

Tribal Identities and Tribal Reservations

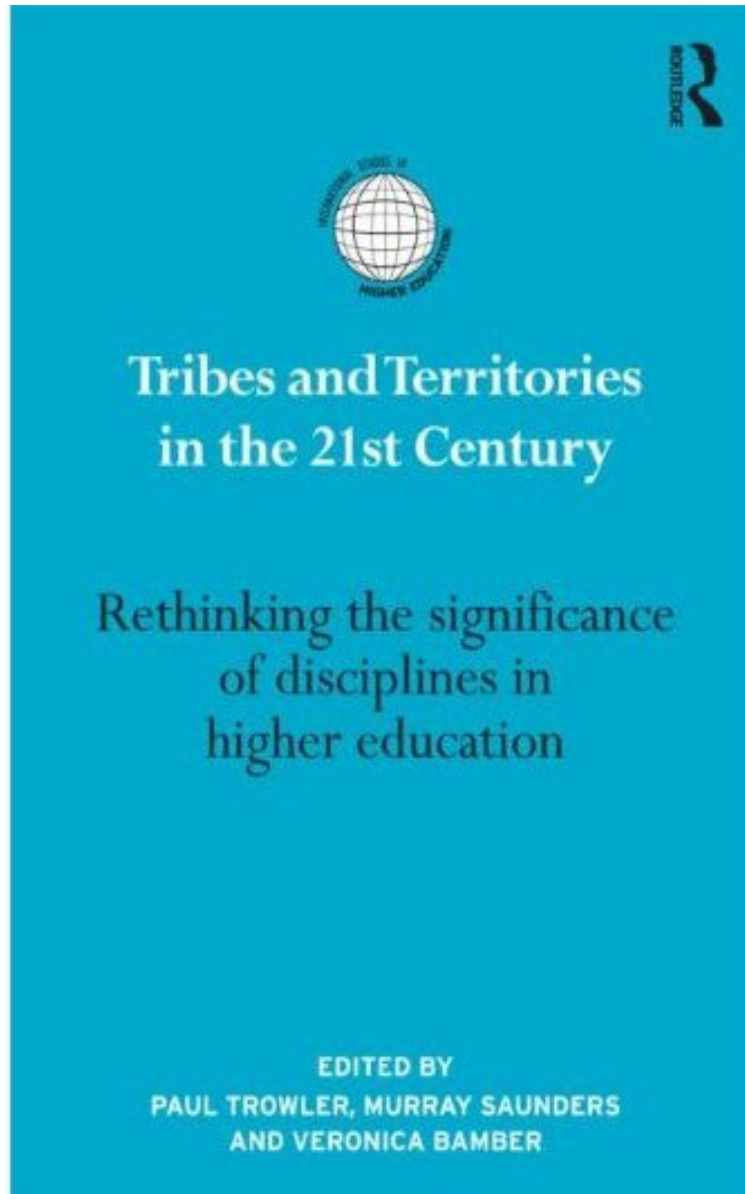
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**Trowler, Saunders and
Bamber (Eds) (2012)**

