

**Beyond Managerialism: Towards a Model of Humanistic-Management.**

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of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

I confirm that the word-length conforms to the permitted maximum.

Signature .....Madi Ruby

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## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses a gap in knowledge about academic-management in higher-education, utilising a humanistic-management theoretical framework. This adds to knowledge about the complexity of structural and agential factors in higher-education management. Tensions between the valid structural needs of the organisation and the agential needs of managers and managed-academics must be continually balanced by academic-managers through ethical-reflection.

The ontological position is pragmatic, appropriate to the applied nature of this practitioner research. The mixed-methods embedded case-study employed semi-structured interviews (with academic and professional-services managers at all levels in the hierarchy), a Qualtrics™ survey (of managed-academics) and document analysis. Qualitative data were coded in Nvivo™, thematically analysed and compared by hierarchical and role level.

Quantitative survey data were analysed in SPSS™ using non-parametric one-sample chi square tests and MS Excel™ using simple descriptive statistics.

Where academic-managers were experienced by managed-academics as practicing humanistic-management (in keeping with concepts of dignity, wellbeing, humanistic communication and acting on their personal values), managed-academics reported higher levels of dignity and wellbeing and perceived that managers enacted the values of the university. Where humanistic communication was not experienced, all concepts were negatively impacted. Factors which either facilitate humanistic-management practice (humanistic communication and ethical-reflection) or impede it (structural

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barriers to trust and open communication) were found. Assumptions of policy-ownership and non-participatory policy implementation increase the hidden work of emotional labour for managers, whilst agential factors such as ethical-reflection and humanistic communication improve wellbeing.

A model is presented which synthesises sub-concepts of humanistic-management. The model shows the relationship between organisational values, humanistic communication, wellbeing, psychological safety and dignity. It is recommended that academic-managers should be educated about these concepts and how to employ them to increase the likelihood that all who make up the university community experience dignity and wellbeing at work.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>List of figures and tables</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Figures</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Tables</b> .....	<b>xv</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and contextualisation</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Research questions</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 Professional experience and personal motivation</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.3.1 Misunderstandings about humanistic practices.....	<b>6</b>
1.3.2 Integrative humanistic-management .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 Relevant developments outside of HE</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.5 Developments in HE management research</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1.6 Management and leadership</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.7 Research setting</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.8 Definitions of hierarchical roles</b> .....	<b>13</b>

---

---

<b>1.9 Original contribution to knowledge.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.10 Overview of thesis structure .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Situating literature and theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2 UK policy context .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.3 Managerialism .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.4 Management as relational .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.5 Developmental needs for management roles.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.6 Theoretical framework: humanistic-management .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.7 Defining humanistic-management.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.8 Hierarchy, structure and agency in humanistic-management.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.9 Key constructs of the theoretical framework .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.10 Dignity .....</b>	<b>30</b>
2.10.1 Ten elements of dignity as adapted from Hicks (2018) .....	32
2.10.2 Communication in relation to dignity: Schein & Schein’s (2018) levels of relationship .....	32
2.10.3 Levels of communication as adapted from Schein & Schein’s (2018) levels of relationship.....	35

---

---

<b>2.11 Flourishing and wellbeing .....</b>	<b>35</b>
2.11.1 Flourishing.....	37
2.11.2 Elements of wellbeing theory as adapted from Seligman (2011) .....	37
<b>2.12 Voicing values .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.13 Summary .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Research design .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.2 Research design and axiological position.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3.3 Ontological and epistemological position .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>3.4 Focus on middle-managers and inclusion of multiple perspectives .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.5 Mixed-methods case study methodology.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.6 Interviews.....</b>	<b>52</b>
3.6.1 Participant selection and recruitment .....	52
3.6.2 Interview design .....	52
3.6.3 Interview time-frame and participation.....	53
3.6.4 Interview analysis .....	54
<b>3.7 Survey .....</b>	<b>56</b>
3.7.1 Participant selection and recruitment .....	56

---

---

3.7.2 Ethical considerations .....	57
3.7.3 Questionnaire design .....	58
3.7.4 Survey validity .....	59
3.7.5 Survey participation .....	60
3.7.6 Survey analysis .....	60
<b>3.8 Document analysis.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.9 Integration of mixed methods .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.10 Additional ethical considerations to those woven through the methods</b> <b>.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.11 Trustworthiness .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.12 Summary .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Findings .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>71</b>
4.1.1 Chapter structure.....	71
<b>4.2 Survey findings .....</b>	<b>73</b>
4.2.1 Dignity, wellbeing and university values .....	73
4.2.2 Levels of communication .....	76
<b>4.3 Interview findings.....</b>	<b>81</b>



---

4.3.1 Managers' values .....	82
4.3.2 Managers' opinions regarding the necessary skills and attributes for academic middle-management .....	86
4.3.3 Limitation of interpretation regarding values, skills and attitudes. ....	87
<b>4.4 Integration of findings of mixed-methods regarding the concepts of dignity, wellbeing and espoused university values .....</b>	<b>89</b>
4.4.1 Perspectives on dignity .....	89
4.4.2 Managers' perspectives on the sub-concepts of dignity.....	90
4.4.3 Survey findings for lower scoring questions regarding managed- academic's perceptions of their dignity in relation to their manager's practice..	92
4.4.4 Perspectives on wellbeing .....	96
4.4.5 Managers' perspectives on wellbeing .....	97
4.4.6 Perspectives on university values .....	103
4.4.7 Accessible: fairness & justice .....	107
4.4.8 Accessible: inclusion and belonging.....	109
4.4.9 Innovative and ambitious.....	111
<b>4.5 Factors facilitating or impeding the practice of humanistic-management .....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.5.1 Facilitating factors: humanistic communication .....	116

---

4.5.2 Facilitating factors: ethical-reflection .....	117
4.5.3 Impeding factors: structural barriers to trust and open communication..	120
4.5.4 Impeding factors: governance and communication related barriers.....	121
4.5.5 Impeding factors: sustainability related barriers .....	125
<b>4.6 Summary .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>5.2 Contribution to knowledge.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>5.3 Structure of discussion .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>5.4 Why values matter in academic-management.....</b>	<b>133</b>
5.4.1 Summary of findings.....	133
5.4.2 Emergent theory .....	136
5.4.3 Implications for practice.....	138
<b>5.5 Underlying assumptions about policy ‘ownership’ and non-participatory policy implementation .....</b>	<b>139</b>
5.5.1 Summary of findings.....	139
5.5.2 Emergent theory .....	141
5.5.3 Implications for practice.....	144

---

---

<b>5.6 Hidden work and emotional labour .....</b>	<b>147</b>
5.6.1 Summary of findings.....	148
5.6.2 Emergent theory.....	153
5.6.3 Implications for practice.....	155
<b>5.7 A model of humanistic middle-management in HE.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>5.8 Summary .....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions .....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>6.2 Research aim .....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>6.3 Methods.....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>6.4 Originality and contribution to knowledge .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>6.5 Trustworthiness .....</b>	<b>169</b>
6.5.1 Single site study .....	169
6.5.2 Insider researcher .....	170
<b>6.6 Review of research questions.....</b>	<b>172</b>
6.6.1 How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?.....	173

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6.6.2 What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers? .....	174
6.6.3 What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university? .....	175
6.6.4 What is the significance of the findings for deploying concepts and theory associated with humanistic-management to better understand management in HE contexts? .....	180
<b>6.7 Directions for future research .....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Appendix One: Interview questions mapped to research questions. ....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Appendix Two: Qualtrics online survey of managed-academics .....</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Report of NVivo™ nodes .....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Results of SPSS™ one sample non-parametric chi-square (goodness of fit to theory test) for dignity sub-concepts. ....</b>	<b>219</b>

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Ruby, M. (Workshop Facilitator). (2019, December 2nd). *Creating an Environment for Wellbeing to Thrive When Everything Around us is Changing*. Confidential Health Organisation.

Ruby, M. & Komljenovic, J. (Podcast). (2020, 16<sup>th</sup> April). *Humanistic-Management in the Covid-19 Lockdown Era : Things Have a Price and Humans Have Dignity*. Available at: <https://anchor.fm/chere-lu>

Ruby, M. (under review). Academic's Perceptions of Autonomy Related to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in one UK University Faculty: A Humanistic-Management Perspective. *Humanistic Management Journal*.

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## List of abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CHM	Concepts of Humanistic-Management
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
HE	Higher Education
HEIW	Health Education & Improvement Wales
HR	Human Resources
HMT	Humanistic Management Theory
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NPM	New Public Management
OfS	Office for Students
PERMA	Seligman's concepts of wellbeing / flourishing: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement / accomplishment
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PVC	Pro-Vice-Chancellor
SmallU	Pseudonym used for research setting
UK	United Kingdom
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration
VC	Vice-Chancellor

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## List of figures and tables

### Figures

Figure 1.1 - The levels of management and the associated communication responsibilities down and back up through the organisational hierarchy. Adapted from Reynolds & Saunders (1987).....	15
Figure 2.1 - Ten elements of dignity adapted from Hicks (2018).....	32
Figure 2.2 - Levels of relationship adapted from Schein & Schein (2018).....	33
Figure 2.3 - Levels of communication adapted from Schein & Schein's levels of relationship (2018).....	34
Figure 2.4 - Elements of wellbeing theory adapted from Seligman (2011).....	37
Figure 3.1 - Graphical representation of mixed-methods research design....	50
Figure 4.1 - Survey results: managed-academics' perceptions of their experience of espoused university values, dignity and wellbeing in relationship with their manager. Aggregated to show the results of the Likert-type scales for all sub-concepts.....	74
Figure 4.2 - Values explicitly stated or inferred from interviews with managers at all levels (academic and professional services).....	85
Figure 4.3 - Interview findings: managers perceptions of the most important skills and attributes required to be an effective middle-manager.....	85
Figure 4.4 - Interview findings: communication and listening sub-skills.....	85



---

Figure 4.5 - Factors facilitating or impeding the practice of humanistic-management.....	113
Figure 5.1 - A model of humanistic-management towards improving dignity and wellbeing.....	158
Figure 5.2 - Humanistic-management at SmallU.....	160

**Tables**

Table 3.1 - Number of participants by management level.....	54
Table 3.2 - Survey response rate.....	60
Table 3.3 - Documents analysed related to context, wellbeing, dignity, university values and perceptions of staff about their workplace.....	63
Table 4.1 - Survey findings by faculty. The differences between faculty participants' perceptions of their managers' enactment of all sub-concepts of dignity, wellbeing and university values in their relationship. Percentages of participants selections on Likert-type scales.....	75
Table 4.2 - Survey results: managed-academics perceptions of level of communication experienced in relationship with their manager by faculty and those who preferred not to state their faculty.....	78
Table 4.3 - Survey results: sub-concepts of dignity (where aggregated scoring between faculties showed that less than 40% of respondents experienced the sub-concept 'consistently') in relationship with their manager.....	94

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Table 4.4 - Survey results: sub-concepts of wellbeing (PERMA) which scored relatively low for being consistently experienced by managed-academics in relationship with their manager.....	97
Table 4.5. Survey results: sub-concepts of university values which scored relatively low for being consistently experienced by managed-academics in relationship with their manager.....	105
Table 4.6 - Theoretical and inductive codes relating to structure from interviews with academic-managers at all levels.....	121

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and contextualisation

### 1.1 Introduction

Interest in management in UK higher-education (HE) came to the fore in policy and theoretical terms due to neo-liberal reforms in the 1980's (Levidow, 2002). Most authors focus on the prevalence of managerialism (Lucas, 2014). Even where they acknowledge that neoliberal managerial ideology does not explain all management practice, they tend to emphasise negative consequences such as erosion of academic identity (Clegg, 2008; Billot, 2010), collegiality (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005) autonomy (Henkel, 2005; Kolsaker, 2008) and the prioritisation of the individual (private-goods) over the social public-good of HE (Marginson, 2011). Together these indicate that new-managerialism affects the culture of academic life (Deem & Lucas, 2007). Summarising the findings of widely disseminated research that Deem and others contributed to, Deem (2006, p212) states that there were:

Sharp contrasts between the positive stories told by senior manager-academics about consultative management and the accounts given by employees. The latter often alleged poor communication, failure to listen, amateurism, slow decision-making, absence of clear policies and a growing gap between senior management and all other employees.

Alternative analysis and conceptualisation, notwithstanding the presence of managerialism is sparse. This risks homogenising managers as managerial and is dehumanising by applying labels which may not be representative of their true values, intended behaviours, and not be how they are experienced

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by managed-academics in all cases. Lucas (2014) argues that NPM (new public management) is not a given. She suggests that more nuanced theory is required and proposes that individuals can, and do resist and destabilise dominant discourse.

Research to investigate the complexity of HE management by including a humanistic perspective is lacking (Clegg & McCauley, 2005). There is a long tradition of humanistic-management in other sectors. Melé (2014) demonstrates its existence since the 1940's work of Follett, built upon by Argyris (1957), and Maslow (1943). Less recognised in management literature is Rogers' (1978) contribution, which was based in his own experiences in HE management. Rogers proposes that management is a fruitful area for developing humanistic practice (1959, 1978). The managerialism / collegialism dualism in HE (Macfarlane, 2015) is an unintended consequence of over-focusing on the negative consequences of managerialism and misses investigating a more relational approach (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). This may have contributed to an identified lack of developmental education for management roles in HE despite the significant challenges faced by those undertaking such roles (Floyd, 2012, 2016; Preston & Price, 2012; Floyd & Preston, 2014; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Ruby, 2018).

The research questions guiding this study and addressing this gap are introduced below.

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## 1.2 Research questions

In light of the complexity of investigating management in a university through a humanistic lens, one over-arching research question, (supported by four sub-questions) was employed:

***How is academic-management practice in a UK university related to humanistic-management concepts?***

Subsidiary questions were required to ensure sufficient data were gathered to comprehensively address it. The first is influenced by Argyris & Schön's (1978) work on implicit theories of action.

***How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?***

The remaining three were:

***What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers?***

***What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?***

***What is the significance of the findings for deploying concepts and theory associated with humanistic-management to better understand management in HE contexts?***

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The relationship between the research questions and methods used is discussed in chapter three and shown in appendix one. Briefly, mixed-methods within a meso-level single-site embedded case study design (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012) were applied to investigate management from multiple perspectives. These included interviews with managers at all levels in the university hierarchy (from both academic and professional-services roles), a survey of managed-academic staff and document analysis for context and triangulation (Gross, 2018). This enabled me to consider in depth the complexities of the relational and structural mechanisms influencing management practice.

### **1.3 Professional experience and personal motivation**

The study arises from a humanistic axiology and pragmatic ontology. It is applied-research undertaken both to improve my own practice and to contribute to new knowledge regarding management in HE. In keeping with a humanistic approach, valuing dignity and the perspectives and autonomy of others relied on gaining perspectives from all levels of academic management, professional-services management and managed-academics in both of the two faculties of the university. I now outline experiences which motivated me to undertake this study.

Prior to my current role I had a career in strategic partnerships in the Information Communications Technology (ICT) industry. This required developing professional relationships. I worked for employers whose cultures differed. One prioritised ethical practices and values, including business being

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conducted to deliver a positive impact for society. Another prized gaining competitive advantage and a win-at-all costs mentality. The experience at the latter company led to my decision to leave the industry and change career.

I was keen to find a career that enabled me to work according to my values. These include balancing my need to be a good enough parent, with my desire for personal growth, intellectual interest and making a positive contribution to society. I chose to train as a psychotherapist. Whilst retraining, I recognised that educating counsellors and psychotherapists presented an opportunity to make a larger difference, through the ripple effect (Yalom, 2008) of impacting more people positively by contributing to developing the skills of others. This led to me completing a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) in lifelong learning. I subsequently became a programme leader in counselling and psychotherapy. When an opportunity arose to apply for an associate-dean post within the same university it offered the opportunity to blend skills from my careers in ICT, healthcare and education. I saw it as offering personal growth and the potential for me to make a difference through improving managed-academics' experiences of management.

Once appointed to this middle-management post I found myself seeking information about how to be a manager. I wanted to work from my values and from an evidence informed perspective (Biesta, 2010). Finding scant resources specific to HE and that management was judged harshly in this sector (Birds, 2014), I decided this would be a promising topic for a PhD.

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### 1.3.1 Misunderstandings about humanistic practices

Experience in clinical practice, teaching and conducting research into models of therapy educated me that the term humanistic is often misunderstood as being overly optimistic about human nature. This leads to a myth that it will always take the easy consensus way forward (West & Bailey, 2019) and therefore avoid dealing with behaviour that is socially unacceptable.

