human subject capable of supporting the interests and objectives of the state. This chapter also explores the notion of ‘subjection’ by explaining how, within multiple relations of power, individuals are shaped or constituted by their engagement with particular bodies of knowledge and discursive practices. This is followed by a discussion of the various instruments and techniques conceptualised by Foucault to explain processes of ‘subjection’, including Foucault’s three disciplinary technologies of surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement; and four discursive operations: technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self. Finally the chapter relates these ideas and techniques to a discourse analysis approach as used in this study to present and interpret the particular and unique experiences of the 15 academics who took part in the study. Although this study provides a substantive theoretical and literature-based
analysis and critique of PBRF, it is the experiences of these academics, along with their interpretations and understandings of those experiences, which form the basis of this study.

Governmentality

Throughout his lifetime French philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault (1977, 2003a) was interested in the ways power was exercised to elicit acts of compliance and consent from subjects positioned within particular contexts and situations. In his earlier works Foucault (1969, 1978) claimed that the human subject was constituted by discourses and relations of power, suggesting that these factors served to control the lives of individuals by scripting their existence (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). However, in his later works Foucault (1994a, 1994b) became interested in the way populations could be managed through the emergence of a government rationality or 

raison d'état

(reason of state). Calling this a process of ‘governmentality’, Foucault (1994a) began to explore the way that power could be exercised most efficiently by governments and institutions in order to maintain the economic health and wellbeing of the state. In his essay entitled Governmentality, Foucault (1994a) describes this process as a historically specific economy of power whereby power is de-centered and society’s members are positioned to play an active role in their own self-governance (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). In his 1982 lecture The Political Technology of Individuals, presented during the ascendancy of neo-liberal discourses in Germany and France, Foucault (1994b) examined the historical shift in the art of government from a sixteenth century Machiavellian tradition of principality to that of government by the state and by state reason.

In The Political Technology of Individuals Foucault (1994b) discusses how, as a consequence of the liberalisation of western politics, governments began to perceive the population of their state as a resource that needed to be managed. This required a production of systems capable of analysing populations followed by the implementation of policies that served to regulate the conduct and behaviour of those populations while ostensibly maintaining their health and happiness (and therefore,
their productive capability) as defined by the powerful or ruling classes (Danaher et al., 2000). Foucault (1978) called this 'biopolitics', that is, the art of shaping the body and conduct of the human subject as a means to facilitate the production and management of the state’s human resources. For example, Foucault (1994b) examined the 'science of the police', suggesting that it existed as a technique of government responsible for securing the care of individuals' lives and happiness so that these could be attuned to maximising the health and strength of the state. In this sense, Foucault's notion of governmentality entailed the replacement of strict and punitive laws designed to enforce good citizenship with coercive strategies that were aimed at modifying the bodies and conduct of populations (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). These 'strategies', or techniques of government, produced a technology of 'truth' that shaped and defined the relationships that existed between the state and the body politic, thereby facilitating the constitution of the human subject (Danaher et al., 2000; McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000).

The modern concept of government, as conceptualised by Foucault, is a technology that encompasses everything from one's control of the self to the control of populations (Danaher, et al., 2000). According to Popkewitz and Brennan (1998), Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' provides a way “to consider the conceptual scaffolding built through discussions on decentering the subject and the problematics of power when considering issues of change” (p. 20). They assert that governmentality enables the disindividualisation of human subjects (taking away their autonomous self by maintaining their individuality but conforming their bodies and conduct to a state sanctioned rationality for their existence) via their organisation and categorisation into particular sets of populations that can be shaped and managed by particular and specific institutions and practices. In particular, Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) highlight the specific role that educational institutions play in shaping various population categories.

Miller (2003) claims that the development of universities in most western societies has been characterised by “an expansion of governmentality” (p. 898). He
argues that this can be seen in the way research has been focused towards the achievement of public wealth, teaching has become more vocationally-based, knowledge has become commodified, students have become consumers and academics have been made more accountable to institutional managers and government bureaucrats. According to Miller (2003), the emergence and application of neo-liberal discourses in the political spaces of contemporary western culture since the latter half of the twentieth century characterise the purpose and methodology of governmentality. Neo-liberal discourses apparently diminish the role of the state as a ‘master’ by offering populations various goals and objectives that individuals should aspire to. This creates the perception of an agentic individual capable of pursuing those goals and objectives in an autonomous way. However, according to Miller (2003) and Ossen et al., (2004), this perception of autonomy and freedom masks an underlying discourse of conformity and compliance. Miller (2003) claims that modern universities have become primary sites for this form of governmentality because they encourage various populations to pursue certain aims and objectives (to accumulate knowledge and develop skills), and they teach those populations how to use their knowledge and skills to make themselves ‘better’ citizens.

McCarthy and Dimitriadis (2000) assert that various techniques of government perform “the ideological and discursive work of managing the complexities and challenges of diversity and multiplicity, and social, cultural and economic change generated by globalization” (p. 172). They claim that various modes of governmentality are “deeply imbricated in the techniques and processes of self-management and the self-regulation of modern populations” (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000, p. 172). According to McCarthy and Dimitriadis (2000), these practices of self-management and self-regulation serve to devolve responsibility from a centralised concern of the state to a decentralised network of social institutions and from a paternal state/community-based care of the family to an individualised accountability of the self. McCarthy and Dimitriadis (2000) suggest that decentralisation allows for the establishment of complex systems of change whereby the influence of various social institutions (such as those in education) and
expressions of popular culture prescribe legitimate and normalised ways of being that help cultivate a community of politically complicit individual subjects.

Danaher et al. (2000), suggest that governmentality involves a shift from government by the state to a form of self-government whereby individuals within the population are equipped with various techniques that enable them to shape their bodies and conduct to become effective and valued members of that population. In using the various techniques made available to them, individuals are encouraged to reflect upon their “moral, productive/economic and bodily selves” and make appropriate adjustments in order to produce themselves as proper members of that population (Danaher et al., 2000, p. 107).

This thesis explores the conduct of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation in 2003 as a form of governmentality that makes New Zealand’s population of academics the objects of a new production of power. This production and exercise of power could potentially reconstitute the professional identity of academics by creating new classifications of legitimate work, establishing new systems of accountability regarding that work, and encouraging academics to reshape their professional and ethical selves accordingly. As the PBRF Quality Evaluation encourages academics to reflect upon their moral, productive and bodily selves, it shapes their professional conduct and status within their scholarly community in particular ways. It is the way in which academics undergo various forms of subjection as part of this reflexive process that is of interest in this study.

Subjection

Foucault was particularly interested in the way in which different forms of knowledge (and particularly the knowledge inherent within the disciplines of the social sciences) became intertwined with “the problems and practices of power, the social government and [the] management of individuals” (Gordon, 1994, p. xvi). In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* Foucault (1977) describes the concept of discipline in two ways. Firstly, discipline is used to describe acts of punishment or coercion, and
secondly, it is attributed to the various skills and knowledge that pertains to a particular field (such as anthropology or geography as academic disciplines). When Foucault combined his two definitions of discipline, he created his concept of 'power-knowledge' (Danaher et al., 2000). This concept refers to the role knowledge plays in the subjection of individuals because of the way that people turn to particular bodies of knowledge such as religion, biology, psychoanalytic theory and history in order to make sense of themselves (Foucault, 1994c). In other words, people can be subjected as a consequence of their sexual practices and orientations, their particular moral or religious principles, or by their general behavior in relation to widespread accepted norms of appropriate social or psychological functioning (Foucault, 1977, 1978).

Foucault's examination of power is significant to this study because the ways power is exercised often contributes to how individuals come to constitute themselves within various discursive fields and therefore, articulate meaning and understanding about their private world via the various discourses and practices operating within those discursive fields. In the case of institutions such as universities, Foucault (1994d) argued that while they provide the apparatus for the exercise of power, power did not reside within the institution itself (as an animate part of its structure). Rather, Foucault believed that the power exercised by an institution existed within the conduct of the institution's members who accepted and complied with the administrative and regulatory conditions expressed as part of the particular world view that the institution represented (Foucault, 1994d). In this sense Foucault (1994b) maintained that power was not distributed from top to bottom (by a monarch or totalitarian state) but rather, from multiple sites within various institutions including from the bottom-up. What intrigued Foucault (1977) within this institutional multiplex of power was the way an individual became subjected as a consequence of it, and the way that power was implicated in that process of subjection.

According to Foucault (1994d), subjection occurs when individuals locate themselves within the multiple discourses available to them. He suggests that while
there are always national and global political struggles that shape the world in which we live, it is actually the subtle disciplines and minute strategies of every-day life that distributes and redistributes multiple relations of power across the social milieu to produce and reproduce the subjection of the individual (Foucault, 1977, 1994d). According to Davies and Harré (2001), the way individuals develop an understanding of their world and their position within it involves the following processes. Individuals learn and adopt social categories that designate the inclusion and exclusion of themselves and others (for example, categories based on gender, ethnicity or hierarchy). They also participate within a number of discursive practices where they learn the various meanings assigned to those categories. As a consequence, they locate or position themselves by determining which categories and meanings are most relevant to them (for example, I am a male rather than female, I am Pākehā rather than Māori, I am a student rather than a supervisor). They then begin to identify particular characteristics that locate them within more specific categories and not others (for example, as a male I can see myself as a father and as a son, but because I am an only child I cannot see myself as a biological brother). In doing this, an individual may begin to develop “a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways” and this will serve to define how the individual assigns meaning and makes sense of the world around them (Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 263). Finally, as a subject located within specific categories and identified by particular meanings, an individual may experience contradictory positions that serve to challenge, strengthen or reinforce their knowledge of what it means to be them.

As people go about their daily routines, the various values, attitudes and practices that they have taken up, alongside the taken-for-granted knowledge made available to them, is perpetually shaped and constituted by the discursive formations and structures around them (Foucault, 1994b; Trowler, 2001). Trowler (2001) contends that within the context of a university, these values, attitudes and practices are likely to include:

Although in some discursive fields it is possible that I might be understood as a brother in a social sense.
Educational ideologies; 'stories' about the epistemological character of disciplines; the relative profitability of alternative behaviours, as well as a mix of 'cultural traffic' entering the institution from outside; cultures associated with gender, social class, ethnicity and so on. (p. 191)

Trowler (2001) believes that "the actions, reactions, behaviour and textual production of any individual will be conditioned (but not determined) by the particular configuration of these forces as they align in a given context" (p. 191). In other words, individuals may be predisposed by the various values, attitudes, practices and taken-for-granted knowledge around them to adopt certain discursive repertoires associated with ongoing tertiary education policy reforms because these appear to represent logical, necessary and profitable ways of being.

In an example that demonstrates different possibilities for the subjection of academics, Olssen (2001) compares a traditional notion of professionalism with a contemporary neo-liberal view of professional activity and behaviour. Under the traditional notion of professionalism, Olssen (2001) shows how academics might expect to maintain certain rights and freedoms over their work "in line with classical liberal notions of freedom of the individual" (p. 38). This notion of professionalism is premised upon academics being able to make autonomous decisions about their work, to critique, and to be accountable through assessment by their peers. However, under neo-liberal discourse professionals are constituted as self-interested and self-serving creatures and their general behaviour is perceived to be directed predominantly towards opportunism (Olssen, 2001). Therefore, academics need to be professionally answerable to managers within a hierarchical system that is "premised upon a need for compliance, monitoring and accountability" (p. 38). While this neo-liberal subjection of academic professionalism does not preclude academics engaging in critique, new professional expectations that demand measurable outputs that produce substantive benefits for the organisation (and/or society and government) significantly intrude on their ability to do so (as will be discussed in Chapter Eight of this thesis).
A neo-liberal discourse and a managerialist framework have become common attributes associated with the politics and reform of tertiary education in contemporary western democracies like New Zealand (Olssen et al., 2004). As a consequence, these discourses and their associated frameworks serve to guide and justify social behaviour as an expression of efficiency, economy and market responsiveness within the tertiary education sector (Olssen et al., 2004). Part of this focuses on managing the population of academics using a variety of instruments and technologies to ensure that the conduct of individuals corresponds with the normalised expectations required of them within their particular field (the notion of governmentality) (Trowler, 2001). According to Foucault (1977, 2003a), this is achieved by the application of three disciplinary technologies: surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement; and four discursive operations: technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self.

**Surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement**

Foucault (1978, 1994d, 1994e) was concerned about the simultaneous rise of economic neo-liberalism in Western Europe as a response to the initial oil crisis of 1973 and the global economic recession that followed. Foucault (1994d) believed that although the aspirations of neo-liberalism created juridical restrictions against the institutional exercise of power over individuals as a consequence of the individual’s rights to freedom, personal sovereignty and choice, power continued to be exercised beneath the juridical realm through widespread panopticism. This is a process that incorporates surveillance, meticulous record taking and the imposition of new and specific social conventions, expectations and norms (Foucault, 1977). These new social conventions and norms, used to measure the attributes of a ‘good citizen’, included a new individualisation of the subject based on economic activity, personal responsibility (and accountability) and presentation of the body (Danaher, et al., 2000; Foucault, 1994d).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) described the various techniques of power, arguing that for the most part it was the “apparent neutrality and political
invisibility” of these techniques that made them “so dangerous” (Gordon, 1994: xv). This is perhaps one of Foucault’s most significant revelations with regard to the notion of power, that it functions best when hidden from view. For Foucault (1977), the idea of a continuous gaze as a covert act of surveillance was perhaps one of the most effective ways to exercise power. According to Foucault (1977), the subjection of humans meant individuals became the objects of inexorable modes of surveillance, examination and manipulation in ways which they, themselves, became agents of their own ongoing subjection (Semple, 1993). In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) describes Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon prison, designed in 1786, as an architectural marvel that required very few supervisory resources to provide a continuous and uninterrupted supervision of inmates. According to Foucault (1977), the panopticon design allowed a single gaze to function so as to create the illusion of a continuous act of surveillance and encouraged docility within the observed via the perpetuity of that surveillance (Foucault, 1977). In this sense, Foucault (1977) maintained that Bentham’s panopticon was the superlative technological apparatus of disciplinary power.

Foucault argued that panopticism was about the disindividualisation of power. Power did not reside within an individual, it existed within a “concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights [and] gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). In this sense, it did not matter who exercised power through the enactment of the gaze because the invisibility of the individual during the exercise meant that it was the gaze that had effect, not the individual deploying it. By using a metaphorical account of Bentham’s panopticon, Foucault (1977) argued that the gaze could function in anonymity in such a way that allowed it to become a multiplicity of gazes. He also contended that acts of surveillance had become an integral part of the economic, social and political environments of the western world since the latter part of the twentieth century. To demonstrate this point I, in collaboration with Nairn, have applied Foucault’s metaphorical use of the panopticon prison to a critical examination of the role undertaken by New Zealand’s recently established Tertiary Education
Commission, the organisation responsible for implementing and administering PBRF (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004). In that paper we have argued that the Tertiary Education Commission creates an environment of panoptic surveillance whereby individuals are placed under the Commission’s perpetual superintendence and, as a consequence, begin to conduct themselves in ways that indicate their sense of the gaze’s limitless presence.

Set alongside the disciplinary technology of surveillance is another mechanism through which power can be exercised over individual subjects: the written examination. Foucault was interested in the way that written records served to identify the specific individuality of each subject and document their lived experiences in a stored collection of fixed data, facts and figures. For Foucault (1977), this kind of reporting and recording is fundamental to the exercise of disciplinary power.

The examination leaves behind it a whole meticulous archive constituted in terms of bodies and days. The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them. (Foucault, 1977, p. 189)

An example of the written examination exists in the way that the Tertiary Education Commission attempts to identify and fund the ‘highest quality’ research being undertaken by New Zealand’s academics via the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise. As part of this process the Tertiary Education Commission requires academics of ‘status’ in New Zealand to participate on PBRF peer-review panels where they assign an evaluation of quality to the Evidence Portfolios of research submitted by other academics within their various disciplines.

As an instrument of examination, each Evidence Portfolio is divided into three categories. In the first category, academics are required to provide four Nominated Research Outputs that represent the best examples of their research activity for the previous six-year period. In the 2003 Quality Evaluation academics could also include up to 50 other Research Outputs in this category (in future rounds this will be
but the four Nominated Research Outputs remained the main focus of the PBRF peer-review panels (Web Research, 2004). The other two categories are ‘Peer Esteem’ where individuals are required to demonstrate examples of their academic status as seen by others in their profession, and ‘Contribution to the Research Environment’ in which wider academic and community activities can be acknowledged. Each Evidence Portfolio is assigned a ‘quality score’ or ranking of either A, B, C or R by a subject-based PBRF peer-review panel. That ranking is calculated on the basis of 70% for the research outputs (with the emphasis given to the four nominated outputs) and 15% each for the two other categories. A Ranking of ‘A’ indicates that the research output of the individual is of a world class standard (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a) whereas a ranking of ‘R’ means that the individual does not “meet the requirements for category C” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003b, p. 3). It should also be noted that this is the most definitive description of the ‘R’ category provided in any of the Tertiary Education Commission documentation prior to and during the inaugural 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise and in the publishing of its results in 2004. The quality scores or ranking of each individual academic is reported back to their employing institution (as an aggregate score at the departmental level) and is made available to individuals by computer database if they choose to access it.

According to Foucault (1977), the examination is “a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (p. 184). Foucault (1977) claims that the examination establishes a visibility of individuals and, via this visibility, enables individuals to be differentiated and judged. An Evidence Portfolio clearly represents a technique of surveillance whereby academics provide particular details about their activities and practices so that these details can be scrutinised by a panel of ‘experts’ who are monitored themselves by a higher panel of moderators. Because Evidence Portfolios are restrictive in so far as they present an individual’s material in three categories via a universal format, the PBRF peer-review panels are more readily able to classify and judge an individual’s performance in that it becomes comparable to others by the uniformity of its presentation.
Davies (2003) describes the potential for instruments of examination to act as techniques capable of reshaping the bodies and conduct of examined individuals. Although she specifically refers to evidence-based systems of measurement in teaching, Davies (2003) claims that instruments and systems like Evidence Portfolios make it possible for individuals to provide ‘objective’ data about themselves to make them accountable to others (such as institutional managers or government agents). According to Davies (2003), if the data that individuals provide about themselves fails to correspond with the data that is being sought by the process of examination they are participating in; it is possible that individuals could find themselves targeted in various ways. The problem with this, as identified by Davies (2003), is that what is portrayed as ‘good’ data that results in a ‘successful’ examination of the individual is often determined by processes beyond the individual’s control and, in many cases, contrary to the perception of self held by the individual. In other words, for individuals to succeed in a process of examination like the PBRF Quality Evaluation, they must adapt their evidence to fit with both the method and expectations of the examination process and the messages about conduct that accompany it. By requiring certain forms of evidence from individuals whereby the construction of that evidence has the capacity to position those individuals in particular ways, the inclusion and exclusion of certain possibilities of being are likely to contribute to the constitution of very specific types of subjects within a field (Davies, 2003).

As a consequence of ongoing surveillance, tracked in perpetuity by record and documentation, Foucault (1977) describes a third disciplinary technology that impacts upon the individual subject: the normalising judgement. According to Duncan (2001), it is through the creation of a normalising judgement that society’s institutions “play a leading role in the productive processes of power in society” (p. 102). Olssen et al., (2004) claim that the written examination produces a normalising tendency that constitutes and regulates the body and conduct of individuals according to a raison d’État that individuals feel obligated to endorse and accept.
According to Olssen et al., (2004), academics generally establish significant relationships with their community of practice and the object (the subject matter, studied population, conceptual sphere) to which their practice is directed. Their ‘community of practice’ will often include colleagues with congruent models of practice directed towards similar objects of interest. However, as Trowler (2001, p. 194) asserts, government policies and institutional directives are likely to establish the structural context for academic practice via the establishment of rules and guidelines, the division of labour, and the allocation of duties. To negotiate pathways through the structural context, academics are likely to adopt ways of behaving that facilitate their quests for success and these may include behaviours that have been discursively constituted as those deemed necessary, profitable (in the broadest sense) and ‘normal’. As each academic within a community of practice adopts a particular behaviour attuned to the discursive rhetoric of their institution or government, the possibility exists that their conduct will reiterate to their colleagues that it is ‘okay’ to adopt this behaviour. Further, if their colleagues subsequently follow suit by also taking up and accepting the new behaviour, this will reinforce the original academic’s acceptance of that behaviour. As such, the new behaviour is not only reinforced, it is justified and, as a consequence, becomes a ‘taken-for-granted’, normalised part of one’s practice.

Foucault (1977) argued that the models of liberal and neo-liberal society, as an individualised society, have been constructed from the abstract renderings of “juridical forms of contract and exchange” (p. 194). In other words, Foucault’s notion of governmentality represents the contractual association between the state and its institutions, and the individuals of society. It is via this metaphorical representation of the contract that the “machinations of discipline” (surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement) are administered in various forms to produce a particular “reality”, the “domains of objects” and “rituals of truth” that contribute to particular constructions of the human subject (Foucault, 1977, p. 170, 194).
However, Foucault (1994d) also argued that during the mid-eighteenth century there had been a shift in the art of governing from a model that partially reflected sovereign rule, a disciplinary dictatorship based on economy, trade and labour; to one that emphasised concerns about the health, wellbeing and the moral conduct of populations. As populations became the “ultimate end of government”, new campaigns and techniques were developed to improve their condition, increase their wealth, attend to their health and manage their distribution (Foucault, 1994a, p. 216). Foucault saw this as the final stage in the development of governmentality whereby governments became concerned with the “consciousness of each individual who [made] up the population” and the “interest of the population regardless of...the particular interests and aspirations of...individuals” (Foucault, 1994a, p. 217). This final shift (from sovereign rule to disciplinary rule to governmentality) was accompanied by the birth of a new set of operations or techniques; each associated with its own type of domination and each capable of training and modifying individuals so as to elicit certain attitudes and behaviours from them (Foucault, 1994a, 2003a).

Technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self

Technologies of production

Foucault (2003a) describes technologies of production as the modes by which various things can be produced, transformed or manipulated. They are the technical artifacts with which we work (Foucault, 2003a). According to Lemke (2001), modern concerns about the accumulation of capital require labour to be shaped in particular ways so that it can be used in an economically efficient and profitable way. Time must be constituted in relation to labour, space must be organised around economic interests and specific habits and dispositions must be encouraged in relation to time, space and economy. In other words, a technology of production provides a way of making a “political investment in the body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 25). For example, within the discursive context of PBRF; academic time, space and labour can be organised via the various policies and practices that are produced, transformed and
manipulated by the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission, the two primary institutions responsible for creating and generating ‘truths’ about PBRF. These policies and practices produce the basis of a ‘truth’ regarding the construction of academic time, space and labour and presents that ‘truth’ as a representation of the totality of academics’ professional conduct and productivity.

Jesson (2005) uses governmentality to describe the various ways she believes PBRF will impact upon and change the nature of academic labour in New Zealand. Describing the implementation of PBRF as a technology of production, Jesson (2005) argues that PBRF establishes a new set of national standards that academics feel obliged to adhere to as part of their professional and scholarly status. A need to ensure the accountability of public tax-payer expenditure is presented to academics as a legitimate function of the state and this becomes a common-sense rationality that academics are encouraged to use in making determinations about their conduct and research (Jesson, 2005). By conceptualising PBRF as a form of governmentality, Jesson (2005) demonstrates how PBRF can become an instrument that supports a new raison d’État for academic research in New Zealand. By identifying PBRF as a form of governmentality, this study examines the various ways that PBRF operates as a technology of production that encourages some academics to demonstrate the economic significance of their work and justify decisions about their research in very particular and specific ways.

Technologies of sign systems

Technologies of sign systems account for the various ways individuals use signs, symbols and meanings in developing their knowledge about themselves and others (Foucault, 2003a). According to Foucault (1969), the collection of various signs and symbols within a particular discursive field serves to construct distinct ways of thinking and knowing via their “contrasting characteristics and their rules of use” (p. 95). Danaher et al., (2000) provide an example of how a technology of sign systems enables populations to be categorised or distinguished by referring to the way that the Third Reich in Germany stripped the identities of prisoners in concentration camps by
replacing their names with tattooed numbers on their forearms. According to Danaher et al., (2000), the application of tattooed numbers as symbols of identity made the inmates “non-human” and this made it easier to “abuse and kill” them (p. 127).

In this study a technology of sign systems exists in the way that the PBRF Quality Evaluation assesses an academic’s research activity and performance with a measure of validation in the symbolic form of a grade or ranking. The way in which an Evidence Portfolio is assigned a final quality score occurs as follows. The four Nominated Research Outputs and the other categories of an Evidence Portfolio are assigned a grade between 0-7 whereby “‘7’ is the highest point on the scale and ‘0’ is the lowest” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a, p. 168). Once they have been assigned a grade, they are given a weighted score whereby each grade is multiplied by one hundred (that is, a grade of 5 becomes a weighted score of 500) (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a). The scores are then used to determine the ‘Indicative Quality Category’ of the Evidence Portfolio. An Evidence Portfolio with a score of under 200 is ranked ‘R’, between 200 and 400 is ‘C’, up to 600 rated ‘B’ and anything over is assigned ‘A’ (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). The peer-review panels are then required to make a holistic judgement (an interpretation) to determine the final grade to be assigned to an individual’s Evidence Portfolio. This is achieved by considering the three scores awarded to each category within the Portfolio (the Nominated Research Outputs, Peer Esteem and Contribution to the Research Environment), the Indicative Quality Category, any uncommon factors contained within the Evidence Portfolio and the overall information provided by it (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). Each Evidence Portfolio is then given a final ranking of either ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ or ‘R’ that signifies the quality of research produced by each individual academic. The accumulation of individual quality scores within an institution is then used by the Tertiary Education Commission to

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9 It should be noted that the ‘R’ category had originally been assigned as ‘D’, but this had been widely criticised as signifying a ‘failing grade’ that could have generated potentially de-motivating and demoralising effects on academics (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003b).
determine the levels of research-based funding directed towards the institution. The quality scores play a vital role in establishing a hierarchy of institutions and therefore, they are capable of impacting on the reputations and profiles of academics employed within different institutions depending on each institution’s hierarchical position.

The creation of an academic hierarchy via the application of symbolic representations of worth was emphasised by the Tertiary Education Commission who published the comparative 2003 rankings of academic disciplines within and across the various institutions in 2004. This has made the status of the perceived worth of individuals within those disciplines and departments more visible to others (Middleton, 2004). This is because the relatively small size of New Zealand and the general knowledge that individuals have of their departments, institutions and academic disciplines makes it possible for academics to use the published 2003 Quality Evaluation results to infer the quality scores of their colleagues and peers (Boston, 2005). In other words, a PBRF quality score becomes a symbol of an academic’s research ability and as such, it becomes a knowledge or ‘truth’ that others (peers, managers, bureaucrats) may use to make judgements about them. As part of this assessment process, academics may come to understand the symbol or ranking as a knowledge or truth about themselves. As such, academics may compare their symbol to the symbols attained by others (peers) and construct a perception of the self as a consequence of what they have understood the various symbols to mean.

Technologies of power

The way that Foucault (1978) conceptualises power enables it to be understood in terms of the techniques through which it is exercised. According to Foucault (1978) power can be conceptualised as something that is exercised rather than possessed and productive rather than repressive. Foucault (1978) argues that there are many forms of power inherent in society such as legal power, administrative power, economic and military power and so on. However, Foucault (1978) believes that all forms of power share a commonality in that they all rely upon certain modes of application and all draw authority via an espoused ‘truth’.
Using the examples of the panopticon and the confessional, Foucault (1978) argues that the various modes or techniques through which power can be exercised have an historical basis and it is this history that enables the existence of different systems of power relations. In this sense, Foucault (1978) argues that the production of quite specific practices in society serve to shape the ways in which power relations operate in that society. For example, the development of PBRF policies, alongside the implementation of the Quality Evaluation assessment exercise, is a particular discursive operation by which power is exercised in relation to the professional practices of academics.

Foucault believes that individuals have their lives, thoughts and activities scripted for them by a variety of discursive practices (Danaher et al., 2000). In terms of this study, individuals (academics) experience differing positions within power relations, and the discursive effects of institutions, class, race, gender and so on can be acknowledged for contributing to the constitution of those positions (Duncan, 2001). Foucault (1978) argues that while it is important to examine the macro elements of a discursive field, it is more important to understand how power is being exercised in order to identify the specific effects it produces. In this study Foucault’s technologies of power will serve as a useful tool to analyse how academics perceive the interactions they have with their peers, departmental heads and institutional managers in terms of the power relations made apparent via PBRF discourses and practices.

Technologies of the self

The final technology, technologies of the self, enables individuals to effect, either by their own means or with the help of others, “a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immorality” (Foucault, 2003a, p. 146). In his later work Foucault (1984, 2003a, 2003b) became interested in the way people were active in shaping their identity. In the third volume of The History of Sexuality Foucault (1984) explores various
philosophies of the self that are evident in ancient Graeco-Roman and early Christian cultures. Foucault (1984) claims that both these cultures shared common beliefs about the ‘self’, each claiming that the self could be perfected and that only those who strive for that perfection would have access to rationality and truth. According to Foucault (1984), individuals adopt a variety of practices to regulate their bodies, thoughts and conduct in order to try and perfect their self. Foucault describes these regulatory practices as ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1984, 2003b).

Foucault (2003a) identifies three main technologies of the self. The first technology of the self, referred to by Foucault (2003a) as Senecan, involves a series of techniques that enables individuals to examine the various ways that their thoughts tie in with the rules of society. For academics engaged in PBRF, this involves thinking about how they can participate successfully in the PBRF Quality Evaluation. This engagement is not simply an act of compliance informed by a set of rules and regulations. It can also be perceived as an attempt by an individual to improve their status within the field defined by those rules and regulations. The second technology of the self, called Christian hermeneutics, explores the relationship that exists between an individual’s thoughts and their inner integrity (Foucault, 1984). For example, while academics may think about ways to attain better personal outcomes from the PBRF Quality Evaluation, this does not necessarily mean that they accept those outcomes as being valid representations of their academic self. In other words, the second technology explores the various similarities and contradictions existing between how academics thought and felt about their participation in the exercise (their conduct and their beliefs about the morality of that conduct). The final technology of the self, identified by Foucault (2003a) as the Cartesian mode, investigates the extent to which an individual’s thoughts corresponds with reality (Foucault, 1984). As policies and practices like PBRF shape, reshape and inform the tertiary education sector in New Zealand, this technology of the self explores the way that academics perceive themselves in relation to the way that their work environment has come to (re)constitute what an academic is.
All three technologies of the self encourage individuals to express their thoughts, either verbally or in written form, as a way of examining and knowing the self. Foucault (1984) notes that in ancient Graeco-Roman culture individuals achieved this by maintaining a journal (a form of self-examination) whereas in early Christian culture individuals were encouraged to verbalise their thoughts, either in prayer or confession, so as to replace their sinful self with a more pure self. Danaher et al., (2000) suggests that these practices still apply in more contemporary cultures and traditions, citing medicine, psychiatry and psychology as fields in which individuals are encouraged to find or confess the truth about their physical and mental wellbeing. They argue that through the legal and education systems and media, along with sexual and family relations, the practices of verbalising, writing and confessing have become so entrenched that a whole series of industries have developed to take advantage of them (Danaher et al., 2000). These include counselling and life-coach programmes, television and radio talk shows, tabloid publications and various internet activities and practices (even research projects such as this one involve verbalising and confessing characteristics by way of the qualitative interview). As such, the practices of verbalising, writing and confessing have become a major factor in shaping truth and reality in the modern world (Danaher et al., 2000; Foucault, 2003a).

According to Foucault (1984), the main purpose of the technologies of the self, both historically and in the modern sense, are as tools to ensure that individuals have the right competencies to take up positions that conform to the conventions and practices of society. As Foucault (1984) observes, this relies on the assumption that it is the duty of every individual to try and perfect their self, both physically and mentally, in order to become a better person in society. Foucault (1984, 2003a) focuses on understanding how individuals come to perceive themselves as subjects morally obligated to apply technologies of the self to constitute their subjectivity and achieve a sense of state-sanctioned existence. In this study the technologies of the self serve as a useful analytical tool for understanding how 15 academics reached
particular understandings of themselves as researchers and academics that in turn, played a role in constituting their respective identities.

According to Foucault (2003a), the four technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self usually function simultaneously within a discursive field. Although Foucault's (1994a, 1994b) notion of governmentality implies that governments use various techniques to guide and shape the conduct of individuals, Davies and Harré (2001) argue that individuals also take up various technologies (particularly those of the self) to exercise agency in the way they respond to particular discourses and position themselves within various discursive practices. According to Davies (1997), individuals have the ability to:

[S]ee the constitutive process; read the texts of their 'selving'; recognise the constitutive power of discourses to produce historically located ideas of what it might even mean to be a self, engage in 'selving'; look at the contradictions between discourses (and not reject them solely on those grounds); and play endlessly with the discursive possibilities that have been made observable through post-structuralist analysis. (p. 274)

Davies and Harré (2001) also state that “the possibility of choice in a situation in which there are contradictory requirements provides people with the possibility of acting agentically” (p. 270).

Foucault (1994b, p. 405) also saw the capacity for individuals to act as thinking beings capable of making agentic decisions but went on to link the autonomy of the individual to a historical rationality that he identified as the raison d'état (reason of state). In describing the 'science of the police', Foucault (1994b) presents a number of different historical understandings of the establishment of the idea of 'the police' as a symbolic or metaphorical explanation for the rise of a technology of the state. Foucault (1994b) describes the 'police' as an instrument of the state used to educate and guide individuals towards being productive for the state. Although the emphasis of Foucault's discussion is an historical examination of the police as a technology of government, the same discussion could be applied to other, similar technologies of the state such as ideas about teachers, health workers, public
sector managers, and Tertiary Education Commission employees responsible for administering the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise. While Foucault presents these technologies of the state as instruments by which compliance is encouraged as part of a discursively formed *raison d’état*, he also presents an argument for the possibility of agency. Here Foucault (1994d) argues that while it may be difficult for individuals to escape the regulatory institutions and discourses that formed a technology of the state, individuals could identify these technologies as well as their own practices of the self. In other words, individuals have the capacity to identify how the policies and practices of government are designed and implemented to shape their bodies and conduct and, as such, resist them. In this sense, individuals can find alternative ways of conducting themselves, deciding how, where and if they should conform and comply with various technologies of government.