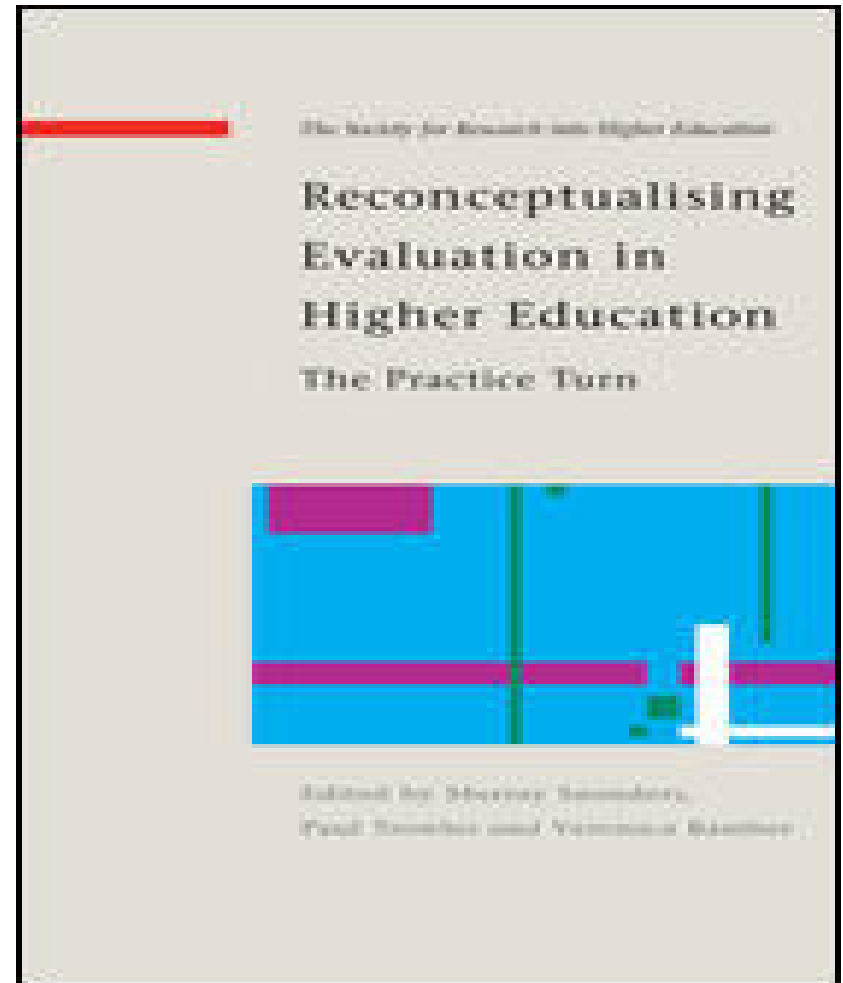
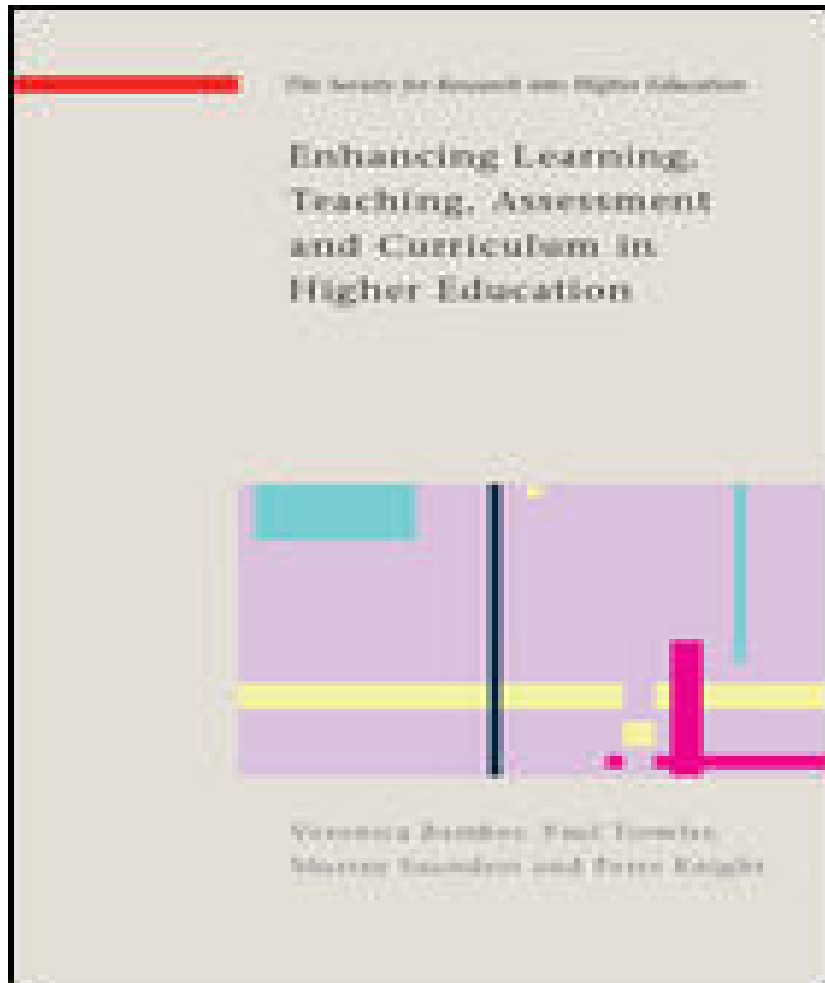
***Tribes and Territories
in the 21st Century:
Rethinking the
significance of
disciplines in higher
education***



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The others...