Humanism does not avoid such challenges, relying on openly communicating differing views with the aim of developing mutual respect. It expects leaders to engage in ethical-reflection (Melé, 2003; Spitzek et al, 2009), meaning reflecting on one's values and motivations for taking a course of action before, during and after acting.

Haskins and Thomas (2018) wrote about developing a university values statement to include kindness in leadership and discussed how such terms can be resisted because they seem 'soft'. Challenging such assumptions Brown (2018) states that her research has shown that such terms are often misunderstood. Kindness is not the same as being nice. Kindness is instead about providing clarity (Brown, 2018). This includes the courage needed to have difficult conversations (including inviting others to provide honest feedback about how they perceive you).

Additionally, humanism is sometimes understood as rejecting religion or spirituality. Whilst this may be the case for some humanists, my position is in line with Harari (2019), that it is possible to respect the beliefs of others whilst holding a personal position which differs.



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### **1.3.2 Integrative humanistic-management**

Spitzeck (2011) proposed an integrative model of humanistic-management. He argues that humanistic organisations are underpinned by pro-social values with aims to promote the economic and social development of individuals and communities to improve wellbeing (Spitzeck, 2011). Humanistic organisations do not ignore the fact that profitability and basic economics are factors in their ability to deliver on their aims (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009). However, their purpose is to create social impact and all financial surplus is reinvested to further the pro-social aims. This tension between aspects of wellbeing and profitability are experienced by managers in everyday decisions. There are no outside criterion which help to regulate between profitability and morality. Therefore, a humanistic manager always organises as if there were two goals to fulfil (Spitzeck, 2011) and must rely on ethical-reflection in evaluating their motivations and the effects of the decisions they take (Melé, 2003; Spitzeck et al, 2009) so their practice is mindful of the need for profitability *and* putting humans at the centre. The theoretical framework set out in chapter two elucidates the concepts of humanistic-management (CHM) of dignity, wellbeing, humanistic communication and voicing values.

### **1.4 Relevant developments outside of HE**

There have been changes in how organisations outside HE approach leadership and management. Poor leadership and management have been found to contribute to cultures where people do not speak up, even when they witness wrongdoing (Francis, 2010, 2013). Developments to address this

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include work in the health sector such as compassionate leadership (West & Chowla, 2017). This shares common features with humanistic-management including the importance of creating the right conditions through the development of relationships where difficult issues can be discussed. The financial crash of 2007 and 2008 also precipitated renewed focus on corporate responsibility and leadership (Gentile, 2010; Christensen et al. 2012) in organisations.

### **1.5 Developments in HE management research**

There is little empirical work that investigates humanistic leadership and management in HE. However, research in this area is developing. Branson et al (2016) explored middle-leadership by experienced chairpersons in a university in New Zealand and found that middle-leadership is relational. However, their research did not include the perspectives of those who were led or managed.

Research I conducted during the early stages of my PhD demonstrated that not all managers are managerial. This involved two projects. Firstly, a self-evaluation through collaborative enquiry with five women academic middle-managers (Ruby, 2018). Secondly, I investigated managed-academics' perspectives of their autonomy related to their experiences of working with academic-managers. This utilised a survey of one faculty in the same university (Ruby, under review). Findings indicated that academics valued their relationships with their academic-managers, valued both autonomy and support and saw managers' roles as necessary in ensuring the right working

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conditions for all team members and ensuring fairness. The research for this thesis was conducted in the same university. I use the pseudonym 'SmallU' for confidentiality in line with British educational research association (BERA, 2018) ethical guidelines.

Jaye et al (2020) investigated the management of sick-leave in a New Zealand university. They demonstrated through qualitative interviews with managers that even where a requirement for instrumental application of policy existed, managers used their discretion to work flexibly and relationally. Their research avoids the managerialism / collegiality dualism and fits with an integrative view of management (Spitzeck, 2011) which recognises the coexistence of directive and relational practice in the same setting.

## **1.6 Management and leadership**

The term management can provoke negative responses and be used pejoratively (Briggs, 2007). Complexity is introduced by the inter-changeable use of the terms management and leadership (Middlehurst et al, 2000) creating conceptual ambiguity (Jones et al, 2014). A distinction is obfuscated by arguments that leadership and management are not the same thing (Taylor & Machado, 2006).

The use of the term leadership has become common in education and it has been questioned whether the change from using the term management to leadership is more of a semantic rather than meaningful one (Bush, 1995). Such tensions can mean that some choose to distance themselves from the term manager (Deem, 2006) and when taking on management roles, without

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training for the role, need to develop confidence in their right to manage (Preston & Price, 2012; Ruby, 2018).

Taylor & Machado (2006) define leadership as a process for *influencing* decisions but management involves the *implementation* and administration of decisions and policies whilst highlighting that they cannot be treated separately. The management scholar Mintzberg (2017) states that it is a fable that leadership is separate from, and superior to, management and that this assumption has been bad for understanding both management and leadership. Mintzberg (2017) instead posits that they are two aspects of a complex role. I contend that the complexity of roles in HE requires those in academic-management roles to become leader-managers (Taylor & Machado, 2006) and possess both management and leadership competence. This view is in line with Hayat and Suliman's (2012) suggestion that a manager's role is to balance the human and technical aspects of work so that the wellbeing of the people and the organisation are protected and developed. Formal professional development experiences are necessitated that will prepare aspiring leader-managers for the challenges they will face (Taylor & Machado, 2006).

At SmallU all leaders and managers have both management and leadership responsibilities. I have used the terms executive-manager, senior-manager, academic middle-manager and professional services middle-manager, rather than leader when discussing roles and hierarchy. This avoids two potential pitfalls. Firstly, implying that leadership is something only those higher-up in the hierarchy do, in the sense of the heroic visionary with the power of

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personality to lead successful change (Macfarlane, 2014) whilst missing the now more common emphasis on distributed leadership (Boden et al, 2008). However, Bolden et al (2008) also point out that distributed leadership cannot be considered real without budget responsibility also being devolved. They point out a disproportionate level of influence of budget holders and that unclear culture regarding the distribution of leadership and clarity about the relationship between structure, culture and agency will give rise to inevitable tensions. They propose that a deeper understanding of the ways in which people work relationally is needed to enable greater insight into how leadership is actually accomplished within HE organisations. Leadership can be understood instead as a process continually constructed through social interaction and that as such it is fluid and exercised up, down and laterally through the influence of actors at multiple levels within the hierarchy (Bolden et al, 2008). This necessitates recognising that there is considerable overlap between leadership, governance, management and administration (Middlehurst, 2000).

Secondly, I wish to avoid using the term leadership as a euphemism to disguise the reality that in some cases (for example inappropriate conduct) directive management is required. Effective management can involve characteristics and skills more commonly associated with leadership (direction, strategy, purpose, values and influencing) (Middlehurst, 2000) but management is sometimes misrepresented by being simplified as transactional implementation and control of resources (Middlehurst, 2000). This belies the multifaceted complexity of management *and* leadership skills

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required in complex hybrid HE organisations (Whitchurch & Gorden, 2010; Bolden et al, 2008).

Morley (2013) argues that leaderism replaces managerialism and that 'the leaderist turn' (p117) is value laden; leaders are expected to demonstrate autonomy, agency and excellent communication skills. She recognises that leadership therefore has an 'affective load' including emotional labour and the requirements for an elastic self. She states that women are likely to be perceived less favourably than men as evidence shows there are less women in senior posts in universities. A gendered perspective is offered by Peterson (2018) who separates leadership ideals or traits into masculine and feminine. She argues that transformational leadership has been typically associated with femininity and women and labelled as communal, versus the transactional traits which she positions as masculine.

### **1.7 Research setting**

The research was conducted at SmallU, where I am employed. This is a small post-92 university (circa 6000 students). Approximately 88% of students are undergraduates and the university does not yet have its own awarding powers for post-graduate research degrees. It has a long history of providing HE since the 1800's as an institute of HE. Its vision and strategy state that it is shaped by its values of being accessible, supportive, innovative and ambitious. It has an applied focus, is an anchor institution for its region and serves its communities with a civic mission central to its objective of being a leader in social inclusion (SmallU, 2019e). SmallU is promoted as successful

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in this aim due to its high ranking for social inclusion (Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide, 2021), whilst it has a low position on other metrics and rankings.

State school admissions make up 99.2% of the student body. 22.1% of students declare a disability. 72.0% are mature students. 57.5% of the student population are from the local region. Finally, 23.6% of admissions are from deprived areas (SmallU, 2019a). Despite the many challenges students face, 93% of graduates are employed within six months of leaving.

The university has two faculties; one of health and social sciences and the other of technology and arts. Between the faculties at the time of the data collection there were 182 managed-academic staff. Middle-managers have limited control of budgets and the number of staff they manage varies depending on the size and number of departments they oversee. The executive-management team have all been in place for the duration of the research. An explanation of the university hierarchy follows, including definitions of the roles of the various research participants.

### **1.8 Definitions of hierarchical roles**

It is important to provide clarity about the management structure at SmallU to provide detail about the context in which the research was carried out. As shown in figure 1.1 managers occupy specific yet distinct positions in the university management structure. Each have perceptions and values from their personal and situational point of view.

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The broad classification of academic-managers is all those whose roles include the management of academic work, from VC to heads of department (Deem, 2006). Executive-managers are what are commonly thought of as top or executive-management or leadership. Some have the primary responsibility for legal, financial and regulatory matters, whilst the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) oversees all academic, as well as some professional-services. The Vice-Chancellor (VC) is responsible to the board of governors.

Senior-managers are defined as either academic deans or directors of professional-services. Deans are responsible for the overall leadership and management of all academic matters relating to their faculty. Directors of professional-services report to executive-directors of professional-services. However, along with academic deans, directors of student services, quality and recruitment and admissions report to the DVC.

The literature is unclear on academic middle-managers. Distinctions between roles of heads of department and associate-deans are vague. I rely on Pepper & Giles (2015, p46) definition of academic middle-managers as those managers in positions below the level of dean and “often referred to as associate-deans or heads of school”. As figure 1.1 (overleaf) shows, the hierarchy at SmallU shows that associate-deans fit this definition at SmallU. Associate-deans oversee the day-to-day management of multiple departments. These do not necessarily relate to their own academic discipline. At the time of the research, some (but not all) departments had principal-lecturers who held management responsibility for groups of managed-academics.



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Professional-services middle-managers fall into two categories. Firstly, those who report to the directors of professional-services (such as quality, student services and human resources (HR) executive). Secondly, faculty business managers report to deans. Their responsibilities include overseeing key projects and the faculty specific administrative teams.

Managed-academics are defined as all those whose roles mean that they are employed on an academic (as opposed to professional-services) contract. At SmallU such roles involve teaching and research. They range from professor, to graduate teaching assistant (GTA) with reader / principal-lecturer, senior-lecturer, and lecturer in between. There were no roles that solely focused on research within the university at the time the research was undertaken.



Figure 1.1: The levels of management and the associated communication responsibilities down and back up through the organisational hierarchy. Adapted from Reynolds & Saunders, 1987.

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## **1.9 Original contribution to knowledge**

The aim of this thesis is to explore concepts of humanistic-management (CHM) in relation to the values and practices of managers in HE, and how these relate to the experiences of managed-academics.

The theoretical framework used within a single-site mixed-methods case study approach brings together the concepts of dignity (Hicks, 2018), wellbeing (Seligman, 2011) humanistic communication (Schein & Schein, 2018) and voicing values (Gentile, 2010) in a novel way to investigate management in HE including the perceptions of academic-managers and managed-academics from a humanistic perspective. This is an approach which has not been previously attempted and makes an original contribution to knowledge about management in HE. The significance of this has theoretical relevance for other settings.

## **1.10 Overview of thesis structure**

Having introduced the background and context of the study I now outline the structure of the thesis. Chapter two situates the study in the extant literature on management in HE. Chapter two also sets out the theoretical framework for the study. This combines concepts from authors which relate to humanistic-management. These include firstly, Hicks (2018) work on leading with dignity through attention to ten aspects of dignity. Secondly, Seligman's (2011) work on how 'positive emotions', 'engagement', 'relationships', 'meaning' and 'accomplishment or achievement' impact on wellbeing. Thirdly, Schein & Schein's (2018) work on the importance of the development of

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higher levels of relational working and the impact of this on workplace culture and performance. Fourthly, Gentile's (2010) work on giving voice to values and the importance of this for ethical work practices. For the purposes of this research, the espoused values (Schein & Schein, 2017) of the university were utilised, in addition to exploring the personal values and motivations of managers. Chapter three presents the single-site embedded case study research design (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012) including how this relates to my ontological and epistemological position. Chapter three also details how the concepts of the theoretical framework are operationalised and justified within the mixed-methods approach. Chapters four and five deal with the findings and discussion of findings respectively. The findings of the mixed-methods (interviews, survey and document analysis) are presented and synthesised in chapter four. Firstly, the survey findings and then the interview findings and document analysis are related to the theoretical framework. Then factors which facilitate or impede the practice of humanistic-management are considered. The discussion in chapter five focuses on three key themes that arose from the findings: (1) why values matter in management, (2) policy-ownership, underlying-assumptions and non-participatory policy implementation and (3) the hidden work of emotional labour in management. A model of humanistic-management is proposed which extends humanistic-management theory (HMT) for HE. Chapter six concludes the thesis by addressing the research aim, reflects on the effectiveness of the mixed-methods design, contribution to knowledge, limitations and provides a final review of the research questions. Recommendations for practice and future research conclude the thesis.

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## **Chapter 2: Situating literature and theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

There is a gap in knowledge about the underpinnings of the practices of academic-managers. In chapter one I proposed that this gap may be addressed through analysing experiences of academic-managers, managed academics and documents through the lens of HMT. This chapter firstly situates the research within the literature through a critical analysis of the tendency to focus on the negatives of new public management, including the policy context, managerialism, management as relational and the lack of training for management roles. Secondly, it outlines the concepts (CHM) that form the theoretical framework for the research.

### **2.2 UK policy context**

In the UK, government attitude towards HE has changed. Universities were established within the humanistic tradition to develop citizens (Pirson, 2017c). Such a romantic view of a collegial past has been challenged (Deem, 1998; Clegg & McAuley, 2005) since collegiality was limited, hierarchical, and accessible to a minority, mainly elite members of society. Marketization of HE (Deem, 1998; Middlehurst, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005) has led to Universities' value being viewed by policy-makers and the media as measured on a 'value for money' contribution to public-good (Coiffait, 2018). In England the sector is now regulated by the Office for Students (OfS) whose remit includes access and progression, quality, employability and value for money (OfS, 2018). SmallU is in Wales. Since education is a devolved matter

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OfS regulation does not directly apply. However, since such measures and metrics affect UK ranking, Welsh universities pay attention.

Elwyn-Jones (2007) argues that it was obvious that in this new market-driven climate that competition for students and research funding would be beneficial to the biggest institutions. To be able to compete requires careful management of resources to run financially sustainable organisations. Now, universities must prove their worth and value according to their ability to contribute to the development of the knowledge economy (Sum & Jessop, 2013). Knowledge is understood as the primary driver of national and international economic and social prosperity (Henkel, 2007). However, these are not the only public goods that result from HE. Universities contribute to the development of persons and those that help their students become thoughtful, empathic and humble are good value for anybody's money (Coiffait, 2018).

In this policy-context, research into managerialism in HE has developed. A review follows which considers managerialism, management as relational and the lack of training for management roles.

### **2.3 Managerialism**

The values and experiences which drive management practices in HE in the UK are poorly understood and under-theorised (Floyd, 2016). The axiomatic use of the term 'new-managerialism' (Deem, 1998; Middlehurst, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005) belies the true complexity of middle-management in HE. Managerialism is defined by Deem (1998, p53) as "the adoption by public sector organisations of organisational forms, technologies, management

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practices and values more commonly found in the private business sector”. It appears that an implicit belief has developed that those in management roles act according to a neo-liberal ideology which prioritises economic growth, and profit over people (Kostera, 2016; Dierksmeier, 2016). This ideology has been viewed as eroding academic identity and autonomy (Henkel, 2005; Hoecht, 2006; Clegg, 2008) and ignoring the wider public-good of HE (Marginson, 2011).

Many argue that managerialism reduces professional autonomy and academic freedom (Hoecht, 2006). Managerialism is perceived to threaten academic identity, which is defined using “treasured words such as collegiality, autonomy and excellence” (McNeill, 2016, p167). The term new-managerialism implies power and control of organisations and environments (Kostera, 2016). It is no surprise that under such circumstances, the term ‘manager’ is often used pejoratively (Briggs, 2007).

