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Managerial Identity Formation in a Public Sector Professional: An Autobiographical Account

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Abstract: This article discusses the formation of managerial identity within a public sector setting. It takes an autobiographical view of the way in which I, as a long serving academic, undertook the identity work of becoming a Head of School in a University. It considers five principal narratives through which this process was presented, to self and others, as I moved into the role. It looks at the ambiguity of taking a managerial role in such an organization, and the scope which is given by multiple concurrent narratives for doing this in a way which preserves the previous professional identity. The implications of a number of different stories which were used to explain managerial identity in the case example are examined, and a tentative framework is suggested which may illuminate the situations of other professionals turned manager in the public sector.

Keywords: narrative, managerial identity, public sector

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on autobiographical data. In it I report on introspective research that I undertook for a period of five years during which I held a role as a senior manager in a University.[1,2] I shall be using some of the data that I collected during that period about my identity as a manager in this article.

Managerial identity is developed through the prospective storytelling by which people lead their lives, and not just the retrospective storytelling through which they tell us about lives they have (or would like to have) lead.[3] In this article I shall examine the relationship between the building of a managerial identity and the development of stories about being a manager and of a character to be a protagonist in those stories. I shall go on to look at some reflections on how people tell future oriented stories of themselves, and particularly how we learn and develop our way of telling a story of our own future.[4,5]

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I then examine some of my own managerial practice of storytelling, and consider some of the different kinds of story that I have told about myself as a manager. I pay particular attention to the relationship between professional and managerial identity, which is key to understanding the identity of the public professional turned manager. Finally, I consider what this analysis suggests that might help us more broadly to comprehend the formation of managerial identity in the public sector.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In the spirit of research on lived experience,[6] this article is offered as an illumination of how managerial and professional identities are developed and how they interact. The stories that are referred to in this paper are what Boje [7] refers to as antenarratives. As Boje says:

> Story resists narrative; story is antenarrative and on occasion even anti-narrative (a refusal to be coherent). The folk of organizations inhabit storytelling spaces outside plot, not tidy and rationalized narrative spaces. Narrative analysts replace folk stories with less messy academic narrative emplotments and create an account of organizations that is fictively rational, free of tangled contingency and against story.[8]

The data from which the ideas below were generated came from my moving from the role of an academic into five years of managerial activity as the founding head of a School in a UK university. I collected the data through noticing over a period of time the range of stories that I told about the stage of entering my new role. I have used this data to consider how I learned a managerial identity. I am aware of the temptation to give a veneer of sensible and positive action to my often fragmented story lines. I am also familiar with the temptation to put myself in a good light, because this article will be read by people who I would like to have a positive view of my abilities as a manager, my intellectual competence as an academic, my integrity as a human being, and my desirability as a friend.[9] I can not guarantee that I have never fallen to such temptation, but I would argue that I have no reason to suppose that I have been any more misleading than any one else supplying qualitative (or indeed quantitative) data.

MANAGERIAL IDENTITY

A manager spends his or her time plotting a story of themselves in their managerial lives. This is done for many different audiences, but one of the crucial ones is the manager themselves. We tell ourselves stories of ourselves. We do

so according to who we want to be taken to be, according to the persona we wish to convey. Within the world of *homo narrans narratur*[10] we will tell stories that are simultaneously intended to tell our selves as a story.

A storyteller is always engaged in at least two presentations simultaneously. There is the story currently being narrated, and there is the view being offered to both listener and storyteller about who the storyteller is and what kind of relationship they see themselves as having with the listener. For example, a manager may have a well practiced skill in telling all of his colleagues disgraceful stories about each other. In so doing, he conveys both a set of stories that he finds amusing, and with which he can easily raise a laugh, and a message about the relationship that he has with whichever colleague he was talking to at the time. This is the distinction that[11] makes between the representational and the interactional functions of narrative. So in this example, the storyteller is simultaneously presenting a story about a recent indiscretion of a mutual colleague, and using the story to present his identity and the kind of relationship which he is offering to the audience.

This is what is meant by the narration of the managerial self. This is not meant to imply that this self is exclusively managerial. The managerial self is not distinct from other selves. However, we are interested in the formation of managerial identity for a person who already has other well developed identities. While "sequence is the source of sense,"[12] this is reversed for prospective narrative; when considering how people develop their stories of their selves for the future, sense is the source of sequence. The sense that a person wishes to make of your future, which is the main way in which their managerial identity is both formed and revealed, will determine the sequencing as well as the selection of the events which they include within the stories that they tell.