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What will I (we) cover?

- Updated notion of Tribes and Territories
- Some examples from different disciplines
- The Social Practice Theory perspective on this
- Questions about
 - The value of metaphor
 - What is changing in your ‘tribe’



Original book's main thesis

- Our subject **discipline** defines us, and **identifies** us as members of academic **'tribes'**.
 - Becher 1989, revisited by Becher and Trowler in 2001



SOME WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH 'TRIBES' IN THE LITERATURE...



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universities specialized
structures taught
networks approaches Epistemology
theory thinking
strategy practices
research ways transfer subject
knowledge social
community outsiders next body accumulated practising
object culture one groups
established particular accepted discourses cartels generation
power insiders agreement theoretical
systematic Intellectual organizations specialist
recognisable vocabulary

‘Disciplines’

Questions to ponder...

- Are we defined by our discipline?
- Is that where we get our identity from?



Question 1:

What is *your* identity?

And do we academics and researchers have identities such as ‘historian’ or ‘biologist’ or ‘engineer’ running through our bones like the lettering in a stick of seaside rock?

Some problems with ‘disciplines’

- Inter-disciplinary boundaries
- Intra-disciplinary wars
 - Eg internal disputes about content
- Disciplines constantly evolving
 - reconfiguration into new disciplines
 - sub-specialisms
 - splitting of disciplines into new forms
- “Discipline as curriculum” v “discipline as research” (Bernstein, 2000)
- Differences between sites (Bernstein, 2000)

HOW IMPORTANT IS EPISTEMOLOGY IN ALL THIS?



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Strength of epistemologies in disciplines

- Biglan (1973) - epistemological paradigms
- Neumann (2002) – Biglan’s paradigms mapped onto L&T dimensions
- Lattuca and Stark (1994) [Biglan again] - ‘unequivocal’ patterns in knowledge conceptions and practices



Biglan (1973)

Hard

Pure

Disabling dualisms?
(Trowler, 2012)

Applied

Soft

-

|

Reality: more nuanced

Epistemology only part of the mix. Eg

- Signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005)
- Ways of Thinking and Practising (McCune and Hounsell, 2005)
- Threshold concepts (Meyer and Land, 2003)
- Mix of influences in identities (Henkel, 2000)
- Context and personal ideology (Fanghanel, 2009)
- Teaching and Learning Regimes (Trowler and Cooper, 2002)
- Shifting disciplinary boundaries (Malcolm and Zucas, 2009)



Argument of the book

- Epistemological essentialism doesn't reflect the dynamic, complex nature of HE work
- Barnett (2000) – supercomplexity: academics work together in 'epistemological pandemonium'
- BUT: that pandemonium has patterns, key features
- From social practice theory perspective
 - √ Intellectual territory of the discipline (epistemology)
 - √ academic identities, discourse, multiple cultural configurations, social context, change over time...



QUESTION 2

To what extent do members of your 'tribes' share a coherent set of practices, values and standard approaches to activities like teaching and research?



How to go beyond the 'disabling dualisms' and 'premature ultimate' (Brookfield, 1995) of disciplinary essentialism?



SPT helps us acknowledge...

- Academics not in an inflexible disciplinary framework
- They're constantly reworking disciplinary norms
- Recreating what they do, and how
- Individuals both construct and enact culture
 - Not passive recipients
- Key = changing nature of disciplines over time
- And constant influence of other, non-epistemological, factors: shifting **territories**



uncertainty Disciplinary monitoring students
learning REF employability interconnectivity
sub-disciplines targets exchange economic priorities Massification
performative increased Conflicting discourse efficiency unpredictable
Ubiquitous income climate excellence mission
Research grant agendas interdisciplinary
student evaluation culture professional
support teaching constant activities body ethos interdependency
multiple drift fees advantage boundaries impact turbulence
Technology financial Academic change case contracts quantitative
university generation term state
large fixed table
policies globalised funding Social outcomes
relevance purpose Transdisciplinary
education competition tuition world
knowledge league system business ever-changing policy
Specialised deprofessionalisation competitive experience increasingly marketisation regulation
Non-traditional

So: maybe this is a better representation of academic life, rather than the assumed stability of disciplines?