There is no agreed definition of managerialism (Doran, 2016). Those who become academic-managers are often promoted from teaching and / or research roles, having “typically entered the profession subscribing to strongly held core values linked to helping people” (Floyd, 2016, p5). Their personal identity; their sense of who they are, may be deeply connected to social-ethical values (Winter, 2017). Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest that it is important to recognise that where managers are observed to employ the practices and / or language of ‘new managerialism’, this does not mean that they are aware of, or accept the ideological consequences of this. Winter (2017) proposes that skilful managers have the ability to engage in

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perspective-taking and to use the discourse of managerialism when communicating with management colleagues and discipline discourse when speaking with academics. It has also been suggested that managed-academics are instrumental in sustaining managerialism in universities and that they accept managerialism so long as some autonomous niches can be protected (Kolsaker, 2008). The suggestion is that social processes between managers and academics enable this.

There is little perception that control is exercised by academic-managers, instead it is perceived as a systemic outcome (Hoecht, 2006). The 'blame' for new-managerially perceived practices is targeted at policy-makers and executive-management, which rather implies that middle-managers are seen as carriers of policy, rather than as active decision-makers with agency within appropriate organisational constraints.

Perceptions about managerial roles impact how people work together. The following section considers literature on relational aspects of management.

## **2.4 Management as relational**

Owing to their situation within complex economic and political contexts it has been proposed that universities have become 'hybrid organisations' (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010; Winter, 2017) in response to increasing public pressure to become more efficient and business like, whilst maintaining effective professional outcomes and a pro-social focus (Winter, 2017). This complexity creates challenges for managers. The literature on the experiences of middle-managers highlights the tensions arising from 'juggling

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and coping' with conflict between the desires of those above and below (Floyd & Dimmick, 2011) when balancing these competing demands (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001; Preston & Price, 2012; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Floyd, 2016).

Kolsaker (2008) indicates that the situation between managers and academics is a relational one, where all parties constantly reconstitute themselves in relation to their own perceptions and their environment. She suggests that further research is needed to better understand these relational processes (Kolsaker, 2008).

It seems that management identity is continually changing and involves personal subjective interpretation of our individuality related to context and experience (Clegg, 2008). A fluid view of academic identity (Clegg, 2008) that treats management practices as productive and valuing of self-agency allows that managers and academics find their own ways of practicing and a personal sphere of meaning and that they create "spaces for the exercise of principled personal autonomy and agency" (Clegg, 2008, p343). Structure can enable and empower agency for autonomous working, if management practices are empowering and supportive of individuals in ways which evolve for both manager and managed-academic.

As relational processes are seen as important in management, the question of how managers are prepared for such complexities when taking up management positions arises. The following section discusses issues relating to the lack of training for management roles.



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## 2.5 Developmental needs for management roles

The lack of training and preparation for management roles is a recurrent theme in the literature (Preston & Price, 2012; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Floyd, 2016). University leaders often stress the pro-social benefits that universities offer through education and research (Winter, 2017). Perhaps a problem in HE management is framing management practices in ways that are congruent with the pro-social aims of academics, managers and the stated missions of universities.

It is important that there is congruence (alignment) between what an organisation states that 'it is' and the identities, values and practices of those who collectively 'are' the organisation (Winter, 2017). It is important because a factor in the development of psychological distress is the expectation to behave contra to personal values (Rogers, 1957, 1959). In humanistic terms 'identity-schisms' (Winter, 2009) can be explained through the humanistic concept of "configurations of self" (Mearns & Thorne, 2007). This concept explains that people adopt attitudes and behaviours in order to deal with the complexities of social interactions in different spheres of their lives. This is viewed as healthy coping, unless there is such a difference between different configurations as to cause psychological distress. Such distress arises from a perception of threat to the person's self-concept through behaving counter to personal values.

Self-management of psychological and emotional states can be viewed as emotional labour, first defined by Hochschild (Grandey & Sayre, 2019).

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Emotional labour refers to regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one's professional work role (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). This differs from emotion work, which is the usual work expected as part of roles in which caring is a natural and enjoyable part of the job. Emotional labour is about managing internal psychological processes, so that the outward appearance fits the desired norm (Hochschild, 1979). This includes acting with professionalism, civility and collegiality, even when the internal experience differs. To be able to do this successfully, and without damage to one's self-concept requires psychological maturity. Psychological maturity involves being able to think and feel flexibly (rather than rigidly), critically evaluate the intentions of others without attributing unhelpful malign intent to them and to take ownership of decisions about one's own emotional responses. Such characteristics are explained by Maslow (1943) and Rogers (1959) as part of becoming a fully functioning person. These characteristics can be gained through education and engagement in facilitated reflective activities such as mentoring or clinical supervision.

Management development in HE should address such relational dynamics and complexities. Research to better understand the experiences, perceptions and practices of managers may assist in identifying areas where development should be prioritised.

## **2.6 Theoretical framework: humanistic-management**

Pirson and Lawrence (2010) suggest that the emergence of value models is indicative of a paradigm shift. Such a shift away from economic models

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outside of HE (Seligman, 2011; Haskins & Thomas, 2018; Pirson, 2017c; Radecki et al, 2018; Schein & Schein, 2018) suggest that it is timely to explore other conceptions of management for HE. This may be pertinent as such value models are well-suited to organisations that are based in an ethic of care where such values alignment would be beneficial (Pirson, 2017c). Despite aims towards positioning humanistic-management as a new paradigm (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010), the question of what humanistic-management is, and how to define it and its attributes has not been answered with a definition agreed upon by scholars. Melé (2016) notes that scholars use the term humanistic-management in different senses and present partial meanings. This makes the task of researching which organisational practices promote dignity and achieve higher well-being challenging (Pirson, 2017c). Pirson proposes that answering such questions is important in developing a humanistic conception of management that is absent from the usual economic conceptions (Pirson, 2017a, 2017c). It is important to identify constructs for testing and refinement of theory, whilst acknowledging that this will be an incomplete and value-laden picture. Before setting out the constructs employed in this study, the following two sections first define HMT and then consider how hierarchy, structure and agency relate to it.

## **2.7 Defining humanistic-management**

Humanistic-management has been described as a concept that upholds the dignity of every person within an economic context (Melé, 2003; Spitzbeck, 2011). Thus, each person is valued not for the specific strengths they offer,

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but because of the emphasis on dignity which “is an attribute we are born with – it is our inherent value and worth” (Hicks, 2018, p2).

Humanist approaches do not focus on individualism, but rather on a desire to develop human dignity and well-being which is inherently relational. The development and application of practical wisdom, relational and moral practices which enable dignity and human flourishing are key (Pirson, 2017c).

HMT differs in focus from neoliberalist and economistic conceptions of management. It rejects the mechanistic and reductionist approach (Dierksmeier, 2016) in which the neo-classical economic view, underpinned by a neo-liberal ideology takes a rational purposive view of management decision making (Kostera, 2016) and prioritises profit over people. Instead, HMT recognises the agential nature of managers who are decision makers in complex circumstances, balancing economic needs (management of resources) with the desire to promote human dignity and wellbeing. Research into humanistic-management theory should consider the attributes and values which people ascribe to themselves (Dierksmeier, 2016). Humanistic-management practice requires managers to be reflective, psychologically mature and flexible in their ability to engage in ‘perspective taking’ in considering the views of others (Winter, 2017). They have to contend with the complexities of stakeholder requirements and political, legal and ethical issues which relate to the differing perspectives and interpretations individuals have about the appropriate decision to take. A fundamental underpinning of HMT is the view that people should never be regarded as a means to any end, such as profit, economic growth or effectiveness, but should be seen as

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an end in themselves. All other duties and obligations follow from the obligation toward the human being. Management following this path “cannot take any other primary form than that of dialogue” (Kostera, 2016, p51).

## **2.8 Hierarchy, structure and agency in humanistic-management**

Hierarchy is not dismissed in HMT (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). It is viewed as a usual part of human organising. Hicks’ points out that there is nothing inherently wrong with hierarchies, but that managers must understand dignity, so that power is not abused or misused (Hicks, 2018). Hicks (2018) also makes the valuable point that dignity is a two way process. Meaning that employees are also responsible for the well-being of each other and the culture. She further points out that whilst everyone has dignity, not everyone deserves respect. Respect must be earned and part of respecting each other is ensuring that conflict is not avoided, because when avoided and allowed to fester, it creates a toxic work environment where people do not feel safe to speak and so do not feel their concerns have been recognised and addressed (Hicks, 2018). Humanistic-management does not suggest that it is easy to achieve the dignity and wellbeing it aims at. There will always be tensions between the competing wants and needs of individuals and groups.

An important function of a humanistic manager is to encourage dignity between all colleagues and themselves. Honouring the dignity of all creates a sense of safety between group members (Hicks, 2018). This should not be taken to mean that social and cultural norms expected in a society (groups of people) ruled by justice, benevolence and civic friendship (Melé, 2016) are not

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enforced. This may be a hierarchical function of a manager if an organisation seeks to be “a community of persons, built up by reinforcing the sense of belonging, the awareness of common purposes, the links among those who form the community, and the willingness to cooperate to achieve common goals” (Melé, 2016, p52) and exist, not be subverted by the actions of those who lack the appropriate conduct that professionalism and academic autonomy affords them (Preston & Price, 2012; Ruby, 2018). In the ideal world, the community would resolve such issues mutually. However, since we are dealing with the real versus the ideal, it is necessary for managers to balance the wants and needs of individuals, when dealing with complex situations. Further complexity arises because managers may not be able to be open or explicit about all decisions, where confidentiality is a requirement (for example, relating to the legally protected individual circumstances of team members). Such an approach appreciates the value of a structure, whilst appreciating the agency of actors (Archer & Morgan, 2020).

Importance must be placed on understanding how structure and agency interact, and bringing such complexities to the attention of those who together make up the community. Such efforts are important to understanding organisational and human impact on dignity, wellbeing, communication and values. I detail these concepts, which together form the basis for the theoretical framework for this study below.

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## 2.9 Key constructs of the theoretical framework

Some say that giving a comprehensive account of what kind of values should be given priority in an organisational context is contra to the position of HMT that developing organisational culture should include all of its stakeholders (Dierksmeier, 2016). There is a reticence to identify and prescribe what values should be promoted in organisations with the argument that these values should come from the community (which together forms the organisation) rather than being imposed (Melé, 2012, 2016, Dierksmeier, 2016).

There is however some consensus between authors about certain constructs within HMT, at least considering the frequency and consistency with which dignity, wellbeing, relationships (communication) and values are alluded to in the literature. I wish to maintain a concern for the wholeness of the person without reducing the human being to a few aspects (Melé, 2016). However, seeking to look closely at certain concepts may enhance overall understanding, without imagining that they are separable. Concepts interact in complex ways, both within the person, and interaction with others and the context.

Each of four key theoretical constructs is large and complex, and made up of multiple sub-concepts, which need to be unpacked in order to study and understand them. The ways in which the key-concepts and sub-concepts were utilised in the study for data generation and analysis are explicated in chapter three. The present focus is on defining and explaining the concepts as aspects of HMT. Definitions and exploration of four key-concepts; i) dignity,

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ii) wellbeing, iii) levels of communication and iv) values which make up the theoretical framework follow.

## **2.10 Dignity**

Unconditional human dignity is repeatedly mentioned in the literature about HMT, without there being an agreed definition of its meaning. (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010; Dierksmeier, 2016; Melé, 2016; Pirson, 2017c). Humanism is seen as:

Ethical. It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others (Humanists international, 2002, p100)

Literature specifically about HMT foregrounds dignity as something to be protected. All humans are viewed as having a:

Common nature, which gives us an essential equality. But, at the same time, each individual is unique, possessing certain particularities equal only to oneself which no-one else has. This uniqueness entails not only genetic heritage but also cultural influence and above all, a biography made up of personal decisions, which configure one's personality and character. (Melé, 2016, p42).

Additionally, dignity is seen to be premised on moral autonomy (Dierksmeier, 2016). Dignity and autonomy are closely related within humanism generally and within HMT specifically. Dignity has been defined as the inherent and



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immeasurable worth of each human individual which is an absolute. It deserves personal respect and protection from others when dignity is at risk or not respected (Melé, 2016). Central to dignity is autonomy, which is the right to be self-directing, and is linked to wellbeing (Pink, 2009). Autonomy means being free to act with choice which also means we can be both autonomous *and* interdependent with others (Pink, 2009).

Simplifying Kantian theory to a succinct statement Melé (2016) argues that things have a price and humans have dignity. This definition of human value is further illuminated by the explanation that a person's value does not arise from their relationship to the goals, desires, or ends of others. Instead, the fact of their autonomous agency should place a limit on the goals, ends and desires of others. 'Dignity' is the term Kant uses to describe this unconditional worth that is grounded in autonomy (Bjorndahl et al, 2017).

Fostering dignity is not easy (Hicks, 2018). It requires continual ethical-reflection in order to ensure that organisations operate to increase citizen's quality of life (Melé, 2003; Spitzeck et al, 2009, 2011). In order to aid leaders in working to create a culture that enhances dignity Hicks (2018) identifies ten elements of dignity which are common in stories of when people feel their dignity has been violated, and she proposes these ten elements should be considered by managers in how they interact with others. These ten elements are shown figure 2.1 in section 2.10.1 below.

## 2.10.1 Ten elements of dignity as adapted from Hicks (2018)

Hicks Ten Elements of Dignity	
<b>Acceptance of identity:</b> individuality, neither inferior nor superior, freedom to express themselves without fear of judgement.	<b>Fairness:</b> justice, equality and even-handedness according to agreed laws and rules.
<b>Recognition:</b> validate others and give credit.	<b>Independence:</b> empowerment to act, feel in control of their own lives and experience hope and possibility.
<b>Acknowledgement:</b> give full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding.	<b>Understanding:</b> what others think matters, enable others to express their perspective by actively listening to understand.
<b>Inclusion:</b> make others feel that they belong.	<b>Benefit of the doubt:</b> start from the basis that others are trustworthy and have good motives and are acting with integrity.
<b>Safety:</b> both physical free from fear of bodily harm and psychologically, free from being shamed or humiliated and able to speak up without retribution.	<b>Accountability:</b> take responsibility for your actions, apologise if you have wounded another person's dignity and make a commitment to change hurtful behaviours.

Figure 2.1: Ten elements of dignity adapted from Hicks (2018).

These sub-concepts were utilised in the data generation and analysis and are therefore further discussed in chapter three, and the findings synthesised in chapter four, discussed in chapter five and conclusions drawn in chapter six.

How managers communicate can impact on dignity. Therefore communication in relation to dignity is considered next.

## 2.10.2 Communication in relation to dignity: Schein & Schein's (2018)

### levels of relationship

Schein & Schein (2018) include four defined levels of relationship in their book Humble-Leadership, these definitions are shown in figure 2.2.

Schein & Schein's 2018 levels of relationship	
Level name	Level definition
Level minus one	Total impersonal domination and coercion.
Level one	Transactional role and rule based supervision.
Level 2	Personal, cooperative, trusting relationships as in friendships and effective teams.
Level 3	Emotionally intimate total mutual commitments.

*Figure 2.2: Levels of relationship adapted from Schein & Schein (2018).*

Such levels of relationship are affected by communication, including whether it is 'personalised' or transactional. Personalised communication involves one or both people investing themselves in the relationship and making themselves vulnerable to being ignored, dismissed or disrespected (Schein & Schein, 2018). The aim of being vulnerable is to increase the chance that the parties in the communication will be open and honest with each other. The desired effect is that when things are not going well a sufficient sense of psychological safety still exists in the relationship that enables being open about mistakes, lack of understanding and disagreements. Personalised communication (levels 2 and 3) fits with HMT as dialogic (Kostera, 2016). Levels minus 1 and 1 as command and control may be perceived as managerial. Schein & Schein (2018) also make the points that as organisations grow it can become harder to maintain personalised communication and that it is not possible for someone to fake vulnerability because people are finely tuned to detect inauthenticity, which would negate the genuineness required in humanistic communication. That is not to say that people cannot learn how to communicate more authentically and how to take appropriate risks with being vulnerable.

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Not all management or other communication in organisations occurs in structured ways. Corridor conversations (Jameson, 2018) are examples of informal conversations outside of, although still influenced by, the usual hierarchy, which may also influence perceptions about management practices. Therefore, such informal communication was also considered in this study.