We live out stories that we develop in our imaginations.[13] Our fantasy lives are precious to us, and are a place in which all sorts of futures get lived out which would never otherwise see the light of day. We are continuously fantasizing future events in the very detailed sense of an imaginative rehearsal.[14] This means that we imagine them in full physical detail; for example, if we are imagining a situation in which we might feel embarrassed, we will experience the physical sensations that we feel with embarrassment, say, a tingling in the fingers. If we are imaginatively telling ourselves a story in which we feel fear, the kind of imaginative rehearsal that I am referring to will include the sensation in the stomach that we would expect with the actual fear.

This is a general point about how people prepare for the future. Our storytelling of our future is informed by such imaginative rehearsals, as we rehearse and develop our stories. A good storyteller can often make the listener feel a sense of being present—even at times that they *were* present, even when they know intellectually that they were not. Telling a story about something which has not yet happened is a precarious activity which can lose

credibility with both the teller and the listener extremely quickly. To be successful, it requires a considerable degree of empathy. And such empathy is developed through fantasy.

So where do our stories of our future come from? Partly from our observations, noticing characters or characteristics that intrigue us and that we might like to emulate, and that we can build into our prospective storytelling. For example, a manager notices a colleague demonstrating a clever way of handling a difficult subordinate, and looks for an opportunity to try doing the same. On some future occasion when they see someone being suitably difficult they then experiment with the strategy. The prospective side of this is that they are looking for a particular kind of story to unfold, and are thus likely to create it, to practice carrying out the strategy they want to try.

Other prospective stories come from memory. We construct a future that can show some continuity with our present and our past, to give us a sense of coherence. We do this from our memory, which means through considering the active reconstructions that we make of events.

We also stock our fantasy for future story telling with our empathetic understanding of others to whom we relate, our heroes, villains, fools, even our victims.[15] For example, we develop our managerial identity by imagining what it must be like to be some manager whom we particularly admire. We mimic them in our imaginations and imagine doing what they would do in the way they would do it, before we start to do the same in our outward lives.

Finally, we feed our fantasy through fiction. Managers appear to learn much of their prospective storytelling by watching the actions of fictitious managers. More generally, human beings may learn a lot about how to be human beings, and what sort of stories to create for themselves to live out in the future, through fiction.[16] Films and television plays, and for those managers who read, novels, feed the imagination about possible futures. There may be non-fiction which has the same effect on the imagination, for example, autobiographies, if they are well enough written to take the reader into empathy with the subject. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is of no significance here; whichever genre the original is labeled as, the reader reads, empathises, and creates their own simulated reality out of what they are reading. They may then test this reality by going and living it out, through the form of a prospective story.

LEARNING MANAGERIAL IDENTITY

So far we have been speaking of stories as if they were engaging and exciting. This is not necessarily so. Stories can also be boring and can fail to enlist the interest or the empathy, of the listener. There are stories which actively repel us, perhaps because they are embarrassingly unconvincing, or alternatively because they do not make us wish to identify with any of the characters.

Perhaps the strangest boring stories are the ones that we bore ourselves with—where the stories fail to catch the attention even of the teller. The fact that we are finding them boring does not necessarily stop us telling them, and we are one narrator that we cannot escape. People can develop a considerable sense of ennui when they get bored with their own stories. What could be more sad than to be bored by your own telling of your own story? This can be the moment at which you try to find some way of spicing life up, perhaps by weaving a new and more exciting strand into your story, or even by attempting radically to change your story. This is what happens in a mid life crisis.

Not only do people get bored, they may also lose the plot. When people apply for jobs, they may reread their *curriculum vitae*, read some previous job applications, and talk to their friends and family; this sometimes reminds them of a plot that they once saw in their story of their lives which they had forgotten about or from which they had been diverted.

Losing the plot is not necessary negative, however. Confidence in the continuity of the plot can insulate people from experience and from learning. There may be times when learning proceeds only if the plot is lost. As long as I have the sense of individual control and distance which I get from being aware of, and happy with, my plot, I may be defended from learning. As soon as the sense of control is gone I may be more open to learning something new. There is a conflict here; the security of the plot can be boring. People at work continually and deliberately place the plots of their prospective stories at risk. They do things which mean that they cannot tell how the story is going to unfold. If they do not do this, they are liable to become bored with their own stories.