Although Foucault (2003a) acknowledged that individuals could take up technologies of the self to facilitate opportunities for agency, he also identified the disciplinary logic associated with various technologies of government that worked to undermine individual agency by constituting particular subjects in particular fields (Foucault, 1994d, p. 331). He argued that while the possibility for agency existed when an individual constructed their 'self' using their self-knowledge, to do so often meant resisting the regulatory institutions and discourses in which the individual’s identity had been produced. According to Foucault (1994b), this was a difficult enterprise in that the regulatory practices and discourses used to establish and maintain the discursive conditions of a particular field or context represented a technology of conformity or a rationality of rules that individuals felt obliged to adhere to. They presented common sense values and ideas about the world that assumed a common sense way of living and being. In other words, it is difficult to resist if resistance means being understood as not normal (Davies & Banks, 1992).

**Foucault and discourse analysis**

This study examines the techniques of governmentality that shape academic identities and practices via PBRF and deploys a discourse analysis approach informed by
Foucault's three disciplinary technologies and four discursive operations. Potter and Wetherell (2001) state that in using a discourse analysis approach it is possible to locate connections between language and social practice. These connections include the way that language is implicated in relations of power, how it constitutes ideology and how it serves to subject identities and objectify practices, values and norms (Potter & Wetherell, 2001). A discourse analysis can also serve as an emancipatory tool for the participants/subjects of a study by making them aware of certain coercive elements that may be apparent within a particular discourse and by presenting them with possibilities for pursuing and locating themselves within other discourses.

Danaher et al., (2000) define 'discourse' as "individual acts of language, or 'language in action'- the ideas and statements that allow us to make sense of and 'see' things" (p. x). They suggest that discourses help shape our understandings of who we are by enabling us to make distinctions between what is perceived to be real and unreal, true and false, valid and invalid, right and wrong (Danaher et al., 2000). According to Foucault (1978), discourses embody written, spoken and symbolic forms of text and represent historically specific ways of speaking and knowing. He argues that discourses determine what can be said at any given moment, decide who is positioned to say it, and identify how that position has been authorised and legitimated. Discourses contain the ideas, statements and assumptions that exist as part of our language and allow us to make sense of, and perceive the world around us (Foucault, 1978).

In The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 Foucault (1978) examines the role of discourse in creating the subjection of an individual within relations of power. He argues that discourses provide the rules, behaviours and expectations that serve to inform an individual's identity and actions in society. Foucault (1969, 1977, 1978) claims that discourses occur within the various social structures, institutional settings and organisational environments in which individuals participate. These are called 'discursive fields' (Foucault, 1969). Foucault believes that within these discursive fields certain people are positioned with institutional 'authority' (such as government
bureaucrats, medical professionals and company managers), enabling them to impose their own particular world-view on various groups in society (such as inmates in prisons, patients in hospitals or academics employed in universities). This enables those groups to be administered and regulated within their institutions according to that institutional world-view (or discourse) and the rules of conduct that accompany it (Foucault, 1969).

Foucault (1977) asserts that although individuals are capable of drawing from a multiplicity of discourses to shape their identity and subjectivity, they tend to align their thinking (and therefore, their subjection or identity) in accordance with the discourses promulgated by the dominant classes. This is because dominating discourses have a tendency to present themselves as representing common-sense values and practices (Gavey, 1989). By doing so, dominant discourses seemingly define what is ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ behaviour for an individual to undertake as part of their subjection as a member of society (Davies, 1989). As a consequence, dominant discourses are able to conceal their own power-base by reinforcing a particular form of social behaviour and discouraging alternative possibilities as ‘abnormal’ and ‘undesirable’ (Davies, 1989; Gavey, 1989).

In this context Davies and Harré (2001) argue that a discourse can be defined as an “institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems” (p. 262). They believe that discourses operate within a variety of institutional settings and that discursive practices can also be found within various fields such as gender, social class and sexuality. Discourses also operate in knowledge-based disciplines including psychology, science and medicine; and contribute to our understanding of what counts as pathology within those disciplines (for example, Schizophrenia as a pathology of mental health) (Foucault, 1969; Ritchie & Ashcroft, 2004). In The Birth of the Clinic (and again in The History of Sexuality, Volume 1) Foucault (1975, 1978 respectively) discusses how medical and psychiatric patients have been subjected to an internationally validated set of norms against which their actions and behaviours are understood. According to Foucault (1975), doctors and psychologists embody an
institutional gaze via the way they evaluate their patients in terms of their bodies and behaviours. As a consequence, the medical and psychiatric discourses of doctors and psychologists become the meta-narratives used for generating knowledge about the body and about behaviour. Foucault (1975) demonstrates this by examining nineteenth century attempts to free urban society of disease and social unease by turning public health into a moral issue as well as a social problem. As a consequence, civil authorities were able to act as moral agents (as church leaders had previously done) and society's lower classes were made subject to and compliant with the 'messages of morality' espoused by those authorities. Therefore, those 'messages of morality' became the systems of thought used by society and its individuals to make decisions about public health concerns and to act accordingly.

Using a Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis involves trying to understand how individuals become identified or subjected as a consequence of their engagement with various discourses and their participation within particular discursive practices. A discourse analysis approach attempts to locate the knowledge and context underpinning the meanings and interpretations taken up by individuals prior to and during their act of speaking (Potter & Wetherell, 2001). It involves studying the way that power is structured and exercised in society, the way institutional practices are developed, and the way perceptions of reality are created (Duncan, 1994).

Wetherell and Potter (1992) use the metaphor of 'mapping the language' to describe the process of analysing a particular discourse as "charting themes and ideologies, [and] exploring the heterogeneous and layered texture of practices, arguments and representations which make up the taken for granted in society" (p. 1). Through this metaphorical approach it is possible to ascertain what actions and practices are perceived as legitimate within a particular social context as well as determine which actions and practices are perceived as counter productive within that social context. Crucial to Wetherell and Potter's (1992) metaphor is that it makes it possible to view a discourse as "material which can be explored and chartered" (p. 2).
Most approaches to discourse analysis are undertaken from the premise that discourses are fluid and changing entities where meaning is continually recreated and contested. Within the area of the social sciences discourse analysis does not involve locating specific and definitive truth claims. Truth claims are viewed as interpretations of reality given legitimacy through affirming hegemonic discourses in a structured world where not all discourses are equal. In other words, truth claims are often perceived by social scientists as assumptions and premises validated by particular world-views (Fairclough, 1993; Taylor, 2001; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Researchers undertaking a discourse analysis are not trying to recover "events, beliefs and cognitive processes" from the discourse of individuals but rather, are trying to understand how individuals have come to develop their own interpretations of particular experiences (Potter & Wetherell, 2001, p. 200).

Zipin (1998) asserts that discourse analysis is becoming increasingly common in studies directed towards educational policy and practice and allows for the way various policies and practices are bound up in particular systems of knowledge. He claims that by adopting a discourse analysis approach, it is possible to study institutional sites in terms of "the rule-bound sign systems (discourses) that infuse every-day activities, and that differentiate people in relation to cultural norms that constitute self-regulatory ways of knowing" (Zipin, 1998, p. 316). A discourse analysis approach enables researchers to explore how individuals may embody subjective dispositions to distinguish their 'self' from others, identify their 'self' in terms of the rules of conduct that determine what is 'normal', and locate their 'self' in relation to those norms as a "raced, sexed, classed, or otherwise identified subject" (Zipin, 1998, pp. 316-317).

Prichard and Trowler (2003) claim that there is a major advantage in using discourse analysis as part of a qualitative methodological approach to research in higher education. They suggest that in terms of the professional practice of academics, this kind of approach to research produces data from the ground-up rather
than reproducing the statistical (and political) agendas already generated by governments and institutions. In other words, Prichard and Trowler (2003) believe that qualitative narrative data is able to more accurately reflect and represent the professional issues and concerns of academics. While more positivist research paradigms may have the capacity to turn these issues and concerns into statistical data to benefit policy makers and institutional managers, this does not necessarily address these from the point of view of the people most affected by them. Prichard and Trowler (2003) believe that one of the greatest benefits of using a discourse analysis approach is that it will help to define and work through the various issues and concerns raised by the participants (academics) in a more meaningful way. This is because questions surrounding those issues and concerns (such as “what does PBRF mean for my research?” and “will PBRF affect my career aspirations?”) have emerged out of the professional practice and experience of academics’ lives. In other words, a discourse analysis approach provides an examination of a discursive field or event in an attempt to understand how people (academics) become ‘positioned’ within that particular context by way of their subjection or agency, or as a consequence of both (Davies & Harré, 2001).

Those who undertake a discourse analysis approach in their research tend to draw from a variety of theories to inform their analysis, particularly for those studies that attempt to explain the unpredictability of lived experiences in a theoretical way (Zipin, 1998). In this study I have drawn from the work of Michel Foucault to inform my analysis. Foucault (1969) saw the emergence of the subject not as a linear response to the influences of discourse and practice but rather, as a complex integration of one’s subjection by others through modes of control and dependence, and by the development of one’s own identity through self-knowledge and awareness. Foucault (1977) believed that it was here, within the complex relationships that people formed within various discursive fields, that power is exercised in relation to individuals, thereby constituting individuals as either compliant, consenting or agentic/resisting subjects. This study examines the discourses and practices that a selected group of academics have drawn on to make sense of their participation in the
inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation. Using Foucault's ideas about governmentality and subjection as a guide for analysis, this study explores how those academics came to understand their academic identity and respond to the evaluation exercise, and how they began to imagine how PBRF might affect their future academic aspirations and opportunities.

Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has presented the theory of governmentality by discussing Foucault's interests in the liberalisation of western politics, the exercise of power via governments and institutions, biopolitics (the art of shaping the body and conduct of the human subject), and the self-management and self-regulation of populations. The chapter has presented an account of how people turn to particular bodies of knowledge and various discursive practices to become certain types of subjects within specific contexts or discursive fields. In particular, the chapter has highlighted the roles that the exercise of power and knowledge play in the subjection of individuals and identified the various instruments and techniques that facilitate the processes of subjection. These include Foucault's three disciplinary technologies: surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement; and four discursive operations: technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self. Finally, the chapter has presented an overview of how these theoretical concepts can be applied as part of a discourse analysis approach that can be used to uncover the various ways that the academics in this study came to understand and respond to their experiences of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. The application of these theoretical concepts as part of this study will now be explained in the methodology chapter that follows.
CHAPTER 4

From Data Collection to Analysis:

The research methods applied in this study

In general it is true to say that the quality of research results can be no better than the theoretical considerations that underlie the data collection and the methods derived from the theoretical approach. Theories define the framework for methods, methods determine conditions for concrete research operations. (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000, p. 13)

Introduction

It could be argued that academics are a powerful group in terms of getting their voices heard. They are generally considered to be intellectual leaders in their respective fields and for the most part, they produce and publish their scholarly work accordingly (Halsey, 1992; Peters & Roberts, 1999). Although academics are positioned in this way, they are also shaped by numerous other factors that serve to determine whose voice counts within the halls of academia and whose do not. Academic and institutional hierarchies and assumptions about the prestige of certain disciplines in relation to others are influential in this regard. So too are issues of age, ethnicity and gender.

In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault (1985) describes how academics, once informed by enlightenment discourses that encouraged personal autonomy and free inquiry, have since been shaped by scientific discourses and the historical development and separation of academic disciplines. As such, academics are subjects within “systems of power” that can be exercised to regulate their professional conduct and work (Foucault, 1985, p. 4). Therefore, when academics are confronted with a new discursive event that could possibly alter the conditions of their work and the nature of their profession (such as the implementation of
Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF) not all academics are positioned to have their voices and concerns heard. In some cases, due to the nature of the various hierarchies and categories that are used to shape and construct their population (by external intervention and internal self-regulation), some academics are positioned so that their voices not only go unheard, but are cast as illegitimate and/or irrelevant.

The purpose of this study is not to generalise the experiences of some academics in relation to the introduction and implementation of PBRF so that a single voice represents how PBRF is experienced and understood by all. Rather, the purpose of this study is to create a space in which the unique and particular experiences of 15 academics are presented in a meaningful way. This chapter presents the methods of research used to achieve the aims of this study. It begins by outlining the qualitative interview approach that was designed to gather the data for analysis. This includes a reflexive acknowledgement of myself within the study, a description of the ethical concerns and how they were addressed, the recruitment and description of the participants, and a detailed explanation of the interview process. The chapter also explains how the data was managed through transcription and the actual analysis process itself. This includes a discussion on how I identified four main themes within the data and how I set about analysing the narratives in respect of those themes drawing on Foucault's tools and concepts surrounding the notions of 'governmentality' and 'subjection'.

Talking to academics

Undertaking a qualitative research methodology

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), most people rely on words in order to make sense of any situation they find themselves in. Richardson (2000) describes qualitative research as a methodology that enables researchers to find patterns in the words that individuals use to explain how they have come to view and understand their world. The way individuals use words and sentences to explain their beliefs and experiences is part of the constitutive process that enables individuals to create their
own particular view of reality and of the self (Richardson, 2000). Therefore, qualitative researchers draw from a wide range of theoretical tools to interpret those experiences and meanings so that they can report them in a descriptive way that represents each participant's story as accurately as possible (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) identify four tenets that distinguish a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis from quantitative, positivist research paradigms. Firstly, they argue that the social world is constructed and therefore, certain laws or scientific facts only exist because people attribute meaning to them. Tolich and Davidson (1999) support this by arguing that because human social action is fluid and unpredictable, the way individuals behave in various contexts cannot be explained by fixed scientific laws but rather, by qualitative methods that draw out the various meanings those individuals assign to their actions. Secondly, Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) claim that a researcher cannot separate facts from values as the two are interconnected. This is explained by Davies and Harré (2001) who suggest that as part of the discursive production of the self, individuals accept certain values and beliefs and these influence their perceptions and understandings of certain factual information. Thirdly, Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) state that research is about more than just gathering and dissecting information, it is about understanding the data. Wetherell (2001) asserts that while quantitative researchers seek to ask "what?", qualitative researchers ask "why?" In this sense, qualitative researchers attempt to develop a meaningful narrative of the particular phenomenon being studied. Finally, Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) claim that it is impossible for researchers to observe and remain neutral or objective, and that this needs to be acknowledged as part of any research. Rubin and Rubin (1995) concur by suggesting that when a researcher fails to examine their own cultural assumptions under the pretense that they can remain neutral and objective in their observation of others, they are likely to include those assumptions within the questions that they ask and in the analysis of their data. In other words, to be completely neutral as a researcher is impossible in that the researcher and their research cannot be separated
in a meaningful way (Schwandt, 2000; Taylor, 2001). As a consequence, Richardson (2000) contends that because researchers generally present their work as a contribution to the ongoing formation of knowledge, it is important that they continually reflect on how they “nurture” their “own individuality” within that work (p. 925).

**Locating myself in the process**

In studies such as this one it is important to consider the role that the researcher plays within the research design and, more significantly, in the way that particular role impacts upon the relationship the researcher establishes with the participants (Blaikie, 2000). The rapport that a researcher is able to establish with their participants may be determined by the biases, anxieties, fears, expectations or excitement that the researcher brings to the topic, and by researcher preconceptions about the experiences the participants may have in relation to that topic (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Taylor (2001) raises the importance of reflexivity in research to account for the central and visible role that the researcher undertakes as part of the process. This involves the researcher being able to step back and be self-aware, recognising their role within a particular context. This includes considering how the researcher’s own identity relates to the research topic. For example, Van Dijk (1993) suggests that researchers using a discourse analysis methodology tend to be politically involved with their research, promoting opportunities for agency, resistance and change. In this sense, Taylor (2001) believes that the identity of the researcher is important in discourse analysis research for two reasons. Firstly, it will influence the topic or research area and secondly, it will influence the nature of the data. For example, Taylor (2001, p. 17) noted that the gender of an interviewer may influence the interview in some cases, as could age, ethnicity or any other variable. Therefore, as Silverman (2000) explains, the narrative data of any interview must not be seen as representing the participant’s true and only account of a particular experience but rather, as one of the many possible ways they may construct their account. In other words, the particular account of a participant, and the meanings that may be assigned
to it, has been constructed within the context of an exchange involving two speakers, (the researcher and participant) and as such, needs to be understood in that context (Silverman, 2000).

A pivotal question that any researcher must confront in a study of this nature is, “What kind of knowledge does discourse analysis produce?” (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). In discourse analysis the emphasis of the research is given to providing an interpretation of the meanings expressed within discourse, and it is these interpretations that become the ‘knowledge’ presented in the research. Therefore, because researchers using a discourse analysis approach are not objective bystanders engaged with fixed forms of assumed ‘truths’, they play an active role along with the participants in creating the knowledge in their study and it is important that they remain constantly aware of this (Silverman, 2000).

This was especially important in this study because as part of their willingness to participate, a number of participants expressed a need to know ‘my story’ prior to the commencement of their interviews. Often this need to know my story was simply confined to background information about the kind of study that I had undertaken prior to choosing this particular topic. However, three participants, Harold, Gary and Lloyd, sought a greater account of who I was. I sensed that this was in part about their need to locate my position on the topic, but I also felt that they were making an assessment about my credentials as a researcher whom they could feel comfortable relating their stories and experiences to. Therefore, as part of locating myself within the research when introducing myself to participants, I provided brief autobiographical details, explained my own interests in the topic and described how those interests had evolved as a consequence of my previous studies and experiences at my own university; the University of Otago. I told the participants at the outset of the first interviews between August and October 2003 that I was an Australian citizen who had resided in New Zealand since 1989, and I was 39 years of age. I informed them that I began my academic career in 1998, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree (Education) at the University of Otago, and that prior to that I had spent most of my
working life employed as a trades person. I described how my interests in tertiary education policy had emerged during my Post-Graduate Diploma studies in 2001 after I had experienced a decline of resources and study opportunities within my institution that I believed were directly linked to the ongoing pressures of political reform. I also referred to my Master of Arts thesis, undertaken in 2002, where I examined tertiary education reform in New Zealand with an emphasis given to critiquing New Zealand’s four Tertiary Education Advisory Commission reports of 2000 and 2001. I concluded by suggesting to the participants that designing a study such as this one was almost a ‘natural’ progression given that PBRF policies and practices were one of the consequences of reform associated with the four Tertiary Education Advisory Commission reports. I chose to provide the participants with this level of detail about myself because I believed that this was an essential part of establishing an open and transparent relationship with them.

This approach was beneficial in two significant ways. Firstly, by providing my own autobiographical narrative in a relaxed and open way, I believe I was able to establish a critical rapport with the participants to an extent whereby they felt secure in relating their PBRF experiences to me in an unguarded way. This created an environment within the context of the interviews and research whereby participants’ discussions of PBRF experiences were sometimes intimate and personal, and contained a level of honesty and feeling that I felt genuinely privileged to be a party to.

Secondly, I was very much aware that no matter how ‘neutral’ I intended to be as a researcher, like the participants in this study I was constructed in particular ways by my own experiences and knowledge of the tertiary education sector and my participation in it. This was made evident by the work (both published and unpublished) that I had produced prior to and during the design of this study. For example, in one results chapter I identify a participant who was in total support of PBRF and could not say a single critical thing about it. Although from my own perspective I found this difficult to comprehend (that a participant could find no
aspect of PBRF to criticise), it was important that I continuously reflected on my own role as an interviewer and researcher who could potentially influence the outcomes of this study. By taking a reflexive approach to the study, I believe that I made every effort that I possibly could to position myself so as to present an honest account of all the participants’ stories by including their positive comments about PBRF as well as those critical of it.

**Ethical issues pertaining to the study**

In this study I was delving into an area of great importance in the lives of the participants and as such, I had a responsibility to ensure that the interview experience was a respectful one that maintained participants’ confidentiality and anonymity at all times. This raised a number of ethical issues that needed to be addressed. According to Tolich and Davidson (1999), there are five core principles that a researcher undertaking a study such as this must pay attention to. Firstly, the researcher must not cause harm to the participants in any way. Secondly, all participation must be voluntary and participants should have a right to withdraw at any stage. Thirdly, participants must be able to consent to their involvement in the project from an informed position. Next, the researcher must not deceive the participants in any way. Finally, participant confidentiality and anonymity must be maintained at all time (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Using Tolich and Davidson’s (1999) five principles as a guide, I included the following ethical procedures in the design of the study.

In a round table discussion between two supervisors and myself (as researcher), only three potential problems could be identified that might cause harm to a participant. Firstly, given the nature of the research, a participant may want to be identified in order to ‘own’ their expressed views on PBRF. In this case it was decided that I would advise participants of the possible risks associated with being identified. For example, there was always a concern that a view expressed in the context of the ‘here and now’ could have a detrimental effect upon an individual’s career or opportunities at a later stage in life. However, while I would do my best not to identify participants in this study as part of my obligation to maintain participant
anonymity (as discussed later), I could not be held responsible if individuals publicly identified themselves as participants of the study.

The second potential problem concerned the possibility that a participant may become distressed and/or emotional during or after an interview. Fortunately this never eventuated. Nevertheless, this was a concern given that in 2003 there was a climate of uncertainty within the research community over the possible immediate and long-term implications of PBRF policies and assessments. However, once I had obtained ethical approval for the project in July 2003, I made contact with the Occupational Health Nurse of the participants' university and discussed the project and these concerns. By doing so, I was able to find out the kinds of support and resources that were available to the participants within their institution if and when they were needed. This information was then made available to the participants. I also made myself available to participants via my work contact details.

The final potential problem related to another of Tolich and Davidson's (1999) core principles of ethical conduct: confidentiality. There was always a possibility, given the nature and the immediate relevance of the topic of this research, that individuals external to the project would attempt to guess the identities of participants. This possibility existed as a consequence of the varying degrees of significance that individual academics gave to the implementation of PBRF, their interests in commentaries about it, and the fact that this study had enlisted participants from within the academic community. As explained later, to ensure confidentiality only I knew the identities of participants and I have undertaken never to disclose this information for any reason.

In respect of Tolich and Davidson's (1999) second, third and fourth principles of ethical conduct, participation in the study was entirely voluntary with the participants having the right to withdraw at any stage. Regarding Tolich and Davidson's (1999) third principle in particular, Alderson (1995) contends that the researcher is responsible for finding appropriate ways of providing information about the research to all potential participants, and for ensuring that any consent given is
done so from a fully informed position. Every participant in this study was provided with two information sheets (one containing a brief overview of the study and the other containing all the relevant detailed information about it) and a consent form so that their consent could be given from an informed position (see Appendices A, B and C). The purpose of this material was to provide the participants with clear and concise information about the purpose of the study, the reasons for selecting them and the level of commitment that was required. It also ensured that they were fully informed of their rights as participants of the study as well as my obligations in respect of those rights.

To address Tolich and Davidson's (1999) final principle, I set about designing a variety of strategies to maintain participant confidentiality to the fullest extent of my abilities. Each participant was assigned a numerical code unique to this study and all interview and journal entries were labeled with that code. Due to the need to maintain participant anonymity in a situation where the supervisors of the project and the participants were likely to be peers, only I would have access to the actual identity of the participants to whom a code had been assigned. It was agreed between the supervisors of this project and myself that it was not essential that the supervisors knew the identities of the participants, and that this unique exclusion allowed for the greater protection of identifying information. In addition, each participant was asked to select three unique identifiers, in the form of pseudonyms, to be used interchangeably where necessary throughout the presentation of this thesis to further reduce possible identification. For example, a participant may have chosen the pseudonyms Bert, Ernie and Oscar. However, in the presentation of the research it would never be indicated that Bert, Ernie and Oscar were the same participant. The purpose of this technique was to try and prevent peers from piecing together the fragments of a participant's narrative in order to identify them.

To aid in the continuity and readability of this thesis it was decided to use only one of the three pseudonyms for each participant throughout most of the study. In this case, I only drew on a participant's second and third choice pseudonym when
using a piece of data that contained specific information that could, if connected to other parts of their story, enable them to be identified. For example, in one chapter of results I refer to a particular experience of a participant who had been involved on a peer-review panel as part of the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. On its own this piece of specific information (being a member of a PBRF peer-review panel) does not identify the participant. However, it may be possible for some of the participant’s peers and colleagues to identify them if they were able to connect this specific piece of information to some of the participant’s other details. To resolve this potential problem, I chose to use one of the participant’s alternative pseudonyms rather than their primary one, and I identify this to the reader by using an asterisk beside the alternative pseudonym so that it appears in the text as “Rodney*”.

By using Tolich and Davidson’s (1999) five principles of ethical conduct, I designed a study that would protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants at all times and to the fullest extent of my abilities. I also provided as much detailed information as I could to try and ensure the participants understood what the study was about and what was required of them as part of that. Finally, I established the necessary strategies and protocols that would ideally protect them from any unforeseen harm.

*Meeting the participants*

At the outset of this study I made a decision to recruit participants from a single New Zealand university. The basis for my decision was that it allowed for the opportunity to learn about participants’ varying experiences of PBRF without having to try and discern whether those experiences were a consequence of their academic focus or simply a result of the institutional culture of different universities. By using one university I was enlisting participants whose general employment and working conditions were comparatively similar. However, conducting research in one institution would not entirely eliminate all the problems associated with the influences of wider institutional culture. Every institution has its own unique character and culture and for the participants of this study this was always going to be
a factor that contributed towards their experiences and understandings. Further, although it can be argued that the participants' general employment and working conditions were comparatively similar, different universities favour different disciplines and subject areas and this may create distinctive disciplinary cultures within institutions.

I began recruiting participants for this study on 16 August 2003 and enlisted my 15th and final participant on 28 October 2003. Although the recruitment of 15 participants advantageously provided a balance between the three main academic disciplines within the institution (Sciences, Humanities and Commerce/Other) as well as a diversity and depth of experiences and employment within those groupings, I had not predetermined that number. Although I had planned to recruit a number small enough to provide an opportunity to undertake an in-depth and penetrating analysis of participants' experiences of PBRF (see Duncan, 2001; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1995; Kvale, 1996), I designed the study so that recruitment was based around self-segmentation. During the scheduled recruitment period described below 15 academics indicated their desire to participate and were accepted into the study, thereby determining the final number of participants.

Participants were recruited after I had made personal contact with various departmental administrators and receptionists in the various divisions across the participants' university and advertised the study in a variety of formats and publications that targeted the population from which participants were sought. This included posters that were displayed in areas such as departmental staff rooms and staff notice boards. It also involved circulating recruitment packs (containing a poster and information sheet) for staff distribution to 46 individual departments within the institution (see Appendix D) and placing an advertisement in the institution’s weekly staff newsletter.

Despite the wide range of techniques employed in trying to attract participants, there was no initial response from anyone within the Arts or Social Sciences. As a consequence, in October 2003 I began calling, by telephone, the
various school and departmental administrators within those areas and followed up each call with an email about the project to be circulated by them to staff in their department/school. Through these additional procedures five participants representing the Arts and Social Sciences were recruited to the study. In the final distribution five of the participants came from the Sciences, five from the Arts and Social Sciences, two from Commerce and three represented subject areas outside those main categories. Within the overall composition, three participants came from vocational programmes, two of which contained a research component directed at professional practice.

Generally, participants made the initial contact with me, responding to the various posters, email messages and advertisements about the study. The usual form of this contact was via an email and I responded to each email by telephoning the potential participant. There were only two exceptions where I made the initial contact and this approach was made after each individual had expressed an interest in the project to an intermediary and I received information about this.

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), there are three basic considerations for selecting and recruiting participants to an interview-based study. Participants should have an obvious connection or relationship to the subject area of research, be knowledgeable about it or have experiences of it, and collectively represent a balance in the diversity of viewpoints and perspectives concerning it. As already indicated, the participants sought for this study were academics currently engaged in research and teaching activities within one particular New Zealand university. Participants needed to have some knowledge of PBRF policies and to understand the context in which those policies were being implemented. It was also important that participants had some knowledge and experience of a pre-PBRF university environment and therefore, participants were required to have worked in university research and teaching at the level of lecturer (or higher) for at least five years prior to their participation in the study.
In this study five of the participants were employed as Lecturers (or equivalent), four as Senior Lecturers (or equivalent), three as Associate Professors (or equivalent), and three were employed as Professors (or equivalent). Four participants held the position of Head of Department and one was an Acting Head of Department during the interview period. All but two participants came from different subject areas. However, the two who represented the same subject area had two significantly different roles within their department. No participant came from the same subject area (Education) as the researcher. Three participants were female and twelve were male. Although participants were not asked to locate themselves in any ethnic or cultural category, four participants believed that it was important to do so with one identifying as Māori and three using alternative categories of classification. However, it should not be assumed that the remaining eight participants represented or shared any particular ethnic or cultural characteristics because the majority of those participants did not attempt to identify themselves as anything in this regard (a more individual description of participants is presented as Appendix E).

The low representation of women did raise some concerns in terms of how it might impact upon the findings of this study. In this study only 20% were women, whereas Ministry of Education (2004) statistics show that generally across all tertiary education institutions 42% of those employed are women (although I cannot discuss the proportional representation in the participant’s own institution as this could possibly identify it). However, participants self-selected for this study and while it would be interesting to explore why only so few women chose to participate, that is outside the scope of the study. This study never intended to represent the voice and concerns of all academics but rather, it is an account of the experiences of 15 specific academics. Therefore, while it remains a genuine concern that so few women chose to participate in this study (and the same concern could be raised in respect of Māori participation), this in no way diminishes the value of the stories contributed by the diverse group of individuals who did choose to participate.
The diversity of the participants within such a small group raised another issue regarding this study: the politics of their representation. Any disproportionate balance between the representation of the participants’ voices and stories would need to be justified in that if some were to become dominant without justification, this could be seen as serving interests or agendas beyond a simple analysis of individuals’ experiences (Wetherell, 2001). However, as Mehan (2001) indicates, any formula for representation applied within a study does not reflect the entire “unique or exhaustive” characteristics of the group or of individuals within the group (p. 345). Being aware of this, I set out to represent each participant in a way that I believed was accurate and fair, but this did not always mean that each participant was allocated an equal amount of dialogue as part of that representation. Nevertheless, I regard each of the 15 academics who have participated in this study as collaborators who have helped me to learn and understand how the introduction and implementation of PBRF affected their academic lives (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I acknowledge their expertise as individuals who have valuable information to share (Cook, 2001; Potts, 1997).

Talking about the interview process

According to Richardson (2000), the particular skills and aptitudes that a researcher brings to a project are important elements of a qualitative approach to research. This is because Richardson (2000) believes that it is the researcher, not the study questions or the taped interviews, that becomes the “instrument” through which the most meaningful data will be uncovered and the best analysis will be done (p. 925). Richardson (2000) claims that it is via the skills that the researcher adopts in their engagement with participants, analysis of data and processes of writing that distinguishes qualitative research from other methodologies. This is because a qualitative approach allows the possibility for multiple rather than singular ways of knowing a particular topic. Further, that good analysis and writing in qualitative research makes for a fluid and evolving relationship with the topic whereby new ways of understanding continually emerge (Richardson, 2000). However, Kvale (1996)
contends that within this fluid and evolving context of qualitative research the experiences and accounts of the participants must always remain central to the project. While Richardson (2000) identifies the researcher as the ‘instrument’ through which the most meaningful research can be done, Kvale (1995) asserts that it is in the interviews with the participants that the “construction site of knowledge” is located (p. 2). Undertaking a qualitative approach to this study involved thinking about how I could construct and conduct a series of interviews with a group of research academics about a topic that was both new and significant in respect of their professional identities and careers.

Kvale (1996) describes the qualitative research interview as a professional conversation that has a structure and purpose. He asserts that the purpose of an interview is to gain an insight into the way that a research participant comes to understand the world around them in relation to the particular context or experience being studied. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) distinguish a qualitative research interview from other types of interviews and from general conversation by highlighting the profoundness of the exchange that occurs between the interviewer and the participant. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), a qualitative research interview extends beyond the “surface talk” of everyday life to create a “rich discussion of thoughts and feelings” (p. 80).

Kvale (1996) suggests that the structure of an interview can depend upon a variety of factors. For example, in studies where a researcher may lack interviewing experience it may be beneficial to adopt a highly structured approach to keep the interview on track. However, in studies that include participants who have a broad and in-depth of knowledge of the phenomenon being studied it may be more advantageous to undertake a less structured and more informal interview approach that allows participants greater opportunities and freedoms to impart their knowledge. Regardless of how an interview is structured, Tolich and Davidson (1999) claim that researchers will only gain useful data if, prior to the interview, they design useful questions. They assert that the questions that are asked during a qualitative interview
need to allow the opportunity for participants to use their own words to describe their experiences and define the meanings they attribute to them. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), these questions should be broad, open-ended and serve to encourage participants to engage in a conversation on the topic or context being studied.

An important consideration given in designing the interviews for this study was the need to ensure that the required level of participation would not interfere with or impede the various work and professional commitments of the participants involved. I was very aware of ever-increasing pressures placed upon academics in terms of research expectations, teaching loads, community and institutional commitments, and administrative requirements. I was also aware that the frequent addition of new professional and administrative requirements (such as those imposed as a consequence of PBRF policies) further contribute to the quantity of work and potential stress experienced by academics. So it was with a sense of irony that in attempting to uncover how PBRF policies impacted on the lives of academics, I set about designing the interview process in a way that did not require a level of commitment by participants that might further exacerbate their work loads.

The interview and data collection part of this study involved three stages. Firstly, an initial interview was conducted with each participant in the latter quarter of 2003 as participants were either preparing, submitting, or had just submitted, their Evidence Portfolios as part the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation. This interview took between an hour and an hour and a half (generally determined and directed by how much information the participant was willing to share). The interview focused primarily upon participants describing their perceptions of being academics, expressing a view of current trends in tertiary education policy reform, and indicating their predictions and expectations of PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise. Because I was a relative novice to interviewing I prepared a series of open-ended questions to help guide the structure of the interview (see Appendix F). However, I generally attempted to allow the participants to shape the nature of the conversation.
and determine what they thought were the important issues that needed to be included. As such, I did not always ask my prepared questions and in some cases, I would ask spontaneous open-ended questions (such as “how did you respond to that?” or “has that changed your perception of...?”) to encourage participants to expand on those issues that were clearly important to them.

The second stage involved short telephone interviews that were designed to coincide with the release of the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation results (on 22 April, 2004). These interviews were generally approximately 10 minutes in duration and were conducted in the first week of May 2004. The purpose of these interviews was to gauge the level of feeling about participants’ PBRF rankings, particularly in relation to their prior expectations. The interview also gauged how participants responded to their institution’s ‘official position’ and interpretation of the assessment results, a position announced by the Vice Chancellor in the same week of the interviews. As such, these interviews were structured around two specific open-ended questions. Firstly, In terms of the 2003 PBRF assessment results, I asked “how has the experience turned out in terms of what you had expected?” Secondly, in terms of their Vice Chancellor indicating his belief that the majority of the new PBRF funding attained by the university should go to those individuals and departments that had earned it, I asked “how do you feel about that?”