The way in which managers communicate has a bearing on how they are experienced and their relationships with others and therefore has a potential impact on dignity. It is relevant to psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined as “feeling able to show and engage oneself without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career” (Kahn, 1990, p708). Kahn found that “People felt safe in situations in which they trusted that they would not suffer for their personal engagement”. (Kahn, 1990, p708). Radecki et al (2018) state that in a psychologically safe climate, team members are not afraid to express themselves because they feel accepted and respected. This openness creates a fertile environment for thinking, creativity, innovation, growth, and leads to more collaborative relationships. Poor communication can lead to the perception of psychological threat (Rogers, 1957, 1959). This results in a visceral response and may be related to a sense of shame that is experienced when one’s dignity is violated (Brown, 2018; Hicks, 2018).

In order to operationalise how communication was perceived to impact on relationships between academic-managers and managed academics, I adapted Schein and Schein’s (2018) levels of relationship to provide

definitions of communication which were operationalised as discussed in chapter three. Figure 2.3 below shows these definitions.

### 2.10.3 Levels of communication as adapted from Schein & Schein’s (2018) levels of relationship.

Functional Levels of Communication	
Managerial	<b>Level Minus 1:</b> Command and control: In my area it is clear that one person or group is in control, and dominates everyone else.
Common for workplaces	<b>Level 1:</b> Transactional relationship: We tend to work according to our defined hierarchical roles and don’t know much about what motivates each other.
Humanistic relational levels of communication	
Humanistic Levels of Communication	<b>Level 2:</b> A personal relationship based on mutual interest: Our relationship has some personal features, I can share things about myself and my manager sometimes shares things about themselves with me.
	<b>Level 3:</b> Mutual trust and open communication: There is a real sense of trust and open communication between us.

Figure 2.3: Levels of communication adapted from Schein & Schein’s levels of relationship (2018).

Since these sub-concepts were utilised in the data generation and analysis they are discussed further in chapters three, four, five and six. The following section explores the HMT concept of wellbeing.

## 2.11 Flourishing and wellbeing

Pirson (2017c, p75) states that in HMT well-being and flourishing are the “ultimate purpose of human existence”. However, he does not define what

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well-being or flourishing are. Additionally, the two terms are used together and separately in the literature and appear to be used interchangeably. It is important to provide a definition of wellbeing and flourishing that I rely on to make this aspect of the theoretical framework explicit. I rely on the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of well-being in the context of work as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948, p100). In the following section I discuss wellbeing and flourishing, and show that they are so closely interlinked as to result in operationalising them together in the research design.

Notwithstanding the above decision, wellbeing is not simple to define. It has even been suggested that a challenge for HMT is answering the question “what exactly is wellbeing and how can we organise for it” (Pirson, 2017c, p187). Huppert and So (2013) state that wellbeing must exist for people to flourish. They further define wellbeing as comprising positive and sustainable characteristics which enable individuals and organisations to thrive and flourish. Wellbeing and flourishing are linked to the humanistic psychology concept of the actualizing tendency which drives humans to seek out opportunities for development in order to thrive (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1957, 1959).

Dodge et al. (2012) stress that wellbeing is not fixed, it is not something we either do or do not possess. It is a continual fluid process toward greater balance. Stable wellbeing is experienced when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet associated

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psychological, social and or physical challenges and therefore to thrive (Dodge et al. 2012).

### 2.11.1 Flourishing

Human flourishing is a complex concept which is related to human excellence and naturally striving toward growth and excellence. There is a personal responsibility for virtue and growth, “but other people and the environment have an influence and can make a contribution to human flourishing through education, communitarian activities and appropriate conditions of psychological wellbeing” (Melé, 2016, p43).

Seligman (2011, p24) states that “wellbeing is a construct” which has five measurable elements that count towards it which are necessary for humans to flourish. These are captured in the acronym PERMA and shown in figure 2.4.

### 2.11.2 Elements of wellbeing theory as adapted from Seligman (2011)

Elements of Wellbeing Theory (adapted from Seligman, 2011)
<b>Positive emotions:</b> of which happiness and life satisfaction are aspects of a pleasant life.
<b>Engagement:</b> being engaged and absorbed in something usually noted retrospective if in the flow state – transcending thought and feeling.
<b>Relationships:</b> very little that is positive is solitary. Having people in your life that you care about and also those who really care about you.
<b>Meaning:</b> belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self
<b>Achievement:</b> accomplishment pursued for its own sake, purposeful action for its own sake rather than to fulfil a biological need

Figure 2.4: Elements of wellbeing theory adapted from Seligman (2011).

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These sub-concepts were utilised in data generation and analysis and are discussed in chapters three, four, five and six. The following section addresses the final core-concept of the theoretical framework, values.

## **2.12 Voicing values**

Whilst values are seen by some to be “deep-seated and difficult to change” (Winter, 2017, p13), others note that it is possible for people to adopt practices through the process of socialisation into communities of practice (Lave, 1991), and at the extreme that deviance in organisations can be transformed into acceptable behaviour (Vaughn, 1996).

It is important at this point to be clear about a definition of values for the study. This is because external pressures on universities discuss value without making explicit what value/s universities are expected to deliver, or implicitly valuing financial value and public good, over intrinsic personal good (Marginson, 2011). Personal and public good are hard to quantify in an environment in which financial or economic measures are the norm.

In HMT there is a focus on values and ethics (Gentile, 2010), values based management approaches are increasingly discussed (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010). Ethics, Seligman (2011) argues are the rules people apply to get what they care about. What people care about, their values is more basic than ethics. Gentile (2010) defines the term ‘value’ as denoting the inherent worth or quality of a thing or an idea and makes the case that to behave ethically organisations need to be places where people can voice their values.



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The way we value things and persons can be seen as our personal value system. Individuals may value things differently. Gentile explains that values are about something we ourselves hold dear and we experience deeply and internally. Although it possesses a cognitive aspect, is not exclusively about thinking through decisions (Gentile, 2010). The process of using our values to appreciate our deepest sense of who we wish to be requires us to experience feelings about them as well as thoughts. Both feeling and thoughts are part of our perceptual system and influence our behaviour (Gendlin, 1996). Gentile makes the important point that acting on our values is context specific.

Because a person's workplace is a context, studying espoused organisational values and their relationship to the personal values of actors within an organisation may offer illumination of alignment (or lack of alignment) between them and provide causal insights and explanations of the organisational and personal impact of experiences of voicing and acting (or not voicing or acting) on values in that context.

The relationship between ethics and values may also be relevant when considering organisational values, and how these are arrived at. Ethics are "understood as a system of rules with which one is expected to comply" (Gentile, 2010, p25), so if imposed from above, organisational values may be ethics in disguise if peoples personal values are not aligned. At SmallU, all staff were offered the opportunity (by executive-managers) to contribute to the development of the university vision and strategy, through a series of workshops. The same has not been true for the development of policies and procedures arising from professional-services departments.

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Gentile (2010) postulates that most of the time most people want to do what they believe to be right, but sometimes find it difficult to voice their values. Gentile encourages engagement with reflective opportunities aimed at creating experiences which show that voicing values is possible. She proposes this can be achieved through encouraging people to identify times when they have succeeded (and failed) in doing so. Interviews included questions designed to enquire about middle-managers' experiences of voicing values, or feeling that they had to act in ways not in accordance with their values.

Participants were asked questions that aimed to elicit their personal values through recounting their implicit or explicit theories related to why they went into a management role, what they thought were the most important skills and attributes required to be effective in their role, and their opinions about the needs of managed-academic staff. In keeping with HMT I took the decision that coding for *personal* values would be an inductive process. The organisational values operationalised as a priori concepts for the study are the stated SmallU values (SmallU, 2019e): Accessible, Supportive, Innovative and Ambitious. This is elaborated in chapter three.

### **2.13 Summary**

This chapter contextualised the research by situating the need for research into humanistic-management in HE within an overview of the extant literature on managerialism in HE. The theoretical framework is outlined, drawing together key concepts of HMT. These include dignity, wellbeing, levels of

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relationship (communication) and values. There is a gap in knowledge regarding these in relation to management in HE. The following chapter explores the research design and explains how the concepts from the theoretical framework are operationalised and employed in a mixed-methods embedded case study approach (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012). The research design addresses the lack of theoretical and empirical consideration of managers' values and practices (and how their practices are experienced by managed-academics) to address the gap in knowledge.

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## Chapter 3: Research design

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the mixed-methods embedded single case study design (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012). My positionality in the research is addressed to include axiological, ontological and epistemological considerations. A graphical representation of the research design (figure 3.1, page 50) illustrates how the methods utilised relate to the theoretical framework outlined in chapter two. The design enables inclusion of multiple perspectives to gather empirical evidence with rigour towards addressing the gap in knowledge about humanistic-management practice in HE.

The strategies for data collection and generation, sampling, methods of data analysis as well as relevant ethical matters are embedded within sections that discuss each method. Briefly, these were threefold. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with managers: executive-managers (n=7), senior managers (n=2) and middle-managers, both academic (n=8) and professional-services (n=5) respectively. Secondly, a quantitative survey of managed-academics (n=29). I took the decision to close the survey early for ethical reasons, despite a low response rate (15.9%), due to the first Covid-19 UK lockdown on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. The survey was therefore open for less than two weeks and no follow-up prompt sent to encourage participation. Thirdly, document analysis (n=10) provided context and triangulation (Gross, 2018). The data were synthesised to result in thick-enough description (Ponterotto, 2006) whilst not seeking to provide the depth of description of the manner, language and behaviour of participants that may be expected in an ethnographic study. This addresses the gap in the

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literature regarding humanistic perspectives on management in HE whilst maintaining participant anonymity. The findings are presented in chapter four and discussed in chapter five. In addition to the ethical matters and limitations considered when discussing each method, additional separate consideration is given to my position as an insider researcher (Trowler, 2016). Limitations to the mixed-methods design are acknowledged. Finally, I set out how integration of the mixed-methods (Creswell et al, 2006, 2011) within an interpretive framework (Creswell et al, 2006) was accomplished.

### **3.2 Research design and axiological position**

The theoretical framework set out in chapter two sits at the heart of the research design. The focus of the research was to apply CHM to understand the practice of management in a post-92 UK university.

Researching management from this position relates to my own axiological stance, as set out in chapter one. I am a qualified humanistic psychotherapist and am a practicing academic middle-manager. My practice is self-consciously based in a particular humanistic view of values. That is, I aim to value people equally, no matter where they sit in an organisational hierarchy.

My interest in HMT sprang from my own experience of being promoted to a middle-management role at SmallU. I sought to work from my personal values and noted that management is often viewed negatively in the literature (Briggs, 2007) on HE. Also, colleagues had expressed views about managers that did not fit with my experiences of them. In my work with counselling clients and whilst educating students I noted a common perspective that those who were perceived

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as having power were assumed to have no problems and that malign motives were often attributed to them. This inspired my prior research (Ruby, 2018; Ruby, under review) which found that neither middle-managers themselves nor the academic staff in one faculty of SmallU viewed them as managerial. This thesis expands my research within the same setting to explore CHM in greater detail.

An approach to research from a humanistic perspective, must have an ethic of inclusion at its core and place human dignity and wellbeing at the fore. One common factor those working in universities share is that we are all human and as a consequence have equal value and worth (Hicks, 2018) whatever our position in the hierarchy. Therefore, it was necessary to design the project to be inclusive of the multiple perspectives or voices of the people who make up the university.

### **3.3 Ontological and epistemological position**

Positivism and interpretivism are two overarching perspectives that shape understanding of research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I value a non-polarised view of research (Silverman, 2010) which accepts that both positivist and interpretivist approaches have utility, as long as they are appropriately and rigorously applied to relevant problems and questions. As a practitioner researcher utility is important to me. This position leads to an applied research project to provide knowledge to solve practical problems (Swanborn, 2010). It is applied-research undertaken both to improve my own practice and to contribute to new knowledge regarding management in HE. The study therefore arises from a humanistic axiology in which human flourishing is a “process of social

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participation in which there is a mutually enabling balance, within and between people, of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy” (Heron, 1996, p11). This axiological position calls for a participative approach. This is in keeping with practitioner research and pragmatic ontology which seeks to involve people in influencing practices “which affect their flourishing in any way” (Heron, 1996, p11). My approach to the present study sits toward the interpretivist end of the research continuum.

Organisations are social objects, complex and the people within them best understood from their own perspective. Good explanation of sociological objects is dependent on appropriate reference to structure, agency and culture (Archer, 2010). It is important to be explicit about the context as this is the structure within which the research took place, and the participants operate. All research and parties within it are always value laden, so are never subject to ‘neutral’ consideration (Saunders et al, 2007). This leads to the need to be as explicit as possible about what values and theory are being examined.

The methods are chosen for their ability to contribute to answering the research question (Saunders et al, 2007), to handle complexity and contribute to the transparency of the study (Jagdish, 2017). Mixed-methods are both a methodology and methods (Creswell et al, 2006) which are justified when focusing on research questions which require real-life, multi-level perspectives. Accumulating different perspectives can provide greater clarity about the issue (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Rigour can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative analysis, where investigation is framed within a clear philosophical

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and theoretical position and where the combination of methods draws on the strengths of each (Creswell et al, 2006, 2011).

### **3.4 Focus on middle-managers and inclusion of multiple perspectives**

Within universities (whether intentionally or not) power is exercised up and down the hierarchy. Saunders and Sin (2015, p140) get to the crux of the issue facing academic middle-managers, who are the focus of this study:

They embody the tension between the managerialism inherent in running a Higher Education Institution and the traditional values of collegiality and academic freedom.

It has been stated that the development of effective middle-management is essential for the future success of HE (Floyd, 2016). This is important because several studies have shown that middle-managers experience stress whilst trying to manage conflicting demands (Winter, 2009). Some manage to juggle the balance of being a manager and a colleague better than others, who either cope or struggle (Floyd & Dimmick, 2011). Many do not receive training for their management role (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Saunders & Sin 2015; Ruby, 2018). Additionally, the emotional strain of the role requirements to be both manager and peer (Preston & Price, 2012) may have a detrimental effect on mental health. This has the potential to have negative consequences for managers themselves. It also has the potential for wider negative consequences if managers lose their ability to organise compassionately (Pirson, 2018a). Whilst middle-managers were the focus of this study, it would not be possible to answer the research question without understanding the context they work in. This includes the



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perspectives and aims of those above them in the hierarchy, as well as understanding the impact of their practice on the managed-academics below them. Also, artefacts such as policies (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein 2017) have a part to play in understanding how the context in which they work is shaped.

In the following section I explain and justify the rigour of the meso-level single site embedded case-study design (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012).

### **3.5 Mixed-methods case study methodology**

Case studies are a common, but contested method of conducting educational research (Yazan, 2015). Criticisms tend to revolve around the issue of generalisability (Yin, 1981a, 1981b; Maxwell, 1992; O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014), and being seen as exploratory before more systematic research is undertaken (Yin, 1981a, 1981b). Conversely it has also been repeatedly argued that case studies offer rich opportunities to explore social situations, taking into account multiple perspectives and develop holistic description through appropriate research processes (Burawoy, 1998; Meyer, 2001; Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012). This can result in discovering and understanding organisational mechanisms and relational processes (Vincent & Wapshott, 2014). Therefore, a single-site embedded case study taking into account the perspectives of multiple internal stakeholders (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012;) from all levels of management as well as managed-academics was an appropriate way to address the research questions. It is also possible that a case study may generate theoretical principles which may apply to other settings (Swanborn,

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2010; Hammersley, 2012; Evans et al, 2014). This is relevant for applied research (Swanborn, 2010) which aims at utility for practitioners.

All single cases require comparison to investigate a multiplicity of perspectives to better understand and theorise what the case adds to knowledge and to elevate it beyond the simply descriptive (Dumez, 2015). Single case studies examining a phenomenon at the meso-level can achieve this through the inclusion of the perspectives of multiple stakeholders within an organisation (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011). The integrity of the findings is provided through comparison with the perspectives of the stakeholders in different positions in the organisation (Thomas, 2011). Each level of management and the group of managed-academics are stakeholders within the research context, as shown in figure 1.1 on page fifteen in chapter one.