This suggests a limitation to the social constructionist view of personal narrative. We construct stories of our working lives, and have considerable power to make our stories come true. However, if we see ourselves as having too much control over this, we get bored. It becomes a Faustian pact, where we are condemned to the hell of living out our own boring stories. At that stage we long not to have control of how we construct our stories, in order to let something outside our control liven it up for us. We need our stories to be permeable to events.

I have argued elsewhere that the development of a canon of stories is the very act of learning in an organization.[17] This means that the story development that arises from losing the plot may be of utmost significance to the person. As long as you know where you are in your story, how the bits fit together, who you are as a character and so on, your learning is comfortably bounded. When you lose the plot, for example when you cannot think what a satisfactory conclusion to the emerging story would be, then you are confronted with the need to learn at a much more radical level. So long as I know what to do next, my need to learn is limited. If we follow Kelly's view[18] of learning as the extent to which people are changed by experiences, then it is the times when I do not know where my story might go next which are the main moments of learning,

because these are the times when I have to work out my own identity and where the character with that identity is in the plot.

The concept of character arc is helpful here.[19] In thinking about how characters are constructed for films, plays, novels etc. it is suggested that sudden discontinuities, such as sudden changes of heart, or conversions, are difficult for viewers or readers to believe. More convincing is a character that develops gradually over time, not in a straight line but also not in a random walk. The arc is the preferred metaphor for satisfactory character development for writers such as McKee. If this is true for fiction it is worth considering whether it is true for the fictions that we create and live, otherwise known as our lives.

COMPETING STORIES OF MANAGERIAL IDENTITY

The stories I tell about my identity have a surprisingly fragmentary quality, given that I had five years to rehearse them into something coherent. Linde's argument [20] that the coherence of our life stories is only maintained by being able to tell several different, and to an observer inconsistent, stories, seems valid. I am aware that I tell different stories of those five years of managerial life to different audiences.

The amount of narrative material available for discussion at this point is far too great to present in this article. It would be possible, for example, to work with stories about the first year in the role, or about development within the role, or about the view from after completing the role. I have chosen to focus on stories about how I came into the role because I think they are representative of a range of storying of lives, and because stories of entering a role clearly represent the development of life story. In addition, this permits comparison with other accounts in the literature.[21] There are five stories that I shall examine, which I would characterize as follows:

1. "Gaining experience"—professionals should experience management.
2. "Cleaning the stables"—professionals may need to go in and sort out the managerial mess.
3. "Creating bliss"—creating the ideal environment for professionals to flourish.
4. "Entrapment"—professional forced to become a manager.
5. "Life after death"—management is the role for professionals who cannot perform.

The first story that I sometimes tell is about the need for management academics to do some management, "gaining experience." This helps them to work out what is worth talking about in the classroom, and also affects their research agenda. Consistently with this story, I had done something similar

before, during a managerial period as Director of Studies for a programme in another university, and it had given me confidence for years of thinking about what issues in management were worth teaching and researching. This story has variants for different audiences. There is the banging your head on a wall version—that such roles are of value because it is so nice when you stop, and it makes you appreciate the joys of other types of professional activity. This goes down well with people who disparage professionals in management.

There is the research planning version—that such roles give you an experiential insight into the activity of management which affects your research agenda, and this variant of the story goes down better with those who want to find out if I am a responsible academic. There is the credibility version—that having achieved something as a manager, even in an academic institution, gives you some credibility when talking to practicing managers in other institutions; this goes down well with those who stress our responsibility to be able to get into good conversation with the practitioner community, and to influence them.

The second story, "cleaning the stables," takes as its elements an organizationally confused situation, a group of valued colleagues who needed a particular job done to enable them to flourish, and the opportunity for me to seize the moment. This was the point in history at which my university could create for itself a significant school. It was also the point at which we could have ended up with a very unclear and uncongenial organization, which would have made life dissatisfying for all of us. Someone needed to get in there and clear it up, take the opportunity and make something of it, and I was the person who responded to that need. Someone needed to love the organization to life.[22] If I took that role on we could create something special, a really interesting school where we could work on important questions and be valued. This story is a self-aggrandizing one; "cometh the hour, cometh the man."