The final interviews were conducted twelve months after the first interviews. These interviews were the most focused of the three and explored the various patterns and themes that had emerged out of the previous two sets of interviews. Despite being the most focused, each interview for this round only lasted between 30 and 45 minutes in duration. The economy of time and focus for the final round of interviews was a result of careful planning using the experiences and accounts of participants’ earlier interviews. For example, I was able to explore the more general themes that had emerged out of the earlier interviews of the entire group as well as some specific and unique concerns expressed by particular individuals (such as one participant’s obvious concerns over possible PBRF implications for Māori). Alongside tracking
the more general and individual themes, I was also able to gauge whether participants had shifted their thinking in the twelve-month period since their initial interview. I was particularly interested in whether or not predictions made a year ago had eventuated and how participants responded to that. I also wanted to know whether, in hindsight, participants had experienced their involvement in the 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation in a positive or negative way. Finally, I wanted to discern the types of discourses that participants drew from when constructing their understanding of their PBRF experiences. The generic questions that were asked as part of this interview are presented as Appendix G (although the individualised questions are not included to avoid any possibility of identifying particular participants).

Except for the telephone interviews that I conducted from home (due to the fact that I shared an office when attending the participants' university and did not want to compromise participant confidentiality), all interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants and in a location preferred by them. For example, while most preferred to be interviewed in their departmental offices, others chose to be interviewed at their local café and in one case, in their own home. All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of each participant, and a researcher's journal (as recommended by Kvale, 1996; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) was kept to enable non-verbal communication at the time of the interview, points of clarification and reflections on the process of all data gathering, to be noted. For example, many non-verbal cues (such as sarcastic comments) would not always be evident in plain text transcription and therefore, were noted in my fieldwork journal to be included later, in square brackets, as part of the written transcripts. The benefits of the journal will become apparent in the case of Michael discussed later in this chapter.

Acknowledging the tension between experience and post-structuralism

Some commentators (such as Jones, 1997) may criticise the use of an open-ended interview approach within a post-structuralist study for the way that this traditional qualitative design lends itself towards a theoretical slide into humanism and realism, particularly when discussing agency. Scott (1992) identifies this when she
rhetorically asks, “when evidence is offered as the evidence of ‘experience’... what could be truer... than a subject’s own account of what he or she has lived through?” (p. 24). For example, in this thesis the question could be asked: “what could be truer than academics’ accounts of their own experiences of PBRF?” However, as Scott (1992) argues, it is “precisely this kind of appeal to experience” that may weaken a post-structuralist analysis (p. 24). This is because any uncontested acceptance of ‘experience’ assumes a stable, rational and unified subject (Cameron, 2001).

This tension between accepting individuals’ accounts of their own experiences and a post-structuralist theoretical framework that looks at how subjects are constituted in discourse can be identified in this study. For example, some participants claimed that they have worked hard over the years and now have an internationally recognised scholarly reputation. In making this claim, they are describing themselves within a historically accepted discourse for constructing academic subjectivity, expressed in terms of how academics achieve status and recognition via the conduct of their research and the dissemination of information about it. In accepting participants’ claims without contesting those claims, this study risks presenting participants as “essential prediscursive” subjects constituted in humanist discourses in which it could be problematically assumed that those subjects are responsible for enacting their own choices and positions (Davies, 1997, p. 271).

Within a Foucaultian framework it can be understood that PBRF is operating as a technology of government that measures academics. But so too does the interview itself, asking academics to reflect upon their academic selves in particular ways and report their reflections. From a humanist standpoint it could be argued that academics provide the ‘truest’ and most rational accounts of their own experiences. However, from a post-structuralist perspective it is the various discourses of policies like PBRF that position academics’ experiences in the first place.

Davies (1997) defends similar criticisms concerning her own work (see Jones, 1997) by arguing that the humanist subject is always present, despite the rigor of post-structuralist analysis. She argues that the point of post-structuralism is “not to
destroy the humanist subject”, but to “enable us to see the subject’s fictionality, whilst recognizing how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real” (Davies, 1997, p. 272). Davies (1997) suggests that although there is a tension in accepting individuals’ accounts of experience within a post-structuralist analytical framework because this may invoke a prediscursive humanist subject, it also enables post-structuralist theory to “show how the humanist subject is so convincingly achieved” (p. 272). For example, this study risks constructing a ‘realist’ account of a humanist subject by accepting an assumed ‘authenticity’ regarding academics’ own experiences of being assessed by PBRF. However, as Davies (1997) asserts, post-structuralism facilitates the naming of humanist discourses and as such, makes it possible to integrate a post-structuralist theoretical framework and a more ‘realist’ acceptance of individuals’ accounts of their own experiences within a study such as this one. Therefore, the humanist subject is present in the analytical chapters of this thesis, set alongside a more clearly post-structuralist account.

**Looking at the data**

**Transcribing**

Having recruited and interviewed 15 participants, my next task was to decide how I would organise and manage that data. Following each interview I transcribed the narratives in private (usually at my place of residence because my office was a shared space). Because oral speech differs significantly from written speech (Taylor, 2001), I was particularly concerned with ensuring that I did not overlook the way the data could be transformed as the spoken material was transcribed into written text. Therefore, I was determined not to edit a participant’s words in any way and attempted to reproduce their narratives as they were presented on the tape recordings. Although I was aware that oral and written texts differ (Taylor, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 2001), I also believed that any attempt to re-draft the oral narratives into a standardised literary form would alter the meanings, experiences and representations expressed by the participants (De Vault, 1990). The various hesitations, repetitions, contradictions and confusions, along with the diverse expressions of frustration,
sarcasm, humour, optimism, pessimism, anger and excitement, all served to provide important data that would inform the analytic process.

Nevertheless, when it came time to present the transcripts to participants for their clarification and approval, I found that the approach I had undertaken created some problems too. For example, upon receiving the transcript of his first interview, Scott expressed his annoyance that it was presented in such a “crude” form that made him sound “pretentious”. Therefore, Scott substantially amended his transcript, rewriting it into what he perceived to be a more ‘bona fide’ piece of literary text. This included redrafting the narrative into an essay form that included scripted descriptions of “sweeping hand gestures”, a graph to explain an individual’s assessment of their own teaching, and one in-text reference. As a consequence, much of Scott’s spontaneous thoughts and feelings presented during our conversational exchange were lost and, in many cases, there appeared to be little (if any) correlation with what Scott had voiced during the interview and what now appeared in the ‘transcript’.\(^9\)

Despite this experience, it was important that when I came to present various participant accounts within this study that I would be able to do so in a way that not only focused on their stories but also on the various ways they expressed and constructed those stories. I was also acutely aware that despite my own determination to reproduce the transcripts as accurately as possible, the act of transcribing is itself a part of the analytic process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this sense there was always the potential that I could unintentionally reframe the narrator’s intended meanings through my textual representation of their speech. Therefore, while some might suggest that Scott’s response to his transcript would justify a researcher not giving control of transcripts to participants, I saw this as an important part of the process. If the validity of the research hinged on ‘accurately’ representing the experiences and meanings of participants, then ceding control of the transcripts was a

\(^9\) It should be noted that in representing Scott, I elected to use his amended transcript in that this was the ‘narrative’ that he chose to put forward to be included in the study.
necessary act of transparency (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). As such, all transcripts were returned to the participants to be read and amended to ensure that they represented the participants’ stories as accurately as possible. This process also enabled the participants to take control over sections of their narratives that they did not want to be analysed. Although Scott took one particular approach with his transcript, for the most part the remaining 14 participants made only minor (if any) changes to their transcripts. These were often minor clarifications such as those where a particular emphasis given in the oral interview did not translate effectively in written form. None of the participants asked that I remove content from their transcripts so that it could not be analysed.

A good example demonstrating the benefit of this part of the process was evident in Michael’s transcript. Michael had come from a non-English speaking background and English was an additional language. At times transferring his spoken narrative into written text posed problems regarding what Michael had said and what I assumed he had meant. For example, I asked Michael if PBRF would affect his view on collaborative work:

**Craig (Interviewer):** With collaboration though, like because you got an ‘A’, how would you feel now working with someone who got a ‘C’?

**Michael:** Hmmm, yeah, it’s been interesting that our three ‘A’s have been known to others. Somehow everyone, even though it’s assumed to be confidential, everyone knows everyone’s... ahh... that’s kind of interesting and ironic [laughs]. Um, no I would not.

**Craig:** You wouldn’t?

**Michael:** I would not... [pauses].

**Craig:** Is that because of PBRF?

**Michael:** No, I will not, I don’t think that would have any impact on me to make a decision to collaborate.

During the interview, with the advantage of the various non-verbal indicators, recorded in my fieldwork journal, I understood Michael to be saying that he would
not make a decision about collaborating with another academic based on that academic's PBRF quality score. However, as demonstrated here, when the interview was transcribed into text that expression was not evident. In the transcript version it almost appears as though Michael is stating that he would not collaborate with an academic who had a poor PBRF ranking. Therefore, by returning Michael's transcript to him and offering him the opportunity to make amendments, the transcribed text became a more accurate reflection of his intended story:

Hmmm, yeah, it's been interesting that our three 'A's have been known to others. Somehow everyone, even though it's assumed to be confidential, everyone knows everyone's... ah... that's kind of interesting and ironic [laughs]. Um, no, I would not base a decision about collaborative work on someone's PBRF ranking.

Locating themes and meanings

In research studies such as this one it is the narrative data drawn from the conversational interviews that provides the basis for analysis and interpretation (Zink, 2004). In the previous chapter of this thesis I described a discourse analysis approach to research as the study of language in action. In this sense, language is used to do a variety of things from simple acts of communicative dialogue through to the creation of new concepts and meanings that inform social practice (Taylor, 2001). One of the important contributions of discourse analysis is that it provides a means to understand the way language is being used within a particular interaction or exchange (Taylor, 2001).

Taylor (2001) describes four general approaches to discourse analysis. The first approach examines the variations and imperfections that are evident within systems of language. This approach focuses on how language varies in different situations and contexts, particularly when used by different speakers. The second approach focuses more on the activity of language by investigating the conversational exchanges that occur between at least two parties in order to identify what the various parties are doing with the language. The third approach seeks to identify patterns in the language associated with a particular topic or activity such as one's participation
in a family context or role within a particular occupation. The final approach, similar to the third, looks for patterns in the language associated within larger contexts such as society and culture (Taylor, 2001, p. 7). In terms of this study, while the second approach could be seen as important because the various meanings inherent within the data had been constructed as part of an interaction between two parties, the approach I chose to undertake was the third approach. By using this approach, combined with Foucault’s theoretical concepts of governmentality and subjection, I was able to look at the patterns in the language associated with being an academic who was required to participate in a new process designed to measure and evaluate their role as an academic. However, I did also adopt elements of the fourth approach in that this involved the study of power and resistance and I was interested in the power relations associated with PBRF.

In terms of interview-based qualitative research studies such as this one, Duncan (2001) recommends that a researcher should become familiar with their data (recorded tapes and transcripts) as early as possible, suggesting that the researcher could begin a tentative preliminary analysis immediately following each interview. While it is important to emphasise that this early analysis, undertaken as the data was being collected, would only produce rudimentary outcomes in terms of the wider aims and objectives of a study of this nature, it does aid the researcher by providing a starting place for further analysis.

In this sense, while still gathering data throughout the interview process, I began an early ‘sifting’ through the narratives using Duncan’s (2001) recommended approach of “plotting diagrams, pictures and charts” to try and make some sense of the information (p. 126). In other words, using Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) metaphor of ‘mapping the language’ (as discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis), I was “charting themes and ideologies” (p. 1). The benefits of undertaking a preliminary analysis as the data was being collected was made apparent immediately following the initial round of interviews. My preliminary analysis enabled me to identify four dominant themes that appeared in all the interviews. The first of the four
themes focused on the extent to which PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise could reshape and direct the nature of the research being undertaken. This was made evident by the number of participants who were seeking ways to “play” the PBRF “game” by attempting to produce more research outputs suitable for inclusion in their Evidence Portfolios and avoid other research activities deemed unproductive in terms of PBRF (see Chapter Five of this thesis). The second theme identified various ways whereby PBRF could represent a field of compliance. This could be seen in the way a number of participants felt PBRF required them to “dance to someone else’s tune” by positioning themselves as subjects who were attuned to the expectations of university managers and government bureaucrats (see Chapter Six). The third theme explored the potential impact that PBRF could have on the career aspirations and opportunities of academics. This was made apparent by the awareness of participants that a number of New Zealand universities, including their own, were already making changes to their internal appointment and promotion procedures to correspond with the expectations of the Quality Evaluation framework (See Chapter Seven). Finally, there were some consistent messages about how PBRF might undermine the pursuit and practice of academic freedom (see Chapter Eight).

Having identified four main themes, I began making notes and assigning corresponding codes in the margins of the transcripts to locate and identify the linkages that generated particular stories in respect of the various themes. Then, using a physical cut and paste approach, I began moving sections of transcripts into relevant theme categories. Sometimes I found that a piece of narrative could occupy more than one theme and as such, copied it into various themes with accompanying notes to identify the characteristics I had identified in assigning it to each particular theme. Again, using Duncan’s (2001) approach of making visual linkages, I began to construct mind maps and flow charts in an attempt to track the course of the developing themes. This also enabled me to examine the various possible meanings of the narratives in a way that was visually and contextually different to straightforward text analysis. In this sense, it provided an extra tool in the process of analysis.
Once I had completed and transcribed all the interviews, I replicated this procedure and applied it across the entire body of accumulated data so as to identify any inconsistencies in the four main themes, and to help identify any new emerging themes. However, while I did not add to the four main themes, I began to realise that by viewing and exploring the narratives over and over, I could potentially reshape the meanings of stories simply by the way I chose to categorize them. To address this I took a reflexive approach and revisited those four main themes to ensure that they had indeed emerged out of the participants’ stories and not out of my need to categorize data. Having concluded that the main themes had emerged out of their stories and not my need to categorize, I turned my focus to the narratives assigned in each of the theme categories for a final in-depth theoretical analysis using the various concepts described in the previous chapter of this thesis.

Chapter summary and conclusion

This study focuses on 15 academics’ descriptions and analyses of what happened to them as a consequence of their participation in the inaugural 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise. The purpose of the study was to draw out and share their individual experiences and interpretations of that exercise. This chapter has provided an account of how this study was conducted by explaining its overall qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Whereas the previous chapter identified the theoretical underpinnings used to inform this study, this chapter has described its methods. This has included an account of the ethical procedures, the recruitment and inclusion of the participants, and the design and conduct of the interview process. The chapter has also described the techniques of transcribing and data management that were undertaken as part of this study as well as the process of analysis that was used to make sense of the participants’ stories. I was able to identify four main themes in relation to the collective experiences of all participants, and each of those themes will now be addressed individually in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.
CHAPTER 5

"Give me your four best papers":
Identifying the potential for PBRF to alter the nature of academic research

The PBRF should appropriately measure the quality of the full range of original investigative activity that occurs within the sector, regardless of its type, form, or place of output. (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 8)

Introduction

With policy trends towards the end of the 1990s demanding greater accountability of outputs from public sector institutions, it is hardly surprising that the research output of the tertiary education sector has finally come under the scrutiny of New Zealand’s government via Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF) (Locke & Lowe, 2002). This chapter represents the first of the ‘results’ chapters of this thesis and explores how the research practices of the academic participants in this study changed (or are changing) as a consequence of how they perceived their research to be valued by the inaugural 2003 PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise.11 This chapter begins by examining the PBRF definition of research and explores how the notion of ‘quality’ was applied during the Quality Evaluation exercise to assess and evaluate research. It then explores various ways that some academics have responded to PBRF. In particular, the chapter discusses the experiences of the participants of this study in relation to the allocation of quality scores and identifies how some participants found aspects regarding that allocation to be somewhat disquieting. The chapter also examines how journal status was used as a proxy indicator of quality during the 2003 Quality Evaluation. In this regard, this chapter considers why some participants felt that the emphasis given to the four Nominated Research Outputs steered academics

11 As stated in the previous chapter of this thesis, a general description of the participants is presented as Appendix E.
towards increasing their publishing activities while others believed it encouraged academics to do less. The chapter also explores how some participants thought PBRF had the potential to shape academic behaviour in ways characteristic of a factory production line whereby academics would become complicit in their own conformity, making research a mechanical and uniform process. Finally, the chapter highlights how most participants in this study described PBRF as a “game” that needed to be “played” with some revealing ways they were already “playing the game” and others describing ways they were intending to “play the game”. The chapter concludes by asserting that some assessment elements of the 2003 Quality Evaluation were flawed and, as a result, a majority of participants in this study are now making decisions about their research that may not always be in their best interests.

What is good research?

In *Investing in Excellence* the PBRF Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002b) argued that in order to design a coherent and effective PBRF system, there needed to be a clear definition of research underpinning it. Any such definition needed to be “sufficiently inclusive to cover a range of original investigative activity that [occurred] across disciplines” (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 17). It also needed to be “detailed enough” to indicate precisely what sorts of outputs and activities should be included and excluded, and it had to be “robust and comparable with international standards” (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 17). The definition of research adopted by the Tertiary Education Commission in establishing and implementing PBRF was based upon similar definitions used abroad (such as that used in Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise), but also included elements taken from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). In *Performance-Based Research Fund: Evaluating Research Excellence* (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a) research is described as an “original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding” (p. 22). According to the Tertiary Education Commission (2004a), this:

[T]ypically involves enquiry of an experimental or critical nature driven by hypotheses or intellectual positions capable of rigorous assessment.
It is an independent, creative, cumulative and often long-term activity conducted by people with specialist knowledge about the theories, methods and information concerning their field of enquiry... Its findings must be open to scrutiny and formal evaluation by others in the field, and this may be achieved through publication or public presentation. (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a, p. 22)

This definition recognises that some research can appear in the form of an “artistic work, design or performance” or could contribute to the “intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines” (such as the publication of dictionaries and scholarly editions) (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a, p. 22). It also allows for “experimental development of design or construction solutions” and investigation that leads to “new or substantially improved materials, devices, products or processes” (p. 22).

However, the definition is also very specific about what cannot be constituted as research. The exclusions include “preparation for teaching”, “the provision of advice or opinion”, “scientific and technical information services”, and feasibility studies (unless they are undertaken as part of developing a research or experimental project) (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a, p. 22). Other exclusions include “specialised routine medical care”, “the commercial, legal and administrative aspects of patenting”, routine computer programming and maintenance, and “any other professional practice” (p. 22).

Although every attempt has been made to produce a definition of research that is completely tacit and quantifiable, Web Research (2004) claims that the Tertiary Education Commission has not been completely successful in this. According to Web Research (2004), there continues to be an interpretative element to the definition and this has been made evident in the way different PBRF peer-review panels applied it during the Quality Evaluation. According to Web Research (2004), in making decisions about the comparable quality of research presented in Evidence Portfolios, particularly in areas of ‘non-traditional’ research such as the creative and performing arts or indigenous research presented in alternative frameworks, panel members often
struggled with the more subjective aspects of the new definition and, as such, often failed to “adequately recognise excellence wherever it occurred” (p. 25).

While Web Research (2004) has identified the interpretative inconsistencies that have emerged as a consequence of applying the new definition of research to the PBRF Quality Evaluation, there has been no discussion about what has been included and excluded as part of the definition itself. For example, there appears to be a contradiction in the exclusion of “preparation for teaching” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a, p. 22) in that the Ministry of Education (2002a) has continued to affirm the important link between research activity and teaching at the degree level. According to the Ministry of Education (2002a), the relationship between the two ensures that “knowledge is incorporated into the scholarship activities of teachers... and provides a research culture within undergraduates to learn to take a research-based approach to their lifelong educational development” (pp. 59-60).12

In terms of the “provision of advice or opinion, except where it was consistent with the definition of research” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a, p. 22) there are more complex issues. According to the third objective of Strategy One in the Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2002a), a greater degree of collaboration is required between the research sector, business and industry, communities, the government and other sector stakeholders. For academics involved in these linkages and actively pursuing ways to enhance opportunities for innovation and enterprise (described in the Strategy as key qualities for facilitating a knowledge society), defining what aspects of these collaborative relationships are based on research as opposed to consultation may not always be clear. Furthermore, if academics provide “advice or opinion” in their legislated role as society’s “critic and conscience” (Education Act, 1989, s. 161.2), it is conceivable that this might not be

12 Although as a postscript to this thesis, New Zealand’s Minister of Tertiary Education, Hon Dr. Michael Cullen (appointed in 2005), believes that it is time to question whether teaching at the degree level should be linked to research. According to Cullen (2006), although there is a clear rationale for why the link should remain for most post-graduate degrees, it no longer serves as a relevant or necessary foundation for under-graduate degree-level teaching and learning.
regarded as a legitimate scholarly enterprise because it does not fit the PBRF definition of research.

Despite these concerns, the definition of research recommended by the PBRF Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002b) and adopted as part of the inaugural Quality Evaluation exercise continues to inform PBRF policy discourse and practice (see the Postscript of this thesis). A number of critics (Boston, Mischewski & Smyth, 2005; Dalziel, 2005, Small, 2005) have indicated that this could ultimately influence the actual research that is undertaken and disseminated by academics by shaping their conduct via the rigidity of a ‘quantifiable’ definition and the perceived way that that definition is applied. In order to gauge the merit of such criticisms it is essential to explore how academics have experienced being assessed for their research activities and outputs.

"It’s changing my practice": Academics’ responses to being assessed

The allocation of quality scores

According to Broadhead and Howard’s (1998) analysis of Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), they argue that instruments like the PBRF Quality Evaluation are capable of facilitating the constitution of a new audit-focused academic subject. Devos (2000) asserts that the scores allocated by these exercises, and any professional development practices that arise as a consequence of them, may be seen as technologies of the self that academics take up and use to govern and police their activities and practices according to new government rationalities. In this case, those government rationalities are about what counts as ‘research’. Both Broadhead and Howard (1998) and Devos (2000) argue that contestable forms of research assessment encourage a sense of conformity whereby the activities and practices of academics are assessed according to a grade-based hierarchy that not only defines an academic’s research productivity, but also creates new norms against which that productivity is measured. According to Broadhead and Howard (1998), the consequence for academics in being assessed and ranked on statistical league
tables is that it will serve to construct an academic subject in terms of quantifiable outputs and numerical status indicators.

When it came to discussing how they were positioning themselves in response to the new expectations outlined in PBRF policy and discourse, the participants of this study identified a number of similar concerns to those raised by Broadhead and Howard (1998) and Devos (2000). At the outset of this study, as participants were either thinking about, preparing, or had just submitted their Evidence Portfolios as part of the inaugural Quality Evaluation; 10 out of 15 asserted that the implementation of PBRF would not encourage them to change how they conducted themselves as academics and engaged in their research. However, most also indicated that they could perceive of possibilities whereby the meaning and validity of the allocation of quality scores had the potential to influence how ‘others’ may shape and conduct themselves as academic subjects. Alec best exemplified this during his first interview. Describing himself as a mid-career academic not entirely opposed to the idea of PBRF but concerned about the possible implications that such a policy could have on academic practice, Alec found two things to be somewhat “disquieting” about PBRF:

One is the danger that I’ve mentioned before of humans being reduced to numbers or figures on a scale. The other thing is the... [short pause] somewhere lurking in the background there is some sort of business model here of the university and that bothers me because it seems utterly inappropriate. Now what do I mean by this ‘business model’? Well, for one thing, there’s the assumption that your research must lead to a product and, in fact, that product would be somehow more welcomed if it was produced this year rather than next year.

Tied up into the rationale for allocating quality scores is, according to Alec’s perspective, a push for productive accountability and a sense of ‘immediacy’; a need to demonstrate one’s actual research output in a business-like quantifiable way within the shortest, or most efficient, timeframe. Curtis and Matthewman (2005), in their analysis of PBRF and other issues affecting higher education in contemporary New Zealand, concur with Alec’s perspective. They refer to studies undertaken by Clark (1998) and Slaughter and Leslie (1997) to argue that there is an “entrepreneurial
variant” inherent to PBRF (p. 1). According to Curtis and Matthewman (2005), this ‘entrepreneurial variant’ conceptualises research as a means for facilitating revenue and this has powerful implications for changing the shape of universities and the kinds of research that is undertaken within them.

Gary, a senior academic who described himself as having a significant international reputation within his subject area, echoed the views expressed by Alec and by Curtis and Matthewman (2005). He expressed concerns during all of his three interviews regarding the influence of economic factors in shaping how research was being perceived and valued. In his final interview Gary stated:

Now here’s a thing. I can do research on a shoestring and the irony of that is that because I’m not applying for research grants and I’m not spending money, the research is not recognised as being as important as if it had a monetary sum identified with it. And it has changed the perception... [pause]. I suppose I would see this as part of a policy of monetarisation where commercial monetary values are used as the measure of research. So if it costs a lot and a lot is paid for it, it’s more valuable than that which can be done at a lower or no cost. Everything costs and there’s hidden costs and there’s explicit costs. But the explicit costs with research are becoming more and more evident or used as the standard. And sometimes the tail wags the dog, I think. So if it costs a lot of money it must be good research.

Gary, who had scored a ‘B’ in the Quality Evaluation exercise after scoring an ‘A’ in his institution’s internal PBRF trial, went on to state that:

[PBRF] looks for results [said with emphasis], but fails to measure the effort or energy or commitment of the researcher. And it makes no allowances for the unfortunate or the serious failure [laughs], all of which are a part of the risks [associated with] the enterprise.

Gary was also concerned that because his research could be done on a “shoe-string” budget, it was assumed that the nature of his research offered no direct, immediate or identifiable potential to generate an economic return. In all his interviews he expressed concerns over the implications of such an assumption. For Gary, those implications were twofold. Firstly, PBRF policy discourses assumed that the cost of undertaking and producing a piece of research had a direct correlation to the economic value of its outcomes and usefulness. Secondly, that policies pertaining to
PBRF only valued research that had an explicit capacity to generate an economic return. For Gary, neither assumption held true and during his second interview, he stated that allocating quality scores on this basis had made PBRF comparable to the “carefully programmed” system that had been used in the former Soviet Union to monitor and gauge academic behaviour. He claimed that PBRF, “especially in its bureaucratic surveillance” was “very much like a Soviet system in that nothing’s left out and nobody’s overlooked”.

Gary’s concerns provide a good demonstration of how academics may respond to PBRF’s normalising discourses about research by adjusting their conduct in relation to research. Although the majority of participants had claimed at the outset of this study that they would not change the way they conducted themselves or their research because of PBRF, the allocation of quality scores became the main focus of participants’ concerns during their second and third interviews. This was an issue that appeared to have been predicted by Lloyd during his first interview in September 2003. Lloyd, another senior academic who was also a Head of Department, had noted that:

PBRF has really tried to turn everything into a statistic, and it’s a measurement. But because there is a tendency to try to make that measurement so accurate by, you know, getting ratings [said with cynicism] for each little thing and putting it all together, people are going to have a tendency to think that it actually means something. And it doesn’t mean much because it’s a particular type of instrument that is measuring a particular type of output.

Lloyd’s analysis is interesting in that he found aspects of PBRF discourses to be misleading and inaccurate, even though those discourses seemed to represent a common-sense approach to assessment. Within the logic of PBRF discourse it makes sense to make comparative evaluations of research and create statistics about those evaluations. It therefore follows that these statistics can be tabled in hierarchical form. It also follows that statistics gained for a specific purpose will be representative of that purpose (that is, statistics gathered during a research assessment exercise must logically represent the assessment of research). Therefore, the obvious common-sense conclusion is that people should accept that the numbers actually have some degree of
legitimacy and meaning. However, according to Lloyd, none of this is true. People should not try and turn the value and validity of research into a statistic. Where such statistics did exist, it should not be assumed that they represented an accurate hierarchy because, as numbers, they could not fully represent the totality of the research that they had measured. Therefore, according to Lloyd, people should not take the numbers too seriously because as a set of numbers, all they are is an indicative assessment of research output, not a comprehensive assessment of the research itself.

During the same interview, Lloyd positioned himself amid the majority of participants by going on to state that he would refuse to change his approach to research regardless of the demands imposed upon him by PBRF. In his third interview, undertaken in October 2004, Lloyd attempted to reiterate this point:

I’m not going to let the PBRF system, under the current system I’ll never get an ‘A’ anyway, so I’m not going to let the current system drive me professionally. Up to a point. For instance, I won’t do textbooks, I won’t do another textbook. But at the same time I know professionally, I don’t need PBRF tell me this, I know professionally that it’s important that I get back to another sole-authored book. That’s on my agenda and I’m working on that. I know that to have credibility in my own field professionally that I really need to get back and do another sole-authored book. So I’ll let these things affect me up to a point, but only up to a point. I’m not going to let PBRF really drive and shape what is important for my own discipline.

Although Lloyd appeared determined to follow through on the original claim of his first interview, there appeared to be some changes creeping into how Lloyd might go about that. Lloyd, who identified himself as a prolific publisher at an international level, claimed that he would not do another textbook. The suggestion was that in order for him to maintain his international reputation, Lloyd would need to think about doing another sole-authored book instead. The point is that although Lloyd has expressed a determination not to make changes to his research practice due to PBRF, he is making changes. In Lloyd’s defence, he claimed that other issues were driving those changes such as his need to maintain an international reputation as a scholar, something that he saw as being “professionally important”.

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The irony associated with Lloyd’s determination not to yield to PBRF while making changes that he deemed “professionally important” is that the alterations he intended to make are the kind that would be supported by the PBRF framework. A textbook is not as significant as a sole-authored book, an international scholarly reputation is more important than a local one, and it is the professional responsibility of academics to pursue higher level scholarly standards by focusing on internationally recognised research outputs. In other words, despite his determination not to yield to PBRF, Lloyd appeared to be guided by certain technologies of the self by following the same normalising tendencies that were evident in PBRF discourse. So although Lloyd expressed a sense of autonomy in his refusal to change because of PBRF, the changes that he intended to make for ‘other’ reasons actually coincide with the changes he expected if he followed the PBRF trajectory. As such, any sense of autonomy expressed by Lloyd in deciding how best to shape his professional practice is questionable if, as this example demonstrates, the changes he intends making correspond to those that he identified as being required by the Quality Evaluation exercise.

Trevor was another participant who raised concerns about the direct relationship between an academic’s pursuit of a higher quality score and the nature of the research that they were willing to undertake. In his first interview, Trevor, who was also a senior academic of several decades standing, believed that PBRF would value and reward research on the basis of its “addition to existing bodies of knowledge”, its “applied usefulness” or “its ability to stand the test of time”. By the time of his final interview Trevor had received his PBRF ranking and believed that his research had been under-rated:

And I must say that I thought about that in terms of what I’m doing, I have a suspicion that [a current project] won’t be ranked very highly by the panel [in the next PBRF round]. So if I took myself as an example I could easily find myself saying, “Well, I shouldn’t be doing this kind of work. It’s not going to help my promotion. I should go and do something that’s going to get me an ‘A’”. And I have a feeling that that would in fact be a bad thing because it would be indicating that I must change my research according to the criteria that’s being rewarded.
Trevor concluded that through the allocation of PBRF quality scores, the type of research he undertook at any stage during his career represented a technology of production that could influence the various career opportunities made available to him thereafter. In other words, Trevor believed that there was a direct connection between the symbolic association of a quality score and the subjected nature (rather than the ‘quality’) of one’s research. Further, he recognised that if he strategically undertook research that differed to his current line of research (thereby taking up certain technologies of the self to regulate his conduct), he might enhance his quality score in future rounds. Although Trevor did not actually indicate an intention to change the nature of his research, his illustrative conversation with himself: “I shouldn’t be doing this kind of work. It’s not going to help my promotion”, suggests his belief that PBRF may have a direct influence on the type of research that some academics undertake in New Zealand in the future.

In considering Lloyd and Trevor’s accounts, I argue that the allocation of quality scores represents a technology of sign systems that has the potential to influence the nature of the research that some academics choose to undertake. According to Lloyd, in any statistical hierarchy there is a tendency for people to take the numbers too seriously and pursue higher quality scores at all costs. Trevor seems to concur, believing that the pursuit of higher quality scores could ultimately influence the type of research that some academics are willing to undertake. Their concerns, shared by the majority of participants in this study, points to a system that they perceive is predominantly about ‘ratings’ and finding ways to achieve better ones.

Journal status as an indicator of quality

In responding to these types of concerns, the biggest issue that participants identified in relation to their research in this study involved the way it was being published or disseminated and how that might change as a consequence of the new PBRF requirements. A key concern raised by Web Research’s (2004) Phase One evaluation is that panel members “often scored a [Nominated Research Output] as though the
journal in which it was published represented its quality” (p. 26). In this study one participant, Rodney*, had been a member of a PBRF peer-review panel during the inaugural Quality Evaluation exercise. During his first interview, just prior to undertaking his responsibilities as a panellist, Rodney* appeared generally positive and enthusiastic about PBRF. Although he was aware of the potential for discrepancies to occur during the evaluation process, he believed that the allocation of quality scores in most cases would accurately reflect the research being done. However, when I spoke to Rodney* in October 2004, almost five months after the release of the 2003 PBRF results, he seemed somewhat despondent about the process:

It seems to me that you have to be very very good to get an ‘A’ but you can have internationally recognised scholars working productively over a number of years who still come out as a ‘B’ and you have young people who are just entering the profession who have done commendably, they have done the amount of work that obviously puts them into the ‘B’ [pause], and you have a conceptual world separating the two.

It should be noted that although Rodney’s* final interview took place almost five months after the release of the inaugural Quality Evaluation results, he still did not know what quality score he had been allocated during the exercise and had no desire to find out. Rodney* was the only participant in this study who had sat upon a peer-review panel during the 2003 Quality Evaluation and he was the only participant in this study who, several months after the results were released, did not know the score that he had been allocated by the exercise. Rodney* appeared to be annoyed that the seniority and reputation of more established academics did not always appear to be taken into account when assigning a score. He also expressed a concern that some of the more technical forms of research often associated with his subject area had not been rated as highly as the more “philosophically-based” research. However, when I mentioned to Rodney* the evidence that most PBRF peer-review panels had used the

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13 As indicated in Chapter Four, sometimes throughout this thesis I will refer to information about a participant that could, if connected to other parts of their story, potentially identify them to certain readers. To avoid this possibility and ensure participant confidentiality, I refer to the participant upon these occasions using an alternative pseudonym as chosen by them. To ensure the ongoing clarity and readability of this thesis, I identify these instances to the reader by placing an asterisk beside the alternative pseudonym so that it appears in the text as “Rodney*”. 

