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This paper explores the identity of Higher Education [HE] lecturers in College Based Higher Education [CBHE]. This sector margin now accounts for 8-10% of HE in the UK (Simmons and Lea, 2013) and provides an accessible, localised alternative to traditional university. This development is in response to UK government policy on Widening Participation [WP] and vocational skills shortages (Parry et al, 2012). CBHE is similar to the provision in Community Colleges in the United States of America and the Technical and Further Education Colleges of Australia [TAFE]. The HE sector margins, such as CBHE, have begun to draw increasing academic attention and they are now recognised as an important area for research in relation to debates on the significance of academic identities (Clegg, 2008), the WP agenda and social justice (Avis and Orr, 2016; Bathmaker, 2016).

This paper contributes to the limited, yet growing, research on CBHE through an in-depth exploration of the identities of a sample of those who teach in HE in Further Education Colleges [FECs]. There are a few small-scale studies in this area (Turner, 2008; Burkhill et al, 2008; Feather, 2012), yet still there is little known about the background and identity of those teaching HE in FE (Kadi-Hanifi and Elliott, 2016). Understanding HE lecturer identity contributes to debates around HE learning environments and teaching and learning interactions (Ashwin, 2009). Identity has emerged as one of the significant themes in our understanding of society and its social stratifications. It remains difficult to define, being at once something that makes us stand apart, yet simultaneously binding us in complex ways (Jenkins, 2008). It is important in helping us to understand the hierarchies within HE and the influence of education on social mobility. Here, identity is taken to be the negotiated process of positioning and becoming. The background and daily self-practices of the lecturers create ethico-political struggles, which are seen as central in creating and perpetuating elements of the role and the environment (Clarke, 2009).

This paper is drawn from a qualitative analysis of the experiences of thirteen HE lecturers, from five FECs in North-West England who participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. A framework for analysing lecturer identity was developed from Clarke's diagram for teacher identity work (2009). This focuses upon three main areas: background, self-practices in the role and relations with authority sources, and these provide the super-ordinate themes. These are explored in relation to personal fulfilment and pedagogy by considering the motivational influences on participant's practices. The analysis explores individual's personal struggles within these marginal spaces, and ways in which this creates second-level discourses around identity and the environment, in line with theories of social constructionism (Burr, 2015).

This research uncovers the familial backgrounds, educational influences and career progression of these lecturers. It explores what they do on a daily basis and shows how this is fulfilling and motivational, and how it affects their pedagogical practices. The findings suggest that the participants had often experienced similar backgrounds to their students, progressing through FE routes and non-traditional HE environments, including CBHE. They gained high levels of satisfaction

by participating in the students' success within the college-based environment, as they once did. There was a lack of time and motivation for scholarly research, which some argue problematizes the environment (Creasy, 2013), a view which can lead to a deficit position. However, these lecturers are well qualified, become confident and find autonomy within these marginal spaces. They offer something different to their students, and here it is argued that rather than a hybrid, with elements of HE-ness missing, they are a breed of their own specific to CBHE.

The participants enjoy and protect their role, actively distancing colleagues and managers in order to maintain their position. They offer high levels of nurturing to students, because it is personally fulfilling and it reminds them of their own educational success within FE. This high level of support creates demanding students who then expect access to their lecturers to an extent which creates heavy workloads, that can impinge on tutor wellbeing. Participants struggled with the tension between offering support and meeting their own needs, yet perpetuated and reinforced their own and student behaviours. These lecturers cross the boundary from FE to HE, in their settings, and yet they show little interest in leaving the environment for more traditional HE environments. They find little motivation or reward for research and publications, and they prioritise teaching and supporting students over such scholarly activity. They create a reality where they stay in the CBHE environment, because this is where they feel comfortable.

There are some positive outcomes within these marginal spaces, for the expansion of HE environments and for the pedagogical approach to teaching and learning in HE. However, it is clear that whilst CBHE changes individual lives of students, it does not address some issues, such as social mobility on a macro scale (Avis and Orr, 2016). These marginal spaces and the identity of those within them should continue to be debated so that we can better understand the verticality and hierarchical nature of the HE system. These lecturers challenge traditional academic stereotypes and broaden the scope for academic identity by allowing those with non-traditional backgrounds to teach HE and create positive environments for learners who need more support. Whether this polarises society further or breaks boundaries is a matter for ongoing discussion and research.

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