The third story, "creating bliss," is not completely different from the second, but it goes down better for audiences who work in other competing schools and potential recruits to the staff. This story is that I saw an opportunity to be part of creating the kind of school I had always wanted to work in; that in my previous experience I had seen enough of the inside of academic schools to have a view about what climate was needed for a school to flourish, that I saw the opportunity to create something close to my dream, and so I went for it. This is close to what Edwards[23] meant by saying that the meaning of life was the extent to which you could write yourself into others' stories.

The fourth story, "entrapment," is one that I have never told, but have sometimes heard friends and former colleagues tell about me, which is that it was done to me. This story has me innocently accepting a professional role as an academic employed to do research and teaching, and finding myself transposed after a short time by pressure from my employers to a completely different role, in which I was managing the School. I have never liked this

story, I do not find it convincing, and I have often been annoyed when others have assumed it to be true, or tell snatches of story which take this as the plot. It seems to me to be unfair to my employers, as well as to show me as too disempowered for me to be comfortable with it. What has intrigued me is the number of people who seem to assume that I will like this story, as if there is something that I should aspire to in the victim role.

The fifth story, "life after death," is one that I like even less, that I would not often tell, but which I have heard told about other people in similar roles to my own, and which I have been known to tell myself on really bad days. This is that the role of academic management is what you take on when you no longer have the confidence that you can perform as a professional. Head of School is the resting place for the departed academic mind. There are two variants of this story, which reverse the causality. One is that the activity of being Head is what kills the mind. There are only so many strategic planning documents from your university that you can read, only so many benchmarks from the quality review and accreditation bodies, only so many times that you can try to fix deals with other departments, before you find yourself incapable of the degree of critical thinking required for research. The other version of the story has the decaying mind seeking out a managerial role to escape to, before being found out. Either way, once you are in the role, this story suggests that you could not still survive as a professional if you were to move out of management.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STORIES FOR MANAGERIAL IDENTITY

Each of these five stories was a part of the repertoire of stories that I told to myself and others, and with which I formed my managerial identity. As we commented above from Linde,[24] the coherence of my managerial story can only be understood by taking several inconsistent stories together; coherence does not happen without inconsistency. But how do these stories interact, collaborate and conflict to produce a coherent managerial identity? Are there aspects of these five stories which are illuminating about the formation of managerial identities more widely for professionals in the public sector?

The gaining experience story suggests that it should be part of the professional identity to experience the managerial identity. So taking the managerial role is not seen as a retreat from the professional identity, but rather a strengthening of it. This is an attractive, relatively cost free piece of identity work. It gives the option of taking a managerial identity as if trying it on for size, thus attempting to do no damage to the identity of the professional academic, and keeping the path clear to revert to a professional identity in the future.

Table 1. Five stories of managerial identity

Story Title	Story Line	Managerial Identity	Effect on Professional Identity	Comments
Gaining experience	Professionals should experience management	Manage in order to be a better professional	Claiming that professional identity is enhanced by managerial work	An attempt to have your cake and eat it too.
Cleaning the stables	Professionals may need to go in and sort out the managerial mess	Manage in order that your professional colleagues are not disabled	Placing professional identity at risk to maintain professional values	The managerial identity is a sacrifice offered to preserve professional values
Creating bliss	Creating the ideal environment for professionals to flourish	A manager who is a true professional can understand what professionals need	Professional identity is risked to further professional excellence	A managerial identity is seen as making a positive professional contribution.
Entrapment	Professional forced to become a manager	Unwilling victim of the intrigues of higher management	The manager would still be a professional if only they could	Disempowering of both the managerial and professional identity
Life after death	Management is the role for professionals who cannot perform	Management as the activity of last resort	The professional identity is now lost	Plays to most professionals' insecurities

The cleaning the stables story is also an attractive one for the teller; although this does not enfold the managerial identity within the professional one, it claims that the managerial identity is taken in order to defend the professional identity of colleagues. The management role is adopted in order to create, from comparative chaos, a School in which colleagues can preserve and strengthen their professional identity. To the extent that I am placing my own professional standing at risk, I claim to be doing so in order to allow the professional identity of my colleagues to flourish. Thus the managerial identity is acknowledged, but it is claimed that it is being taken in order to further professional values; I may not still focus on being a practising professional, but I have left only in order to enable my colleagues to practice.