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status of the journal or outlet as a proxy indicator of the value of a research output (as identified by Dalziel, 2005 and Web Research, 2004), he was somewhat surprised by this. As a PBRF panel member, Rodney* explained that although he had been instructed to pay the most attention to the four Nominated Research Outputs, he believed that most panel members would have considered the actual merit and scholarly contribution of each output over the site of its publication. Rodney* also took some convincing that the two minor categories of an Evidence Portfolio, the Peer Esteem and Contribution to the Research Environment categories, each contributed 15% (or 30% collectively) towards the total score of an Evidence Portfolio. According to Rodney*, his panel had been instructed that the two latter categories were very minor categories that only required cursory consideration when some clarity and contextualisation of an individual’s four Nominated Research Outputs were needed. He stated that, “We were really largely concerned with the four major pieces and the other two [categories] came in as very minor parts of the process”.

Rodney’s* surprise that most quality scores were allocated on the basis of the journals that each of the four Nominated Research Outputs were published in highlights another concern for the academics in this study: how the ‘quality’ of their research was determined by the Quality Evaluation exercise. While it can be assumed that the highest ranked journals achieved their status because they continually contribute to existing bodies of knowledge and withstand the scrutiny of international peers, the actions of the PBRF panels implied that those journals naturally published the best research outputs in their respective fields. This is an assumption that cannot be taken for granted and there is evidence to demonstrate that for a variety of reasons, academics publish in journals that vary in status and purpose (Milne, 2002). One such example is the situation whereby academics working in applied or professional programmes may prefer to publish in vocationally orientated journals which tend not to be ranked as highly as more prestigious ‘scholarly’ periodicals. Notwithstanding changes to editorial boards over time may alter the nature of a journal and the kinds

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of articles it publishes. Therefore, the existing status of a journal may not always be indicative of the quality of the articles published in it.

Another assumption that underpins PBRF discourses implies that individuals, in submitting their Evidence Portfolios, will select their four Nominated Research Outputs on the basis that they represent the individual’s ‘best’ work during the specified period. According to the guidelines established by the Tertiary Education Commission (2003a), individuals are required to make their Nominated Research Outputs available for examination if requested to do so by the PBRF peer-review panels. Each peer-review panel is required to sight at least 10% of the submitted Nominated Research Outputs (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a). Nevertheless, according to the Tertiary Education Commission (2004a, p. 27), most PBRF panel members had gone so far as to sight up to 20% of Nominated Research Outputs in their subject area in 2003. For the remaining 80-90% of Nominated Research Outputs that were not sighted by their respective PBRF peer-review panels, proxy indicators were used to assess their value (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a). In other words, the vast majority of Nominated Research Outputs were evaluated solely on the basis of the journal in which they were published.

In assuming that individuals would select what they considered to be their four ‘best’ pieces of research for the PBRF Quality Evaluation, this did not necessarily mean individuals selected those pieces on the basis of the journal they were published in. Most participants in this study expressed concerns over the paramount consideration that seemed to be given to the status of a journal in determining the quality of an output. But their reasons for this varied. For example, Tim pointed out that within his subject area it often took individuals several years before they were published in an ‘international’ journal, noting that ‘international’ generally meant an ‘American’ or ‘English’ journal. The nature of Tim’s particular subject area meant that much of his research was disseminated in local or national journals, and many of these had a vocational orientation. Alternatively, Trevor argued that in his subject area even the best publishers produced "some very shoddy material
at times”. He identified publishers such as Oxford and Cambridge University Presses alongside McMillan Publishers (all English-based publishers), describing them as highly respected publishers that, on occasion, were capable of publishing “stuff that’s absolute nonsense”.

When I asked Freddie, a mid-career academic who scored a ‘B’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise, how he had selected his four Nominated Research Outputs, he responded:

Not in terms of the journal, definitely not. In fact, you look at some of the indices that they were suggesting we use and one of the journals was way down for whatever reason. It wasn’t highly rated in that sense. But I put it down because I think those four best reflected the sort of work I did.

If Freddie’s selected outputs were not amongst the 10-20% actually sighted by the peer-review panels, they were likely to be rated using the proxy indicators identified by Dalziel (2005) and Web Research (2004). If this were the case then Freddie’s research would probably be rated as being something less than “world class” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a, p. 217) solely on the basis of where he had chosen to disseminate it. However, if the peer-review panels were using the status of the journals as a proxy indicator of quality for the Nominated Research Outputs that they had not sighted, then it must also be assumed that in the interests of consistency, they incorporated this into their evaluation of sighted outputs too.

According to Small (2005), academics’ concerns over the importance that PBRF appears to give to the status of a journal in determining the quality of an output could have a significant impact upon how academics choose to engage with PBRF in the future. He believes that academics’ perceptions of the purpose and intent of the Quality Evaluation framework could result in a situation whereby PBRF fails to reward ‘quality’ and, instead, rewards the publishing prowess of what he describes as the “dull but diligent” (Small, 2005, p. 24). By this, Small (2005) is referring to an idea discussed by Broadhead and Howard (1998) whereby more seasoned and experienced academics are able to regurgitate their research. This leads to the
repetitive duplication of the same type of research in the same prestigious journals, often at the cost of denying access to less well-known scholars who may have more original or insightful material to offer. Although the practice of recycling material for publication has been occurring within academia for some time, constantly reaffirming the status of those academics skilled (or ‘diligent’ enough) in perpetuating the practice, both Broadhead and Howard (1998) and Small (2005) are suggesting that PBRF is likely to increase this activity.

There was evidence to support these arguments within this study. One participant in particular, Kenneth, described how PBRF could encourage and reward this kind of practice. During the course of his first interview, Kenneth, who also described himself as a well-published senior academic within his subject area, indicated that he believed that this was a positive attribute of PBRF:

I suppose what’s good about it and how it’s changing my practice is that it’s going to force you to get more mileage out of what you do in terms of making sure you get it off to refereed journals...[pause]. So [describing a key-note address he’d given at a conference] I’ve got something three quarters written for an academic article. All I’ve got to do is academicise it a bit, stick in something a bit more conceptual, stick in a bit more theory, stick in a few more footnotes and it’s there, and off it goes. And so, and if I’m smart, like, I say I can get two journal articles out of the one keynote address and that’s got to be a good thing.

Is it a good thing? Kenneth’s ideas about how to develop two publications out of one conference paper seems more mechanical than conceptual. To “add” ‘this’, “stick in a bit” of ‘that’ and ‘tack on’ a couple of ‘these’ suggests that for Kenneth, it is all about a process - taking one’s hamburger and upsizing it to a combo meal. The ‘hamburger’ analogy is one way to describe Kenneth’s approach to “academicising” his conference papers. Another is conceptualised via Foucault’s (2003a) technologies of the self whereby Kenneth’s actions represent an example of Foucault’s Senecan mode, the mode whereby individuals examine the various ways that their thoughts tie in with the rules of society. The implication is that Kenneth’s papers just require certain ‘add-ons’ and they become bona fide academic journal offerings that meet the new rule-bound codes of conduct that Kenneth associates with being successful in
PBRF terms. It is perhaps this type of approach that Small (2005, p. 24) was referring to when he described the skills of the so-called "dull but diligent" (although it might not be considered 'diligence' as generally understood by the term). However, given that Kenneth was the only participant who described this kind of approach, it is worth noting that after the Quality Evaluation results were released, he received a substantial promotion within his department and, in his final interview, attributed that promotion directly to his PBRF ranking. It is also worth considering that Kenneth's promotion was the most significant career shift of any of the participants of this study during the two-year period August 2003 to August 2005.

While Kenneth's experience suggests that PBRF might encourage a proliferation of publishing activity by New Zealand academics, this by no means implies that all academics will try to increase the number of publications they produce. Dobson (2004) refers to his experiences of the RAE in the United Kingdom to argue that because the focus of the PBRF Quality Evaluation places the greater emphasis on the four Nominated Research Outputs, they are likely to become the sole focus of academics as well. According to Dobson (p. 4), academics are unlikely to consider publishing large books or contributing to encyclopaedias and textbooks (as indicated by Lloyd) when all that is required from them is four short journal articles over a six year period. So long as those four articles are published in the top-tiered international journals, they represent far greater value for the academic than does a single authored book or six to ten articles published in so-called mediocre, national or professional/vocational orientated journals. In other words, according to Dobson (2004), PBRF is likely to encourage those academics skilled at securing spaces within the international journals to actually do less rather than increase their productivity. This point did not escape the attention of three participants of this study in that Gary, Tim and Lloyd all commented on how they believed PBRF would encourage academics to do less, and this was for the very reasons identified by Dobson (2004). For example, Lloyd commented in his first interview:

We're talking about "well look, you should try to do a couple of articles a year". But if that is what PBRF is going to encourage people to do, to just come up with four reasonable outputs in five
years or whatever it is, and so if anything it’s actually going to potentially encourage people to do less.

And again in his third interview twelve months later:

It’s affecting my output. It does I think affect most people because everyone wants to think in terms of “I need to make sure I have four good outputs”. So instead of thinking “I’ve got these two important projects I’m working on”, you’re thinking, “I’ve got to have these four outputs”. It’s changing the landscape if you will. And I think that bigger projects potentially can be disadvantaged because people are going to think first in terms of four rather than maybe think in terms of one big book or something like that.

Although Lloyd’s analysis of PBRF appears contrary to Kenneth’s analysis in that Lloyd believed PBRF would lead to a reduction in the research outputs academics would strive to produce, both participants believed that PBRF was “changing the landscape” in terms of how academics were being subjected. Whereas Lloyd suggested that PBRF would only encourage academics to produce “four reasonable outputs” within each assessment period, Kenneth believed that finding ways to produce more outputs from incidental work was the “good thing” to do. Either way, Lloyd and Kenneth’s accounts suggest that for many academics, particularly those within this study, PBRF could potentially reshape the way they thought and strategised about disseminating information about their research, possibly constituting them as more rigid and calculating academic subjects.

The academic production line

For many participants in this study this was a major concern: that the emphasis placed upon Nominated Research Outputs, accompanied by the allocation of quality scores and an increased urgency to publish, could reconstitute the activity and production of research as a calculated and mechanical process. For example, during his final interview Gary identified what he perceived to be a “dumbing down” effect for research as part of the Quality Evaluation exercise:

If the programme persists then I think it’ll make academic work more mechanical and more by way of response rather than exercising any
sort of initiative...[pause]. You have a deadline, you have a production line. There are some things that you may not be able to afford to do.

Gary’s reference to the idea of a “production line” is quite significant in that it was an expression used by a number of participants in this study. Lloyd used the phrase to describe how the bureaucratic elements of his professional role appeared to be overtaking his academic work:

In my own experience I’ve never encountered this amount of bureaucracy and paper work anywhere. If you actually look at what’s actually occurring, so much of the work of the university is actually in record keeping, bureaucracy, attending meetings and that’s my job, a lot of my job.

In identifying PBRF as an example of the amount of “bureaucracy and paper work” that was impinging upon his daily routine as a Head of Department, Lloyd went on to state that these experiences were characteristic of a “production line” but not characteristic of his “work as an academic”.

Michael did not use the phrase “production line” in describing his view of PBRF. However, the description that he did offer was consistent with those offered by Gary and Lloyd:

In general I think that PBRF makes researchers to be somehow uniform. You know, publishing in the same journal and somehow to be critical but not too critical.

Tim summarised his view of PBRF as follows:

I’m not sure necessarily that the country’s going to be better off for it. As we produce a lot more research that goes into academic journals, there will be an increasing proliferation of academic journals to take up the research. And particularly, at the other end of the spectrum, you’ll see an expansion of academic journals to take up research outputs that weren’t currently getting in the existing sets of journals that were around in the field, so that more people can become research active as judged. Will we be better off for that? I doubt it. Will students be better off for that? I doubt it. Academics will spend less time with them because they’ll be busily pursuing their own research agendas. And then they won’t possibly be pursuing their own research agendas, they’ll be pursuing a research agenda that requires them to produce ‘X’ number of products within ‘X’ period, a factory type of production.
Expressions like "you have a production line" and references to the notion of "factory" have specific and historical connotations concerning the managerialist discourses that have informed PBRF related policies. According to Foucault's notion of governmentality (as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis), the aim of governments and their institutions is to create self-motivated and self-regulated individuals who actively (or passively) support the sustainability of the state (Foucault, 1994b). In many cases governments will facilitate this by adopting various technologies of production and power that manipulate the bodies and conduct of individuals in particular ways to encourage the constitution of economically efficient and profitable human subjects. *Scientific Management Theory* was an earlier example of this type of governmentality and describes a technique developed by Frederic Taylor in 1911 that promoted capital accumulation through the specialisation of labour based upon the analogy of a factory (or organisation) as a machine (Jones & May, 1999).

As both a technology of production and a technology of power, *Scientific Management Theory* had initially been a response to the needs of managers and owners of industrial enterprises within the United States to increase productivity and profits, and exercise control over labour (Clegg & Dunkerley, 1980). Taylor (1967) made a number of assumptions about the nature of the institution or organisation, offering the analogy of a 'machine' that functioned without any management/worker conflict. Central to the operating capacity of the 'machine' was the way labour was divided through specialisation. The more people specialised, the more efficient they became (Jones & May, 1999). Braverman (1974) argued that *Scientific Management* encouraged the institutionalised supervision of workers "to render conscious and systematic, the formerly unconscious tendency of capitalist production... concentrated in the hands of management" (p. 120-121). It was via this theoretical principle that factory-based production lines came into being. Their purpose, as an instrument or technique applied within the factory or organisation, was to manage the bodies and conduct of workers in accordance with the factory or organisation's function or purpose.
In this sense, when Tim, Gary, Lloyd and Michael introduce the analogy of a 'factory production line' to indicate how they see PBRF shaping research in the future, they are in effect identifying the imposition of a new government rationality on New Zealand’s research culture. As such, they suggest that the way academics are being governed in their institutions encourages complicity via new expectations of performance and productivity associated with being a more efficient academic subject. In other words, individuals are being encouraged to take up more routinely ritualised ways of work and worker accountability (to adopt specific technologies of the self and respond appropriately) as part of their own academic subjection. According to Tim, Gary, Lloyd and Michael, the consequences of this will result in a “dumbing down” of research in which the process will become “mechanical” and “uniform” and the focus of academics will be on “bureaucracy and paper work” and producing “X number of products within X period” of time. Using a discourse of Scientific Management Theory to explain Tim, Gary, Lloyd and Michael’s analysis; the Quality Evaluation exercise promotes conveyor-belt specialisation and compliance in an attempt to produce more ‘efficient’ and ‘quality-focused’ (whereby quality is determined by productive yield) products and outputs.

“Playing the game”

For Broadhead and Howard (1998), it is difficult to see how academics might resist the new normalising tendencies inherent to assessment frameworks like PBRF because the discourses that accompany them promote a sense of complicity through a notion of “spontaneous consent” (p. 7). Academics become an integral part of their own surveillance because to do so comes “naturally” as a direct consequence of the many years that their professional identity has been systematically subjected (p. 7). This subjection begins even before academics enter their profession, during their many years as students where they are perpetually examined, assessed and rewarded (Broadhead & Howard, 1998). This ongoing examining, assessing and rewarding continues as they enter the academic profession, sending papers off to journals and other outlets seeking publication and professional affirmation. This quest for
affirmation becomes an almost ritualised activity that serves to shape and position academics within the spaces of their profession.

It is no coincidence that the various technologies used within the PBRF framework mirror the same technologies that academics have used for years to guide their own activities and practices. The application of these techniques (for example, the process of peer-review), along with the normalisation of a performance hierarchy based upon the allocation of quality scores, constitute a powerful guide for academics to abide by. As Broadhead and Howard (1998) claim, “so much is at stake” for both academics and their employing institutions and as such, “the individual academic must conform” to secure their place, and their institution’s place, upon the all important hierarchical league table (p. 8).

To what degree will PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise influence the way academics go about their research as a consequence of this new government rationality for change? For Michael, a junior-level researcher within his subject area, it seemed perfectly clear:

It’s no longer just about what I think is important, it’s about what PBRF thinks is important. They’re overlapping. Even though sometimes they are quite different perspectives, they are overlapping. Therefore, now I might think “this is good for PBRF so why don’t I go for that if I have to make a choice?” If one choice will have no influence over my PBRF rating and the other choice will have a positive influence I would say that would impact my decision.

Michael’s response, a position also expressed by Alfred, Edith, Harold and Scott, could be construed as one of ‘spontaneous consent’. This is because although Michael acknowledged that there were different perspectives about what is important in undertaking research, PBRF represented a dominant technology that needed to be considered when making decisions about research. Because PBRF is the new technology by which Michael’s professional legitimacy can be affirmed, he was aware that in making decisions about his research, he needed to consider how his research was likely to be validated by this framework. For Michael, the examining, assessing and rewarding characteristics associated with the PBRF Quality Evaluation
constituted the new ritualised activities that were shaping and affirming his profession.

Weiner (1998) suggests that as research increasingly becomes the primary focus of academics within a context of hierarchical assessment, this will lead to a further proliferation in the range of advice available for academics in respect of getting published and participating successfully within those assessment hierarchies. Examples of these include various 'how to' guides such as Brown, Black, Day and Race's (1998) 500 Tips for Getting Published and Germano's (2001) Getting it Published: A guide for scholars and anyone else serious about serious books. Other examples include publications on preparing and enhancing Evidence Portfolios (such as Kelly, 2003) and preparatory programmes and workshops being run by various tertiary education institutions ahead of the 2006 Quality Evaluation (for example, Victoria University, 2005). According to Weiner (1998), publications and programmes of this nature are likely to become essential components of an academic's tool kit, providing guidance on how academics can write for and target specific journals, and offering them strategies for planning and participating in various assessment and evaluation processes. In other words, the proliferation of resources of this nature will provide assistance to academics by enhancing their capacity to 'play' the PBRF 'game' (Dobson, 2004; Hattie, 2005; Kinnear, 2004).

This notion of 'playing the game' in respect of PBRF (Dobson, 2004; Hattie, 2005; Kinnear, 2004) was identified by the majority of participants within this study. Ten out of 15 participants used the phrase directly and most of those went on to describe various ways in which they intended to 'play' the PBRF 'game'. Of the participants who either intended to 'play the game' or believed that a 'game' could be played by others in respect of PBRF, the most common way of doing so was in the selection of an individual's four Nominated Research Outputs. Anne provided an example that captured this best. During her first interview Anne who, like Michael, described herself as a relatively early career academic, differentiated between papers
that she would have selected as representing her best work when communicating with colleagues to those that she deemed to be her best four Nominated Research Outputs:

My friend [name] who works in my area has already read all my papers and I’ve already read all his because there’s not many people working in our area. If he said to me “What do you think your four best papers were?” I would pick out the ones that he and I would probably agree on. But that’s not to say that that’s the ones that I would give to someone who wasn’t in my area. If it was someone who wasn’t in my area, somebody in a different department in the university said “Give me your four best papers” or PBRF said “Give me your four best papers” I would choose the four top journals [pause], I’d pick an international journal every time.

Here Anne identified two different discourses relating to the notion of ‘quality’ and as such, two models of accountability that informed her research. The first or primary definition of quality emphasised the importance of content knowledge as subjectively judged by others who had an interest (or stake) in that knowledge, and by Anne herself as a form of self-validation and affirmation. Accountability in this instance appeared to rest with those to whom Anne had attributed that role, including herself, and was directed towards maintaining Anne’s focus and motivation in terms of her research activity and conduct. Anne’s second or alternate definition of quality focused primarily on tacit, quantifiable aspects of the research, such as the journal it was published in. According to this definition of quality, research was judged by an assumed objective formula that could be taken up and administered by anyone, regardless of whether they shared a relationship or interest with the subject area or not. The accountabilities associated with this alternate definition of quality rested with the systems and purposes for which quality was being evaluated and these were factors extrinsic to Anne’s rationale for undertaking the research in the first place. There is a tension between both definitions of quality and their associated accountabilities and it appeared as though Anne was aware of this. Although that did not suggest that Anne felt conflicted by any inherent tension between them. On the contrary, Anne went on to discuss how she would be able to successfully incorporate both definitions into her academic practice. Anne would be able to use her second or alternate definition of quality and its associated accountabilities to secure and
maintain her position within her institution and profession, thereby sustaining her
capacity to pursue research that was informed by her primary definition of quality and
its associated accountabilities. According to Anne, this justified “playing the game”.

Anne was not the only participant who differentiated quality for different
purposes. During his second interview George*, who had publicly challenged the
idea that journals could be ranked for the purposes of the Quality Evaluation exercise,
admitted to “playing the game” by selecting his four Nominated Research Outputs
solely on the basis of the journal they were published in, as had Alfred, Harold,
Lloyd, Michael, Scott and Tim. Other participants (Alec, Beth, Freddie, Gary,
Kenneth and Trevor) all claimed to have selected their Nominated Research Outputs
based upon their own perceptions of their quality although both Beth and Kenneth
acknowledged as early as their first interviews that they had perhaps been “a bit dumb
on this”. Beth also stated that although she had not “played the game” in relation to
PBRF, she knew of colleagues who were “learning ways to avoid the rules” in order
to “play the game”. Both Angus and Edith admitted that they did not have enough
outputs at the time to enable them to be strategically selective during the 2003
Quality Evaluation.

If the strategic selection of outputs represents an academics’ foremost means
of successfully ‘playing’ the PBRF ‘game’ then it follows that academics must have
outputs that are strategically beneficial to that game. As Anne’s narrative
demonstrates, any research produced and disseminated by academics specifically for
the purposes of enhancing their status and ranking as part of the PBRF exercise may
not necessarily be representative of their ‘best’ work. As a consequence, as Michael’s
earlier comments about research choices would indicate, in order to ‘play’ the PBRF
‘game’ academics may need to strategise about the nature of the research that they are
actually undertaking and publishing. In other words, in order to have the strategic
outputs to include in one’s Evidence Portfolio, one must produce the strategic outputs
in the first instance. It is here that the PBRF Quality Evaluation appears to be
instigating a change in the types of research that academics are choosing to undertake

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and the types of research outputs they are seeking to produce. For example, Edith, who had described herself as a self-appointed PBRF "whip-cracker" in her department, was able to identify how she, and some of her colleagues, were rethinking their research activities and practices as a response to PBRF. In particular, when I interviewed Edith for the first time in September 2003, she had already made a major strategic decision not to undertake a research monograph ever again:

It's too much work and would take too long and you don't get enough credit for it. It would be much more, sort of, efficient to do edited books because they're much easier to produce and you get as much credit.

Kenneth, a senior academic who had been involved with two significant Marsden grant projects in recent years, indicated that he would have to seriously reconsider whether he should be involved in any future Marsden applications. He suggested that although Marsden projects provided a number of opportunities for academics, the time invested in applying for them was enormous. Kenneth believed that it was possible to produce two or three journal articles quite reasonably within the same amount of time that was required to meet the commitments of a Marsden grant application process. Kenneth did acknowledge that a successful Marsden grant application provided a vast array of opportunities in terms of potential outputs. However, Kenneth was also aware that if he pursued another Marsden grant application at the cost of producing a number of journal articles and failed to attain the grant, then he could be left standing with nothing to put forward at the next PBRF Quality Evaluation.

Angus, another relatively new career academic who openly and intentionally admitted attaining a quality score of 'R' in the inaugural evaluation exercise, also believed that it was important to strategise ahead of the 2006 round. Otherwise,

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14 The Marsden Fund (formerly known as the 'Basic Science Fund') is a grant that was established by the New Zealand government in 1994 to support excellence in research and researchers (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2006). Applications for the fund are assessed by various panels in the following research areas: biomedical sciences; cellular, molecular and physiological biology; ecology, evolution and behaviour; earth sciences and astronomy; physical sciences and engineering; mathematical and information sciences; social sciences; and the humanities (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2006). In the period 2003/2004 the Marsden Fund provided approximately $32.8 million for research in these areas.
according to Angus, it would be unlikely that he would be given another opportunity to prove himself. In his final interview Angus explained:

In [several] months time I go on sabbatical and I have quite specific aims for my sabbatical and what I come out with regards to PBRF. Again, if I don’t have a cunning plan it will sneak up on me again and I’ll write it off with this idea that “I didn’t take it seriously” which I think you can get away with the first time but I don’t think you can get away with it a second time.

Angus was the last participant I interviewed in this study and that was in late November 2004. When I asked him at the conclusion of that interview if he had any final thoughts regarding PBRF, he responded:

I know people who are just fantastic at reproducing articles for journals. We have a staff member who is stunning at it. That colleague will always do well in PBRF. But with the things that are really important around here in regards to the daily running of a department that has bums on seats, then some of that stuff [that colleague] is not fantastic at. I think that those who know how to play the game already will do well under PBRF and will continue to do well.

It does appear from the narratives of Edith, Kenneth and Angus that some academics within this study are taking a serious look at the type of research activity they are willing to undertake and produce as a consequence of PBRF. Kenneth has described the pursuit of a Marsden grant as a career ‘gamble’ that is no longer worth taking. Angus, on the other hand, has described what he can do in terms of improving his PBRF profile. He has allocated space, in the form of a sabbatical, to devote to creating the kinds of outputs that he believes will be suitable for submitting in his next Evidence Portfolio. This, according to Boston et al., (2005), is where the real improvements in quality will occur over time in relation to PBRF. These improvements in quality will not be associated with research per se, but ones associated with the notion of “grade inflation” (Boston et al., 2005, p. 12): that over time academics will improve the quality scores that they obtain as a consequence of their participation in successive evaluation rounds. However, according to Boston et al., (2005), this will be a direct consequence of academics becoming more strategic.
about how they prepare Evidence Portfolios and select nominated outputs rather than as a result of any real improvement in the quality of research they produce.

Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has identified various factors regarding PBRF that are likely to impact on the future research activity of New Zealand’s academics. In particular, it has been argued that during the 2003 Quality Evaluation, as much as 80-90% of research outputs submitted by academics in their Evidence Portfolios failed to receive an assessment based upon the merit of the research itself. Rather, in the majority of cases judgements were made based solely upon the journal that the research was published in. Milne (2002) describes this as a “half-baked measure” that fails to provide any accurate or objective account of the quality of academics’ research (p. 84). He asserts that:

If we are to evaluate the quality of academics’ research, as I think we are destined to by the nature of our work, then I believe we owe it to ourselves the courtesy of actually reading their work and making up our own minds. And if we can not be bothered to do this, then we should refrain from making a judgment in the first place. (Milne, 2002, p. 84)

Participants in this study have experienced or identified a number of disciplinary technologies or discursive operations affecting the assessments made by the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise and for many, those technologies and operations have led to some degree of change in the way that they go about their research activities and practices. Lloyd recognised that it was important to focus on more prestigious publications such as a sole authored book than on seemingly less valued publications (such as “another textbook”). Kenneth believed that PBRF encouraged him to try and get more mileage out of some of his incidental work. Trevor felt that for academics who had not done so well in the Quality Evaluation exercise, an implicit message tied to their poor quality scores was that perhaps they were doing the wrong type of research. Michael saw this as the “choice” that academics had to make in terms of thinking more strategically about the research that they undertook. He, along with Lloyd, Tim and Gary, also saw the potential for PBRF to reduce
research activity and practice to a factory styled production line. Anne recognised that being successful in terms of PBRF required her to submit outputs that were not necessarily her best outputs in terms of her subject area. She described this as “playing the game”. George* admitted to having “played the game” in 2003 by selecting his four Nominated Research Outputs solely on the basis of the journals they were published in. Finally Edith, Kenneth and Angus all openly admitted that they were now making changes to their research practice so as to better position themselves to “play the game” in 2006.

It is one thing to measure individuals in relation to their peers by saying “you’re better than him, but not as good as her” or by suggesting that “you could be a Senior Lecturer but you’re not yet ready to be appointed to a Professorial position”. It is another thing to assign a value to an individual’s craft, particularly if that value is being determined by factors not directly related to the work itself. We do not judge a table crafted by a carpenter based solely upon the room it is located in. Nor do we assess the calibre of a painting based on the wall upon which it hangs. Therefore, arguably it seems contrary to the design and purpose of PBRF to assign a quality score to an academic’s research if the primary indicator used in determining that score is the journal that the research is published in.
CHAPTER 6

“I’m having to basically dance to someone else’s tune”:

How the PBRF Quality Evaluation might be constituted as a field of compliance

Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. (Foucault, 1977, p. 170)

Introduction

Foucault (1994d) claimed that within most institutional settings power could be exercised via the establishment of goal-directed activities in which the production and exchange of signs and symbols represented a major technique for modifying the field and the relationships within it. Within the field of education, the arrangement of space within and outside institutions, the establishment and implementation of new regulatory guides and practices, and the organisation of activities occurring within institutions all serve to facilitate the compliant subject (Foucault, 1994d). As academics engage with the discursive field of Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF) they are presented with new codes of conduct regarding the productivity of their research. They are also confronted by a system that identifies their comparative value as an academic via the allocation of a productivity score and then locates their position within a professional hierarchy that is based around the allocation of scores. As individuals begin to account for these changes in their day-to-day rituals and routines of academic life, they are likely to adopt various technologies of the self in order to keep their professional self in check. In other words, without intending to change, it is highly probable that some academics will, by consent, police their own ongoing subjection, perceiving their compliant behaviour as a self-directed attempt to maintain or improve the general conditions of their professional status.
This chapter explores the various ways in which PBRF might by constituted as a disciplinary technique designed to facilitate a form of normative compliance. Normative compliance occurs when an individual is seduced or transformed by the disciplinary logic of a particular discursive field and shapes their conduct in terms of the normative pressures that accompany it. In this sense, normative compliance is distinct from procedural compliance which is simply an action undertaken by individuals because it is required by certain administrative or management operations as part of the practices and routines that form the basis of individuals’ professional roles.

This chapter begins by identifying how some participants in this study felt that PBRF required them to “dance to someone else’s tune” by constituting themselves as compliant subjects attuned to the normative expectations of university managers and government bureaucrats. The chapter also examines how various participants positioned themselves in different ways in relation to their peers and colleagues in order to defend or support their own responses regarding the assessment exercise. The chapter then describes the tensions that exist between ‘being compliant’ and ‘being agentic’ in that these two seemingly binary positions have a tendency to be obscured within the discursive construction of PBRF because they often co-exist and inform each other as part of the subjection of an individual. Finally, the chapter explores various obstacles that some participants faced when trying to find ways to actively resist PBRF. The chapter concludes by asserting that the PBRF Quality Evaluation represents a form of governmentality capable of shaping academic subjects to conform to a new discursive construction of what a ‘good’ academic is deemed to be.

“As a matter of survival I’ve got to hedge my bets and cover my back”

Within New Zealand’s current climate of accountability in which indicators of productivity are required for a variety of evaluative and audit processes, the underlying assumptions that accompany the new array of performance measures serve to create and perpetuate a new vision of the qualities and behaviours that a ‘good’ academic might be expected to exhibit. In this study a number of the
participants identified their perceptions of what these new qualities, behaviours and expectations were likely to be within the discursive context of PBRF. Five participants, namely Kenneth, Harold, Scott, Tim and Trevor, each believed that PBRF posited scientific-based researchers as the ideal academic subject, thereby undervaluing academics from the Social Sciences, Humanities and Commerce. Lloyd argued that within a context of PBRF, being an ‘excellent’ teacher was no longer attributed as being characteristic of a ‘good’ academic. Alec suggested that PBRF encouraged individuals to become competitive researchers whereas Michael believed PBRF would foster more docile and “uniform” academic subjects. Anne believed that PBRF’s construction of a ‘good’ academic was centred on the characteristics of a male subject positioned within a paternalist hierarchical environment. Finally, Angus argued that PBRF promoted that attributes of a ‘white’ or colonial research culture, thereby negating or rendering invisible the unique characteristics associated with non-white, indigenous academic subjects.

In identifying these new qualities, behaviours and expectations of the ‘good’ academic, various participants went on to describe ways in which they were changing their professional conduct in order to fulfil these requirements by conforming to the new regulatory mechanisms associated with PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise. For example, Harold, a Head of Department, indicated that he had adopted a more clinical and strategic approach to his professional practice that required him to question the value of some activities that he had once considered standard elements of an academic career. Lloyd, also a Head of Department and one who was highly critical of PBRF for its arbitrary approach to assessment, found himself directing staff towards activities and practices that would be beneficial in terms of it. Scott described PBRF as a “wake up call” that reminded him that it was time to get back to the thing that had attracted him to a career in academia in the first place: his research. Finally, Alec felt that he was now spending more time accounting for his research activities than he was in actually doing those research activities.
Tim attributed the changes that academics were experiencing because of PBRF to a recent increase in the government’s need for accountability. During his first interview he claimed that under “‘third way’ political thinking”, governments pursued accountability by “introducing increased mechanisms of surveillance”. He went on to say, “there are incentives and attempts to increase levels of productivity of academic staff. There’s no doubt that fundamentally means that we are having to run a lot harder”. He then elaborated his concerns:

Increasingly less and less of my time is available to spend on research and teaching because I’m playing [pause] I’m having to basically dance to someone else’s tune. And increasingly the tune I’m dancing to is some other administrator. And you know, it doesn’t stop with just the sheer time to fill out the paper work and submit the thing. It’s that the university or members of the university administration will now agonise and strategise over these things. They will now have to have retreats, they will now have to bring in consultants and other educational experts so they can strategise how to improve the performance score and it will become more and more overwhelming. And that’s happening on all sorts of fronts, not just with the measurement of research performance. It’s strategic retreats, the development of mission statements.

Tim has identified governmentality (Foucault, 1994a) in action. In Tim’s account, the “strategic retreats” and the “development of mission statements” represent the technologies that are taken up by university administrators to discipline the bodies and conduct of academics and maximise the status of the institution. As a consequence, academics are having to “dance to someone else’s tune” by engaging in various technologies of the self and participating in various institutional auditing processes that will enable them to account for their own conduct. By having to “run a lot harder” and “fill out the paperwork”, academics are positioned as compliant subjects attuned to the raison d’état of their university institution.

Edith was one participant who saw a definite need to ‘dance to someone else’s tune’ in respect of PBRF and provided a good example of how this might be achieved. Edith appeared to be positioning herself according to the various technologies of production and ‘truth’ associated with PBRF discourses by becoming a self-appointed departmental motivator, taking up the task of encouraging all her
colleagues to meet the 2003 Quality Evaluation guidelines as productively as they could. As stated in the previous chapter of this thesis, Edith described her role as the department’s PBRF “whip-cracker”. In her first interview Edith identified the demands of students and government bureaucrats as two major reasons why she believed it was essential that academics take PBRF seriously:

"If we just sort of sat around and moaned about what a bureaucratic nightmare it was then we would lose out. Because if they were going to redistribute funds on the basis of it [and] we hadn’t bothered then we would lose money. Or if, as happened in England, if students were led to go to the departments, if they decided they wanted to study [in Edith’s subject area] and they look at the published ratings and they see [a specific New Zealand university] is the best, then they’ll go to there. So that would mean that we would lose students. Then [said with emphasis] we would lose funding and again. We would lose out. And, long term, what this might mean if we were going to lose out in [Edith’s university] in terms of funding least ways, we might reduce in size as a department or ultimately close down.