I take the position that case study is a “serious research strategy” (Yin, 1981b), appropriate to the research questions (Yin, 2012). Careful and rigorous design and selection of complementary methods to gain the perspectives of those well-placed to inform from a range of perspectives (Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2012) aims at overcoming criticisms levelled at case study methodology. Attention to the early development of a theoretical framework has ensured that theory is employed effectively within the chosen methods in order to provide construct validity and provide sufficient evidence that the theory being applied correctly corresponds to the observation (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

A benefit of case study research is its ability to apply theory in one context (Meyer, 2001; Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012) and propose how it

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may be relevant to other settings and suggest directions for future research (Evans et al, 2014). The case study presented makes a contribution to knowledge regarding the presence of humanistic-management in one UK university which has hitherto not been demonstrated. The concepts from four separate theorists (Gentile, 2010; Seligman, 2011; Hicks, 2018; Schein & Schein, 2018) have been brought together into a theoretical framework including the espoused values of SmallU.

Much has been made of the differences between pre and post-92 universities. Post-92 universities are viewed as having been more ready to adopt managerial practices, seeing universities as a business (Kok et al, 2010). SmallU has a clear mission regarding accessible HE and inclusion (SmallU, 2019d). As a leader in this area it provides an opportunity to investigate a 'key case' of special interest (Thomas, 2011) and make a contribution to knowledge about the values, aims and practices of management in a small, new university.

This has the potential for transferability (Trochin, 2006) to other settings. Understanding workplace relational management in terms of dignity, well-being and communication in light of espoused values and artefacts (Schein, 1990) has the potential to highlight ways in which managers could develop and improve their practice.

Figure 3.1 below graphically shows how the theoretical framework sits at the centre of the research design. It shows that the concepts (independent variables) were identified from the literature and the stated values of SmallU operationalised for analysis.

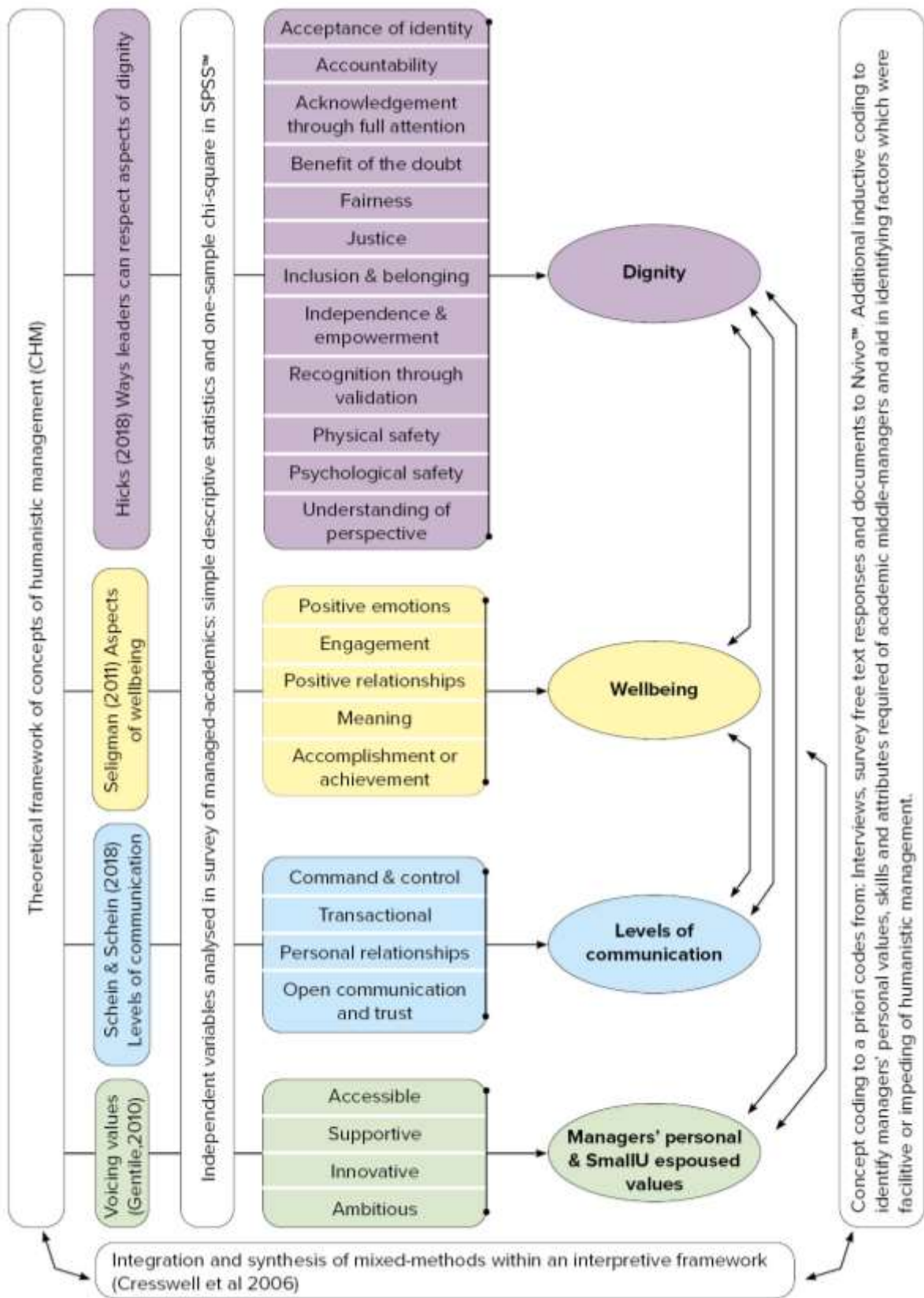


Figure 3.1: Graphical representation of the mixed-methods research design. The colours are used throughout the thesis when presenting and discussing the findings regarding the concepts graphically.

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The methods were aimed at generating intensive data (Swanborn, 2010) in seeking a variety of perspectives to illuminate (Hurrell, 2014) in order to together answer the overarching research question:

***How is academic-management practice in a UK university related to humanistic-management concepts?***

The methods were threefold. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with defined groups of leader-managers aimed to address sub research-question one:

***How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?***

Secondly, a survey of managed-academic staff address sub research question two:

***What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers?***

Thirdly, document analysis, survey and interviews address sub research question three:

***What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?***

Together, the mixed-methods address the final sub-question four:

***What is the significance of the findings for deploying concepts and theory associated with humanistic-management to better understand management in HE contexts?***

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The interview questions are mapped to the methods as shown in appendix one. I now detail the methods in turn.

### **3.6 Interviews**

#### **3.6.1 Participant selection and recruitment**

The academic-managers were purposively selected for their ability to comment according to their role (Teddie & Tashakorri, 2009), and their implicit practice-based personal theories of action about 'how to be a manager'. They occupied specific yet distinct positions in the university management structure which impact on academic working practices. These groups were executive-managers (VC, DVC, PVCs and executive-directors of professional-services such as finance and HR), senior-managers (academic Deans and directors of professional-services), middle-managers of professional-services (such as student administration and faculty business managers) and academic middle-managers (associate-deans, who have management responsibility for multiple academic departments).

#### **3.6.2 Interview design**

The semi-structured interviews were designed to enquire about managers' practice-based personal theories, values, experiences and what they viewed as the most important skills and attributes required for good management practice in their roles.

The interviews offered opportunities for reflection on experience, including challenges faced and overcome which may highlight "revelatory moments that

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dramatise patterns of constraint and opportunity” (Smith & Elger, 2014) and involved listening for values (Gentile, 2010). Care was taken to avoid leading, whilst maintaining focus on the purpose of the interview, through using open questions and checking my understanding with participants.

### **3.6.3 Interview time-frame and participation**

The interviews took place between 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 12th December 2019. I transcribed the first interview and shared it with my supervisor, to be sure that I was competent (BERA, 2018) before proceeding with the others. Of n=23 total invitations sent, n=19 were accepted, with a further n=3 accepting on follow-up. n=1 did not respond to follow-up and was therefore not included.

Interviews ranged between 25 minutes and 71 minutes (mean 40 minutes). This reflects the usual communication style of the participants; participants I experience as being less ‘chatty’ needed less to time to answer questions.

Table 3.1 shows the number of participants by level of management. It also shows the dates between which each level of management interviews were conducted. Notably all executives and all middle-managers invited participated.

	Executives	Senior Professional-services & Academic (Dean or Director)	Middle-Managers Professional-services	Academic Middle-Managers both faculties (associate-deans)
Number of participants	n=7	n=2	n=5	n=8
Interviews timespan	23/07/19 to 09/09/19	29/08/19 to 18/11/19	29/08 to 14/11/19	23/08/19 to 07/11/19
Gender of managers	Female 43% Male 57%	Female 0% Male 100%	Female 80% Male 20%	Female 62% Male 38%

Table 3.1: Number of participants by management level.

Whilst the focus is on middle-managers, understanding the perceptions of managers at other levels was necessary to address research question three:

***What facilitates of impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic managers in this university?***

### 3.6.4 Interview analysis

I used a digital voice recorder and downloaded the recordings following the interviews to an encrypted memory stick, to ensure data remained confidential. This was important as an insider researcher, where if the recordings were listened to by colleagues, participants would be identifiable. The interviews were transcribed by me, and sent to participants for checking, in line with the commitment to do so in the participant information and consent form, before their inclusion in data analysis. All participants accepted the transcripts, with two requesting minor redactions for confidentiality purposes as they felt some of their comments may enable them to be identified. Transcribing in this way enabled me



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to engage in initial concept-coding of possible themes by colour coding and adding notes using the review function in Microsoft word™. Transcripts sent to participants did not contain this information. The transcripts approved by participants were then uploaded to NVivo™ as cases and concept-coded (Saldana, 2016) to NVivo™ nodes representative of the a priori concepts from the theoretical framework (n=34). Additional nodes (n=17) were added inductively. These capture key experiences and perceptions of managers at all levels related to personal practice-based implicit theories of management. Sub-nodes were also created for values (n=27) and opinions about the skills and attributes required to be a middle-manager (n=39) and what managers perceived the needs of academic staff to be (n=17). A table of the nodes is presented in appendix three.

Following coding in NVivo™, bespoke tables were created using Microsoft word™. These tables were designed to facilitate further analysis of NVivo™ nodes in order for comparison to be made between the results for each level of manager (and between academic-managers and professional-services managers), and the qualitative responses from the single free text question in the survey of managed-academics. I extracted comments from the NVivo™ nodes and colour-coded them by level of manager role, and free text survey responses of managed-academics. I then repeatedly re-read the contents to reflectively thematically analyse them. This enabled the recognition that rather than there being differences between levels and roles of managers, it was the repeated meanings and values regarding the concept-nodes, and inductive nodes that were most apparent. Albeit, there were specific tensions for academic middle-

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managers regarding voicing and enacting values which are analysed in chapter four and discussed in chapter five.

Integration of the interview findings with the survey quantitative results and document analysis was then undertaken. This is explained in section 3.9 of this chapter and the findings analysed in chapters four and five. The following sections 3.7 and 3.8 address the remaining two methods; the survey and document analysis respectively.

### **3.7 Survey**

To address sub research question two:

***What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers?***

A survey was utilised to understand the perceptions of managed-academics about their experiences and perceptions of working with their managers related to HMT concepts.

#### **3.7.1 Participant selection and recruitment**

The survey was administered using an anonymous link to a Qualtrics™ survey. This was sent by e-mail from my Lancaster University account, to signal a boundary between the research and my day-to-day role. I used a participant information sheet and consent form template provided by Lancaster University. The link was purposively sent to all managed-academics to enquire about their 'bottom-up' perceptions of the impact of management relationships. They were identified from up-to-date organisation charts provided by each faculty business-

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manager. Both had participated in interviews and were aware of the purpose of the study and that permission from SmallU and ethical approval from Lancaster University had been granted.

The survey was applied when all the interviews were complete (between March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020) in order that the interviews could inform further development of the questions, in keeping with the Creswell et al (2006, 2011) suggestion that mixed-methods may start with a qualitative phase to ensure appropriate development of quantitative instruments. This also aided the manageability of the data and its analysis. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in appendix two.

### **3.7.2 Ethical considerations**

The short time the survey was open was due to an ethical issue which arose due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The last survey response was recorded on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020. I had intended to send a follow-up email asking potential participants to consider completing the survey. The time period prior to lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 contained many uncertainties, including if universities would remain open. Aside from increased workload due to preparing in case teaching needed to be delivered at a distance, some staff and their family members had become ill. Staff who had underlying health conditions recorded on their HR files had already been asked to work from home as a precaution by their managers. Lockdown started on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. I decided not to follow-up until after I met with my supervisor as planned on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020. We agreed it was the right choice not to follow-up and I closed the survey on 27<sup>th</sup> March. There were no responses in this interim period.

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### 3.7.3 Questionnaire design

The survey sought to assess attitudes about middle-managers practices by presenting statements about the sub-concepts derived from the theoretical framework.

Question blocks were created in Qualtrics™ (as shown in appendix two) to explore sub-concepts of the four key concepts of dignity, wellbeing, levels of communication and university values (from the theoretical framework as shown in figure 3.1). Definitions of each of the concepts were provided, with citations of the relevant literature given for transparency. The sub-concepts of dignity, wellbeing and university values formed independent variables which were rated by respondents on five-point Likert-type slider scales designed to measure attitudes or opinions (Rattray & Jones, 2007). The scales aimed to establish the degree that each independent variable of CHM was perceived by managed-academics in their work with their academic-manager. Each sub-concept was phrased as a question about academics level of experience of it. The possible ratings were 0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Usually, 4-Consistently. The purpose of these questions was for comparison between the experiences of managed-academics and the stated intentions of middle-managers, which were probed during interviews as described earlier in this chapter.

The concept of levels of communication was presented as a multiple choice of four definitions from the literature (Schein & Schein, 2018) and respondents asked to select the one that represented their experience of communication with their line-manager.

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One follow-up free text box offered participants an opportunity to make any comment about their perceptions of their line-manager's impact on their dignity, wellbeing, levels of communication experienced, or enactment of university values. This enabled further comparison with middle-managers aims and perceptions of the needs of managed-academics derived from interviews. Furthermore, such comments aided in understanding the quantitative data and aided the explanation of the findings.

#### **3.7.4 Survey validity**

In order to test construct validity (Rattray & Jones, 2007; Lavrakas, 2008) and reliability of the questionnaire I undertook pilot testing. The pilot group were PhD candidates in HE research and all experienced in working in universities. They therefore formed a small sample (n=5) of a target population in a controlled way (Jones, Baxter & Khanduja, 2013). The pilot led to some changes such as correcting typographical errors, ensuring consistent question phrasing and being explicit that the questions related to 'line management' impact, despite my personal aversion to the term. Pilot participants provided written feedback that indicated that the questions enabled respondents to accurately rate their perceptions about the concepts, therefore indicating construct validity. They stated that the questions and concepts clearly related to the research questions as well as encouraging reflection on their attitudes towards their own line-managers. This indicated that the aim to achieve "reliably operationalising the key concepts" (Rattray & Jones, 2007, p235) was achieved.

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### 3.7.5 Survey participation

The table below shows the response rate and total possible number of responses for each faculty. It does not show the breakdown or roles such as graduate teaching assistant, lecturer or professor, because this is not available from the organisation charts provided.

Invitations sent	Total possible responses	Responses identified by faculty	% Response rate
Faculty A	104	21	20.2 %
Faculty B	78	5	6.4 %
Prefer not to say	N/A	3	1.6 (of total possible responses) but 10% of actual responses
Total	182	29	15.9%

*Table 3.2: Survey response rate.*

### 3.7.6 Survey analysis

Qualtrics™ reports provided simple descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation). The numerical data were uploaded to Microsoft Excel™ for preparation (by removal of qualitative data, providing a numerical value for selected string data – for example ‘faculty A’), establishing the percentages of participant responses for each point on the Likert-type scales (for comparison with the SmallU staff survey (SmallU, 2018b)) and then exported to SPSS™ to perform non-parametric one sample chi-square tests of the independent variables. This is a test for goodness of fit to theory, as opposed to the null hypothesis of expectation of even distribution. The sample size of respondents (n=29) is smaller than the population size of potential

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respondents (n=182). The sample size was small, therefore any conclusions drawn from this test are necessarily tentative. However, when considered alongside other methods of analysis (such as triangulating with the staff survey and comparison with interviews) the utility of one sample chi-square was to assist in noticing patterns in the data to aid in explaining and interpreting these in light of findings from the other methods and theory. The test was appropriate for its relevance to sub research question two regarding the perceptions of managed-academics related to CHM. SPSS™ auto-calculates the expected frequency (expected N) which must be greater than 5. All were larger than 5 and therefore met the standard for the one-sample chi-square test. An example table of results for the dignity sub-concepts is available in appendix four.