The creating bliss story does much the same kind of identity work. The difference is that instead of heroically rescuing my colleagues from a chaotic situation, I am deliberately designing a productive and congenial situation for them—and myself. Just as in the second story, I am doing this without risking my reputation for caring about professional values, although in this case I am making more of a claim for a managerial identity; I am suggesting not just that I can ride in like a rescuing hero to retrieve a bad situation, but that I have positive design skills, and know how to create a good environment for professional work. While the cleaning the stables story only requires righteous indignation and a willingness to stand up for professionals, story three claims the skill to organize in a novel and more effective way.

The entrapment story is of a very common kind among professionals in the public sector. It assumes that anyone who could be a professional would avoid management tasks, and that professionals would only become managers if they were pressurised to do so. They are placed in a managerial role by their senior management, and have no choice. The expected managerial identity is one of victim. Colleagues will often jokingly quote Shakespeare, in Twelfth Night:

> But be not afraid of greatness: some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

The entrapment story assumes that the manager has had greatness thrust upon them. This assumption is quite undermining of a managerial identity. Unlike the hero in the cleaning the stables and creating bliss stories, the manager here is so powerless and unheroic that they cannot prevent themselves being thrust into a management role. They are a manager because they are too powerless not to be one. The manager ceases to be a player in their own story. Colleagues who make these assumptions may assume they are being kind; they have found an explanation of your new managerial role which does not assume that you are either insane or power crazed. They do not seem to be aware of the narrative bind in which they are placing the manager.

In the life after death story, the professional who turns manager is given an even less enviable position. In this story the managerial identity is associated with the loss of professional competence. As I said above, this association can be implied in either direction. It may be that the aging professional is seen as fit only to manage, assuming once again that everyone who could be a professional would be, and that the switch to management would only be made if the mental faculties were too decayed to carry on with professional work. Equally, the story can be told in a way that assumes that it is the managerial work which causes the intellectual and moral decline of the person performing it. Either way, the story offers a managerial identity in which professional identity and competence are denied. The manager is no longer fit to practice as a professional. Indeed the manager may be the target of special suspicion from professionals. As a former member of their group, whether the manager has deserted their professional work or carelessly grown incompetent at it, they have lost what should have been their pride and joy—their professional competence.

The managerial identity offered by the life after death story is one that may seem quite convincing to the manager on bad days. Things are going badly; you do not expect ever to be able to make any good professional use of your managerial experience, you do not believe you have saved your colleagues from chaos, you certainly do not believe you are designing a better professional world for them to live in, and you will not allow yourself to see the managerial role as having been thrust upon you. At this stage you may feel that there is little choice of story, and hence of management identity, other than to acknowledge that it is your way of retreating from the continued challenge to your own sense of competence that is implicit in all professional work. You see yourself in a vicious circle where loss of intellectual sharpness leads to focusing on the managerial, which leads to further loss of intellectual sharpness and so on.

PERFORMING A MANAGERIAL IDENTITY TO AN AUDIENCE

One audience that all our stories have in common is ourselves. We tell stories to other people, but we have usually rehearsed the story in our own minds several times before releasing it on anyone else. We do not rehearse these stories—or indeed usually tell them—from beginning to end. Instead, they are told in snatches, with a few lines uttered at a time and the expectation that there will be an opportunity to come back to them. But in the role of Head of School there are a number of different audiences that you have to address. You cannot tell more than one of these stories at a time. Not only is it seen as offending turn taking rules in conversation,[25] but also as an offense against story telling norms. We are expected to be able to give versions of stories that entertain, inform, and convince our audience. We rehearse the stories with the

audience in mind. In so doing, we make the link between retrospective story telling and prospective story telling.

Stories are our way of remembering, including remembering who we are.[26] The development of our stories representing our own identity is a way of growing and changing. Sometimes the stories we rehearse in our minds are under development for particular audiences. However, the rehearsals that we undergo may have a powerful effect on ourselves as audience.[27] As we rehearse a story in our mind, so we become more used to the world of the story that we are rehearsing, more comfortable with our own view of ourselves in it, and more likely subsequently to live the story out. In this way we live the stories that we tell, certainly if we tell them often enough and with enough conviction. We become the character that features as us in those stories. We are changed by our own story telling. Clearly this is not an unlimited process of change. If I were to tell stories in which I exhibit astonishing athletic prowess I would have no way of living these out. But if the stories are sincere in the sense that I can imagine them in sufficient depth for my physical sensations are affected, then I am likely to live them out.