Edith then went on to state that:

Governments, you know, who aren’t academics and who don’t know what it’s like to be an academic, and who don’t understand the academic world from inside might think “Oh well, we only need one place in the country to do [Edith’s subject area] so let’s close all the others down and concentrate all our funding to [a specific New Zealand university]”.

Here Edith is echoing Brown’s (2003) discursive construction of a neo-liberal subject as an autonomous rational decision-maker capable of articulating calculated judgements about their own wellbeing while either consciously or unconsciously supporting the government rationality of their institution. In doing so, Edith identifies the neo-liberal necessities for competition and accountability as reasons why she believes academics should comply with PBRF. In terms of competition, Edith identifies the continued institutional pursuit of student numbers as one rationale for the need to adhere to the new funding guidelines. In terms of accountability, she identifies institutional performance, public perceptions about that, and the relationship that exists between performance, perceptions of performance, and
institutional funding. Edith supports her claims by making assumptions regarding Britain’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in which she perceives a relationship between institutional losses in funding and student choices in terms of enrolment practices. However, there are a number of studies in higher education (Coccari & Javalgi, 1995; Menon, 2004; Raffan & Deaney, 2006) which indicate that student choices about institutions are often based on personal experiences and circumstances. Moreover, most student enrolment decisions that do account for institutional reputation are generally based on anecdotal evidence and perceptions rather than reported performance (Raffan & Deaney, 2006). For example, in examining participation in a New Zealand context, Leach and Zepke (2005) found that most student choices involved intrinsic factors such as their financial situation, parental influence and family history, personal career aspirations, achievement at secondary school, availability of financial aide and accommodation, and geographical location. In virtually all cases, institutional mass marketing (which might include disseminating information about research performance and outcomes) did not appear to contribute to the decision-making process (Leach & Zepke, 2005, p. 4). In this sense, although Edith refers to the RAE as evidence to support her claims, it appears that her assumptions have been informed by the discursive exercise of power through PBRF and by her own positioning as a neo-liberal subject rather than by the actual evidence of student enrolment choices (Butler, 1997). As such, Edith continues to believe that ignoring the voices of students (and government bureaucrats) by “doing nothing” will be “potentially suicide” for any university department and therefore, for any individual employed within that university department.

Gary was another participant who felt that his professional conduct was now being shaped and driven by external forces. He was particularly concerned that as he set about re-evaluating the roles that activities such as publishing papers played in

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15 Although Leach and Zepke’s (2005) report examines student choices about participation in a New Zealand context, the authors have drawn from literature-based evidence abroad to support their findings. This includes information about trends in the United Kingdom within the context of the British RAE, and it also includes similar information from other countries where contestable models of research funding have been developed and implemented.
academia, he faced the potential of reconstituting himself to become the type of academic subject that PBRF required him to be. To demonstrate his point, Gary referred to the importance given to the four Nominated Research Outputs by the evaluation framework as an example:

As a matter of survival I've got to hedge my bets and cover my back. I cannot, in terms of the process that has already been introduced, afford to take five or ten years for what I consider to be very important and long ranging research, and during that period having nothing to show for it, even though what I may produce is going through the mechanical process of satisfying four sole publications.

The implications behind Gary's statement are significant in that by referring to the importance of producing four publications as part of the evaluation exercise, Gary claimed that if he failed to adapt his activity to conform to that expectation, he might not survive as an academic. More importantly, Gary believed that if he did adapt his model of practice to produce the required four publications, other elements of his former practice would be compromised. By the time of his third interview in 2004 Gary reported that he was making changes to his practice for the sake of his own academic survival:

I am aware I've changed and I am changing because it is an ongoing process. It's not only an historical event, it's a process that is now a part of the establishment. And for anyone who regards it as trivial or as superficial or on top of everything else that one really wants to do, and sometimes my response is to look over the top of it or around it, but even in doing so, it's there. So I am changed, I have to be changed. More changed than I thought I would be.

Gary, like Tim, experienced a form of governmentality that was driving him to change even though at times he was trying to avoid it by looking "over the top of it or around it". For Gary, PBRF represented a government rationality that demanded his adherence. Regardless of whether Gary supported PBRF or not, he felt that he was now required to distinguish the essential activities and practices for sustaining his academic subjection over those that would not (thereby taking up various Senecan-based technologies of the self to regulate his conduct and work).
In a variety of different ways, the experiences and accounts of Tim, Edith and Gary raise a number of questions about the degree of compliance that may be expected from academics as they engage with the PBRF framework and examine their own professional conduct because of it. Their accounts demonstrate how some academics in this study have responded to various acts of governmentality by taking up particular technologies of the self and learning to alter their own practices to conform to the expectations of PBRF. However, in each of these examples there is no evidence to suggest that the discourses associated with PBRF have made specific demands upon the participants to make changes to their pre-existing research activities and practices. On the contrary, it could be argued that PBRF discourses actually encourage academics to continue with what they already do and to do so while striving for greater ‘excellence’ within their current fields of practice. PBRF discourses do not explicitly ask that academics undertake and produce certain types of research and not others but rather, encourage academics to establish and contribute to “lively and highly productive research cultures... which produce high-quality research” (Ministry of Education, 2002b, p. 2).

In other words, it is not the discursive formation of PBRF policies and practices that encourages academics to reconsider their academic subjection. It is the various techniques of governmentality that are enacted around such policies and practices that have this effect. By adopting particular technologies of the self and responding to the various technologies of production and signs that accompany PBRF discourses, academics like Tim, Gary and Edith appear to ‘choose’ to make the various adaptations and changes that they claim PBRF explicitly demands of them. However, the choices that these academics make are not the only possible choices that are available to them. Rather, they are choices made as part of the reconstitution of their academic subjectivity within a discursive context where they have been positioned to believe that the actions they ‘choose’ to take are the actions they actually ‘want’ or ‘need’ to take (Davies, 1991). Whether academics like Tim, Edith and Gary continue to reshape their professional conduct to comply with their
perceptions of PBRF or find alternative ways of acting is a theme I return to at the
close of this chapter.

"I’m determined to stick to my own vision of what academic life is about"

As the previous examples demonstrate, academics’ individual experiences of PBRF
are likely to play a significant role in shaping the ways that they come to identify,
locate and normalise themselves in their institutional, professional and social fields.
As such, examples such as these are critical in demonstrating how some academics
conform to, or resist, new expectations of what constitutes the ‘good’ academic. In
this study the evidence suggests that some participants felt encouraged by PBRF and
therefore embraced the Quality Evaluation exercise whereas others were seeking
ways to resist it. Between these two opposing binaries there were a variety of other
responses too. There were academics that were attuned to PBRF discourses and were
choosing to shape their identities accordingly and those who were aware of PBRF’s
discursive rhetoric and its script for facilitating compliance but continued to engage
with it in order to secure spaces for pursuing other academic activities (such as
teaching or undertaking ‘important’ research not valued by PBRF). What is evident
from the various experiences and accounts of the participants in this study is that
there are multiple ways individuals can conduct themselves as academic subjects
within discursive fields such as PBRF.

Alec was one of the participants who believed that PBRF had the potential to
encourage high degrees of conformity from academics. During his first interview
Alec, like Tim, Lloyd, and to a lesser extent, Beth, described his experiences of a
similar evaluation exercise abroad whereby he had worked alongside a number of
academics who had changed their practices so as to conform to the expectations of
the assessment regime. In light of this discussion, I asked Alec if he thought that
PBRF might contribute towards creating a change in the way that academics
conducted their professional activities and practices in New Zealand’s tertiary
education context. He responded:
Speaking just for myself "no" because I'm determined to stick to my own vision of what academic life is about. But I'm very aware that a number of my colleagues respond to initiatives like the PBRF as if they were signals saying "You've been walking in the wrong direction and this is the way to go". So I suspect that I may find myself more alienated from some of my colleagues than was previously the case if, as I anticipate, they become very enthusiastic about the notion that academics are not engaged in some collaborative exploration of their subject but instead, are in a competition to see who, according to the rules that are now being spelt out somehow from above, can win the prizes or accumulate the most points in some sort of scoring system.

There are a number of interesting discourses in Alec's response. To begin with, Alec not only provides us with a glimpse of his own attitudes towards research and academic life, he also speaks for his colleagues, predicting how they may respond to PBRF related policies. Alec believed that PBRF encouraged academics to pursue a competitive career path as part of what might be constituted as the expected behaviour of a 'good' academic subject. Later, Alec went on to describe his own conduct as a legitimate act of resistance that makes sense within the discursive subjection of academics as society's "critic and conscience". However, Alec also indicated that he suspected that he might encounter new limitations on the choices and opportunities made available to him because of his unwillingness to change. In other words, by continuing to "stick to" his "own vision of what academic life is about", Alec believed that he could face further 'alienation' from peers and that this was likely to be detrimental to his academic career.

Another interesting discourse in Alec's response correlates with the narratives of the majority of participants who believed PBRF would not change how they viewed their professional selves or the research practices they engaged in. In this study, several participants defended their subject positions and, in doing so, could be understood as 'defended subjects'. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) describe the notion of a 'defended subject' as the need by an individual to defend and protect themselves against "feelings of anxiety" associated with the discursive situation they may find themselves in (p. 59). In positioning themselves as a 'defended subject', individuals will report a weakness (or submission to norms or regimes such as PBRF) in their
colleagues as though they are stronger than their colleagues in resisting normative pressures (Wetherell, 1999). Alec's assertion that his colleagues are likely to respond to PBRF as though it says “You've been walking in the wrong direction and this is the way to go” provides an example that captures this best. Using Hollway and Jefferson (2000), I suggest that Alec positions himself as a “defended subject” to protect his own professional identity by “investing in a discourse of an idealised past” (his own “vision” of academic life) and by critiquing the predicted actions of his colleagues to justify his own (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, pp. 59-60).

The irony of Alec’s position as a ‘defended subject’ is that in identifying the ‘weaknesses’ of his colleagues and using them to justify and protect his own subject position, he is now able to make discursive shifts in that position without compromising it. Although there is no indication that Alec intends to shift, the potential now exists for Alec to reconsider aspects of his position in respect of PBRF. Alec can now make adaptations to his practices to conform to PBRF, justifying any change as minor and necessary, but not as extreme as the shift made by his ‘weaker’ colleagues in deciding that “this is the way to go”.

Where Alec expressed his determination to maintain his current academic subjection despite the discursive imposition of PBRF, Freddie also set about defending his existing position as an academic subject but in a way that was supportive of PBRF. Freddie, who believed that his department would not perform well in the evaluation exercise, expressed concerns about the possibility that PBRF could determine the success and failure of academic departments in New Zealand. In his first interview Freddie had shared similar views to those expressed previously by Edith regarding how various government bureaucrats might interpret and respond to PBRF outcomes:

I can see [PBRF] more easily leading to concentration of resources in my [subject] area. By far the best group in the country would be in [another New Zealand university], partly because they're much bigger than us but there is some very good people there too. I can imagine that an exercise like [PBRF], you know, can say, “So look at them, great, look at them, excellence there with all these great features”. That then
would lead to [the group in the other New Zealand university] being more likely to get FRST [Foundation of Research, Science and Technology] funding, Marsden funding... [laughs and ends].

Like Edith, Freddie appeared to identify the potential for some departments in his subject area across New Zealand to receive preferential funding and treatment on a variety of levels because of their success in the Quality Evaluation exercise. As such, Freddie went on to state, “I can see one [subject-based] department in the country that’s certain to close, I would say, as a consequence of [PBRF]”. However, in responding to these concerns Freddie claimed that he was already an active researcher and publisher (he ultimately scored a ‘B’ as part of the 2003 Quality Evaluation) and therefore, there was no reason for him to make any changes to his current conduct and practice. In his final interview Freddie claimed that he was positioned as an academic subject who had done well in terms of research prior to PBRF and by maintaining the characteristics of that subjection (his emphasis towards research and publishing) he would continue to do well in spite of PBRF. Therefore, Freddie, like Alec (albeit in a different context), was able to justify his determination to stick to a particular ‘vision’ of what he perceived academic life to be about. Because of this perceived sense of justification, Freddie raised concerns that others in his department did not share his attitudes about being active researchers and publishers, and this worried him. In particular, Freddie claimed that his Head of Department had been reluctant to make “necessary” changes in response to PBRF by choosing to remain “focused on student numbers” and by not encouraging “more active research” within the department. In his final interview Freddie made a number of critical statements about his Head of Department and the approach the Head of Department was taking in response to PBRF:

What is difficult for me is that there is very little response to the question I ask about why they’re [more senior academics within his department] not doing research. It seems to be a personal attack on people that they just don’t respond to. Maybe it’s something they don’t want to discuss in any sort of public way. [Pause] And there’s no message through the Head of Department to the department that anything’s happening.
Freddie then suggested that, “I think there’s been a bit of an Ostrich mentality hoping that the whole thing just goes away.” Freddie went on to promote the same need for ‘others’ to comply with PBRF that was formerly promoted by Edith:

You would hope [said with emphasis] that he [the Head of Department] would respond. In some instances in my department it’s not always obvious what they are doing. But PBRF might change the way that our group as a whole views research which, to me, could be another silver lining in that I would hope it would automatically lead to, you know, instead of people constantly worrying about [student numbers] and stuff, I’m much more interested in discussing research.

What Freddie appears to be describing here is the way that certain subject positions become legitimated or negated within particular discursive fields. Freddie believes that it is essential for academics do the best they can by PBRF because their actions could determine the success or failure of their academic department. Fortunately for Freddie, who describes himself as a mid-career academic active in research and publishing, this requires little effort because he perceives himself as already meeting the legitimated subject conditions that PBRF requires of him. From Freddie’s perspective, the subject conditions for determining a ‘good’ academic within the discursive context of PBRF are the same as those that have always defined what a ‘good’ academic is. However, for those senior staff members in Freddie’s department such as his Head of Department, the norms of academic subjectivity they are constituted by are those that permeated higher education discourses in New Zealand prior to PBRF. Those discourses advocated institutional competition via student numbers and increasing student participation within institutions by developing and conducting popular courses, and offering ‘fashionable’ qualifications (Peters & Roberts, 1999). They did also include research and publishing as a condition of ‘good’ academic practice but only as part of a more holistic description that recognised and included other aspects of academics’ professional conduct such as ‘quality’ teaching and active community service. In this sense, although Freddie “would hope” for a change in what ‘others’ in his department are doing, Nairn, Higgins, Thompson, Anderson and Fu (2006) are likely to argue that their “degree of
conformity” will depend upon how the new subject conditions advocated by PBRF compares with their belief in their own current academic subjection (p. 292).

In other words, although Freddie appears willing to comply with PBRF, the conditions by which he must comply are not abhorrent to him because they have been presented to him as a familiar and ‘common-sense’ way of being that appears to reflect how Freddie has always positioned himself. That is, the various technologies of the self that Freddie must take up as part of governing his conduct in relation to PBRF mirror those he had taken up prior to PBRF. However, in the case of Freddie’s senior colleagues, and particularly his Head of Department, the new discursive conditions for determining a ‘good’ academic are not the same as those that were expected prior to PBRF’s implementation and this requires a greater degree of change. This is a tension that was highlighted in Alec’s positioning as a ‘defended subject’. In this sense, although the discursive conditions for a ‘good’ academic advocated by PBRF now exist as part of the hegemonic norms associated with Freddie’s particular subjection, this does not mean academics will automatically conform to PBRF. While some, like Freddie, may argue that for various reasons, PBRF “is the way to go”, it is possible that others, like Alec, may continue to “stick to [their] own vision of what academic life is about” even if that vision goes against the subjected norms that PBRF promotes (Nairn et al., 2006).

Compliant or agentic subjects?

Broadhead and Howard (1998) claim that as academics adopt various technologies of the self towards compliance, they are likely to become less effective in challenging the processes that require their compliance. Broadhead and Howard (1998) attribute this to the gradual docility that becomes a part of any form of subjection and to the degree to which “disciplinary logic is embedded in the academic system” (p. 1). However, although there is a government rationality underpinning PBRF that encourages docility via technologies of production and power, this does not mean that all those who adopt a compliant approach when engaging with PBRF have become ineffective in challenging it.
Alfred’s response to PBRF is a good example. Alfred, whose academic career had extended beyond two decades, was the strongest advocate for PBRF in this study. He indicated in all his interviews that he was feeling very positive about the role PBRF would play in shaping his position as an active researcher. He believed that PBRF would not change his professional practice, only enhance it. In his first interview he began to explain how PBRF could achieve this by describing how his professional life had changed over the years prior to the implementation of PBRF:

I used to come in to work, walk into a lecture, give a lecture, walk out and go to the lab. That was basically it, giving lectures wasn’t any strain at all. Now we spend an immense amount of time with, I think, a completely unnecessary administrative load. We also suffer the frustration that what we teach is forced to be progressively dumbed down and dumbed down to cope with the lower and lower common denominator and we get penalised if we try to inspire the bright students by telling them things that are difficult.

Whereas other participants who had discussed these concerns had identified PBRF as a further burden in addition to that “completely unnecessary administrative load”, Alfred reiterated his optimism during his final interview by stating:

People are quite explicitly positive about [PBRF]. I think that people in the department have felt that their daily lives have been intruded constantly by trivial administrative and needless administrative tasks and paper work and so on. We are using PBRF as a tool to reduce the number of departmental committees and to reduce the administrative load on those who would rather just do research activities.

To prove that everybody in his department was positive about PBRF, Alfred went on to claim that:

[I]n my department everybody has volunteered to state what their grades were, or at least, to go to the Head of Department. And also we have asked to get our individual reports back from the [Tertiary Education Commission] so that the Department can do an analysis on who got what and try and work out what the real criteria are from the perspective that this is going to drive the department in terms of where we’ve got to go.

There is no doubt that Alfred saw PBRF as representing one of the most positive shifts in tertiary education policy that he had experienced for a number of years. While other participants of this study expressed some positive feelings about PBRF
and the evaluation exercise, Alfred's total support for the changes made him unique. However, what is interesting about Alfred's account is that he also assumed that all of his colleagues felt the same way about PBRF as he did. When he claimed that everybody in his department "volunteered to state what their grades were", Alfred neglected the possibility for any contested understanding of how 'voluntary' that process may have been.

Nevertheless, although Alfred did not criticise or challenge PBRF, this did not mean that he was unable to do so. Alfred simply believed that he had no reason to challenge or criticise PBRF. He believed that the funding model would rectify a disproportionate attention to teaching that had resulted due to competitive student-based funding models applied throughout the 1990s. Alfred was optimistic about the way he believed PBRF would re-emphasise the importance of research. The point is, although Alfred appeared to be complying with PBRF initiatives, this did not mean that he was responding to those initiatives as a compliant subject. On the contrary, Alfred's accounts indicate his strong desire to go along with PBRF rather than challenge it, and they suggest that he is actively choosing his 'compliant' response. In other words, Alfred's response to PBRF appears to be an agentic one: he is walking in the right direction because for him, PBRF is "the way to go".

However, most participants in this study expressed varying degrees of optimism and pessimism over PBRF and as such, it was often difficult to determine whether individuals were being compliant or agentic because sometimes their accounts of their actions were inconsistent with their accounts of PBRF. Anne demonstrated this best. During her first interview Anne was quite critical of PBRF and compared it to the previous student-based funding model that had been used in New Zealand during the 1990s. In her critical comparison she asserted that during the 1990s the approach was to fund tertiary education institutions on the basis of the number of students they managed to enrol. The result, according to Anne, was that institutions went out and attempted to attract as many students as possible to increase their eligibility for funding. As such, Anne commented that:
[W]e had as many students as we could have and we got the money we deserved and that was that. But why go out of your way to kill yourself one way or another? Why change what you do to the point where you hate it, just to get some more people?

Using this as her frame of reference, Anne went on the state:

And the same thing is true with the research thing. Okay PBRF is going to reward people who are doing different amounts of research and different quality of research. But why would you go, I mean, you’d want to do high quality research because of the high quality research. Why would you go out of your way to do something you hated just for that purpose? You know, it isn’t in my particular mind-set to do that.

Anne’s point was relatively straightforward. She believed that academics wanted to do high quality research for the sake of the research itself and not for the purposes of fulfilling the assessment regime of some government-driven funding instrument. According to Anne, although PBRF was designed to reward academics for doing ‘good’ research, it was only rewarding them for doing what they already intended to do. Anne’s final statement, “it isn’t in my particular mind-set to do that”, implied that Anne would not engage in research simply to compete with other academics as part of any assessment and funding exercise.

However, after stating this position, Anne, who was assigned a quality score of ‘B’ in the evaluation exercise, went on to make the following seemingly contradictory statement as part of the same interview:

Academics are competitive. They’re so bloody awful, they’re incredibly competitive [pause]. And I think there will be people who are like “I’m going to be an ‘A’ next time no matter what”, and I guess they’ll do what it takes, um, whatever they perceive it is that that will take. And I have to say that, you know, I had the same sort of feelings. It would be much better to be an ‘A’ thank you very much next time.

Suddenly it was in Anne’s “mind-set to do that”: to go out and compete with other academics for high scores in an assessment and funding exercise. PBRF requires academics to take up specific technologies of the self that enables them to think competitively and to strive for higher scores by producing ‘better quality’ research. Part of PBRF’s raison d’état is to construct a culture of research that can be
quantified into numbers and hierarchies that can be compared and differentiated for
the purpose of allocating institutional funding. This not only requires the
establishment of a competitive model of assessment to account for the research output
of academics, it requires academics to believe in the competitiveness of the system
enough to want to actively engage in it. In Anne’s case it appeared that she was
fundamentally opposed to notions of competition between universities, whether it be
by way of promoting student numbers or producing research outputs, until she was
confronted by PBRF’s technology of quality scores. Once confronted by those, her
thoughts shifted to thinking that perhaps “it would be much better to be an ‘A’ thank
you very much”. In other words, by claiming that “academics are competitive” and
positioning herself within that context, Anne is indicating a possibility that she could
adapt her professional practice to pursue the new ‘official’ signs and symbols of
PBRF in order to continue to legitimate herself as an academic subject.

Another participant who demonstrated some inconsistencies in his narrative
that indicated possibilities for normative compliance was Harold, a senior academic
and long-time Head of Department in a vocational school. At one stage during his
final interview, after criticising PBRF as a subjective assessment exercise that failed
to account for research undertaken in a professional programme such as the one that
he was involved in, Harold went on to describe how he had approached the inaugural
evaluation exercise:

I think that my experience has been, “Well, so we’re through that, just
another administrative hassle”. It’s a part of ranking the university. It’s
a part of life. So I will look to see how I modify my actions and seek to
optimise the ranking next time. While life carries on, I’m nevertheless
modifying my actions in order to ensure that we do as well as we can
next time [pause]. It is affecting my approach in terms of what I do with
the research, but not the research itself.

What Harold described here is a form of procedural compliance in which he would
continue to do research that he deemed to be important and fundamental to his subject
area, but that in engaging in that research he would have to be mindful of PBRF. The
important point is that during his interview Harold affirmed his intention to continue
with the type of research he had always done. The only difference is that along the
way he would make the necessary concessions to satisfy PBRF criteria in relation to
what he did with the research so that he retained his position within academia that
allowed him to engage in his preferred areas of research.

At first Harold’s approach sounds as though it might be a positive and
practical one because it allows him to engage with PBRF without having to change
his focus in terms of research. However, Harold went on to assert:

Although it’s been time consuming I think it’s been useful for our staff
to go through an evaluation process and focus the mind a little bit on, as
an individual, where am I at in terms of research? I think it also has
potential to help us to make better decisions, probably more appropriate
decisions, in terms of some of our actions [pause]. I’m trying to think a
bit more strategically about how we do things, why we do them, with
the goal being to optimise our PBRF result. And if that optimisation of
a PBRF result has been to the detriment of wider community education
and understanding, well, so be it.

Although Harold began by seemingly advocating procedural compliance as part of a
more holistic and pragmatic approach to engaging in research, he then appeared to be
swayed by PBRF’s discursive rhetoric. Suddenly PBRF could “focus the mind”,
encourage academics to think about where they are “in terms of research” and
position themselves to make “more appropriate decisions” regarding it. PBRF could
enable academics to think “strategically” about what they are doing with their
research so that they could “optimise” their PBRF results in the future. This is no
longer the account of someone promoting the idea of engaging with another “time
consuming”...“administrative hassle” just to get it done so that they can continue
their focus on more important research activities. Harold was now advocating
compliance even to “the detriment of wider community education and
understanding”. It is a contrary position to his earlier one and it suggests that Harold
is not simply responding to PBRF’s procedural elements, he is conforming to its
normative pressures too.
"I don’t want to morally prostitute myself on the backs of other people"

Although Anne and Harold’s accounts show how some participants of this study, to varying degrees, appear to be swayed by the disciplinary logic of PBRF and described their conduct in ways that indicated conformity to its normative pressures, not all of the academics in this study positioned themselves in this way. For example, Angus, whose research interests were in developing practical solutions for issues affecting Māori, described the potential in his procedural compliance to create a space for resistance and change:

[PBRF is] something that I have to learn to live with and turn into a weapon. Before it was an encumbrance, something to be avoided, something that pissed me off. But now my view of it is stop moaning, harness it, make it work.

He went on to elaborate:

PBRF has changed my view of research in that it’s something I don’t have a lot of choice about. If I want to stay here and enjoy it here then I’ve got to be good at it. So that’s why, for me, my approach [pause] has to become aggressive and try and turn [PBRF] into something positive, and that’s what I’m trying to do.

Angus’ desire to “harness” PBRF as a “weapon” that will sustain his career demonstrates how academics may choose to be compliant without understanding themselves as docile and compliant. For Angus, positioning himself as an academic who fulfilled the procedural requirements of PBRF presented him with greater opportunities to advance his own specific research agenda: one that involved empowering Māori communities. As such, Angus was able to see a role that PBRF could play in determining his professional status that also allowed him to act independently from it. In other words, Angus saw a potential whereby he could engage with PBRF in order to resist it.

Despite Angus’ determination to use PBRF as a “weapon” to foster his own research agenda, he was also aware that any level of compliance to PBRF also required a degree of conformity as well. According to Foucault’s (1978) early analysis of agency and resistance, resistance occurred within the reappropriation of
local conflicts via the reversal of relations and by contesting the disciplinary impositions of power on subjects. Hartmann (2003) argues that the problem with this form of resistance is that it is an entirely reactive model, reacting to the exercise of power by others, rather than being “a positive action in its own terms” (p. 4). In other words, to be constituted as an academic subject capable of challenging and resisting the discursive formation of PBRF by using it as a “weapon” to fulfil his own research agenda, Angus believed it necessary to adopt certain practices associated with PBRF first. Despite seeing this as a way to position himself as a subject who could create spaces for resistance and change, Angus was concerned that there was a moral dilemma associated with this approach:

I weigh that up against the idea of being a prostitute because I don’t want to morally prostitute myself on the backs of other people. Especially when your research is on people who are having a miserable time over something. I have moral problems with riding on their backs for the sake of getting a few publications and it’s like this idea of trading on the surplus value of people. So my moral dilemma is that, I don’t want to... [pause] and I think that PBRF forces you to do that. It forces you to trade on the surplus value of other people that we loosely refer to as ‘participants’ or ‘respondents’.

Angus’ metaphor of “prostituting one’s self” was not unique to this study. Alec, Trevor and Tim also used the phrase to describe the idea of ‘selling out one’s professional identity’ for the sake of a better quality score and a higher status within the academic hierarchy. The expression “prostituting one’s self”, used predominantly by men to describe a sense of feeling compromised, appears to draw on a particular discursive construction of ‘prostitution’ as a “social institution predicated on an essential female patholog" (Wagener, 1998, p. 159). This discursive construction of ‘prostitution’ presupposes that in certain situations and contexts, individuals (women who are prostitutes) are “biologically and morally predisposed” to conduct themselves in specific ways (Wagener, p. 159). In using an expression generally predicated upon an assumed sexual immorality of certain types of women, Angus described his dilemma by identifying the various compromised subject positions that he would need to contend with while trying to find ways to resist and challenge the normative pressures associated with PBRF. Angus’ dilemma can be conceptualised in
terms of a particular technology of the self, namely Foucault’s (1984, 2003a) Christian hermeneutics mode, whereby the actions that Angus believes he has to take conflict with those he feels morally obligated to take. For academics to create spaces for agency and resistance, they must first constitute their role as an academic through the various discourses and practices that serve to objectify what an academic is and does. If the various discourses and practices that government institutions use to subject academics include acts of compliance and conformity as part of that subjection, then to be an academic will mean to 'conform' and to 'comply'. For Angus, there would always be a dilemma that in trying to position himself as an academic who could use PBRF as a “weapon”, his constituted ‘predisposition’ to adhere to the discursive context of PBRF (imagined in terms of an assumed sexualised deviancy of certain types of women) could outweigh his agentic desire to resist it.

Chapter summary and conclusion

In identifying various ways in which PBRF could facilitate a form of normative compliance to support a new institutional raison d’état, this chapter has explored how various participants in this study positioned themselves in relation to their experience of the inaugural 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise. Tim believed that PBRF had been introduced as a new instrument of surveillance so that more of an academic’s time was being taken up with administrative requirements designed to account for and direct their performance and conduct. He believed that within the discursive formation of PBRF, academics had to “run a lot harder” just to fulfil the various conditions being set for them as part of their professional obligations to employers and government. Edith claimed that there were good reasons why academics should consider taking PBRF more seriously by engaging with it as productively as they possibly could. Freddie shared some of Edith’s concerns and hoped that PBRF might encourage his more senior colleagues to think about PBRF and focus more on their research instead of worrying about student numbers. Gary claimed that PBRF was forcing him to make changes to his practice just to sustain his academic career. Alec
defended his position not to change by identifying ‘weaknesses’ in his colleagues who considered PBRF was “the way to go” as a means to justify his “own vision” of what academic life was about. Alfred considered that PBRF was “the way to go” because for him, it represented a positive change towards re-emphasising the importance of research in tertiary education policy. Both Anne and Harold were convinced that PBRF would not change their approach to research although Anne was now thinking that “it would be much better to be an ‘A’” and Harold believed that academics could use PBRF to make “more appropriate decisions” about their research. Finally, Angus saw the possibility for harnessing PBRF as a “weapon” to create spaces for resistance and change but conceded that by doing so, he could potentially compromise the research agenda he was trying to advance.

By drawing on the variety of experiences described by the participants of this study, this chapter has demonstrated various ways that the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise arguably represents a technology of government that targets the activities and practices of New Zealand’s academics. As a form of governmentality, PBRF locates and classifies academics in their field, internalises the discipline of the ‘good’ academic, and facilitates acts of self-regulation to ensure that academics strive to become a ‘good’ PBRF academic. The various technologies that are played out within the PBRF environment operate together to shape academics within a particular discourse that not only serves to make them identifiable and recognisable as academics to others, it also makes them identifiable and recognisable to themselves (Foucault, 1994d, p. 331). In considering the experiences of the participants in this study and paraphrasing Foucault’s (1977, p. 170) statement used at the outset of this chapter, I conclude that the PBRF Quality Evaluation is a specific form of governmentality that has the capacity to ‘make’ academics, using them both as objects and instruments of its exercise.
CHAPTER 7

“It’s going to create issues on promotion”:

Examining the role that PBRF plays in shaping academic careers

Over time we might expect to see new symbolic economies at work in decisions over promotion, appointment and salaries in universities. (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 196)

Introduction

Although the current Labour-led Government (elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2005) has continued to promote ‘partnership’, ‘participation’ and ‘inclusion’ as part of its ‘knowledge society’ discourse (Ashcroft & Nairn; 2004, Codd, 2002; Roberts, 2002), it has also continued to emphasise the need to develop a neo-liberal culture of enterprise in New Zealand through skills acquisition and entrepreneurship (Harvey, 2002). Combine this with a system of contestable funding such as Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF), and New Zealand’s tertiary education sector becomes one in which institutions and individuals are pitted against each other, trying to gain their own competitive advantage (Roberts, 2003). In this competitive environment it is likely that some institutions (and individuals) will succeed while others may not. Now that the 2003 Quality Evaluation has identified and defined the successful and not-so successful tertiary education institutions in New Zealand, it will become increasingly difficult with each successive evaluation for the not-so-successful institutions to regain ‘lost’ ground. The same may apply for academics. While some may be willing to make public their successful PBRF rankings so that success in careers and opportunities may follow, those who choose not to make a disclosure (and therefore risk being perceived as having a poor PBRF ranking) may be divested of career prospects and opportunities. Notwithstanding those individuals who either do have a poor ranking, or are perceived to have one, are likely to carry
the burden associated with their real or perceived ranking until the next PBRF evaluation.

This chapter examines the potential for the PBRF framework to shift from being simply a mechanism for distributing funds for research on the basis of implied quality of research outputs to one that identifies and rewards the most ‘talented’ researchers via institutional appointments and promotions. It begins by examining the mechanisms within discursive formations such as PBRF that shape the professional conduct and subjection of individuals (academics). This is followed by a discussion on how PBRF and the evaluation exercise are likely to become primary factors for determining the career opportunities available to academics in New Zealand. This includes evidence demonstrating that, as a consequence of the inaugural evaluation, a number of New Zealand universities have already made changes, or are in the process of making changes, to their internal appointment and promotion procedures. Finally, the chapter investigates the direct impact that those changes are having on the participants of this study. The chapter concludes by arguing that PBRF is likely to become an instrument capable of shaping academic careers in New Zealand and that this will foster an environment where academics feel anxious, insecure and “paranoid” about the way they are being positioned and judged in their working environment.

“I think they will end up tying it to promotion”: Using PBRF to shape academic careers

In 2001 the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (2001c) argued that there was a “positive relationship between the use of explicit incentives for performance and the actual effort expended by academic researchers” (p. 88). Small (2005) asserts that it is possible to perceive the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework as a competition for the attainment of scores that can be used as a form of currency that academics trade against various institutional incentive schemes for individual opportunity and success. He has observed that as a consequence of the 2003 evaluation exercise, a number of university managers throughout New Zealand have signaled their intention to use
PBRF quality scores as an incentive that can be linked to staff advancement and remuneration as well as departmental teaching loads (Small, 2005).