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2zqTYgcpg>
= Building planes while you fly



Disciplines vary between locales
/ contexts, and over time

**QUESTION 3:
YOUR EXAMPLES?**



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SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE 2012 TRIBES BOOK



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Winberg (Engineering)

- Ways in which L&T conducted in engineering
- relationship between academic knowledge and professional knowledge
- knowledge claims between and across fields, along epistemic and social axes



Engineering (ctd)

- Academic world:
 - epistemic relation (eg knowledge of maths) is dominant
- Professional practice
 - social relation (eg interpersonal communications) comes to the fore
- Different attribution of value to L&T activities in each 'world'
 - Eg dissent over nature of student projects + simulation of real world practices



Raises questions about...

- Identity of engineering academics
 - Engineers, academics, strange mix of both?
- Identity of ‘engineering’
 - fragmented identities visible between engineering academics with different specialisations



Changes over time

Laiho - Nursing Science:

- what makes a discipline what it is
- how its place in universities mutates over time in response to many influences



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Nursing - Changes to discipline over time: dimensions

- Knowledge base; eg academic base v clinical practice
- Chronologically, over time: maturity of discipline
- Status of discipline: legitimacy as academic subject
- Geographically: where different nursing specialisms taught



Nursing... Changes over time

- In practices: eg presence or not of research
- Agents of discipline: eg are there professors?
Shifting identities
- Intersections / permeable boundaries
 - Links to other disciplines
 - Academic / professional work and discourses
- Disciplinary profile: international, national or local
- **Other dimensions you can think of?**



QUESTION 4

Given all this - does the tribes metaphor still have value?

Your alternative metaphors?



The power of metaphor

- ‘Tribes’ and ‘Territories’
- ‘Roots’
- ‘DNA’ (Kleiman)
- ‘Kinship’ and ‘familial resemblances’
(Trowler, 2012)
- **Identity trajectories** (McAlpine & Akerlind, 2010)



When *is* 'tribes' concept helpful?

- Analysis of identity **gaps**
 - between subject groups
 - Eg Laiho's Nursing lecturers aren't Physios or OTs
 - between what academics do, and what students do
 - Eg Ashwin et al re Sociology
- Analysis of identity '**drift**'
 - Eg Kleiman re academics focusing on generic skills / employability agendas
- **Battle** for political identity
 - Eg fight for arts and humanities



IN CONCLUSION...

RESERVATIONS



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Tribal reservations =

- Disciplinary knowledge systems
 - are fluid, dynamic and constantly nudged by non-disciplinary policies, initiatives and HE trajectories
 - Influenced by context



QUESTION 5

What are the other elements, apart from discipline, which influence *your* academic identities?



Some telling individual differences...

- FT or PT
- Practitioner or academic background
- Research v teaching-intensive
- Research v knowledge exchange
- Entrepreneurial v traditional
- Loyalty to institution or discipline



Tribal Reservations and shifting territories

- Policy initiatives (enterprise, employability, income generation, credit accumulation)
- Push to interdisciplinarity
- Other?



QUESTION 6: SO WHAT?

What does all this mean for you and your future as an academic or researcher within HE?



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Changes to...

- What we do (eg research v knowledge exchange)
- How we do it (eg technology)
- Who we do it for (international students)
- Who we do it with (eg across depts, industry)
- When and how much ('the merge'; intensification of academic work)
- How we are judged (accountability)
- How we are recognised (contracts)



Career mutations

- Disciplinary migrations: many doctoral grads find employment outside own discipline (Mills, 2010)
- Uncertainty of career options (portfolio)
- Making sense of opaque expectations and changing parameters (Akerlind & McAlpine, 2010)
- Intentionality re 3 strands of your ‘identity trajectory’:
 - intellectual, networking, institutional (McAlpine, Amundsen & Jazvac-Martek, 2010)
- Negotiating ‘lines in the sand’ between disciplines (Reynolds, 2009)



Where does SPT come in?

- Lenses thro which we observe differences:
 - Identity
 - Discourse
 - Multiple cultural configurations
 - Context
 - History



SPT Lens

- Academic identities = fluid, dynamic, reconstructing
- Current HE = ‘a site of many identities-in-the-making’
 - Di Napoli and Barnett (2008: 4)
- Multiple identities



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