### **3.8 Document analysis**

Finally, documents were purposively selected from the SmallU intranet for analysis for their ability alongside interviews to address sub research question two:

***What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?***

As acknowledged in chapters one and three my positionality in the research is affected by my personal values. These values include valuing people equally and treating them as trustworthy. However, of equal importance within humanism is the emphasis on engaging in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with attention to evidence (British Humanist Association, 2018). It does not mean

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uncritically accepting the perspectives of others as fact. To have trustworthiness and integrity research must be able to deal with and interpret uncomfortable findings. As a senior fellow of Advance HE I subscribe to the standards of the UK Professional Standards Framework (Advance HE, 2018) including the use of evidence-informed approaches and utilising outcomes from research to inform practice. I conducted the research with the BERA guidelines in mind (BERA, 2018). I kept a research journal and engaged in reflexive discussion in supervision to ensure that the ethical-reflection required in humanistic approach (Melé, 2003; Spitzack et al, 2009; Spitzack 2011) was applied during the research process. My aim was to develop a rigorous research design, clearly explained, so that trustworthiness is ensured.

Documents relating to staff wellbeing, dignity, and university values and perceptions of staff about their workplace and management were included as shown in Table 3.3, below. All other documents were excluded to enable clear focus on the research questions. A benefit of being an insider researcher was that the barrier to retrieval of unpublished documents (Gross, 2018) was removed.

As well as providing valuable contextual information, the documents evidenced artefacts influencing practices (Schein, 1990) and provided triangulation to “corroborate or refute, elucidate or expand on findings across other data sources ... to guard against bias” (Gross, 2018).

The documents were uploaded to NVivo™ and concept-coded and inductive-coded in the same way as the interview transcripts. How integration of the



document analysis with the other methods was achieved is introduced below, and the findings presented in chapter four and discussed in chapter five.

Document analysis	
Document name	Publicly available or privileged access
Vision and strategy to 2025 (2019)	Public
People strategy 2018 (replaced staff charter)	Privileged
Dignity at work policy 2020 (prior version no changes)	Privileged
Grievance policy 2019	Privileged
Management of organisational change 2020 (prior version minor changes)	Privileged
Policy and procedure for managing stress and promoting wellbeing 2020 – New policy	Privileged
Dignity at work procedure 2020 (prior version no changes)	Privileged
Staff engagement survey results 2018 (reports difference to previous 2016 results)	Privileged
Staff engagement survey, power-point briefing to Staff 2019	Privileged
Annual Reports and financial statements (2019)	Public

*Table 3.3: Documents analysed related to context, wellbeing, dignity, university values and perceptions of staff about their workplace.*

### 3.9 Integration of mixed methods

The purpose of using the mixed-methods selected was to enable generation of appropriate data and analysis to answer the research questions (Creswell et al, 2006, 2011) and increase rigour of the study through triangulation. The findings and discussion seek to present sufficient transparent and contextual detail to ensure the trustworthiness of the research outcomes through providing thick-enough description (Sharrock & Button, 1998; Cromdal et al, 2008). Quotations from interviews were selected to include managers from all levels and roles,

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whilst protecting their individual anonymity. Quotations were selected because they best represented the theme under discussion to enliven the description of findings. Quotations from all level of manager, from academic middle-managers in both faculties and from professional services middle-managers are included to ensure that the voice of all levels and roles is heard, whilst accepting that the voice of participants is filtered through my account (Hertz, 1996). To be successful, the level of interpretive description should be sufficient for those unfamiliar with the setting to gain a detailed sense of it (Ponterotto, 2006), and in conclusion understand how the case enables answering the over-arching research question:

***How is academic-management practice in a UK university related to humanistic-management concepts?***

In order to be able to achieve this, the data from the mixed-methods were integrated. This entailed further review of the transcripts and documents to check for completeness of coding.

The documents were helpful in providing contextual information about SmallU. Coding these institutional artefacts to the a priori concept-nodes in NVivo™ ensured the texts' 'voice' as part of the organisational structure and culture could be heard, and their impact on middle-managers be determined from the findings from interviews with managers. Themes from interviews were compared to the results of the SmallU biannual staff engagement survey (SmallU, 2018b). Questions from the staff survey were categorised based on their relationship to CHM (dignity, wellbeing, communication with manager and peers and values) in bespoke tables created in Microsoft Word™. Since

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the results of the staff survey are reported in percentages, facilitating the comparison to the results of the research survey required that the percentage of participants who rated each point of the Likert-type scale for each independent variable from the theoretical framework (as show in figure 3.1) was calculated. This provided helpful triangulation and showed that although the research survey was small, and focused only on academics, there were clear similarities to areas of strength and those requiring development identified in the SmallU staff survey.

Themes from the interviews, and the a priori concept-codes, were also compared with the vision and strategy document and organisational policy documents which focused on dignity and wellbeing at work. Chapter four presents and analyses the findings of these methods. The following sections address additional ethical considerations, limitations to the research design and summarise this chapter.

### **3.10 Additional ethical considerations to those woven through the methods**

I gained ethical approval from Lancaster University on the basis of a detailed proposal and ethical approval application. Since I am also a middle-manager at SmallU ethical issues of insider research were paramount. The issue of power required careful consideration, including how 'guilty knowledge' achieved as a practitioner (of management) in the same institution as the practitioners studied would be acknowledged and handled appropriately (Williams, 2010). Issues of informed consent and anonymity were key.

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I chose to conduct a survey, rather than interviews with managed-academics due to my position of relative power as a middle-manager. Although interviewing managed-academic participants would have allowed greater exploration of their experience and the meaning of this related to the theoretical concepts, it carried the risk of perceived need to provide me with answers that would please me, rather than being able to answer freely. No inducements to participate were offered and a participant information sheet was included before commencement of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, it is notable that more participants responded from the faculty that I work in, which may be related to their recognition of me and my role. I am aware that the scores in the staff satisfaction surveys for my own area were very positive. In the context of 'positive relationships' it is possible that members of my own team may be influenced to participate to help me.

Interview acceptance was followed-up by booking a time to meet at an agreed mutually convenient location within the workplace (either the office of the participant, if this was preferred, or mine, if that was preferred). Since it is usual for meetings to take place in privacy as part of my role, a meeting would not indicate to others that it was for the purposes of my research. The purpose was kept private by the use of Microsoft Outlook™ to book meetings with the privacy function enabled.

When an acceptance was not immediately forthcoming I followed up with one further e-mail. I stated I would not contact them again and would assume they did not wish to participate and respect this decision if they did not respond.

Anonymity for interview participants was preserved by disguising identities using pseudonyms and removing identifying features from the transcriptions (such as

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ways of speaking that may identify them to others, or reference to present or past roles and workplaces). All data were processed on a password protected computer.

The number of potential senior and middle-managers invited fell from the number anticipated in the planning stage due to a large restructure. I took the decision not to invite those who would be leaving the university and wait to interview those remaining to allow a period of settling after the restructure to avoid adding to distress. Therefore, I interviewed the executive-managers and the academic middle-managers first as they were not directly affected by this restructure.

I have cited the documents utilised in the research. However, since the real name of SmallU is included and would reveal the identity of the university (Trowler, 2016) I have amended the titles of such documents to remove the name of SmallU, whilst still being clear as to their function. An issue of transparency regarding such document exists, as they are only available to those with access to SmallU's intranet (other than the Vision and Strategy). A simple internet search would reveal which universities I have worked for and that I am employed by the particular university. Therefore, informed consent at institutional level, as well as from the individual participants for the research was vital, guaranteeing individual, but not institutional anonymity to the participants (Trowler, 2016). Consent for publications arising from the research was also gained.

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### 3.11 Trustworthiness

Working as an insider within the researched setting offered access to privileged information and therefore insight, which may not always be available to external researchers. This necessitated self-reflexivity to ensure honesty and integrity (Tracy, 2010). I kept a research journal detailing my reflexive self-talk (Archer (2007) and used this as a basis for discussions in supervision. I utilised skills gained from my psychotherapy training to purposefully reflect on how my own personal values might impact my perceptions as well as how my character and personality may impact on the participants and their reflexivity in interviews (Cassell et al, 2010). My reflective capabilities are honed through purposeful reflection on how others perceive me within psychotherapy training. This includes receiving challenging but constructive feedback from peers and tutors in personal development activities (Mearns, 1997; Johns, 2012). Psychotherapy training has heightened my awareness that others can perceive me as confident, intelligent and knowledgeable which has the risk of them presuming I know the right answer or course of action. This awareness involves relational ethics (Tracy, 2010) in developing mutual respect, dignity and relational connectedness. I recognise a need to be clear that I am interested not in 'right' answers, but in finding out what others really think and experience. I aim to create a relationship of equality where, despite the fact that both psychotherapy and research contain elements of inherent power, this can be transcended in relationship (Rogers, 1987) involving the moment of constructing shared meaning. In research interviews I was able to use my psychotherapy skills to listen carefully for participants own internal dialogues so that the research environment provided opportunities for

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participants to engage in focused reflexivity which is uncommon in daily life (Cassell et al, 2020). I used techniques such as summarising what I understood from their responses to questions as a way of member checking within the interviews that I correctly interpreted their meanings. This enabled participants to correct any misunderstanding on my part or, confirm that what I had inferred was what was meant. This provides credibility for the themes then developed from the interviews.

Pilot testing of the interview with one participant and reflecting on this in supervision before undertaking the remainder ensured competence. Pilot testing the survey with managed-academics outside of the setting ensured construct validity of the theory being tested (Kirk & Miller, 1986). The mixed-methods case study ensured that comparison between hierarchical roles and academic and professional services middle-managers sought differences as well as similarities. Additionally, potential weakness in one method was balanced by strengths in another.

To protect participant anonymity I have attributed comments by the level of role, rather than being specific about the department they work in and used pseudonyms. Interview analysis is reported in broader values, skills and attributes with some quotations used to illustrate themes. Some comments have not been reported as they risk identifying individuals, whilst care has been taken to ensure that this does not allow bias toward particular outcomes. Being mindful to achieve an appropriate representation of weighting toward positive and negative comments, proportionate to the findings, was important in balancing needs of transparency and confidentiality.

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The short time-frame the survey was open for, and lack of follow up for ethical reasons due to the UK lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic may account for the low response rate. Therefore, findings are indicative. However, the use of documents such as the staff survey results covering a four-year period providing triangulation with the survey findings gives greater confidence in the findings and conclusions drawn from them.

### **3.12 Summary**

In this chapter I have set out my positionality in the research. I have explained my humanistic axiological position and insider nature of the research. I have outlined my ontological position, axiological humanistic position and how this is congruent with the mixed-methods design. I have provided the epistemological position giving a rationale for a mixed-methods embedded single-site case study design and justified its rigour and appropriateness for the study. Ethical considerations were addressed for each method and separately for insider research. Limitations have been acknowledged. I have detailed the mixed-methods used and explained how these were integrated. The findings of the mixed-methods are presented and analysed in the following chapter.



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## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the mixed-methods (interviews, survey and document analysis). Together, these show that managers aimed to practice management in ways that were humanistic, rather than managerial. The survey results show that academic middle-management practice in faculty A tends to be perceived as consistent with CHM, other than for one survey participant. Whilst academic middle-managers' aims in faculty B did not differ, practice was perceived differently. Managed-academics perceptions about all concepts differed. Reasons why this may be the case are explored through comparisons with findings for faculty A, document analysis and reference to relevant literature.

#### **4.1.1 Chapter structure**

This chapter is presented in three sections. Firstly, the findings of the survey regarding sub-concepts of CHM. Anomalies regarding certain sub-concepts and the differences between the two faculties are analysed to ensure integrity of the findings. Whilst these findings should be treated with caution due to the small number of participants involved, they are illuminating in this case. The findings support assertions in the HMT literature regarding the importance of relationships and humanistic communication. These promote dignity and wellbeing as well as delivering organisational effectiveness. Some may see SmallU's high position in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide

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(2021) for social inclusion as evidence of effectiveness in line with its espoused values, vision and strategy.

The central importance of levels of communication as defined by Schein & Schein (2018) and operationalised in the research survey of managed academics is highlighted. Higher levels of relational communication are reflected in managed-academics reporting positive experiences regarding dignity, wellbeing and perceptions of university values being enacted.

Secondly, the findings from the interviews with managers at all levels are considered through theoretical lens of CHM and contextualised with the survey findings. Managers' values were found to be pro-social and aligned with CHM. NPM does not focus on managers' values which have been shown in other sectors to be key to successful organisations. Values are important in management, because if they are aligned with the basic assumptions that create organisational culture (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein, 2017) they will be facilitative of organisational success. If they are not aligned (or perceived not to be) then tensions between espoused organisational values and managers' opinions about 'how to be a manager' will ensue. Such tensions are potentially harmful to the organisation and the wellbeing of people within it.

The third section deals with analysis of factors that facilitate (ethical-reflection and humanistic communication) or impede (structural barriers to trust and open communication, governance and communication related barriers and sustainability related barriers) humanistic-management, integrating the

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findings from the mixed-methods employed. Evidence from the document analysis provides contextual information and triangulation regarding the expectation of managers' practice. Together, the findings from the mixed-methods indicate the presence of humanistic-management at SmallU. This has not previously been shown in UK HE and forms the claim to the development of new knowledge of this thesis.

## **4.2 Survey findings**

### **4.2.1 Dignity, wellbeing and university values**

The results of the survey when including all participants showed that managed-academics responses indicated a tendency to view their relationships with their manager rather positively, in respect of their experiences of dignity, wellbeing and espoused university values.

Figure 4.1 below shows the aggregated results of all of the Likert-type questions for all sub-concepts of CHM. Each bar represents the percentage of respondents who answered never, rarely, sometimes, usually or consistently experiencing dignity, wellbeing or university values in their relationship with their academic-manager. As can be seen from the figure, substantially more managed-academics experienced positive levels ('sometimes', 'usually' or 'consistently') than those experiencing negative ('rarely' or 'never'). It is notable that the percentage 'consistently' experiencing managers enacting university values and dignity are higher than those 'consistently' experiencing wellbeing.

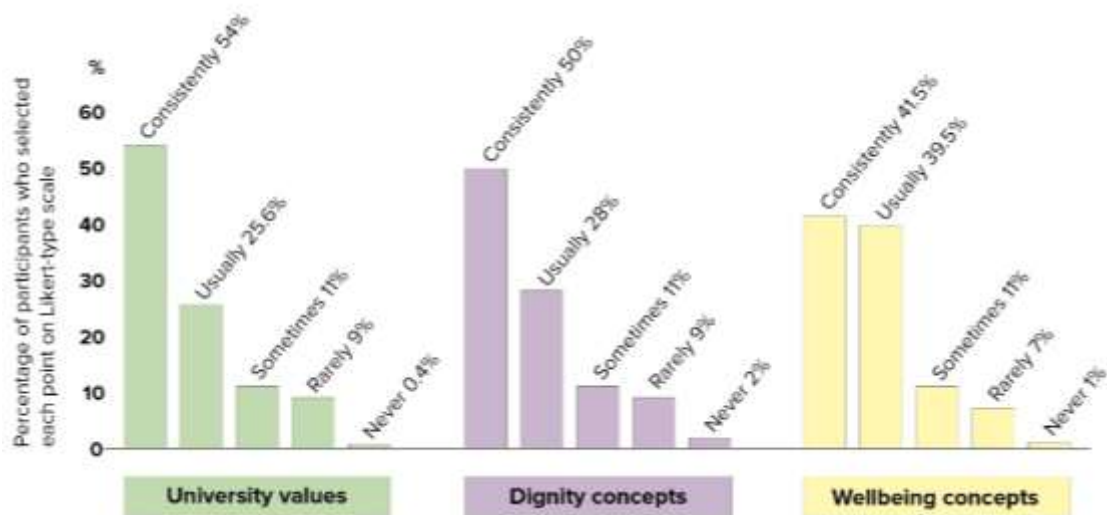


Figure 4.1: Survey results: managed-academics' perceptions of their experience of espoused university values, dignity and wellbeing in relationship with their manager. Aggregated to show the results of the Likert-type scales for all sub-concepts.

To better understand the reason behind such experiences and highlight ways that managers could improve their practice it was necessary to look in more detail at the demographic information provided by survey participants. As the available sample was so small, it was only appropriate to segment by faculty, rather than in any finer grained detail such as gender, length of service or particular academic role. Table 4.1 below shows the results of the survey split by faculty. The table shows the percentage of respondents who answered 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' or 'consistently' experiencing dignity, wellbeing or university values in their relationship with their academic-manager.