In New Zealand prior to the advent of PBRF, most universities appointed staff either through a tenure or confirmation path process. In the case of the University of Otago, as one example, the current confirmation path for an academic is five years (University of Otago, 2005a). During this time, progress reports are requested from the Head of Department, Dean (where applicable) and Assistant Vice-Chancellor at twelve monthly intervals after appointment. Confirmation of appointment normally occurs six months before the completion of the initial five-year term so long as the candidate has demonstrated satisfactory performance in teaching, assessment and curriculum development, research, and professional practice and service (University of Otago, 2005a). In other words, appointments have generally been made by a process of peer review that has profiled an individual’s entire academic and professional practice in order to account for the individual’s total contribution to the institution.

In Britain, experiences associated with the implementation and conduct of the Research Assessment Exercise (as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis) can be used to demonstrate PBRF’s potential to provide institutional managers with a new set of instruments and technologies for redesigning institutional appointment and promotion procedures. There has been growing concern in the United Kingdom regarding the degree to which the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has undermined and distorted academic appointments and promotion procedures in British higher education (Association of University Teachers, 1998). According to Becher and Trowler (2001), the RAE has enabled institutional managers in Britain to gate-keep and determine who belongs within the academic community and who does not. For example, in a study conducted by the British Association of University Teachers (1998) it was evident that most academic staff had come to believe that normal appointment procedures within their university departments were being circumvented in a quest to attract and appoint “star” academics who had the
immediate potential to boost the department’s RAE rating (p. 24). As a consequence, for most academic staff across Britain, there appeared to be a universal lack of confidence in the fairness, objectivity and transparency of institutional appointment and promotions procedures and that this was a direct result of the RAE (Association of University Teachers, 1998).

In this present study three participants, namely Beth, Lloyd and Tim, had experienced first hand how the RAE influenced opportunities made available to academics in the United Kingdom. For Tim, who had spent some time working in a university in Britain, the relationship between the RAE and career opportunities was quite apparent:

I have sat alongside a Dean in a [department] in the UK while they were going through potential academic recruits for a lectureship and the basic initial screening process was “these are returnable”, that means they have four publications within the period, “these are not returnable”. All the non-returnable recruits or potential recruits were simply not going to be a part of the process for interview.

Tim’s statement provides us with anecdotal evidence that supports the British Association of University Teachers’ (1998) assertion that “the RAE is known to have affected the appointment... of academic staff” (p. 12). Given the role that the RAE appears to have played as both a technology of production and power shaping academic careers and opportunities in Britain, it is hardly surprising that some participants in this study saw the same potential for PBRF to shape the careers and opportunities available to academics in New Zealand. Harold, who described only a vague and rudimentary knowledge of Britain’s RAE rather than direct experience of it, provided a good example of this:

I can see that it’s going to create issues on promotion though because people who have rated well will obviously make that statement on their promotions’ statement and those who perhaps haven’t, may not, you know? Silence [pause], that raises the question among the promotions committee, “is silence a defacto indication that my research isn’t as good as I’m trying to make out here?”

Another participant, Freddie, explained that he would not want to include his PBRF quality score as part of any future job application under any circumstance.
During his second interview Freddie described his quality score as representing a sign or symbol that did not compare with the other signs and symbols that he might ordinarily use when trying to present a favourable impression of himself to prospective employers:

I came out [of the 2003 evaluation exercise] with a 'B'. I don’t know what to expect an 'A' is because you hear various things about [pause]. Well, you don’t really know because it’s the first time we’ve all done it. Who really knows what’s going to be an ‘A’? What is it? When applying for a job, I would not actually feel that I want to tell people that I was graded a ‘B’ because it doesn’t sound as good as the rest of what I could put on my CV [laughs].

Although the ‘official’ discourse of PBRF had already implied that Evidence Portfolios and quality scores should not be used for the purposes of institutional promotions (Ministry of Education, 2002a; Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a), Neale and Roberts (2005) argue that the reality is likely to be different. With the Ministry of Education (2002b) stating that quality scores “may be useful in staff promotion and recruitment” (p. 21), Neale and Roberts (2005) believe that it is reasonable for academics that scored well out of the evaluation exercise to anticipate being rewarded for their success. They also suggest that for those who did not perform well, feelings of worthlessness and insecurity in terms of career and opportunity could follow (Neale & Roberts, 2005). Davies (2003) claims that academics who feel perpetually monitored, evaluated and judged for their performance and output will often begin to track and “correct” their professional activity to make themselves “legitimate subjects” in accordance with the criteria established by the various evaluation and audit processes undertaken by management (p. 92).

Interestingly, Investing in Excellence (Ministry of Education, 2002b) also asserted that “it should not automatically be assumed that there would be a close correlation between an individual’s research score and their overall level of achievement or academic standing” (p. 21). This is because PBRF was designed to take a ‘snapshot’ of academic activity so as to make judgements about the funding of institutions. Nevertheless, because PBRF now exists as an ‘official’ discourse
describing the productivity and value of research, and because this is being espoused by the Tertiary Education Commission (2004a) as the most "comprehensive, systematic and authoritative" assessment of research ever undertaken in New Zealand (p. 9), it is highly likely that individual quality scores will become a significant symbolic indicator of an academic’s capability from their employer’s perspective.

The potential for this was best explained by Angus when I spoke with him for the final time in November 2004. In our previous conversation, a telephone interview in May following the release of the 2003 evaluation results, Angus had expressed a concern about whether PBRF would remain independent of institutional staff recruitment, retention, promotion and conditions of employment. In light of that earlier conversation and his general experience of his institution’s response to the release of the 2003 results, I asked how he felt about these issues now. He responded:

I think if anything, there’s more evidence now that those worries are going to come true. I think they will end up tying it to promotion. I have a friend who recently applied for a senior lectureship and was turned down in terms of their research. I don’t know what else they can do in terms of their research.

Trevor concurred:

I think that the definition of the job for an academic is increasingly defined in terms of outputs and success in research. I think that one of the effects of the PBRF is to have stated this loudly and clearly.

However, Angus had also begun to consider his own career aspirations in terms of PBRF, directly aligning opportunities for promotion with particular evaluation outcomes:

I want to get a ‘B’. I want to get a ‘B’ because I think that’s enough as far as I’m concerned. And I also want a senior lectureship and I think that a ‘B’ and a senior lectureship go together.

The association that Angus makes between a quality score of ‘B’ and the position of a senior lecturer indicates how he has adopted a new way of measuring and identifying what is required to be a senior lecturer. There is no indication given as to why Angus might believe that a ‘B’ and a senior lectureship go together. For whatever reason, Angus has reached a particular understanding about PBRF and regardless of the
accuracy or rationale behind his current belief, the belief itself becomes a part of an ‘official’ discourse that now informs Angus about the relationship between PBRF and his career. As such, it does not matter why Angus believes that a ‘B’ and a senior lectureship go together but rather, that he does believe it. In other words, the various conclusions that Angus draws from his experiences ("that a ‘B’ and a senior lectureship go together"), alongside the decisions he now makes in respect of them, provides a good example of how subjection occurs by demonstrating that Angus’ actions are being constituted in PBRF discourse.

Having assigned a credential value to PBRF quality scores, Angus then went on to discuss various ways that he believed his PBRF ranking of ‘R’ might affect his academic career. Angus still considered himself to be a new and emerging researcher, despite having been employed as a lecturer within his institution for almost a decade, and he believed that because he was yet to prove himself to his employer, he would receive little support in fostering his research potential:

Because I’m one of the staff who hasn’t done well under PBRF and I wouldn’t put that down to the system that’s PBRF, part of that is down to me so I own that for what it is. But I don’t think that our department will be favourably treated because of my lack of research outputs. My suspicion is that the ones that haven’t done well under PBRF will be left to sort it out for themselves and will be told [pause] and again, it’s this idea of a market-based approach [pause] the losers have to become winners. In that approach they are not helped to become winners, they somehow stand there and become them.

For Angus, PBRF appears to be about individual professional accountability and it was his expectation that his department would suffer as a consequence of his ‘poor’ contribution towards its overall PBRF ranking. This highlights Angus’s sense of ‘stakeholdership’ in terms of the tensions that exist in policies like PBRF between individual accountability and collective responsibility. Further, Angus believed that there was unlikely to be any institutional support offered to people in his position, those who were struggling to launch or sustain their academic career. Having identified a market-based discourse inherent to PBRF whereby the focus was on ‘outputs’ and competition, creating potential winners and losers where even the losers
were held to account for their actions, Angus perceived that the onus would be upon him to become a ‘winner’ or face the consequences. This corresponds to the discursive construction of the neo-liberal subject (as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis). Within neo-liberal discourses individuals like Angus are expected to shoulder responsibility for their own actions because it is assumed that their conduct is predicated on pursuits of self-opportunism (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004). By making relevant choices and undertaking appropriate measures to rectify any inefficiencies or inadequacies that PBRF highlights in his/her conduct and work, an individual like Angus should be able to improve upon a quality score of ‘R’ at the next evaluation because, as a neo-liberal subject, they will be motivated to do so.

According to Devos (2000), the various techniques and operations that governments use as part of the discursive implementation of policies like PBRF play a significant role in constructing academic subjects by manufacturing a set of universal ‘truths’ about what ‘good’ academic practice is. Described by Foucault (2003a) as a technology of production, these universal ‘truths’ or discourses have a tendency to penetrate and become part of the managerial decisions made by institutions about their staff. In this sense, it should hardly be surprising that immediately following the release of the 2003 Quality Evaluation results in April 2004, a number of universities in New Zealand began to review their internal appointments and promotions procedures. For example, in the same month that the results were released, Victoria University in Wellington circulated a memorandum regarding staff applications for promotion. The memorandum stated that any academic staff “applying for a promotion must comply with the following... ...Publications and other outcomes should be listed in the categories which conform in style to the PBRF template” (Victoria University, 2004, p. 3, original emphasis). Also in the same month, the University of Otago’s Division of Humanities released a new set of guidelines for the confirmation of academic appointments. According to the University of Otago (2004), not only were academics seeking confirmation path appointments expected to produce publications that were consistent with the Tertiary Education Commission’s definition of ‘research’, they were expected to “gain a
minimum assessment of ‘research active’ in the PBRF appraisal” (p. 2). However, it should be noted that there is no category within the ‘official’ Quality Evaluation discourse to indicate that an academic is ‘research inactive’. Although it is generally assumed that a quality score of ‘R’ signifies that an academic is ‘research inactive’, this does not mean that all those who rated as ‘R’ are not currently engaged in research activity. Rather, it simply means that they have not attained the level of research activity required and measured by the Quality Evaluation framework (as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis). It has been a widespread confusion between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ interpretations of PBRF discourse that has allowed a quality score of ‘R’ to become the recognised symbolic and legitimately accepted indicator that someone is ‘research inactive’.

In a third example, at a council meeting in December 2004, the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) of the University of Waikato announced a collective decision “to make a number of new appointments in areas of strategic importance in relation to the PBRF” (University of Waikato, 2004, p. 2). Finally, at the institution that is home to the participants of this study there was an unprecedented increase in the number of applications for promotion to senior lectureship immediately following the release of the first PBRF evaluation scores. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that the increase in such applications directly correlated with a perceived validation of individual scores. For example, in this study Anne had noted that:

Some people who had applied for a promotion did mention what their scores were in their personal statement and I think more people applied for Associate Professor this year than usual because they had actually done quite well in PBRF and they had this kind of objective statement saying “You’re better than you think you are”. So I think there were more applications for certain kinds of promotions than is normal because of PBRF.

For Anne, who had acted as an observer representing the New Zealand Association of University Staff on her institution’s promotions round that followed the release of the inaugural evaluation results, there was a perception that individuals with good PBRF scores now felt vindicated about their status within the institution.
The inclusion of quality scores in individuals’ personal statements or Curriculum Vitae indicated that some academics were assigning a credential value to those scores (as had Angus in linking a ‘B’ to the position of senior lecturer). As such, some academics had identified PBRF quality scores as a technology of sign systems and, by doing so, were using them in ways that supported the discursive formation of PBRF and the government’s rationality for change.

It is interesting to consider Anne’s idea that some academics perceived their success in the assessment exercise as an objective statement that suggested that they were somehow better than they thought they were. Anne’s observations highlight the way that PBRF operates as a technique of governmentality designed to respond to, and become a part of, academics’ ongoing pursuits for affirmation and legitimation. As already outlined in Chapter Five of this thesis, the subjection of academics generally begins even before they enter their profession, during their many years as students where they are perpetually examined, assessed and rewarded (Broadhead & Howard, 1998). PBRF supports this ongoing quest for affirmation. Therefore, as Anne’s observations suggest, a number of academics (at least within Anne’s institution) felt justified in putting their names forward for promotion on the basis of their success in the 2003 Quality Evaluation and on that basis alone. However, what Anne’s observations fail to explain is why her colleagues would rate the affirmation provided by a single quality score in an assessment and funding exercise ahead of all the other indicators that they had previously drawn affirmation from prior to the implementation of PBRF. In other words, it is not entirely clear why some academics might suddenly perceive that their PBRF quality score represents an objective statement that indicates that they are better than all those other indicators had previously led them to believe. This represents another example of how dominant discourses attributed to PBRF can act as powerful constituting forces in the subjection of academics.
"The losers have to become winners": The discursive formation of career anxiety

In considering the potential role that Neale and Roberts (2005) believed PBRF would play in shaping the future career opportunities of academics in New Zealand, they expressed their concern about the way in which the Quality Evaluation framework impacted differentially on some groups. Of particular note, they argued that women and new staff were disadvantaged due to their disproportionate responsibilities for teaching and administration, and Māori were disadvantaged because of the way the paradigms that informed PBRF appeared to marginalise indigenous research (Neale & Roberts, 2005). For others (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2003), concerns about how the focus on research might draw attention away from performance and excellence in teaching have also been raised. Particularly given that the Tertiary Education Commission's (2003c) definition of an academic as someone who makes a "significant contribution to research activity and/or degree teaching" (p. 23) is something that Alcorn, Bishop, Cardno, Crooks, Fairbairn-Dunlop and Hattie et al., (2004) believe should be defined by the actions and conduct of one's practice rather than by terms and conditions in an employment contract. According to Alcorn et al., (2004), an employment contract should not specify how much time is devoted to research or teaching as though they are separate and independent activities. However, it should be noted that a number of universities in New Zealand, as well as those in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, have adopted 'workload models' designed to provide guidelines for the time their academics should spend separately on research and teaching. For example, New Zealand’s University of Otago (2005b) has adopted a generic workload model for its Division of Humanities that recommends 40% of an academic's time be spent on research and 40% on teaching (with the remaining 20% designated for service to the university and community).

This instrumentalist approach to accounting for an academic's time will only exacerbate the issues and concerns raised by Neale and Roberts (2005) in that it can set a benchmark against which any differentiation between groups (such as new and
emerging researchers, Māori and women) can be constituted as inefficiencies in practice. For example, Neale and Roberts (2005) noted that two focus groups, one at Victoria University in Wellington and the other at the University of Auckland, had criticised PBRF for the way it rested on the “hidden work of women” (p. 30). This ‘hidden work’ was identified as the work undertaken by women in areas of administration and research assistance that generally provided support for “visible (male) success” (p. 30). In this sense, Devos (2000) claims that for many women in academia, the discipline of the ‘good’ research academic is often personified in the form of a male colleague. In many cases, a female academic might compare their own practice and performance to that of their male colleagues and deem it inadequate; even in a situation where their performance is, in fact, comparable to or exceeds that of their male colleagues (p. 4).

In terms of Neale and Robert’s (2005) discussion on the “hidden work of women” (p. 30), there are also external pressures that could impact upon the research practice and career aspirations of women. Anne identified some of these in her first interview:

The other influence on when my research is going to be done and how much research I get to get done is unrelated to the university. It’s to do with my personal circumstances. I have two children and if they get sick or whatever, there’s a whole research day down the drain or whatever. So the calls of family life and, well you know, like there’s school holidays coming up, that’s two full weeks that I’m going to be overseas with the family instead, on annual leave, instead of working away and I could have made some more progress then. So I think the family circumstances can influence that as well.

In all my interviews with Anne it was apparent that the care of children was a major factor shaping her academic career. For example, in her first interview she described the two-year period when she stayed at home after giving birth as an interruption to her career. In her final interview she also referred to the inflexibility of her department heads and administrators in terms of scheduling meetings:

It’s interesting how people don’t consider those things. Like I don’t work on a Wednesday and I pick the children up early. Well, now the
Department’s gone and scheduled a meeting at 3.15 this Wednesday and I said, “Well, you know I won’t be there”.

It is important to consider Anne’s priorities as indicated by her narrative, particularly in relation to the connection between her family (whereby Anne is subjected as a ‘Mother’ who works outside the home) and her research (whereby Anne is subjected as an academic who happens to be married with children). As a Mother who happens to work outside the home, Anne is required to stay home and attend to her children whenever they are sick. However, as an academic subject, Anne equated this to a loss of research time. The same applied when Anne, in her subjected ‘mother’ role, was away vacationing with her family. In her alternative role as an academic, Anne described this as an interruption that temporarily placed her research and career on hold. It is also worth considering that Anne’s husband is also an academic employed at the same university as Anne (although he was not a participant in this study). It was Anne’s perception that because he was a male academic, these particular pressures did not affect his career in the same way that they impacted on hers. Indeed, by Anne’s account, it could be argued that her ‘hidden work’ as a female and ‘mother’ not only undermined the progress of her own career, it served to ensure her husband was positioned to take advantage of opportunities made available to him in respect of his career.

Anne’s experiences are indicative of a male dominated working environment whereby patriarchal discourses assign positive attributes to the importance of career and paid work, thereby assigning factors outside of these (including the unpaid role of motherhood) to the periphery of one’s priorities (Herd, 2005). Interestingly, of the three female participants in this study, Anne was the only one who identified these particular issues and concerns. However, of the twelve males who participated in this study, three, namely Freddie, Lloyd and Michael, did identify and describe the complexities of the relationship that existed between their subjection as academics and aspects of their lives outside of their academic careers. In particular, Michael found it difficult at times to reconcile his professional life and his life beyond academia:
It’s really a 24-hour job. Even sometimes you dream and wake up with some idea. I often feel that sometimes when I’m together with my family and with my friends, sometimes I do not think that my heart, my mind [stated with emphasis] is fully there.

Here Michael has identified the pervasive nature of the academic job, something that he believed had been exacerbated by PBRF. This was a problem that was directly identified by one-third of participants with several of these making references to their sleeping patterns while others commented on tensions within relationships. One male participant even suggested that a marital breakup had resulted because of the degree to which he had allowed his work to intrude into the home. For Michael, the problem was not simply one of identifying how much of his work was over-shadowing his personal and family life but rather, about the frustration of not knowing how to stop or even limit this from occurring.

For new and emerging researchers the difficulty faced was one of getting their research career off the ground. Boston, Mischewski and Smyth (2005) note that a disproportionately large number of new and emerging researchers scored in the ‘R’ category in the 2003 evaluation exercise. Further, for academics rated as ‘R’, the consensus was that they would be less valued by their employers than those whose ratings deemed them ‘research active’ (p. 65). The Tertiary Education Commission (2004a) had already recognised that for many staff rated as an ‘R’ and deemed ‘research inactive’ by their institutions; the effect could be “extremely demoralising” (p. 45). A workshop hosted by the Ministry of Education and the then Transition Tertiary Education Commission as early as September 2002, had identified the potential for PBRF to impact upon the opportunities made available to new and emerging researchers. According to the Ministry of Education (2002d), there was a concern that because PBRF would distribute funds via a bulk grant to institutions, this meant that there was no requirement by institutions to foster and support its new and emerging researchers.

In this study Beth was able to demonstrate this point by referring to one of her colleagues. This particular colleague was a new and emerging researcher who had
received a ranking of 'R' in the 2003 exercise and felt a high level of distress because of it. In her final interview Beth described how her colleague had reacted as a consequence of receiving a quality score of 'R':

It's very hard in terms of personal esteem for the individuals who get ranked 'R' or 'C'. I'm acutely aware of that because one of my colleagues who is extraordinarily, unreasonably distressed by having been ranked 'R' when she's been working her butt off for the last four years. I know exactly why she's so distressed. She so desperately wants a permanent post in this department. Before she did her PhD she was a senior teaching fellow. She's an excellent teacher with knowledge of areas for which it is hard to get good teachers, but she knows she will not be appointed to a permanent teaching role to a department unless she's a 'C' and preferably a 'B'.

This bears a striking resemblance to Angus' belief that a quality score of 'B' and a senior lectureship go together. Here, Beth's colleague believed that a quality score of 'R' signified no opportunity whatsoever, demonstrating once again that some academics have aligned the values of PBRF quality scores to particular academic positions, thereby assigning the quality scores with a credential value. What appears to distinguish Beth's colleague's view from that of Angus is that there is an implied 'truth' about this one, as if Beth's colleague had been given direct information upon which to base her belief. In other words, Beth's narrative strongly inferred that within her department it had been made explicit that there would be no room on staff for people who had been deemed 'research inactive' by the evaluation exercise. If that was the case and Beth's colleague had been "working her butt off for the last four years" to secure a permanent position in the department only to be denied because of her PBRF ranking, then her levels of distress could be perceived as being quite reasonable.

Those same levels of distress could also be conceptualised as evidence of a particular technology of the self whereby Beth's colleague is examining her own attributes as an academic subject compared to those that she believes constitute a marketable and employable academic. Foucault (1984) describes this particular technology of the self as the **Cartesian** mode. This technology of the self enables individuals to align their thoughts with the discursive 'realities' around them so that...
they can measure and compare themselves to the type of legitimate subject that their environment expects them to be. In this particular case, Beth described how her colleague had been engaged in productive academic work for the last four years and had a variety of high quality attributes expected of someone wishing to pursue an academic career. In particular, Beth identified her colleague’s excellent teaching abilities, her commitment to the department and her high levels of specialist knowledge within the subject area. In other words, Beth described a variety of attributes in her colleague that, from Beth’s perspective, represented the characteristics of a ‘good’ academic subject. It is because her colleague had these additional characteristics that led Beth to believe that her colleague had over-reacted about her low PBRF score. However, none of these other characteristics are measured or legitimated by the evaluation exercise because the exercise is only interested in one aspect of an academic’s professional practice and that is their research output. Beth’s colleague did not have research outputs as measured by PBRF. So although Beth appeared to be convinced by the totality of her colleague’s professional capabilities, those capabilities would provide no assurance to her colleague if what was counted and legitimated within the discursive ‘reality’ of her department was the value of one’s PBRF quality score.

In terms of Māori researchers, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2004) note that the notion of being a ‘good’ Māori research academic is informed by an expectation to maintain customary values and practices within their approach to research. This is also accompanied by a desire to produce knowledge and educational outcomes that serve the interests and needs of Māori people and Māori culture. However, according to Fairbairn-Dunlop (2004), PBRF undermines the validity of Māori research because PBRF is a system grounded in western epistemology and therefore, it hinders the ability of Māori to identify and take up alternative epistemologies in their research. PBRF also fails to provide incentives or encouragement for growth in Māori-based research values and practices, a problem exacerbated by the relatively low proportion of Māori represented outside the ‘R’ category in the 2003 Quality Evaluation (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2004). Finally, as identified in this study by Angus, the
assessment process, also grounded in western positivism, tended to validate a system of individualised competition that was contrary to the collective values and beliefs of Māori:

Perhaps I’ve picked up PBRF wrongly. My logic for this may be flawed. I think it’s very individually based, it’s individual achievement based. It’s kind of like Piaget’s lone scientist wandering through the world proving and disproving facts whereas, you know, other educationalists have said “Look, actually we’re only as good as our colleagues. We’re only as good as those around us”. We’re only as good as the people we are researching with and for me I have some problems with the inherent nature of PBRF because it is very individually orientated and, for instance, in Māori culture, if you stand up and say “I’ve done this, this and this” they’ll look at you and go “you’re whakahihi” and that means that basically you’re ‘full of yourself’. And being ‘full of yourself’ seems to be the way that PBRF goes. For instance, when I was discussing with a colleague about kind of writing all those things down and blowing our own academic trumpet both of us, both Māori, we really struggled with that because in the culture we come from those things are written about you and those things are said about you from others.

Angus’ narrative described the way in which westernised expressions of accountability in professional practice differed to those expressed by Māori. He began by recognising the distinctly individual nature of PBRF and made an interesting comparison between individual and collaborative practice. “Piaget’s lone scientist” was described in a way that appeared to be symbolic of a traditional liberal view of westernised individualism whereby liberal-based essentialist notions of determinism directed meritocratic views of assessment and validation. This was contrasted with the idea that “we’re only as good as our colleagues”; a statement reflective of the sense of community often attributed to pre-colonised indigenous peoples. This could almost be read as the opposing, existential view of the scientific world whereby everything is developed via connections to the social. Within this context, Angus identified how western notions of meritocracy existed in the way individual subjects were expected to succeed and promote their success. He also recognised how this success was identified as success earned (or claimed) by, and therefore belonging to (or possessed by), the individual. For Angus, this was an
egocentric model that, through his use of the term ‘whakahihi’, was characterised by conceit.

However, within Angus’ view of Māori accountability, success was something that was collective by association. If one succeeded it was because of their connection with others who had been able to help or guide them to that success, and then their success was measured by what others now said about them. As a consequence, Angus found it difficult to participate in the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise in a way that truly accounted for his own model of professional practice and accountability. The exercise required him to subject himself as ‘whakahihi’, to stand up and tell his PBRF panel that he was a good researcher because, as an individual, he had done “this, this and this”.

The consequences for Māori-based research under a system like PBRF is that the practitioners within the field may be forced (either consciously or unconsciously) to take up and adopt more westernised ways of doing things in order to maintain and develop their status as valid and reputable academic subjects. Because being successful researchers according to PBRF is likely to contrast with being a Māori researcher, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001) suggests that a reduction in the expression of alternative Māori or indigenous-based ideologies in research may occur because these will fail to attract institutional funding under the model. As such, it is possible that some academics undertaking Māori-based research, or any other alternative approach for that matter, may find themselves pigeon-holed in their careers because their research paradigms will not be rewarded by PBRF funding and therefore, would be unlikely to attract the favour of employers. There will always be a contradiction for Māori under PBRF if, in order to facilitate opportunities for the growth and advancement of research grounded in their own customary values and practices, they must first subject themselves according to the westernised discourses and practices associated with PBRF.

Issues concerning Māori and alternative models of research and practice also raise questions about the potential space that is available to academics who may
choose to ignore, dismiss or resist PBRF as an instrument capable of shaping or determining their career. Trowler (2001) argued that certain discursive practices could reshape the social reality within a field by denying access to the resources that enabled individuals to think about and describe alternatives. In terms of discursive practices like PBRF, Broadhead and Howard (1998) claimed that any resistance conducted by individuals potentially jeopardised the ranking and funding of the institution in which they were employed. Therefore, it is possible that academics who chose to ignore or resist the models and topics of research preferred by the PBRF Quality Evaluation could find themselves alienated from their employer in a situation where their confidence, job-satisfaction and job-security are perpetually undermined (Broadhead & Howard, 1998).

Foucault (1994d) claimed that certain discursive practices (in this case PBRF) had the capacity to coerce individuals, shaping and controlling their bodies and conduct by constituting their identity in particular ways within a particular context. In this study the participants offered their perceptions of what the discursive characteristics of a ‘good’ PBRF academic were. Collectively these were described as those displayed by senior white males who had a competitive individual drive to achieve success and status by producing internationally acclaimed publications. To ignore, dismiss or fail to conform to these conditions would, according to the reports of most participants, mean they were no longer considered to be ‘good’ academics. Therefore, the majority of participants of this study not only believed that PBRF had the potential to become a driving force in shaping their academic careers, they also perceived it as having the capacity to manipulate their conduct and identity. For example, according to Trevor:

Quite clearly [PBRF] has made a big difference to how people think about the academic job. It’s made a difference to the kinds of teaching that they’re perhaps doing in terms of research orientation. It’s made a few people a bit paranoid about doing other things because they must get on with their research.

In contrast, Angus believed:
I have to take [PBRF] seriously. That if I want to stay in this environment it's almost a part of my working conditions. In fact, at some time in the future I think it could also appear in employment contracts. Which, by the way, I don't want to see, I'd just like to say that now, I'd hate to see an employment contract get that specific.

Both Trevor and Angus foresaw the potential for PBRF to foster anxieties about academic careers. Trevor used the term “paranoid” to indicate how some academics felt about aspects of their practice that were no longer valued as a consequence of the evaluation framework. Four other participants in the study, Tim, Freddie, Lloyd and Gary, also referred to feelings of 'paranoia' in their reflections on PBRF. It is an interesting choice of term given that 'paranoia' is usually associated with “delusions of persecution” whereby an individual might think that “agents of the government” are “talking about” them and “following” them “everywhere” (Gleitman, Fridlund & Reisberg, 2004, p. 652). The term is also used in every-day language and is understood in a similar way. In situations where individuals experience various forms of governmentality, a sense of paranoia generally implies a feeling that 'someone is out to get me'. Therefore, in using the term ‘paranoia’, Trevor, Tim, Freddie, Lloyd and Gary were able to convey a sense that their conduct and subjection as academics were being shaped and guided by a conspiracy of surveillance, examination and control.

Angus was more definitive in describing his concerns that PBRF might become a guide for shaping academic practice via its inclusion in future employment contracts. In order to feel secure about his position within his institution, Angus believed he had to become a pro-active ‘player’ in future evaluation exercises. The assumption was that for Angus, any other course of action would not be beneficial for sustaining his current career aspirations. Of course Angus’ concerns are not too far removed from reality in that, as this chapter has shown, a number of universities have, to varying degrees, already adopted PBRF as part of their appointments and promotions procedures. However, what is evident in Angus’ narrative, as well as in that of Trevor's, is that both believed that the role of ‘academic’ as they had perceived it was going to change as a direct consequence of PBRF.

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This change and its possible implications was most evident in a statement made by Adam* who felt that the introduction of PBRF might bring about an end to his own academic career:

It may in the final analysis, it may hasten my departure from the organisation [laughs]. When you look at the priorities...you’ve got your students, you’ve got your family and then you’ve got your personal research career. My personal research career has suffered after 15 years of [attending to other aspects of the job], that’s the way life is. And the PBRF may hasten that departure because if you look at my research performance versus what you would expect from [an experienced and senior academic], it’s not where it could or should be.

Again, as in the cases of Angus and Beth’s colleague, Adam* has indicated a connection between PBRF and the career status of an individual by linking his research performance, as identified by the evaluation exercise, to his status as an experienced and senior academic. From Adam’s* perspective the two were not compatible. On the list of Adam’s* priorities regarding his experienced senior role within his department, his personal research career was placed last. During his final interview, Adam* articulated that the quality score he had received in the 2003 evaluation was not congruent with his current academic status. Therefore, even though Adam* believed that for more than 15 years he had provided a sound contribution to his department in a manner expected of him by his employers, the introduction of PBRF had created a situation (a new government rationality) where he could now conceive of a time when that contribution was no longer valued.

However, when questioned further about his suggestion that PBRF could hasten his “departure from the organisation”, Adam* stated, “Having said that, I have a fairly clear view and plan for my departure from the organisation”. Adam* was determined in all three of his interviews to convey the message that even if PBRF hastened the demise of his career as he suspected it might, he would make all final decisions relating to his career. This illustrates how some individuals, in responding to the normative pressures associated with particular discursive fields like PBRF, want to perceive themselves as agents rather than as passive bystanders who are
shaped and constituted by the techniques of governmentality exercised through those discursive fields. In other words, when Adam* suggested that PBRF could hasten his departure from the university, he also claimed that he would not be pushed out of his role by his employer. Rather, Adam* indicated that any decision made in respect of his job would be based upon his own perceptions of the status of his career and how they correlated with what he believed a senior academic career should look like. In other words, from Adam's* perspective, he was likely to ‘jump’ before he could be ‘pushed’. Nevertheless, regardless of what career decisions Adam* chooses to make, PBRF will be a contributing factor because it is already doing some ‘pushing’.16

The issues and concerns raised by Trevor, Angus and Adam*: feelings of ‘paranoia’, concerns over future employment contracts; and suspicions that PBRF may represent the demise of academic careers; are likely to be exacerbated as PBRF and the evaluation framework becomes commonplace in the cycle of university funding. As Angus asserted:

I think that the next round will see some things happen at the university in regards to who stays and who doesn’t. I think that people will look at the nature of people’s employment here and all that kind of thing. And I don’t think that is fear mongering. If I was in their position and there was some dead wood that I’d been wanting to get rid of, then I would use PBRF to enforce it.

Chapter summary and conclusion

The various discourses and practices that have accompanied the implementation of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation were built upon a superficial façade of inclusive language and promised participatory stakeholdersthip (Ministry of Education, 2002a, 2002b). It is claimed that the PBRF framework has the capacity to measure and reward the most ‘talented’ researchers and the ‘best’ research (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003a, 2004a). It would appear that this assumed capacity has become a reality from the perspective of many of New Zealand’s research academics as managers validate the performance measures used in the PBRF Quality

16 As a postscript to this thesis, it should be noted that Adam* left his university position in 2006.
Evaluation as part of their institutions' promotions and appointments procedures. It is already evident that a number of New Zealand's universities; including Victoria University in Wellington, the University of Waikato and the University of Otago; have, to varying degrees, included elements of the PBRF framework in their own employment strategies and practices.

In this study a number of participants identified a need to comply and legitimate themselves according to the discursive rhetoric of PBRF because this portrayed the conditions that their employers were now accepting as being ideal characteristics of the academic job. This had created a variety of career-based anxieties for a number of participants in that, as Davies' (2003) earlier comments suggest, discursive fields like PBRF tend to reinforce that if academics are not 'good enough', then they can be replaced. This sense of career insecurity, anxiety or 'paranoia' was made evident through the sentiments expressed by Adam*, Angus, Beth, Tim and Trevor. These participants have each identified a role that they believed PBRF would play in reshaping the opportunities made available to academics in their careers, thereby potentially redefining the nature and conduct of academic practice in New Zealand.

For Trevor, the role of the academic is increasingly being defined in terms of outputs and the assumed success of those outputs and for him, this is a narrow and instrumentalist way of perceiving the role. Angus believed that success or failure in the PBRF Quality Evaluation was likely to have a direct correlation with the position that one was able to hold within their institution. This is supported by Tim's experience in the United Kingdom and Beth's experience of a colleague who believed that a quality score of 'R' in the assessment exercise was unlikely to facilitate opportunities for appointments or other career opportunities within New Zealand's university sector. Trevor suspected that the consequences of this would see academics thinking more strategically about what they were doing in terms of their career, particularly in relation to the expectations of PBRF. Angus had already accepted that PBRF was fast becoming an integral part of his working conditions and he was able
to envisage a time when PBRF could appear in his employment contract. Finally, Adam* felt that PBRF could bring about the demise of some academic careers including his own.