For this reason, inverting the Weick quotation earlier, sense becomes the source of sequence.[28] The sense that I am making of my life means that the stories that I have to tell are influenced (and the events in them are sequenced) by the sense that I am trying to make. I will tell stories to audiences that help them to see my sense of what I am doing, but this is not something that I can manipulate indefinitely; the sense that they see in what I am doing becomes the sense that I myself see. The story that I tell to different parties is not just about the past, it is equally about the future. When I told a story about how I came to be Head of School, I knew that many listeners might be much more interested in how the School was at the time that I was telling the story, or how it is likely to be in the future, or alternatively what I had become or what I was likely to do in the future. What is of interest is how the particular story that I told of the way I became Head of School affected the perception of how things were at the time that I was telling it. When we rehearse stories in our mind, our concentration is at least as much on what the story we are telling is going to tell people about ourselves in the present and the future as on how we were at the time of the events recounted. Retrospective story telling, certainly in a management or organizational context, often has a strongly prospective slant.

For example, I regarded it as part of my job to tell stories to my colleagues about how we got to where we are.[29] The stories were aimed at giving them enthusiasm for the future we were creating together, and at boosting their confidence. As I told those stories they became more true for me than they were when I started. I also had to tell stories for professional colleagues in other institutions, for potential recruits to the staff of my School, for potential recruits to the student body, for the hierarchy of the University, and for my family. Each of these groups would get slightly different stories about the

School, about how it was developing, what it was becoming, and what its future might hold. Each of them will be looking for different kinds of loyalties and commitments from me. As I craft each of these stories, particularly during rehearsal time (which was very often driving time to the meeting at which I am going to have to tell the story), I fashioned a story sequence out of the sense that I am trying to convey. This sense can never be insincere, for the reasons I demonstrated above, but it can vary quite a lot from one audience to another.

The common factor among all those audiences is me; I am always there listening. I am often convinced by what I am saying, and the development of this conviction is learning. The sense that I wanted to convey gets told in a sequence, which seems so powerful to me as teller that it in turn affects the sense further; next time I tell the story it is therefore even stronger and more coherent, and this vicious or virtuous circle may continue for some time.

For example, I used to have to tell prospective students a story about the kind of School we were, and how we were different from other Schools. This is a fairly classic example of the narration of the managerial self, because I was describing an organization that I had been running for some time, and trying to give it a distinct identity in the minds of the audience. As I did this, I found that the story became more and more real for me. Telling the story became part of how I, as a manager, undertook my strategic thinking. Ideas which first came to me when I was trying to tell the story of the distinct character of the School later became part of my strategic thinking about how it should develop. In this way, retrospective storytelling becomes prospective, even if it was never intended to be so.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed in detail a narrative and autobiographical account of the formation of a managerial identity in one public sector professional. While I have concentrated on one case study, I argue that what I have said is consistent with the experience of many public sector managers. I have tested this out by giving a version of the account above to many of them, and hearing that it resonates with their experience. For example, doctors who become health managers have a rather different version of the gaining experience story (more to do with understanding how to get hold of resources), but the other four stories are all very similarly told. Furthermore, I have heard many accounts in which more than one of these stories is told. It is not at all uncommon for a doctor involved in management to talk about how they became involved because it was the way to gain resources for the activity they care about, and also that their hand was forced by their superiors, and also that they suspect they may have taken on the managerial task as a retreat from professional work.

Implicitly there are some differences for professionals who become managers throughout the public sector, though I think that none of the differences are exclusive to any one sector. I would suggest that the combination of the five types of story is what characterizes the formation of managerial identity in the public sector. The public sector includes many organizations that employ highly qualified professionals (educational institutions, health services, social services, etc.). Such professionals have to be managed by somebody, and often this is done by their fellow professionals. This phenomenon is common to most of the service part of the public sector. There is always an ambiguity for professionals about those who disengage from full professional practice to become a manager of other professionals, and this paper is offered as a contribution to understanding the formation of managerial identity for all in such a position.

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