Survey results: the differences between faculty participants' perceptions of their managers' enactment of all sub-concepts aggregated (dignity, wellbeing and university values) in their relationship Percentages of participants' selections on Likert-type scales.						
	%	Consistently	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Dignity	Faculty A	55	32	8	4	1
	Faculty B	29	21	21	24	5
Wellbeing	Faculty A	49	41	9	1	0
	Faculty B	13.33	33.33	23.33	30	0
University Values	Faculty A	63	29	6	2	0
	Faculty B	21	14	37	26	2

*Table 4.1: Survey findings by faculty. The differences between faculty participants' perceptions of their managers' enactment of all sub-concepts aggregated (dignity, wellbeing and university value)s in their relationship. Percentages of participants' selections on Likert-type scales.*

The total number of survey participants (managed-academics) was n=29.

Only n=5 were from faculty B, n=21 from faculty A. Three participants preferred not say which faculty and are therefore excluded from this comparison. As shown in chapter three, table 3.2, the two faculties differ in size. Faculty B is 75% of the size of faculty A in terms of its number of academic staff. The response rate in faculty A was 20% and in faculty B 6%. This may partly be explained by the fact that I work in faculty A. People will recognise my name and position. Whilst this was taken into account in the research design in assuring that participant's responses (or non-responses) could not be attributed, it is possible that there may have been an element of people wishing to help me. However, at the time of the survey I was responsible for the direct management of four managed-academics, so this

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effect cannot be solely attributed to my position. Despite the small number of responses, it remains striking that the experiences of those in faculty B indicated much poorer experiences of all concepts. Participants from faculty B are much more likely to have a male manager (as shown in table 3.1 in chapter three). Research by others has indicated that male managers are expected to be firm and authoritative whilst females are expected to use 'softer' relational skills such as empathy as well as being directive when required (UNESCO, 1993; Griffiths, 2009). Pre-existing perceptions about how male managers 'should' behave may influence perceptions, including attributing motivations to them which may or may not be accurate. The findings regarding the values, skills and attitudes that middle-managers themselves felt they required to be effective are discussed in section 4.3 of this chapter. For now it is important to say that these did not indicate an inclination toward command and control communication for managers of either gender. The survey findings regarding communication are explored in the following section.

#### **4.2.2 Levels of communication**

As introduced in chapter two, four levels of relationship are defined by Schein & Schein (2018). I adapted these creating phrases to offer four choices of academic-managers' communication style:

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- Level minus 1: In my area it is clear that one person or group is in command or control and dominates everyone else.
  - Level 1: We tend to work according to our defined hierarchical roles and don't know much about what motivates each other.
  - Level 2: Our relationship has some personal features, I can share things about myself and my manager sometimes shares things about themselves with me.
  - Level 3: There is a real sense of trust and open communication between us.

Table 4.2 below shows the percentage of managed-academics that selected each of one of the four definitions of levels of communication options presented. Respondents were asked to select the option which best represented the kind of relationship they had with their academic-manager during their time working together. A limitation of this approach was that respondents could make one selection, rather than indicating if they experienced a mixture of communication styles. However, it did enable them to indicate their overall perception of the general nature of the communication with their manager which was helpful in understanding the importance of communication level to managed-academics perceptions of the CHM.

As can be seen, managed-academics' perception of levels of communication tended toward higher levels of communication, since 62% experienced levels 2 or 3. However, there was a significant percentage that experienced level minus 1 (17%), one (3.5%) was from faculty A.

	Humanistic relational levels of communication	Faculty A	Faculty B	Prefer not to say	Aggregated total for A, B & Prefer not to say.
		<b>N= response count. Percentage %</b>			
<b>Humanistic Levels of Communication</b>	Level 3 Mutual trust and open communication: There is a real sense of trust and open communication between us.	N11 38%	N0 0%	N1 3%	N12 41%
	Level 2 A personal relationship based on mutual interest: Our relationship has some personal features, I can share things about myself and my manager sometimes shares things about themselves with me.	N5 17%	N0 0%	N1 4%	N6 21%
	<b>Functional Levels of Communication</b>				
<b>Common for workplaces</b>	Level 1 Transactional relationship: We tend to work according to our defined hierarchical roles and don't know much about what motivates each other.	N4 14%	N2 7%	N0 0%	N6 21%
<b>Managerial</b>	Level Minus 1 Command and control: In my area it is clear that one person or group is in control, and dominates everyone else.	N1 3.5%	N3 10%	N1 3.5%	N5 17%
<b>Total responses for all levels</b>					<b>100%</b>

Table 4.2: Survey results (reading from left to right): managed-academics perceptions of level of communication experienced in relationship with their manager by faculty and those who preferred not to state their faculty. Number of (N) responses and percentages shown for clarity.

It is suggested that moving from level one to level two communication will have a positive effect on relationships, wellbeing and organisational performance (Schein & Schein, 2017, 2018). Level three relationships are necessary in environments where work is complex and teams need to rely on each other speaking up about (and challenging) their experiences to achieve successful outcomes. I suggest that universities are complex environments in



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which the competing needs to maintain autonomy and pro-social focus, whilst operating in a neo-liberal market-place make it essential that managers reflect on their management practice and the potential for unintended erosion of long held values and ideals. How managers communicate can impact managed-academics perception of their intentions and implied underlying values. Higher levels of “personalised” communication (levels 2 and 3) develop strong, open and trusting relationships and lead to improved wellbeing at work. This has concomitant effects on organisational performance (Schein & Schein, 2017, 2018).

Humanistic-management is relational and requires high levels of communication, therefore its primary form should be dialogue (Kostera, 2016; Albert & Perouma, 2017). Communication that develops a relationship of psychological safety reduces the perception of threat to one’s self-esteem (Rogers, 1957, 1959; Kahn, 1990). This enables people to become more fully and personally engaged in their work resulting in creativity, innovation and growth (Radecki et al, 2018; Clark, 2020). Conversely, lower levels of communication and failing to be open and honest, as well as supportive and compassionate about the effects of change can lead to damaged relationships and reduced trust.

Level minus 1 communication (command and control) is viewed as managerial, since it does not place the dignity of the person before operational needs. It is suggested this has a negative impact on dignity (Hicks, 2018), wellbeing (Seligman, 2011) and voicing and enacting values (Gentile, 2010). This has a negative effect on organisational performance

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because failure to exercise appropriate compassion and relational working (especially in management) means that people are afraid to express themselves. This has been demonstrated in healthcare (Francis, 2010, 2013) where well publicised cases of unchallenged poor standards of care have led to deaths. This poor care has been attributed to managerialist management, seen as resulting in a culture with a lack of safety to speak up to challenge mistakes and bad practice (Cunnane & Warwick, 2014). NPM led to the introduction into the NHS of a new cadre of professional managers, who may not have come from the ranks of clinical professions. This has been criticised for divorcing management practice regarding finance, priorities, targets and systems (Cunnane & Warwick, 2014) from the realities and emotional labour required in caring professions (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). The NHS in Wales has a focus on compassionate leadership in healthcare (HEIW, 2020). West & Chowla (2017) set out a model to develop a culture in which listening to understand concerns and taking action to help are prioritised. Since I have worked in both healthcare and HE I have noted that both involve considerable emotional work (Hochschild, 1979) and the values and intentions of managers are under-theorised.

Management and leadership training is being developed in the health-professions right from the start of clinical training (HEIW, 2019). Managers in HE are likely to have come from prior teaching or research roles (Floyd, 2016; Winter, 2017) and as such may be familiar with caring deeply about their students or projects that contribute to public good. They are however unlikely to have received training for the challenges their management role brings

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including the people skills required (Floyd, 2016). Where managers lack such training, they may find conversations about change and the negative impacts this can have on people very difficult to have. Leaving things unsaid can be damaging, because the drive to comprehend (Pirson, 2017a, 2017c) leaves individuals and groups trying to make sense of a situation without accurate information. They can only make up their own stories which can involve negative thinking (Beck, 1963) leading to the development of negative perceptions and lack of trust.

To better understand the findings, it is important to consider managers perspectives about communication. The following section considers managers' perspectives and begins to explore barriers to higher levels of communication.

### **4.3 Interview findings**

This section presents the findings from the interviews with executive, senior and middle-managers. It illuminates the intentions of managers relating to their implicit and declared values, and the skills and attitudes which managers at all levels suggested as being important to being an effective middle-manager. Furthermore, it sets the scene for the sections which follow it which examine in greater detail certain sub-concepts of dignity, wellbeing and university values which were less positively perceived.

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### 4.3.1 Managers' values

The university vision and strategy document (2019e) sets out that the values of the university are to be accessible, supportive, innovative and ambitious.

Eva (executive-manager) stated her perception of the importance of these values in guiding the direction of the university:

The values of the organisation probably transcend what we say in our strategy because they won't change next time we write our strategy, they will still be there. We are never going to change that, in terms of who we are and the identity of us as a university.

This fits with the opinion that values are fixed and hard to change (Winter, 2017). However, it has also been proposed that values can be altered through time, experience and socialisation into communities of practice (Lave, 1991). Gentile (2010) emphasises the importance of being aware of one's own values and being able to voice them, since our values are linked to our deepest sense of who we wish to be.

In order to enact our values, we must first be aware of them. It has been proposed that it is small choices made without reflection that lead to people failing to enact their values through not examining motivations, consequences and congruence with personal values (Christensen et al, 2012). This can result in actions that do not align to values having ensuing unintended consequences (Christensen et al, 2012), including psychological distress (Rogers, 1957, 1959; Hochschild, 1979; Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020). This highlights the importance of ethical-reflection for

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managers in decision making based on accurate awareness of their values and behaviours and how these are perceived by others. Competing pressures caused by balancing the needs and preferences of managed-academics and the pressures caused by organisational and external measures to operate within certain policies and procedures may lead to changes in their enactment of their values if reflection is not prioritised. It is important that policies facilitate managers' reflection regarding decisions and as such serve people rather than becoming their master.

Explicit mention of the stated organisational values was lacking in all but one of the policies (the people strategy (SmallU, 2018a)) included in this research. This may be explained by the fact that policies come up for review at different times and are written by different people. It is understandable that their language may be formal; certain terminology may be the norm for such documents, given that they may be required to support legal processes. However, since they are all subject to review by committees within the university an important recommendation from this research will include greater visibility of the stated values within policy artefacts.

The values, skills and attitudes which managers at all levels felt were necessary to be an effective middle-manager were inductively coded from interview transcripts, because it is important to understand the attributes and values which people ascribe to themselves (Dierksmeier, 2016). This was key to understanding if these implied a command and control, or relational approach. A relational approach being in keeping with humanistic-management.

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The results of the interviews showed that managers at all levels, and in both faculties expressed underlying values which suggest that they retain pro-social values likely to have led to their working in HE (Floyd, 2016). This was evident when managers talked about wanting to make a difference and contribute to developing others. This related to students, not solely as consumers, but as people who could benefit from the experience of HE, who came to it having faced disadvantage including social deprivation and disability.

I undertook semi-structured interviews, but I took care to ask managers the same questions about (i) their reasons for undertaking a management role, (ii) how they tried to enact the values of the university, and (iii) their perception of the needs of managed-academics. Managers' values were sometimes explicitly stated and sometimes inferred by me. A full table of the NVivo™ nodes is provided in appendix three. The following three tables show the results of the interviews with managers at all levels. Firstly, figure 4.2 shows the values found from the interviews. Secondly figure 4.3 shows the perceptions of managers about the most important skills and attributes required to be an effective middle-manager. Thirdly, figure 4.4 shows specific skills of effective communication identified by managers at all levels as important in the middle-manager role. The number of transcripts which each of the values, skills or attributes is drawn from is shown for transparency. The columns read from left to right, showing the values in descending order of those most frequently found.

<b>Managers' motivations for undertaking leadership roles in HE and their opinions about the needs of managed academic staff led to explicit and implicit values being found.</b>	
<b>Number of transcripts</b>	<b>Values</b>
17	Making a difference (including developing others & hope)
16	Self-reflection
13	Challenge (including hard-work)
11	Fairness (including consistency)
9	Respect
7	Self-confidence
7	Honesty (including truth and transparency)
7	Integrity (including authenticity)
6	Empathy
5	Kindness & care
4	Facilitator
4	Supportive
4	Compassion
4	Being reasonable
2	Courage
2	Humility
2	Loyalty
2	Quality or high standards

Figure 4.2: Values explicitly stated or inferred from interviews with managers at all levels (academic and professional services)

<b>Managers' perceptions of most important skills and attributes required to be an effective middle-manager.</b>	
<b>Number of transcripts</b>	<b>Skills &amp; attributes</b>
19	Coping with 'being in the middle'
14	Communication (including listening within sub-skills in figure 4.4) *
10	Resilience
10	Coping with pressure
10	Strategic understanding
9	Supportive
8	Getting away from it
7	Professionalism
7	Decisive
6	Positive attitude to problems
6	Operational understanding
6	Prioritising

\*sub-skills related to communication and listening shown in figure 4.4

Figure 4.3: Interview findings. Managers' perceptions of the most important skills and attributes required to be an effective middle-manager.

Sub-nodes related to communication from most important skills and attributes required to be an effective academic middle-manager.	
Number of transcripts	Communication skills
7	Persuasion and negotiation
7	Opportunities to influence
6	Emotional intelligence
4	Motivating and influencing
4	Taking people with you
3	Encouragement
1	Constructive
1	Kind
1	Patience

Figure 4.4: Interview findings. Communication and listening sub-skills.

### 4.3.2 Managers' opinions regarding the necessary skills and attributes for academic middle-management

As well as exploring managers' values, I enquired about the perceptions of managers at all levels (academic-managers and professional-services managers) regarding the necessary skills and attributes required to be an effective middle-manager in HE.

As can be seen from the above figures, findings regarding the values, necessary skills and attributes and communication skills required to be an effective middle-manager indicate that managers of all levels and roles favoured a relational approach to management. They recognised the importance of communication in achieving this. This perhaps indicates that managers in this setting prioritised leadership rather than management attributes as manager-leaders (Taylor & Machado, 2006) and used relational approaches to navigate the complexity of the multifaceted nature of leadership and management required in HE (Bolden et al, 2008; Whitchurch & Gorden, 2010). Managers recognised that even though these were their aims



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and preferences that there were times when they felt they did not achieve this. A relational approach favours levels 2 and 3 communication (Schein & Schein, 2018) which involves genuine relationships and is in keeping with a humanistic approach. This does not negate the importance of understanding and acting on structural considerations (as shown in table 4.6 page 121) which supports there being a considerable overlap between leadership and management (Middlehurst, 2000).

The findings from the survey show that in faculty A managed-academic's experiences largely contrast with literature which suggests that managerialism results in academic middle-managers working in uncaring and instrumental command, control and 'power over' (StarHawk, 1987) ways, even if it is unintended (Deem, 2006). They indicate that instead academic middle-managers were able to provide opportunities for those they managed experience respect for their dignity, experience wellbeing at work and the enactment of university values. This was in the context of humanistic communication with their managers. In faculty B managers values and aims were found to be similar, but their practice was not experienced as consistent with relational communication. Lower levels of dignity, wellbeing and enactment of university values were found.

#### **4.3.3 Limitation of interpretation regarding values, skills and attitudes.**

A copy of the interview questions I asked and how these map to the research questions is included in appendix one. It is important to acknowledge that comments made in response to interview questions cannot easily be 'mapped'

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to theoretical concepts. It should be noted that the participants were not asked about the concepts, nor presented with the definitions that were supplied to the survey participants. Therefore they do not offer direct comparison to the perceptions of managed-academics experiences about these concepts. The opinions of managers about their own values, the skills and attributes they felt were important in 'how to be a manager' and the implications of these for the kind of communication they used were inferred by me.

Personal meaning, past and current experiences and anticipated future experiences may have influenced responses. The comparisons and interpretations I made must be acknowledged as value-laden as I aim to practice humanistic-management. I was mindful to listen and code for values and practices that relate to universities as hybrid organisations (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010). Managers continually balance valid structural needs of the organisation and the agential needs of managed-academics and themselves. My aim is to contribute to understanding of management in HE through HMT, rather than to suggest this as the only explanation for management practice.

Having examined managers of all levels and roles perceptions of their values and the skills and attitudes they viewed as important to being effective in the role of middle-manager I identified themes from interviews to illuminate factors which either facilitate or impede the practice of CHM by *academic* middle-managers. These are explored in section 4.5 following the integration of findings from the survey, interview and document analysis which I turn to below.