If the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework does shift from being simply a mechanism for distributing funds for research on the basis of implied quality of research outputs to one that identifies and rewards the most ‘talented’ researchers via institutional appointments and promotions then the implications are dire. To use the framework in this way will likely create a tertiary education environment in New Zealand where academic collegiality and collaborative research succumb to widespread career anxiety and apprehension, and more narrowly focused (or constrained) research activity. These would hardly be the attributes needed to accelerate New Zealand’s transformation into “a prosperous and confident knowledge society” (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 10).
CHAPTER 8

“Like freedom of speech, we do not really treasure it so long as we have it”: The 2003 Quality Evaluation and Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is now, and will always be, a hallmark of a true democracy and a strong, vibrant university system. It must be a freedom enjoyed by all in the university. We must have support to exercise this freedom, as ‘critic and conscience’ of society, as much within the campus walls as outside them. (Irwin, 2000, p. 272)

Introduction

Within the traditional culture of the modern university, academics are viewed as the intellectual means by which democracy is maintained by way of the free expression of ideas (Kelsey, 2000). However, most western democracies, including New Zealand, have experienced a shift in government policies over the last two decades with the rise of neo-liberal discourses and their associated managerial practices (Codd, 2002; Olssen, 2001; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004; Peters & Roberts, 1999; Roberts, 2002). Some commentators (Kelsey, 2000; Savage, 2000) believe that these changes restrict New Zealand’s academics by demanding greater compliance and efficiency from them in respect of their teaching and research. Kelsey (2000) asserts that a major consequence of these ongoing changes is that they make it more difficult for academics to actively engage in a culture of academic freedom.

Of the four main themes examined in this thesis: PBRF’s potential for changing the nature of research, its role as a field of compliance, its capacity for shaping academic careers, and its ability to undermine academic freedom: academic freedom received the least attention by the participants in this study during their interviews. Although it could be argued that most participants made a number of indirect references to academic freedom when discussing other issues relevant to PBRF, only six out of fifteen participants referred specifically to academic freedom.
as part of their first interview. Of those six, only two continued to raise issues directly relating to academic freedom in their second and third interviews. For all other participants it appeared as though their main concerns during those latter interviews were focused towards the allocation of quality scores and what those scores were going to mean. However, although the direct importance of academic freedom within a PBRF context appeared to decline in terms of the participants’ discussions over time, issues relating to academic freedom continued to be expressed in less obvious ways. Anne’s notion of “playing the game” in order to pursue research that was important to her (Chapter Five), Alec’s determination to ‘stick to his own vision of academic life’ (Chapter Six), and Angus’ desire to find ways to advance research grounded in Māori values and practices (Chapter Seven) represent some examples of participants exercising academic freedom. In this sense, although a majority of participants demonstrated a decline in their explicit concerns about academic freedom in their latter interviews, their indirect messages, expressed in their discussions and actions relating to other issues about PBRF, indicated that academic freedom was still a major area of consideration for most.

This chapter explores the notion of academic freedom as it relates to the participants of this study and their changing experiences regarding PBRF. It begins by exploring various ways academic freedom has been conceptualised in the research literature and by the participants before discussing how the term has been ‘legitimated’ within tertiary education discourse via its ratification in the Education Act (1989). The chapter then examines the relationship between PBRF and academic freedom and draws on the concerns and experiences of participants regarding the type of research PBRF appears to legitimate, the kinds of constraints it imposes upon academics, and the distrust it generates between academics and their employers. This includes an in-depth analysis of the accounts and experiences of two specific participants, Angus and Michael, who both expressed quite detailed concerns and anxieties about PBRF and its role in undermining academic freedom, particularly in their second and third interviews. The chapter also identifies how some participants in this study were continuing to exercise academic freedom by finding alternative ways
to challenge, critique and resist PBRF discourses and practices. The chapter concludes by suggesting that despite their efforts, there appears to be a general consensus amongst the majority of participants regarding the ‘greater’ importance of the quality scores. As a consequence, most participants appear to have paid little direct attention to the significance and importance of academic freedom.

**What is academic freedom?**

As stated at the outset of this chapter, academics have traditionally been viewed as a symbolic representation of democracy via their capacity to engage in the free expression of ideas (Kelsey, 2000). However, Dew (2004) claims that academics can also be conceptualised as the contemporary equivalent to the clergy of the medieval church in that they are constantly struggling against the apparatus of the state to retain control over the production of new knowledge and ideas (p. 187). Because of this conflict between individual and state, most modern western universities have been established as independent institutions. It is claimed that this independence enables academics to act as the ‘critic and conscience’ of their respective societies without any political or sovereign intervention and restraint (Halsey, 1992; Peters & Roberts, 1999). This forms the basis of what is traditionally understood by the term ‘academic freedom’, an idea that originated in Renaissance Europe (Gould, 1999).

Although this idea of the academic as society’s ‘critic and conscience’ forms the basis for our contemporary understanding of academic freedom, the term has been conceptualised in a variety of ways. Savage (2000) views it as the capacity to critique government and social institutions, including one’s own employer, without being censored. Keith (2000) describes academic freedom as the “great advantage” that enables academics across a wide range of disciplines to draw upon a range of information and opinion, or observe social and political change and provide a commentary on them (p. 257). Kelsey (2000) suggests that academic freedom involves “training the minds of students to analyse, critique and rethink the current orthodoxy, whatever that may be” (p. 230). Said (1996) views the academy as a “place to voyage in” whereby the interactions between academics, public intellectuals
and students facilitates ongoing opportunities for developing new ways of thinking and knowing the world around us (p. 227). Dew (2004) believes that academic freedom enables individuals to challenge the particular values and assumptions that are evident within any process of knowledge production. Henkel (2001), in a study involving 300 participants across Britain, came to the conclusion that most academics perceived academic freedom to be either their ability to pursue their own research agenda or their right to be trusted and supported by their employer to manage their own professional activities and practices.

In this study participants also displayed different ways of conceptualising academic freedom. For Tim, whose subject area often generated opportunities to publish research that was highly critical of institutional or government practices, academic freedom involved his capacity to challenge others:

> There’s a strong emphasis in my own research that’s associated with...[pause] I suppose you could loosely call it ‘campaigning’. Articulating arguments that might challenge organisations or managers in organisations about what they’re doing and why they’re doing it or critically questioning what they’re doing.

For Michael, there was a less pragmatic and more sagacious way for explaining the term:

> It contributes to original ideas and knowledge [for all] human kind, not only just for one country or a nation. So that’s what I consider the most important, original thinking, original ideas.

Although Tim and Michael’s views are both somewhat different, they do represent common understandings of academic freedom and share similarities to views expressed in the literature. Tim, like other academics such as Savage (2000), Keith (2000) and Dew (2004), defines academic freedom as a means by which he is able to challenge institutional and managerial practices. He describes this as “campaigning”. Tim’s academic subjection as a ‘campaigner’ might also be described as a position of resistance if the practices that Tim is challenging are ones that are being imposed on him (such as the implementation of a contestable model of research funding). Alternatively, Michael, in a similar argument to Kelsey (2000) and Said (1996), takes
a more philosophical view of academic freedom. Michael’s view is universally inclusive in that he claims that any new ideas or knowledge emanating out of research should belong to everyone and not solely to “one country or a nation”. Later it is apparent in Michael’s narrative that “one country or a nation” refers to sovereign or political elements that Michael believes are often responsible for constraining or manipulating knowledge prior to its dissemination. Although Michael expresses his ideal view of academic freedom here, he also implies that he is aware that this is not necessarily the reality (Michael and Tim’s discussions are elaborated later in this chapter).

Academic freedom is understood in a variety of different ways and as the accounts of Tim and Michael demonstrate, even in this study the participants did not subscribe to a single definition of the term. However, most participants did have an understanding of how academic freedom had been defined and enshrined, and thereby legitimated in tertiary education discourse by way of New Zealand’s Education Act (1989). According to the Education Act (1989) academic freedom is the capacity of academics, constrained only by juridical restrictions of law, to question and challenge received wisdom and to espouse new ideas and opinions even of a controversial nature (s. 161.2, paraphrased). The Education Act (1989) guarantees the freedom for academics to engage in research, to regulate the subject matter of courses, and to teach and assess students in a way deemed as being beneficial to positive learning (although this is often done in ways that are expedient, such as by examination). This is the legal definition of academic freedom in New Zealand and for most participants in this study, this often became the starting point for any discussion on the issue. For example, in his first interview Gary referred directly to the legislation, describing his notion of academic freedom using the legal terminology of the Education Act:

I would go along with the university legislation which sees the scholar as being the critic and conscience of society, so one’s immediately involved with the philosophy of what it means to be a critic with a conscience, and also having an expertise in one’s own field.

Tim, having described his role as a “campaigning” subject, also referred to the Education Act to support what he was doing:
[I]t’s in the Education Act in New Zealand as you probably know about, universities being the critic and conscience of society, or at least their academics or some of their academics fulfilling that part of the role.

For both Gary and Tim, they expect the Education Act (1989) to provide adequate protection for academic freedom because it guarantees their rights to act as society’s “critic and conscience” (s. 161.2). However, academics have always struggled to protect their right to engage in free and critical thinking (Jackson, 1999) and as Easton (2003) suggests, the introduction and implementation of PBRF in 2003 is likely to exacerbate that struggle as will now be discussed.

The relationship between PBRF and academic freedom

In the first of its four reports, entitled Shaping a Shared Vision, the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (2000) stated that New Zealand’s “tertiary education providers, their staff and learners, should have the maximum level of academic freedom consistent with the highest ethical standards and the demands of accountability” (pp. 12-13). In Investing in Excellence the PBRF Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002b) stated that “the PBRF should operate in a manner that is consistent with academic freedom and institutional autonomy” (p. 8). However, the Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2002a), in stating that PBRF would continue to support the legislated ‘critic and conscience’ role of New Zealand’s universities and academics, asserted that this would need to be done in alignment with the government’s own goals and priorities for the tertiary education sector. As already outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis, the Tertiary Education Strategy had taken a rather instrumentalist view of research and academic practice and there was only one mention of the phrase ‘critic and conscience’ throughout the entire document:

Excellent basic research will underpin the tertiary sector’s contributions to the creation of new knowledge and understandings, to teaching, to the achievement of national goals, and to supporting the universities’ role as critic and conscience of society. (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 55)
As stated in Chapter Two, beyond this statement there was no further elaboration or explanation within the *Strategy* document as to what being the “critic and conscience of society” might actually mean. However, the *Strategy* document does provide very clear explanations as to what the government’s national goals and priorities for the tertiary education sector are and how it is envisaged that those goals and priorities might be achieved.

Fitzsimmons (2004) claims that except for the occasional cursory reference made out of a commitment to political correctness, there has been very little genuine consideration given towards the importance or significance of academic freedom in developing and implementing PBRF-related reforms. She suggests that the reason for this is that neither the government nor its bureaucrats have a vested interest in supporting issues of academic freedom (although she does not elaborate this point). According to Dew (2004), New Zealand’s tertiary education environment has become one that is increasingly defined by evaluation and measurement: a culture that promotes “a standardisation and normalisation of practices fostering conformity” (p. 188). With the introduction of an evaluation system like PBRF academics are placed under a new set of tensions whereby their research and, to a significant degree, any dissemination of their critical thoughts are quantified within a culture of audit and accountability.

Henkel (2001) supports this view, indicating that even the most secure of disciplines, institutional faculties and individuals are made vulnerable as part of a culture of performance and accountability. This is because any transformation or change that may be promoted as part of the process does not come via other academics (in the traditional forms of peer-review and self-governance) but rather, by way of an administrative or managerial hierarchy whose interests lie elsewhere. Olssen (2001) claims that this is likely to place a greater emphasis on institutional loyalty whereby academics may experience increasing levels of disciplinary action against those who publicly criticise their employer. He argues that university managers, as employers, will become less tolerant of those in their charge who speak...
against them because this may be interpreted as a threat to the institution’s reputation (p. 43). Broadhead and Howard (1998) claim to have knowledge of researchers in Britain whom, having failed to conform to the expectations of government and/or institutional managers in respect of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), have been sanctioned. In most cases these sanctions have involved limitations being imposed upon academics in terms of the types of research they are free to engage in (p. 9).

Perhaps one way of resolving the tensions between an academic’s desire to act as society’s ‘critic and conscience’ and the goals and priorities laid out for them by a government’s need for audit and accountability exists in the way that distinctions can be made between different types of research. For example, when I spoke with Scott for the first time in September 2003, just after he had submitted his Evidence Portfolio, he had specific views about the type of research PBRF was set up to evaluate:

It’s clear that what the PBRF is interested in is pure research rather than critic and conscience stuff and I think that’s reasonable. I think, you know, these are both legitimate functions and what they want to assess on is more the pure research stuff... [pause] so [talking about what he would include in a PBRF Evidence Portfolio] I would tend to include primarily more pure research and less critic and conscience, public intellectual stuff.

At this early stage Scott had already made a distinction between what he was able to describe as “pure research” and “critic and conscience” research. Although Scott stated that “these are both legitimate functions” in academia, the implication was that he perceived that PBRF recognised “pure research” as being important enough to measure and assess whereas “critic and conscience” research was not.

What is absent from Scott’s narrative is any indication as to how “critic and conscience” research might continue to be legitimatated and funded if it is indeed excluded from the PBRF process. However, Scott’s perspective does seem to highlight a more general perception of PBRF discourse in which it is assumed that research should be quantified and measured in an accurate, even instrumentalist way.
in order to be funded. Furthermore, Scott’s perspective and response (“I would tend to include primarily more pure research”) also appears to inadvertently reinforce and legitimize the PBRF position. If it is perceived that PBRF validates a discourse of “pure research” over “critic and conscience” research, and if researchers like Scott only submit “pure research” in their Evidence Portfolios because of this, then the only research that will be made available to PBRF peer-review panels for assessment and validation will be that “pure research”. Therefore, as PBRF increasingly becomes the technology by which the conduct and productivity of academics’ research receives recognition and legitimacy, any research that does not fit the criteria of “pure research” (such as “critic and conscience” research) may be overlooked and underrated by the evaluation exercise. As such, it arguably could become a form of research that is deemed not to be in academics’ best interests to pursue.

Although Scott felt assured that the evaluation exercise was only ever interested in assessing his “pure research”, thereby enabling him to undertake “critic and conscience stuff” at his leisure, other participants appeared more wary of the relationship that existed between PBRF and academic freedom. For example, Anne stated as part of her first interview that she was aware that many of her colleagues abroad had experienced a variety of constraints on their research as a consequence of research-based evaluation and assessment exercises like PBRF. However, having experienced the early stages of PBRF here, Anne still believed that New Zealand offered far greater opportunities for academics to pursue research topics that were based on choice and interest and avoid any undue influence and pressure from either government, institutional or private-sector bureaucrats. This was a freedom that Anne believed distinguished New Zealand from a number of other western societies:

New Zealand is a place where we have a lot of freedoms that places like America don’t have in terms of, well yeah, you have to run a little ethics thing, you have to do a little bit of this and a little bit of that, but it isn’t a huge effort to get a new piece of research running.

However, Anne went on to state that, “my husband and I, my husband is a researcher as well, said ‘Well, if it gets to a stage where we can’t do the research we’ll leave’”.
Generally, Anne felt confident and assured that the accepted tenets of academic freedom as she understood them would continue to be protected in New Zealand regardless of how PBRF developed and became embedded within the tertiary education sector. However, it would also appear that Anne and her husband were both aware that, despite Anne’s optimism, there was also a potential for PBRF to develop in such a way that could undermine those important tenets. As Anne indicated, they were both aware that this had happened elsewhere. Interestingly, I asked Anne in a general discussion after the interview where she thought she might go if it got to a point whereby she felt compelled to leave New Zealand’s tertiary education system and she suggested that America was probably her best option (although she did indicate that this would be for academic career opportunities rather than for the pursuit of academic freedom).

What is interesting about Anne’s narrative is the indication that if there did appear to be an erosion of those tenets of academic freedom within New Zealand’s tertiary education sector, Anne is more likely to exit the sector than try and resist that erosion. Perhaps for academics like Anne, although she does not indicate this herself, the idea of exiting the sector may appear to be a far easier option than trying to find ways to resist attacks upon their ability to exercise academic freedom. This is despite the presence of legal protections that should enable Anne and other colleagues in her position to respond to such attacks by taking up their subject position as society’s ‘critic and conscience’ to defend their interests. By using their ‘critical’ voice, academics are theoretically positioned to respond to initiatives that have the potential to undermine academic freedom (including PBRF) and as such, create possible spaces for resistance and change (Davies, 2003; Davies & Harré, 2001). However, it does seem likely that the additional pressures associated with the introduction and implementation of a PBRF framework will only exacerbate conditions that appear to undermine academics’ ability to engage a free and critical voice in New Zealand.

Whereas Anne indicated that she was more likely to exit the tertiary education sector than try and resist the pressures of PBRF, both Tim and Harold believed that
PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise were difficult to resist because they were informed by a discourse of distrust. According to Harold:

It might well satisfy or help satisfy the government’s desire for accountability but accountability is just one word for another few words that just merely say, “I don’t trust you”.

And Tim (the “campaigner”) claimed:

As we increase mechanisms of measurement and control, if you want to use the word ‘surveillance’, what that effectively does is suggest that we are not trusting of members of society. And as we increase more and more measures, people become more suspicious, because they need to be measured and that, if you like, creates a spiral of even more levels of lack of trust.

Tim went on to argue that the increasing lack of trust in academics created by technologies like the Quality Evaluation could facilitate a reciprocal response by academics towards those who appeared not to trust them. In other words, if academics began to feel that they were not trusted by their employers or by government, their primary response might be to become untrusting of the motivations expressed by their employer or government in instigating policies and procedures designed to monitor them (see Hazeldine, 1998). As such, Tim believed that academics were likely to become increasingly wary of what they stated in public or published in articles because of the patterns of “surveillance” and scrutiny they had become subject to.

Academic freedom under attack

“To get anywhere on this, you’ve got to be published”

According to Olssen (2001), it is hardly surprising that academics have become wary or complacent in protecting their rights to academic freedom. He claims that academics have had to adapt to a new discursive field whereby their focus is one of competition and their professional identity is gauged and determined by the various career advancements they might be able to make (p. 44). By focusing on their quality scores, the participants of this study have unwittingly given weight to Olssen’s claims. But they are not alone. In a study involving 617 research academics in the
Humanities and Social Sciences across New Zealand, Curtis and Matthewman (2005) circulated a questionnaire containing 56 statements that participants were asked to respond to. The purpose of the study was to gauge the attitudes of those academics in respect of PBRF and other recent developments impacting on the tertiary education sector (Curtis & Matthewman, 2005). Participants responded to various statements in the questionnaire by rating their relevance on a Likert scale. For the statement “academic freedom is under attack” participants rated this as nineteenth in order of agreement. “Academic positions should combine teaching and research” rated as number one, possibly challenging PBRF’s emphasis on research. Other statements that rated higher than the one relating to academic freedom included “academics deserve better pay and conditions” (number three), “tenure is crucial for good teaching and research” (number nine), and “academics are highly productive” (number fourteen). Of the 18 statements that rated higher than “academic freedom is under attack”, ten were directly related to academic career opportunities or conditions of work. The statement: “the Performance Based Research Funding initiative is beneficial” was rated at 33 (Curtis & Matthewman, 2005, pp. 16-18).

The conclusions reached by Curtis and Matthewman (2005) in their survey suggest that most academics are committed to so-called ‘traditional’ forms of academic work such as teaching and undertaking research, but they are so overworked and stressed that they are generally unwilling or unable to resist external assaults upon their control over it. Broadhead and Howard (1998) concur, claiming that any resistance posed by academics against technologies that they perceive are responsible for changing their professional lives (including their ability to engage in academic freedom) have not translated into any discernable or effective action. There are a variety of reasons as to why this may be the case (Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004; Broadhead & Howard, 1998; Codd, 1999, Olssen, 2001) but in this study Angus explained it best:

To get anywhere on this, you’ve got to be published in international journals and your research has to be undertaken in ways that meet those [international] concerns. And I would say that if you stand there and
say, “Look, my main focus for this is the empowerment of that hapu [sub-tribe], or empowerment of that whānau [family], or empowerment of that iwi [tribe]” and that is your first accountability, as far as PBRF is concerned you’re not going to get very far.

As stated previously, Angus considered himself to be a relatively new and emerging researcher whose primary interests in research as a member of a vocationally-based professional programme rested with addressing issues that affected Māori. As such, much of his own research was undertaken using research paradigms informed by indigenous models of practice. The reason he believed academics had been complacent in their response to PBRF was that PBRF made specific demands on academics and these demands became part of the expectations associated with their professional practice. In the above example Angus identified that PBRF required him to conduct himself in specific ways: to engage in international research and publish in international journals. However, Angus preferred to focus his attentions on local or national concerns that were more likely to be presented in vocationally-based practice-orientated journals. Nevertheless, from Angus’ perspective, if he ‘stood there’ and announced these as his priority, thereby resisting PBRF expectations, he conceded that he was unlikely “to get very far”.

Issues relating to Māori-based research represent a unique situation in New Zealand and exemplify the contradictory tensions that exist between government priorities for research and academics’ right to engage in free enquiry. Regarding research issues for Māori, one participant in Dew’s (2004) study of 15 Health Science academics noted that the government often determined the priorities even though, in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi, this should be done in partnership with Māori.17 However, in accordance with principles of academic freedom, it could be

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17The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 by over 500 Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown and is described as New Zealand’s founding document (State Services Commission, 2004). It contains the ‘principles’ by which the relationship between indigenous Māori and non-indigenous Pākeha (European or ‘other’) is meant to operate and function in New Zealand government and society. These principles exist in the form of three Treaty Articles and highlight issues of protection, partnership and participation for all peoples within New Zealand (but specifically Māori) (State Services Commission, 2004). These ‘principles’ and their meanings have long been debated and contested by various interests in New Zealand (Hayward, 2004).
argued that only Māori are positioned to define what their own research priorities should be. According to Kelsey (2000), in New Zealand there is a contradiction between the ideal of academic freedom and the Treaty of Waitangi. She claims that while Māori have to fight to exercise *tino rangatiratanga* (their right to exercise a degree of self-determination and to practice all activities in a culturally relevant way), they are denied access to academic freedom to express their own valid ideas (p. 231).

As part of this study Angus identified very similar concerns to those raised by Dew’s (2004) participant and Kelsey (2000). During his final interview in November 2004, Angus expressed his belief that undertaking the type of research that would gain him recognition and credibility as an academic was vastly different to engaging in research that was going to be beneficial to his people:

Māori academics are far more likely to undertake research that is from the ground-up. In other words, it is research that their own people are saying “Please do this for us” rather than taking on research that is top-down where the government wants to know something about Māori. But the problem with the two kind of views is that one is well funded and one isn’t. And so, for instance, if you accept the top-down rationale as I have to get to undertake a piece of research that will be a substantial piece of research which will hopefully establish part of a research portfolio for all of us [research team], that’s fantastic. But that’s not from the ground-up research. That hasn’t come from the people who are having some hard days and are wanting to know “Why are our days so hard?”

Once again Angus has identified two conflicting forms of accountability that impact on his positioning as a Māori academic. One of these accountabilities comes from Māori because they are the ones most likely to benefit from research conducted upon their behalf. The other comes from ‘above’ and is extrinsic to any actual outcomes, beneficial or otherwise, that may come out of Māori-based research. For Angus, speaking as a Māori subject who engages in academic activities, any research that is undertaken from the ground up is empowering for those whom the research is about: those people who are wanting to know why their days are “so hard”. However, as an academic subject who also happens to be Māori, Angus has identified that the research most likely to establish his academic legitimacy requires him to produce
substantive outputs in the form of published papers and to undertake research that fits with the goals and objectives established by the various funding authorities. Within the discursive context of PBRF, if Angus conforms to this particular subjection, those funding authorities are more likely to reward him by providing funding for his research and recognising and validating his research profile.

Describing institutional incentives to encourage certain codes of conduct as a process of ‘legitimation’, Foucault (1980) not only identifies research as a practice of knowledge creation but also, as a means by which academics can be controlled. As academics compete for opportunities to disseminate their research (such as publications in journals or keynote presentations at international conferences), this appears to confirm a universal commitment to academic freedom while providing “the boundaries and limitations of what may be said and written” (Weiner, 1998, p. 3). In his final interview Angus went on to express his belief that if he adopted a “Pākeha” or ‘western’ approach to research then he would be identified via the PBRF assessment exercise as a legitimate academic subject. However, Angus also believed that if he then attempted to return to a position whereby he spoke from an alternative “ground-up” position as a Māori subject, that sense of legitimacy would diminish. Angus believed that policies like PBRF reinforced what he described as a “cultural deficit style” of research in that they required him to do research “on” Māori rather than “for” Māori.

“When we’ve lost it then we’ll treasure it”

Of all the participants who expressed a concern over the relationship between PBRF and academic freedom, Michael was the most vocal. In all his interviews, undertaken in October and May 2003, and October 2004, the subject of academic freedom dominated all his discussion relating to PBRF. There is a reason for this as Michael explained. Michael is not a New Zealand born citizen and had immigrated here with his family, leaving behind a country and a lifestyle that was far more restrictive. As such, Michael had a lived experience of an academic environment where freedom of expression was significantly constrained. For Michael, there were aspects of the
Quality Evaluation framework that he found familiar and disturbing. For example, during his first interview Michael described a coercive element that he had identified as part of the various “knowledge society discourses” that he associated with policies like PBRF:

In this age of computers and the TV and newspaper [pause] we are more likely to think by following what other people have said, to agree with invisible authorities which, even though some times we feel that we are doing critical thinking and independent judgement, we’re actually following those invisible authorities and not really being critical and independent.

Relating this directly to PBRF and the Quality Evaluation framework, he also argued:

I still have a problem with those really original ideas like, for example, Karl Marx’s ideas.18 Karl Marx in his life could never have a good academic rating at all [as part of the PBRF Quality Evaluation] because his ideas were too radical.

Michael then went on to discuss how he saw PBRF as an instrument designed to foster mediocrity and constrain free and original thinking:

And yeah, another [thing] that’s come to mind and is related to that, a big concern which I have with PBRF is that [long pause]. Because I don’t think that a researcher, especially researchers in Social Sciences and Humanities, somehow I think it does not pay to come up with ideas that challenge orthodoxy.

I then asked Michael if he thought that PBRF “could actually narrow the kinds of research being done?” because of this. He responded:

Narrow, even I would say threaten [said with emphasis]. PBRF will threaten this kind of research. That’s what I am really concerned about. So, [long pause]. By pressuring the researcher to go along with orthodox, mainstream, therefore…[pause] it becomes a really fragile thing for original ideas to come out. It can be very difficult even to come out. It’s very easy to suppress those kind of really original ideas in Humanities and the Social Sciences. That’s what I think we need to protect, that atmosphere of freedom of thoughts.

18 Karl Marx (1818-1883) has often been described as the ‘Father of Communism’ for his economic commentaries that provided a rigorous analysis and critique of liberalised capitalism for its propensity to concentrate wealth, exploit labour and stratify society (The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics, 2002).
When I spoke with Michael one year later in 2004, I returned to this question. I began by reminding him of what he had said in 2003 and then asked if he still felt that way now. He responded:

That concern even becomes stronger since last year. I’m noticing in general that people are feeling somehow constrained. Academic freedom is now constrained. That kind of control used to be either a religious or political control but now it’s a financial control. I do think that PBRF needs to address academic freedom, particularly in the Humanities. [long pause]. Because Humanities and the Social Sciences, the main goal for the university to develop in these areas is that they contribute to society and they cannot do this without encouraging that freedom of research. It’s not good for our society otherwise. So is PBRF meant to encourage good quality research to positively help society or is it meant to encourage a kind of constrained set of research and thoughts?

It would be easy to argue that Michael’s concerns are somewhat over-stated if they had been spoken by anyone else. But speaking from his own experience of a more constrained academic world, Michael has identified PBRF as a technology of power capable of establishing new discursive norms designed to encourage conformity from academics. According to Michael, the new discursive norms that he associates with PBRF are likely to constrain academic freedom by encouraging academics to regurgitate the current orthodoxy and avoid doing or saying anything that might be considered “too radical”. As such, Michael has described PBRF as a form of government rationality capable of encouraging individuals to take up various technologies of the self and govern their own activities and practices. For Michael, these new discursive norms and their associated expectations of conformity and compliance will only increase as the implementation of PBRF persists. He concluded his final interview by stating that:

Freedom of research has been very much constrained recently because of the research funding system and I see that this constraint has become much stronger and could jeopardise the general freedom of research. When we’ve lost it then we’ll treasure it, you know, when you have something you don’t really treasure it until it’s taken away. Like freedom of speech, we do not really treasure it so long as we have it.
Although academic freedom is protected by law and thereby guaranteed within New Zealand's tertiary education institutions, Kelsey (2000) contends that this does not mean that it is an absolute that should be taken for granted. She argues that academic freedom should not be treated as being self-evident, whether it be legislated for or otherwise, because its meaning and justification has a tendency to change via the way it is asserted, defended or challenged within different discursive formations (p. 228). As this chapter has shown, once the 2003 quality scores were released, thereby becoming the main focus for academics' concerns about PBRF, only two of the participants in this study continued to identify reasons why academics should be concerned about PBRF's potential to impact upon academic freedom. In this sense, Curtis and Matthewman (2005) claim that there continues to be a general lack of any discernable resistance to PBRF by academics. This would appear to support Broadhead and Howard's (1998) assertion that technologies of assessment like PBRF can act as instruments of reward and punishment capable of fostering "complicity and coercion" in the conduct of academics (pp. 10-11).

According to Foucault (1977, 1994a), instruments, such as the PBRF Quality Evaluation, are embedded in discourses of practice that have a tendency to reflect and represent what academics might ordinarily consider to be traditional modes of conduct within their profession. Drawing on Foucault's ideas, I argue that discourses proposing the liberation and free autonomy of individuals such as those used to inform the Education Act (1989) and more recent policy documents alleging support for academic freedom do not generate a reality of freedom. Rather, when policies like the Education Act (1989) or the Tertiary Education Strategy establish the conditions of freedom, they also act as a form of governmentality by setting the limits and boundaries of the freedom that can be exercised, and establishing the authority (government/Tertiary Education Commission) responsible for policing those limits and boundaries.
“This isn’t needed”: Challenging, critiquing and resisting PBRF

Although commentators such as Curtis and Matthewman (2005) might argue a lack of discernable resistance to mechanisms like PBRF, this does not mean that academics are unable to take up positions of resistance to them. In Chapter Six of this thesis Angus described how he intended to use the procedural requirement to comply with PBRF as a means to create a space for resistance, describing PBRF as a “weapon” that he could “harness”. However, as identified in that chapter, the dilemma for Angus in attempting to construct pathways for resistance was that within those procedural requirements, there were specific expectations of conformity. For Angus, finding ways to use PBRF as a “weapon” felt like a form of ‘prostitution’ that compromised the research agenda he was trying to advance. Hartmann (2003) would likely suggest that Angus’ attempt to resist PBRF creates these conflicting tensions because it is essentially a “rear-guard action” whereby Angus has tried to resist the exercise of power from within its exercise (p. 4). According to Hartmann (2003), this is a “vague” form of resistance that denies genuine autonomy of action by the individual.

Whereas Foucault’s earlier work is often criticised for denying the potential for individuals to engage in agentic and autonomous activities (O’Leary, 2003), his later work concerning the technologies of the self emphasises the potential for individual agency and resistance (Olssen, 1999). While it is possible to have a negative view of Foucault’s technologies of the self because they appear to imply that choices are constrained by the way individuals internalise the discourses that are available to them within a field (Devos, 2000), this is not how Foucault perceived their application. According to Foucault (2003a), technologies of the self are instruments used by individuals to map and define the boundaries of the self and as such, can be both enabling and constraining. As a productive or enabling strategy, technologies of the self can be viewed as the foundations for resistance (Devos, 2000).
In *The Subject and Power* Foucault (1994d) provides a more positive account of resistance in relation to the exercise of power. Foucault (1994d) claims that power relations are "rooted in the whole network of the social" and have been "progressively governmentalized... in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions" (p. 345). By arguing the governmentalisation of relations of power within state institutions, Foucault (1994d) conceptualises 'power' as a modification of action by actions. Foucault (1994d) argues that this notion of power is exercised via the conduct and actions of free agents within a field of governmentality that designates:

> [T]he way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed – the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick [of academics]. It cover[s] not only the legitimately constituted forms of political and economic subjection but also the modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] desired to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. (Foucault, 1994d, p. 341)

According to Hartmann (2003), this conceptualisation of power provides an alternative possibility for resistance by locating the exercise of power within a field of possible action in which the subject "must act" (p. 9). In other words, because both Foucault (1994d) and Hartmann (2003) would argue that power is exercised within a field inhabited by free agents, there is always the possibility that within that field, individuals can think, act and respond in "new and creative ways" (Hartmann, 2003, p. 10). In this sense, Foucault’s (1994d) account of power as an ‘action upon action’ facilitates opportunities for resistance by recognising the possibility for individuals to act upon themselves and on others. Therefore, ‘positive’ resistance exists in a subject’s autonomy within the discursive construction of particular institutions and practices, and by the subject’s agentic potential to critique and challenge those institutions and practices.

In New Zealand there has already been evidence of this form of resistance in relation to PBRF in the various critiques that have been produced and published in response to it. This thesis has highlighted the critical work of Curtis and Matthewman, (2005), Dalziel (2005), Davies, Craig and Robertson (2005), Jesson
(2005), Small (2005), and Smith (2005a, 2005b) amongst others as examples of these. All these critical works, written for academics by academics, demonstrate that through a critical engagement with the discursive practices of PBRF and the Quality Evaluation framework, academics are able to resist the various technologies of governmentality that seek their compliance and docility.

In this study, despite the apparent lack of explicit discussion about how PBRF might undermine academic freedom, a number of participants did make references to ways that they could resist elements of PBRF by actively critiquing and challenging them. As stated earlier, Tim had described himself as a “campaigning” subject whose duty it was to question and challenge policies and practices associated with institutions and organisations. Indeed, Tim’s 2003 PBRF quality score of ‘A’ had been achieved on the basis of producing that kind of critical work. However, there were other participants in the study who also described themselves in similar ways. For example, Gary stated in his final interview that he felt obligated to challenge PBRF:

I don’t think I would be an academic with this system. I wouldn’t come into a university now. That doesn’t mean that I get so uptight that I walk out now. I am excited to see how it works. I’m not downcast or upset. I think that it’s a real personal challenge but that challenge is as much against the system, to cope with the system as to comply with it.

Crucial for Gary is the fact that he sees and positions himself as an academic subject nearing the end of his career. Gary explained that this enabled him to have a ‘voice’ without repercussion. Unlike his early-career colleagues whose statements of critique could always be consequentially linked to academic career opportunities later on, Gary felt he had nothing more to prove in terms of his professional career, and faced no burden of consequence for any challenges he made. Therefore, Gary was drawing upon particular technologies of the self to position himself as an academic who could challenge and resist PBRF for, and on behalf of, those who believed they (or, at least, who Gary believed) could not.
Joshua* was another participant who considered that his own individual subjection as an academic provided him with unique opportunities to challenge and critique PBRF and its various implications. In his first interview Joshua* claimed that PBRF carried little relevance for him in terms of his international reputation and subjection as a professional and respected scholar:

One of my main criticisms of Performance-Based Research Funding is, in international terms in my discipline, in terms of my scholarship, in terms of my standing; it's irrelevant, entirely and completely irrelevant.

In his final interview Joshua* described a sense of confidence associated with his international reputation that enabled him to resist and challenge aspects of PBRF that he did not agree with. For example, Joshua* described how, within his institution, the introduction of PBRF had resulted in a whole new series of managerial interventions and policy implementations that, from his own perspective, were often unnecessary:

The Division, for instance, is coming out with all sorts of initiatives that are based around PBRF. So it seems to have increased exponentially the amount of initiatives, the amount of bureaucracy and paperwork.

Joshua* was responding to such initiatives quite deliberately:

Recently for instance, for the second time [since the introduction of PBRF], the Associate Dean circulated a seven page document of a workload model and a workload capacity model and guidelines for the Division and I just spent two hours yesterday writing a two page letter and I was just saying “that this isn’t needed”.

He also described how he was responding at Divisional meetings when PBRF quality scores of various university staff were being divulged and discussed without their prior knowledge and consent:

They’re [academics’ individual quality scores] supposed to be confidential and at Divisional research meetings I’ve sometimes mentioned this and of course it doesn’t go over very well. These are supposed to be confidential but they’re not in fact and they’re not used that way and the university collectively is using every strategy it can to find out everybody’s marks...[pause]. But the problem is that I don’t believe in the system to begin with and I speak my mind.
Finally Noel* claimed that he had been willing to place his reputation and status as a respected academic on the line by publicly challenging aspects of PBRF that he did not agree with:

I went public in terms of [a published article] I wrote about it. That’s the kind of thing I would need to do about this, it’s a survival tactic as much as anything else. Speaking out about it and taking the risk that, who knows? I may be the only one who sees it’s wrong but it’s worth finding out one way or the other.

These examples, to varying degrees, demonstrate that although the discursive pressures associated with PBRF are designed to encourage complicity by subjecting academics to a new rationality of a ‘good’ academic, some academics are able to draw on other discourses of academic subjectivity to challenge or resist PBRF (Nairn, Higgins, Thompson, Anderson, & Fu, 2006). Gary’s position as a senior academic near the end of his career meant that he could critique and challenge PBRF. From his perspective, Gary was able to be a ‘voice’ for those that he believed were not positioned to critique PBRF for fear that such outspoken criticisms could potentially carry long-term consequences for their careers and reputations. Joshua* positioned himself as an internationally recognised scholar and this enabled him to confidently challenge his institutional management about decisions they were making in respect of PBRF that seemed unnecessary or inappropriate to him. Finally, discourses of academic freedom had constituted Noel* as an academic subject who felt obligated to speak out.

**Chapter summary and conclusion**

According to Michael, it is important that academics in New Zealand retain their right to academic freedom and that if they do not consciously protect this right, then they may lose it. It is a dire warning that may sound incredible given that academic freedom is protected in New Zealand via the Education Act (1989) and its subsequent amendments. According to Jackson (1999), it is strongly implied within the Education Act that New Zealand’s government, the universities and society at large carry the responsibility to ensure that academic freedom continues to exist with
minimal constraint in the tertiary education sector. However, as Kelsey (2000) has highlighted, even though academic freedom is legislated, this does not mean that it will always be protected in the way that it is understood by academics. Within the discursive formations of legislation even the accepted meanings of ratified terms are capable of shifting and changing as a consequence of the various tensions that operate within different contexts.

In this study some participants were able to identify how academic freedom could be constrained as a consequence of the PBRF Quality Evaluation exercise. Tim and Harold suggested that the increased mechanisms of measurement and control created a spiral of distrust between institutional managers and their staff, impacting on what academics were willing to state in public or publish in articles. Angus claimed that PBRF would only identify him as a ‘legitimate’ researcher so long as he focused on research that fulfilled the goals and priorities laid out by the assessment exercise rather than research that was beneficial to “the people”. Michael believed that PBRF encouraged mediocrity by actively discouraging academics from pursuing original ideas that had the potential to challenge the existing orthodoxy. Scott inadvertently identified a related issue whereby he believed that PBRF distinguished between “pure research” and “critic and conscience stuff”, and that the evaluation exercise only measured “pure research”. Despite these concerns, evidence in this study, alongside others that have been conducted since the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation (including Curtis & Matthewman, 2005; Dew, 2004; Middleton, 2004), seem to indicate a lack of any clear-sighted action by academics to defend their right to academic freedom. However, by identifying the actions of some participants who are finding alternative ways to respond to PBRF, this chapter has also demonstrated that academics are positioning themselves to challenge, critique and resist PBRF discourses.

I believe that there is no doubt that PBRF quality scores are becoming increasingly significant in shaping the research activity and careers of New Zealand’s academics. This is evident in the experiences of the participants of this study and by
the mounting literature and documentation regarding PBRF that has emerged since
the release of the 2003 Quality Evaluation results. As such, it is my concern that if the
focus on quality scores continues to dominate the attention of New Zealand’s
academics to a point whereby academic freedom is overlooked, then the price of that
focus will be too high. If becoming a PBRF-approved academic subject means
regurgitating the status quo, pursuing ‘flavour of the month’ research and
constraining one’s self in accordance with the expectations of funding authorities; and
if it requires academics to refrain from being critical and independent, challenging
current orthodoxy or publishing anything that may be “too radical”; then perhaps
being an academic is no great thing. In this sense, it may be worth reiterating the
significant point that Michael made at the end of his final interview in October 2004:

When we’ve lost it then we’ll treasure it, you know, when you have
something you don’t really treasure it until it’s taken away. Like
freedom of speech, we do not really treasure it so long as we have it.
CHAPTER 9
Performance-Based Research Funding and Academic Identities:
A conclusion

I currently teach in a second year paper at the University of Otago. This paper deals with education policy from both a theoretical and practical perspective. Much of the paper explores the changes to New Zealand’s educational context as a consequence of the implementation of neo-liberal reforms during the late 1980s and 1990s. When I was an undergraduate student doing this same paper co-ordinated by Dr. Mark Olssen, students were aware of an educational and social context in New Zealand prior to the implementation of those neo-liberal reforms. As such, we positioned ourselves to stand by the values and ideals we had held during that earlier time. These were social democratic ideals whereby the state had existed as a benevolent guardian, the community had represented an extension of the family, and education was considered a ‘public good’ (Rudd, 1997). But even as we clung to these recollections of a romanticised past, we were being disciplined by various technologies of government to adopt neo-liberal codes of conduct and practice, and we conformed by taking up the first student loans, shaping our own degree structures through our right to choose, and exercising our ‘power’ as consumers to demand certain provisions and services from our tertiary education provider.

The students I face today belong to the neo-liberal generation, having been born since the implementation of those reforms. As such, it is a difficult task to describe a New Zealand context that existed prior to this discursive shift because these students have no actual knowledge or experience of it. For example, when I discuss the idea of a ‘free’ education with them they will defend their ‘right’ to pay
for their education and take up a student loan. It is ‘their’ education, ‘their’ private
good, and they justify this neo-liberalisation of their subjection against any alternative
that I can offer. They have taken up the discursive rhetoric of neo-liberalism and as
such, are shaped and constituted by it.

In this study the participants have experienced Performance-Based Research
Funding (PBRF) in the same way that I, as an undergraduate student, had experienced
that second year university paper. Most have claimed that PBRF will not change
them but, as this thesis has shown, many are changing. Some participants, including
Angus, Anne and Michael, believed that the importance of their research transcended
PBRF’s perceptions about its ‘quality’. However, as Anne so eloquently stated in
Chapter Six, “It would be much better to be an ‘A’ thank you very much”. Others,
namely Trevor, Tim, Freddie, Lloyd and Gary, were feeling a sense of “paranoia”
about PBRF’s implications for academic careers. As Gary suggested, in order for him
to retain his academic legitimacy within PBRF’s ‘quality’ seeking gaze, he had to
“hedge [his] bets and cover [his] back”. Alfred, Kenneth, Harold and Scott, amongst
others, were already actively hedging their bets and covering their backs by “playing”
the PBRF “game” and selecting outputs for their Evidence Portfolios based on their
assumptions about what the PBRF peer-review panels are seeking. A number of
participants worried about how their colleagues would react to PBRF. For example,
Alec was concerned that many would see PBRF as a sign saying that, in terms of
their research, they had “been walking in the wrong direction”. Edith believed that,
“If we just sort of sat around and moaned about what a bureaucratic nightmare it was
then we would lose out” because funding would be diverted elsewhere. Finally Beth
described the “extraordinarily unreasonable” levels of stress experienced by a junior

19 It should be noted that tertiary education in New Zealand was never ‘free’. However, prior to 1990
New Zealand’s tertiary students only paid nominal fees and most students received financial support
via a student living allowance. In 1990 the nominal fee for a university education in New Zealand was
$1,250 but students from low-income families were often subsidised to offset that cost (Stephens,
1997). Many critics of the 1980s-1990s market reforms in education, particularly those critiquing the
introduction of the Student Loans Scheme in 1994, generally describe this earlier period as a time of
‘free’ education.
colleague who, as a new and emerging researcher with a quality score of 'R', had grave concerns about her own future academic career prospects.

Beth’s colleague can be likened to the students that I teach in the aforementioned university paper. In the same way that my students have no actual experience or knowledge of a context prior to the neo-liberal discourses underpinning the policies I teach and critique, Beth’s colleague has no actual experience or knowledge of an academic context prior to PBRF. As PBRF persists, and if it extends beyond 2012, then it is highly likely that eventually PBRF will assess and evaluate the research productivity of a generation of academics whose professional identities have been shaped and determined solely within a context of PBRF. Once academics are disciplined by PBRF in this way, it would be interesting to see how many academics beyond 2012 would continue to relate to, or even understand, the range of concerns and issues raised by the participants in this study.

According to Trowler (2001), the conditions for subjectivity presented in the various discourses of higher education and their associated policies and practices expose academics to new discursive repertoires of examination and accountability. Within this new audit culture a number of new assessment regimes, including PBRF, have enabled governments to ‘measure’, ‘evaluate’ and ‘correct’ the conduct and work of academics. I have drawn on the experiences of the participants in this study to argue that in New Zealand, these new technologies of government are playing a significant role in reconstituting academic subjects. The various experiences of PBRF described by the participants of this study provide evidence of a new form of governmentality in the lives of New Zealand’s academics.

PBRF was implemented in New Zealand in 2003 and the first PBRF Quality Evaluation assessment results were published in 2004. This process evaluated individual academics and ‘ranked’ them according to their performance and research capability as determined by PBRF criteria. The PBRF Quality Evaluation has all the
hallmark characteristics of an instrument of governmentality. The process positions academics in a new hierarchy of status and reputation whereby practices of audit and accountability enable new rules of conduct to decide academics' subjection. These rules are not simply those imposed upon academics by managers and bureaucrats, they are also self-imposed as academics take up various technologies of the self to shape their bodies, thoughts and conduct in order to become the new version of a 'good' academic. In this study the majority of participants deployed various technologies of the self by questioning the value and validity of their research and (re)considering where and how they should disseminate information about it. This was exemplified in participants' ideas about "playing the game". Academics in my study discussed their strategies as they competed for higher PBRF quality scores, attributed a credential value to those scores, and began using them to pursue further 'scholarly' and career-based opportunities. In other words, as various PBRF discourses appear to set the limits and boundaries that define the discursive construction of a 'good' academic, most commonly characterised in the form of a senior white male focused towards competition and meritocracy, some academics are adapting their practices accordingly. Whether participants in this study responded to PBRF in a conforming way or in a way that appeared to resist its normalising tendencies, their experiences highlight how PBRF, as a new intrusion into their academic lives, is an instrument of governmentality.

Most participants in this study described, either consciously or unconsciously, the presence of Foucault's (1977, 2003a) three disciplinary technologies and four discursive operations as contributing towards shaping and directing their experiences of, and responses to, PBRF. Foucault's (1977) three disciplinary technologies are surveillance, written examination and the normalising judgement. His four discursive operations are technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self (Foucault, 2003a). In terms of Foucault's three disciplinary technologies, Gary, Tim and Angus all used the term 'surveillance' during their interviews. Gary likened
PBRF to a “Soviet system” of surveillance. Tim described PBRF’s perceived surveillance as part of “third way political thinking”. Other participants inferred a surveying presence. Edith and Freddie’s concerns over how government bureaucrats and institutional managers might evaluate their departments’ performances, and Michael’s reference to “invisible authorities”, indicate how participants perceived a multiplicity of surveying gazes associated with PBRF.

Regarding Foucault’s (1977) written examination, a number of participants in this study expressed concerns over the examining presence associated with PBRF. In this thesis I have described the use of Evidence Portfolios as a written examination that makes it possible to “qualify, to classify and to punish” academics (Foucault, 1977, p. 184). This conceptualisation of Evidence Portfolios was demonstrated in the effort that some participants had put in to preparing them. Gary, who expressed his concern that Evidence Portfolios would soon become the mechanism by which his institutional managers would gauge his scholarly worth and respond accordingly, claimed that it had taken him weeks to prepare his. Both Tim and Harold suggested that for them, it had been an arduous task. Alternatively, Beth claimed that she had just “bunged” her Evidence Portfolio together during an afternoon when she had “nothing better to do”. However, she went on to describe how her department had temporarily hired someone to review and improve (to examine) all the Evidence Portfolios that were to be submitted by staff. Although these examples highlight the diversity of significance that participants gave to preparing their Evidence Portfolios, it does demonstrate how the Evidence Portfolio, as a mechanism for confessing one’s conduct and productivity, is an exercise in written examination. In this sense, academics are encouraged to submit their Evidence Portfolios to position themselves to become visibly audited bodies.

A number of participants, namely Alfred, Anne, Edith, Freddie, Harold and Scott, indicated in various ways that they were responding to PBRF’s normalising judgement by actively positioning themselves as compliant subjects who intended to
continue to conform to PBRF’s policies and practices. Some of these participants had responded to PBRF discourses as though they represented a technology of production that was constructing new ‘truths’ about being an academic and doing research, and this enabled those participants to make a political investment in their academic subjection. Edith’s positioning as a departmental motivator and Harold’s strategic plan to “optimise” his future PBRF results were good examples of this. However, not all those who appeared to be complying with PBRF shared Edith and Harold’s intentional decisions to do so. Gary was reluctantly conforming to PBRF while constantly trying to find ways to “avoid” or “get around” it. Alternatively, Scott, in responding to procedural requirements associated with PBRF, appeared to be oblivious to the normalising tendencies that he was also taking up.

For many of the participants, but particularly for Trevor, Harold, Angus, and Anne, the discourses of PBRF created a culture of career insecurity, anxiety and “paranoia”. There was a general consensus amongst participants that PBRF was going to reshape career opportunities available to academics. This potential for PBRF to play an influential role in shaping academic careers was demonstrated by Kenneth’s substantial promotion during the period of this study, a promotion that Kenneth attributed directly to his PBRF success. It was also identified by concerns raised in respect of the ‘R’ category. Angus, who admitted scoring an ‘R’ in the 2003 evaluation, believed that if he failed to strategise ahead of the 2006 round to improve his quality score, it would be highly unlikely that he would be presented with any further opportunities to advance his academic career. Beth witnessed the high levels of anxiety and distress in one of her colleagues who, having received a quality score of ‘R’ in 2003, now perceived herself to be virtually unemployable according to the feedback that she had been given by management regarding her score.

These experiences demonstrate how many of the participants in this study were conceptualising PBRF quality scores as a technology of sign systems by attributing a credential value to their scores. Often this credential value correlated
with a particular level of academic status (such as Angus’ association of a score of ‘B’ to the position of senior lecturer, discussed in Chapter Seven). In this thesis I have already identified how the allocation of quality scores can act as a technology of sign systems that could construct distinct ways of thinking and knowing via the characteristics they take on and by the rules associated with their use. By assigning quality scores with credential values in this way, most participants saw the potential for quality scores to become an ‘official’ management tool in the recruitment and promotion of academic staff.

The majority of participants in this study also perceived PBRF as a “game” that had to be “played”. Anne claimed that PBRF would create two types of research outputs: those produced for the betterment of knowledge in a field and those designed to do well in PBRF. Sometimes a piece of research could achieve both functions but according to the beliefs of the majority of participants in this study, this would not be common. As such, most of the participants, including Anne, Angus, Alfred, Harold, Kenneth, Lloyd, Michael, Scott and Tim, expressed how they had or were intending to “play” the PBRF “game” by preparing and submitting research outputs for the specific purpose of enhancing their Evidence Portfolios. But if academics are to play this “game” and submit PBRF appropriate research outputs, they must first go about doing that research and publishing those outputs. I contend that if such outputs are not the same as those that academics would normally produce in their academic field, then this in itself constitutes a change in the research being undertaken by them. In other words, if academics respond to PBRF by undertaking or publishing research that they believe is more congruent with its definition of quality research, then this will affirm PBRF as an instrument of governmentality. As an instrument of governmentality, PBRF will manage and regulate academic behaviour by teaching academics to negotiate pathways of institutional and professional success via their own self-regulating practices (demonstrated through their decisions to “play the game”).
In this thesis I have argued that PBRF is a technology of power that, for the
academics in this study, is playing a central and visible role in relaying messages
about how they should now be positioning themselves as academic subjects within
their institutional and professional fields. Most participants in this study have
provided support for my argument, responding to PBRF’s discursive rhetoric by
adopting different technologies of the self. Kenneth provided an example of
Foucault’s (2003a) *Senecan* mode, the mode whereby individuals examine the
various ways that their thoughts tie in with the rules of society. In particular, Kenneth
was responding to the new rule-bound codes of conduct that he associated with being
a successful academic within the PBRF environment. Kenneth was now
“academicising” his incidental work by adding the essential ingredients to make
them bona fide academic journal offerings. Other participants who demonstrated
*Senecan* modes of technologies of the self included Gary in his consideration of the
essential activities and practices he needed to take up to sustain his academic
identity, and Edith in taking up her role as a PBRF “whip-cracker”.

Angus, in stating that he did not want to “morally prostitute” himself via his
engagement with PBRF demonstrated Foucault’s (2003a) *Christian hermeneutics*
mode, the mode that explores the relationship between an individual’s thoughts and
their inner integrity. This was evident through Angus’ conflicted views about what
PBRF required him to do and his own values and beliefs about those requirements.
Other participants who appeared to take up a *Christian hermeneutics* mode included
Anne, who struggled between being a female subject, an academic subject, and a
combination of both; and Lloyd, who described a tension between his own thoughts
about PBRF and its relevance to him, and his obligations to support and promote
PBRF in his role as a Head of Department.

In Chapter Seven Beth described how one of her junior colleagues had taken
up a *Cartesian* mode, the mode that enables individuals to distinguish the extent to
which their thoughts correspond with their discursive reality. Beth’s colleague had
experienced enormous anxieties about her perception of ‘self’ (as an ‘R’), and how that perception did not correspond with the necessary or ‘real’ self that her departmental managers needed her to be. Other participants who took up a Cartesian mode by comparing their perceptions of the ‘self’ with the discursive ‘realities’ around them included Freddie, who compared the actions of his Head of Department with his own perceptions of what his Head needed to be doing, and Alec, who compared his own vision of what academic life was about to a changed vision that he believed PBRF was manufacturing. In both cases, Freddie and Alec demonstrated the enactment of their Cartesian mode by constituting themselves as ‘defended subjects’.

This thesis highlights the normalising role that PBRF is playing in constituting academic subjects by the way it shapes their identity and legitimates their work. It has demonstrated how PBRF has influenced the decisions that the participants of this study are making about their research, their professional accountability, their careers and aspirations, and their exercise of academic freedom. As such, this thesis provides a timely investigation into PBRF as a new instrument of governmentality capable of re-crafting academic identities and practices as part of New Zealand’s tertiary education sector. I argue that PBRF, as a form of governmentality, will foster academic anxiety and complicity via mechanisms of surveillance and examination, encouraging individuals to take up various technologies of the self to regulate and correct their own conduct, thereby affirming PBRF’s role in academics’ subjection.

**Possibilities for future research**

In the same way that the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework was only ever designed to take a ‘snap shot’ of the research being undertaken in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector, this thesis can only claim to have provided a glimpse into the lives and experiences of 15 academics who took part in the 2003 inaugural Quality Evaluation exercise. Although this thesis has much to say about the
disciplining nature of PBRF and the Quality Evaluation exercise, there are other aspects that could be explored and reported in future research if we are to map the full impact of PBRF on New Zealand’s academics.

First, the low representation of women in this study raised some concerns for me. As stated in Chapter Four, only 20% of participants were women. There would be a good deal of merit in pursuing a study that investigates the specific issues that PBRF and other policy changes in the tertiary education field create for academic women. In this study Anne alluded to some of these, describing multiple discourses including ‘motherhood’, ‘patriarchy’ and ‘marriage’ as major influences that affected her academic work at a time when most of her male counterparts were carving out their future academic reputations.

Second, Angus provided insights into the dilemmas faced by academics using alternative research paradigms that have to be assessed and evaluated by PBRF. In Chapter Eight Angus identified two conflicting forms of accountability that impacted on his research as a Māori, and upon his research as an academic. Angus’ experience highlights that contrary to the ‘official’ discourse of PBRF (Ministry of Education, 2002a, 2002b; Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a; Web Research, 2004), the Tertiary Education Commission has failed to adequately understand and account for alternative forms of research in the PBRF design. However, it is not simply a matter of exploring the predicament that academics like Angus experience when trying to reconcile their research priorities with those imposed upon them by an instrument such as PBRF. Rather, the research that is required involves trying to find ways to rethink PBRF’s systems and practices so that they are capable of acknowledging and validating Māori research in ways that are ideologically and culturally relevant. Although this may be difficult because, as Angus demonstrated in his use of the term ‘whakahihi’ (a term describing the ‘conceit’ of a neo-liberal subject), PBRF is a paradigm that is incompatible with Māori systems and practices.
The third area of concern not significantly addressed by this thesis due to the nature of its design, is the plight of new and emerging researchers. This does not mean that I do not believe that there are issues and concerns for new and emerging researchers within PBRF. On the contrary, I fully understand the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by Beth’s colleague because I am at a point in my own academic career where I am discovering those same stresses and anxieties. However, this study was designed to include participants who had experienced an academic role prior to the implementation of PBRF and as such, a criteria for participation was that they were employed in a position of lecturer (or higher) for at least five years. Therefore, the experiences of the participants in this study could not genuinely encompass those of new and emerging researchers.

Concluding comments

As I conclude this study I do not have a single, definitive story to tell in respect of PBRF. Rather, I have written a thesis regarding the various ways that the 15 participants of this study have experienced, rationalised and responded to PBRF as a consequence of being assessed and judged as part of the inaugural 2003 Quality Evaluation. Their experiences exemplify the contestation that exists between participants’ historically accepted ways of knowing their academic selves and the new forms of academic subjection introduced by PBRF. It is within this contested space that the shifting boundaries and limitations imposed on academics constitutes new, and sometimes seemingly contradictory ways of thinking and being.

This thesis has used Foucault’s concepts of governmentality and subjection against a backdrop of New Zealand’s neo-liberalism to present an account of how a group of academics are being constituted, and are constituting themselves, according to a new construction of what a ‘good’ academic is deemed to be. In particular, this thesis has highlighted how the exercise of power and knowledge contributes to
participants' subjection and how various instruments and techniques are facilitating the processes of their subjection.

In this thesis I have explored the conduct of the inaugural PBRF Quality Evaluation in 2003 as a form of governmentality that has made the participants of this study, as academics employed in New Zealand's tertiary education sector, the objects of a new production of power. The 2003 Quality Evaluation has served to categorise the professional roles and identities of each of the participants by separating them from their community, assigning them with a symbolic value comparative to that community (in the form of a quality score), and disciplining them into manageable and co-operative subjects. This constitutes a neo-liberal disintegration of academic collegiality and identity by producing widespread skepticism and anxiety amongst academics about their work, careers and scholarly status. I have argued that within this neo-liberal context, the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework operates as an instrument of governmentality that decentres the government's role in managing the conduct of academics by positioning academics to play a dominant role in monitoring and evaluating their own practices. Therefore, I conclude that PBRF will continue to operate as an instrument of governmentality in the ongoing subjection of New Zealand's academics because that is part of PBRF's raison d'etat.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Date..........................

UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH:
A discourse analysis of Performance-Based Research Funding

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Craig Ashcroft and I would like to thank you for showing an interest in my project. This project will contribute towards the development of my Ph.D. and I am particularly interested in hearing your views on Performance-Based Research Funding.

Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate I genuinely thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and I thank you for considering my request.

What is the aim of the project?
There are two main objectives:
1. To investigate the way that academics within a New Zealand university come to view and respond to the implementation of Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF). This will involve interviewing 15 academics, such as yourself, who are currently involved in university research and teaching.
2. To try and discern the relationship between the discourses of PBRF and related policies at the macro level of society and the meanings that individuals take from these discourses.

What type of participants am I seeking?
This project requires the participation of academics currently engaged in research and teaching activities within a university setting who have held the position of lecturer (or higher) for at least the last five years. 15 academics are required from all disciplines.

What will you be asked to do?
Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in two interviews. The first of these will be undertaken as soon as possible at your convenience, and the second will occur 12 months later. These interviews will be approximately one and a half hours each in duration.

It is hoped that your participation will offer deeper insight into how individuals engage with PBRF policy discourses within tertiary education and thus, be of benefit to those such as yourself who are actively involved in teaching and research within the tertiary education sector.
Individuals will not be identified in the study and all identifying information will be removed to preserve anonymity and privacy. Only I, Craig Ashcroft, will know the identity of those participating in this project and I undertake not to disclose that information for any reason. You may withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**
The data will be collected from the interviews. The interview content will be compared for differences in responses across time and against a discourse analysis of tertiary education policies and, specifically, Performance-Based Research Funding policies.

It is possible that results of this project may be used for publication, further study or conference papers. Any data included will in no way be linked to any specific individual.

This project will involve an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of all the questions that will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review all the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

You will be presented with a copy of the results of the project should you wish. I also undertake to keep you informed of the project’s development and I will gladly provide you with any information that is related to the project and the research topic as it comes to hand.

The supervisors: Drs. Karen Nairn, Judith Duncan and Peter Rich (from the University of Otago) and the researcher, Craig Ashcroft, are the only people with access to the data and the data will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned will be able to gain access to it. At the conclusion of the project all personal identifying information will be destroyed immediately except for any raw data on which the results of the project depend. This will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which the University of Otago’s School of Education Administrator will destroy it.

Again I thank you for showing an interest in my project. I hope you will take this opportunity to participate in what I believe will be a very exciting research study.

**What if I have any questions?**
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Craig Ashcroft: [Place of residence during research] or Dr. Karen Nairn
[Telephone Number: [xx xxxxxxxx]] [Department of Education]
Email: [johyjohn@ihug.co.nz] [University Telephone Number: 4798619]
karen.nairn@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee

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20 Appendices note: My contact details have been removed from all accompanying documents to avoid identifying the institution where this research was undertaken.
Appendix B

UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH:
A discourse analysis of Performance-Based Research Funding

This Project and You: A summary sheet

- This project is interested in hearing your views on PBRF
- You will be one of 15 participants
- Your identity will be kept anonymous and only Craig Ashcroft (researcher) will know your identity
- You may withdraw from the project at any time
- You will be interviewed twice. Each interview will be approximately 1-1.5 hours each in duration
- The first interview will take place asap at your convenience.
- The second interview will take place 12 months after the first
- This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.

For further information:

Craig Ashcroft.
[Temporary office location],
[Institution].
[Postal address],
[City].
Ph: [xx xxxxxxxx]
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Appendix C

UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH:
A discourse analysis of Performance-Based Research Funding
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. All data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project except for any raw data on which the results of the project depend. This will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed by the University of Otago’s School of Education Administrator. All information regarding my identity will only be known by the researcher, Craig Ashcroft, and he shall destroy all identifying information at the conclusion of the project.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of all the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage.
5. There is no reward for participating in this project. However, I will receive a summary of the research at its conclusion and I will be kept informed of the project’s development.
6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the library but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

........................................................................................................
(Name of participant)

........................................................................................................
(Signature of participant) (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix D

Understanding PBRF (Performance-Based Research Funding).

My name is Craig Ashcroft and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Otago. As part of my Ph.D. project I am particularly interested in hearing your views on Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF). I am particularly interested in investigating the way that you come to view and respond to the implementation of PBRF.

My project requires participants who are academics currently engaged in research and teaching activities within a university setting who have held the position of lecturer (or higher) for at least the last five years. Participants are sought from a variety of academic disciplines.

Should you agree to take part in my project you will be asked to participate in two interviews. The first of these will be undertaken asap at your convenience, and the second will occur 12 months later. These interviews will be approximately one and a half hours each in duration.

Individuals will not be identified in the study.

Your participation will offer deeper insight into how individuals (academics) engage with PBRF related policies within tertiary education and thus be of benefit to those such as yourself who are actively involved in teaching and research within the tertiary education sector.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.

For further information please contact:

Craig Ashcroft.
[Address during research].
Telephone: [xx xxxxxxx]
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I thank you for showing an interest in my project. I hope you will take this opportunity to participate in what I believe will be a very exciting research study.

-Craig
Let's talk PBRF*

*Performance-Based Research Funding

Would you be interested in being involved in a project that examines PBRF?

My Name is Craig Ashcroft and this project will contribute towards my Ph.D. I am interested in knowing how you are experiencing PBRF and how your experiences of PBRF impacts upon your general approach to research.

Call for participants

If you would like to have an opportunity to discuss PBRF and be a part of this project then I would like to hear from you.

Your participation will offer deeper insight into how individuals engage with PBRF related policies within tertiary education and thus be of benefit to those such as yourself who are actively involved in teaching and research within the tertiary education sector.

For further information please contact:

Craig Ashcroft**.
[Temporary research address].
Telephone: [xx xxxxxxx]
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Or your own Department Administrator

NOTE: This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.

**Craig Ashcroft is a PhD student from the School of Education at the University of Otago, Dunedin.
Appendix E

The Participants

Alec: Alec is a senior-level academic employed in a single subject area and had previously experienced a PBRF-styled assessment exercise abroad. Alec’s main concern during his interviews was his belief that PBRF prioritised publishing and that this served to narrow research activity to fit a government prescribed model. Alec was allocated a quality score of ‘C’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Alfred: Alfred is a senior-level academic employed in a single subject area and was the strongest advocate in support of PBRF in this study. Alfred was relieved that because of PBRF, student tuition subsidies were now being overtaken by an emphasis on research quality and performance. Alfred did not disclose his 2003 quality score as part of this study.

Angus: Angus is an early career academic employed in a mixed subject area. Angus’ primary interests in research focus on finding practical solutions to issues that affect Māori communities. Angus was allocated a quality score of ‘R’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation and believed that this was something that he would have to address before 2006 if he wanted to remain in the academic profession.

Anne: Anne is an early career academic employed in a single subject area on a part-time basis due to her family commitments. Anne was concerned that PBRF would not make allowances for women who she felt were already disadvantaged in their academic careers. She also believed that PBRF would become a “game” that “had to be played”. Anne received a quality score of ‘B’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation exercise.
Beth: Beth is mid-career academic employed in a department that rated highly in the 2003 Quality Evaluation. Beth felt that PBRF had restored a balance between teaching and being able to further one’s research but she had been taken by surprise at the level of distress that new and emerging researchers appeared to experience as a result of the Quality Evaluation exercise. Beth did not disclose her 2003 quality score as part of this study.

Edith: Edith is a mid-career academic employed in a single subject area. Edith believed that PBRF would play a significant role in determining how her department was funded and how the institutional hierarchy of her university would regard the department in the future. Edith attained a quality score of ‘C’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Freddie: Freddie is a mid-career academic employed in a mixed subject area. PBRF had made Freddie look at his own research output and consider how that output might look to others. Freddie placed a great significance on his 2003 quality score of ‘B’.

Gary: Gary is a senior-level academic employed in a semi-professional single subject area. He did not believe that PBRF had the ability to accurately gauge quality and was annoyed at how intensive the Quality Evaluation exercise had been, claiming that it had taken him several weeks to prepare and submit his Evidence Portfolio. Gary received a quality score of ‘B’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Harold: Harold is a Head of Department in a single subject area. Harold admitted that initially he had been relaxed about the 2003 Quality Evaluation but was now thinking more strategically for the future. Harold received a quality score of ‘C’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.
Kenneth: Kenneth is a senior-level academic employed in a single subject area. He was concerned about PBRF’s emphasis on international research and how this might impact on New Zealand specific research, particularly in relation to conferences, community service roles, textbooks and presentations of keynote addresses. Kenneth did not disclose his 2003 quality score.

Lloyd: Lloyd is a Head of Department in a single subject area. Lloyd expressed a concern for his staff and their morale as a consequence of PBRF. He also described PBRF as a “crude instrument” that failed to accurately measure research quality. Lloyd attained a quality score of ‘B’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Michael: Michael is an early-career academic employed in mixed-discipline area as a full-time researcher. He is not originally from New Zealand and English is not his first language. Michael’s greatest concern was how PBRF would impact upon academic freedom. Michael was allocated a quality score of ‘A’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Scott: Scott is a mid-career academic employed in a single disciplined subject area. Scott was not too concerned about PBRF, believing that it would encourage him to do more productive research. However, Scott also believed that some of his research was not suitable for PBRF assessment. He received a quality score of ‘C’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Tim: Tim is a senior-level academic employed in a mixed subject area. He had also experienced a PBRF-styled assessment exercise abroad. Tim expressed a number of concerns about PBRF including its use of journals as indicators of quality, its potential impact on institutional appointment and promotion procedures, and the assignment of scores as measures of an individual’s worth. Tim attained a quality score of ‘A’ in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.
**Trevor:** Trevor is a senior-level academic employed in a single subject area. Trevor expressed his belief that PBRF was a Science driven initiative that enabled academics to put a “spin” on their CVs and play a strategic game. Trevor did not disclose his 2003 quality score in this study.