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#### **4.4 Integration of findings of mixed-methods regarding the concepts of dignity, wellbeing and espoused university values**

Having thus far considered the findings from the survey and interviews separately, I now integrate them by considering what they mean in relation to document analysis for three of the CHM in turn, i.e. dignity, wellbeing, and university values. Figure 4.5 (page 113) presents themes synthesised from the findings regarding all of the CHM. Prior to the presentation of the themes in figure 4.5 the following sections focus on anomalies from the overall rather positive findings, since these serve to illuminate not only negative experiences but also to highlight possible reasons for positive ones and therefore have potential value for theory and practice. Document analysis is included in this synthesis.

##### **4.4.1 Perspectives on dignity**

The dignity at work policy (SmallU, 2020a) shows the organisational expectations of managers' practices regarding dignity. It states that the university is:

Committed to ensuring that members of staff are treated with dignity and respect whilst at work, offering an inclusive and safe environment. The university expects all members of our community to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration at all times. All members of the university community have the right to expect respectful behaviour from others and have a corresponding responsibility to behave respectfully towards others.

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In common with all but one of the policies and procedures reviewed this policy does not reference the university values. Mention is made of ‘dignity at work advisors’, who can signpost staff to support to deal with bullying or harassment. This implies a model of managing poor behaviour, rather than focusing on enhancing wellbeing and dignity. If an organisation wishes to work according to its stated values it would be logical for these to be embedded within its internal artefacts (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein, 2017) such as policies and procedures and not solely within vision and mission statements which are publicly available. Structures should also be in place to enable discussion regarding revealing underlying assumptions about roles and responsibilities in relation to policy implementation.

#### **4.4.2 Managers’ perspectives on the sub-concepts of dignity.**

The dignity concept of ‘inclusion’ (Hicks, 2018) relates to managers ensuring fair and equitable workloads and creating the conditions for wellbeing and dignity by working through their values in line with the university value of accessible HE. This relates both to the aims managers had to be inclusive of teams as well as empowering individuals. It also relates to the meaning managers attributed to their role in terms of being part of a university that provides an inclusive HE experience. A comment from Patrick (executive-manager) illuminates that focus is not solely about delivering for students (as consumers). Executive-managers saw their roles as transcending the tangible measure of spending limited resources and having greater meaning. Providing a place where people come to work engaged in a common purpose was a clear theme when taking together the interviews of all managers.

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Patrick's comment is an example of the shared pro-social aims regarding social inclusion shared by managers at all levels (academic and professional-services) that went beyond the individual to the common good:

What matters to me is the link between how we spend our resources, what value we get from it and what we can deliver. So, success for me at its most base level is breaking even, making a small surplus, and being financially sustainable. At a slightly higher level, it's about the quality of what we do and the outcomes we deliver for our students and our staff. We should be a great place to work. We're a small organisation really 450 / 500 staff we should be close enough that our staff feel valued are extended, are challenged have a great role and feel a part of it and our students get a good experience out of coming here. So those sort of wider (pause) I nearly said societal benefits, they are not really societal are they, they are organisational benefits.

The high position the university holds in the Times and Sunday Times social inclusion table (2021) may be seen as an indicator that such meaning delivers organisational benefits experienced by students. Furthermore, the staff survey (SmallU, 2018b, 2018d) indicates that 85% of staff consider the university a good place to work. The results of the staff survey may further support working at the university as being meaningful. 95% of staff indicated that they find their work interesting. 92% of respondents indicated that they support the university's strategic aims/objectives indicating that they derive meaning, or a sense of belonging to something with a purpose greater than self through their

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work at SmallU. Meaning is further discussed in the later section on wellbeing since it is a sub-concept of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

#### **4.4.3 Survey findings for lower scoring questions regarding managed-academic's perceptions of their dignity in relation to their manager's practice**

All but two sub-concepts explored in the survey achieved statistical significance on the one-sample chi square test (meaning that they were a good fit to theory) when the test included all survey participants. Since the test is a test of goodness of fit to theory, the null hypothesis (expectation of even distribution between the points on the Likert-type scale) can be rejected. Since all but two sub-concepts were statistically significant, these stood out and it was important to explore them further. Running the test again, separately for each faculty, all sub-concepts were significant for faculty A. Statistical significance therefore indicates that all sub-concepts of dignity, wellbeing and university values were perceived to be enacted by academic middle-managers in faculty A.

The sub-concepts found to be not statistically significant when including all participants were both sub-concepts of dignity. The results of the one sample chi square test for all dignity sub-concepts are available in appendix four. The two sub-concepts were 'understanding of perspective' and 'recognition through validation'. Both can be related to cognitive empathy (Winter, 2017), as part of listening and communicating understanding. The number of respondents in faculty B was too small (n=5) to meet the criteria for a one

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sample chi-square test. However, since the difference occurred when they were included it is logical that their inclusion made the difference observed. When relying on a small sample such findings can only be considered indicative. Therefore additional analysis was required to explain why although managers in both faculties felt that communication – including listening, as well as being able to empathise and recognise and value the work of managed-academics was important to them (figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5), they were not perceived to the same degree by managed-academics in faculty B as they were in faculty A. This may relate to the lower levels of communication also perceived (table 4.2) in faculty B, which could be expected to impact on perceptions of listening and understanding.

Understanding the results of the survey regarding dignity required exploring in finer grained detail those concepts which scored lower than the other nine sub-concepts of dignity. Therefore, closer analysis included a third sub-concept of dignity, 'my perspective on things being taken into consideration'.

Table 4.3 below shows the percentages that managed-academics rated each of the lower-scoring dignity sub-concepts (less than 40% experienced them 'consistently'). The table shows the aggregated scores and comparison between the faculties.

<b>Dignity sub-concepts where relatively low percentages (less than 40% of aggregated responses for both faculties and prefer not to say) of managed-academics selected 'consistently' experiencing them in relationship with their academic-manager.</b>						
<b>Dignity sub-concept</b>	<b>N = response count</b>	<b>Consistently</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
	<b>p= Percentage %</b>					
Validated by being recognised for the contribution made	Aggregated	36%	39%	11%	14%	0%
	Faculty A	N7 35%	N11 55%	N2 10%	N0 0%	N0 0%
	Faculty B	N1 20%	N0 0%	N1 20%	N3 60%	N0 0%
Perspective on things is taken into consideration	Aggregated	37%	35%	16%	12%	0%
	Faculty A	N10 53%	N8 42%	N1 5%	N0 0%	N0 0%
	Faculty B	N0 0%	N1 20%	N2 40%	N2 40%	N0 0%
Acknowledgment through full attention when needed	Aggregated	31%	41%	7%	14%	7%
	Faculty A	N7 33%	N20 48%	N2 10%	N1 5%	N1 5%
	Faculty B	N1 20%	N1 20%	N0 0%	N2 40%	N1 20%

*Table 4.3. Survey results: sub-concepts of dignity (where aggregated scoring between faculties showed that less than 40% of respondents experienced the sub-concept 'consistently') in relationship with their manager. Number of participant responses (N) and percentages for each faculty shown.*

The dignity sub-concepts of 'Recognition through validation', 'understanding of perspective' and 'acknowledgement through full attention' relate to the concept of empathy. Some suggest that cognitive empathy is required due to managers needing to take others perspectives into account, and that this is sufficient (Winter, 2017). However, humanistic communication requires managers to genuinely engage in empathy at an affective and embodied level (Mearns & Cooper, 2005; Schein & Schein, 2018), experiencing what it is like to feel as the other person does. This level of empathy leads to compassion which differs from empathy in that it is action oriented. It is not sufficient for managers to just listen and understand the frustrations of those they manage,



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supportive managers also need to take action to help resolve problems.

Required action relates to managers removing obstacles, including unhelpful processes that do not take into account human needs (West & Chowla, 2017).

The three sub-concepts also relate to the development of supportive relationships and the wellbeing concept of 'positive emotions'. Lower scores for these sub-concepts also correlated with the selection of level 2 rather than level 3 communication. This supports the argument that lower levels of communication lead to lower levels of experiencing dignity at work. Therefore the relatively low scores for these sub-concepts could relate to perceptions about managers not acting on managed-academics voicing concerns. A survey participant (faculty B) gave their opinion:

I feel that it is perhaps unfair to focus upon my manager as they are simply working within a rather poisonous management culture in the university as a whole that does not embrace diversity other than through tick box systems. It is a culture where metrics sadly matter far more than people and when we are asked for our opinions I have a strong feeling that our managers are simply waiting for us to stop talking so they can say they have consulted us while continuing to pursue the same objectives in the same ways.

This accords with the literature regarding there being little desire to 'blame' immediate managers (Kolsaker, 2008). However, neither academic or professional services middle-managers could identify practices aimed at promoting dignity and wellbeing beyond 'dignity at work advisors', indicating that there is a gap in their understanding of CHM relating to dignity. Some

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areas where there were missing policies were identified, such as providing for women going through the menopause when so many staff are female. The following section considers the finding related to the sub-concept of wellbeing.

#### **4.4.4 Perspectives on wellbeing**

The managing stress and promoting wellbeing in the workplace policy (SmallU, 2019c) states that there is a commitment:

To providing a safe and healthy working environment for staff and recognises the importance of fostering psychological as well as physical well-being.

The centrality of relationships to management was captured in a comment by Rebecca (executive-manager):

I quickly learned it's totally relational. This isn't just an intellectual challenge you're dealing with, it's lives. There's that whole thing about perhaps inhabiting a slightly different role ... but hopefully there's a fairly good relationship going on.

As discussed earlier and shown in table 4.4, wellbeing was generally perceived quite positively when related to higher levels of communication. It was however rated less positively than dignity and university values. Wellbeing scores generally received their highest percentages as being 'usually', rather than 'consistently' experienced by managed-academics.

To understand the reasons behind the lower perceptions of wellbeing it was necessary to examine the sub-concepts in closer detail. The survey results showed that two sub-concepts of wellbeing were notable for relatively low scores for being consistently experienced. These are 'positive emotions' and 'engagement'. They were the only sub-concepts to score below 40% being experienced consistently and are shown in table 4.4 below.

The section following the table explores the possible reasons for the relatively low 'positive emotions' and 'engagement' scores.

<b>Wellbeing sub-concepts with relatively low (under 40% aggregated for both faculties and prefer not to say) percentages of managed academics selecting they were consistently experienced in their relationship with their academic-manager</b>						
<b>Wellbeing sub-concept</b>	<b>N = response count Percentage %</b>	<b>Consistently</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Positive feelings at work	Aggregated	14%	55%	21%	10%	0%
	Faculty A	N4 19%	N13 62%	N3 14%	N1 5%	N0 0%
	Faculty B	N0 0%	N1 20%	N3 60%	N1 20%	N0 0%
Engaged & motivated by work	Aggregated	24%	62%	7%	7%	0%
	Faculty A	N6 28%	N14 67%	N1 5%	N0 0%	N0 0%
	Faculty B	N1 20%	N2 40%	N1 20%	N1 20%	N0 0%

*Table 4.4: Survey results: sub-concepts of wellbeing (PERMA) which scored relatively low for being consistently experienced by managed-academics in relationship with their manager. Number (N) of participant responses and percentages for each faculty.*

#### **4.4.5 Managers' perspectives on wellbeing**

Seligman (2011) defines 'positive emotions' as being happiness and life satisfaction as aspects of the pleasant life.

Wellbeing scores tend towards 'usually' more than 'consistently' in comparison to the dignity variables with one exception. Relationships with

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their academic middle-manager were rated higher in faculty A than relationships with colleagues. This may support the position that part of a manager's role is creating the conditions for 'positive relationships' at work and has meaning to managers who wish to work through their values. This requires mediating relationships (including disputes and misunderstandings) between colleagues towards inter-dependence where all willingly sacrifice some of their autonomy in order to achieve a collective inter-dependence that is greater than self.

Furthermore, scores for wellbeing sub-concepts being 'usually', rather than 'consistently' experienced may indicate that in keeping with the literature, wellbeing is always in process towards homeostasis (balance) rather than ever being 'achieved' (Rogers, 1957, 1959; Dodge et al, 2012). So long as this is 'usually' the case, in the context of high levels of communication, humanistic relationships with their manager are still 'consistently' experienced to a relatively high degree. The process of homeostasis requires balancing the challenges of striving toward 'achievement' with 'engagement' and finding meaning in work and other aspects of life. Working with others brings inevitable relationship conflicts (Hicks, 2018) and frustrations that come with trying to overcome difficulties. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the high percentages indicating they 'usually' rather than 'consistently' experienced 'positive emotions' at work is indicative of humanistic-management relationships – where managed-academics indicated their managers used high levels of communication (i.e. in faculty A).

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Interviews with managers of all levels and roles indicated that they wanted people to enjoy their work. Managers viewed an important part of the role as being about creating the conditions for a positive working environment. Suggestions about how this could happen included role-modelling, but also through listening. Careful listening (or attending) (West & Chowla, 2017) enables managers to find and understand problems from the perspective of those encountering them. Taking action to resolve them is the exercise of compassion and may make work more enjoyable. At all levels managers expressed aims consistent with developing a culture where people enjoy work. Nigel (executive-manager) described this management responsibility as:

The maintenance and establishment of a culture which is positive and which people want to be part of. I think, and deliberately being vague I didn't say staff I think that if you create a culture where staff are happy to be a part of I think you create a culture where everyone external, students, other people want to engage with and see it as something positive. I think that's something easy to mess up and takes a while to establish but I think that's important. At a very local level the people reporting to me directly or indirectly, more important than almost anything else is that they come into work looking forward to the day. Not that would apply every day of course, because, you know, life happens but you know that work is a place that they enjoy they feel supported, there are things happening that they want to be a part of and they can

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see that there is a vision that includes them and that they want to be a part of that.

#### **4.4.5.1 Positive Emotions**

It is very human for emotions to vary and this can be impacted by many things, including work. Where 'relationships with managers' and 'levels of communication' scored the highest, wellbeing scores such as 'positive emotions' were also higher. Conversely, where there was a low score for 'relationship with their manager', 'positive feelings at work' also scored lower.

As was the case for dignity sub-concepts, the lower scores for wellbeing were given by participants in faculty B and were directly related to the 'level of communication' experienced with their manager. Those who rated their manager as displaying level minus one (command and control) communication indicated only 'rarely' or 'sometimes' experiencing the wellbeing sub-concepts. The scores for having 'a positive working relationship with their manager' scored 'rarely' where level minus one communication was experienced. Where level one communication was experienced participants tended to indicate they 'usually' had a positive relationship with their manager.

Scores for 'positive working relationships with colleagues' in faculty B were higher than those for relationships with their manager. The opposite was found in faculty A, where relationships with managers were rated more positively than relationships with colleagues. This may indicate that in the absence of a positive working relationship with a manager colleagues find support from each other, since when there is a less positive relationship with

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their manager, the drive to bond (Pirson, 2017a, 2017c) and the desire to avoid painful social exclusion (Bernstein & Claypool, 2012) and achieve a degree of psychological safety mean individuals seek to bond with colleagues, which may or not be unhealthy. In some circumstances poor behaviour can become acceptable within such communities in the absence of good management (Vaughn, 1996). 'Positive relationships' with colleagues in this case appeared to offer some protective factor for positive feelings at work in faculty B, but low scores for experiencing 'meaning' and 'achievement' were found when this was the case.

#### **4.4.5.2 Meaning**

Work having meaning was the highest scoring sub-concept of wellbeing in the survey.

Seligman (2011) defines 'meaning' as belonging to and serving something that is believed to be bigger than self. The vision and strategy of SmallU sets out its mission, including its values and priority strategy domains it will focus on to achieve its mission (SmallU, 2019e). Together, these create the identity of SmallU and provide a framework for 'meaning' as belonging to something bigger than self. This relates to the values of managers as 'making a difference' (including developing others).

The strategy (SmallU, 2019e) states that students are the *raison d'être* for the existence of the university. More broadly the vision includes focus on its civic mission and working in partnership with employers so that graduates can contribute to the economic development of the region. Whilst not explicitly

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mentioned in the strategy, a large proportion of students train for, and go on to work in professions such as nursing and allied health professions, social work and education. Whilst an uninitiated outsider may read references to industrial engagement as being about business and industry (which are included), in the case of SmallU the stakeholders alluded to are also those whose own mission is civic, and focussed on improving lives in the region. In this context, economic improvement can be viewed as a necessary instrument to improve health, dignity and well-being. Serving the needs of humans and social justice, in the sense of HMT, rather than simply providing 'capitalisms foot-soldiers' (Ehrensals, 2001). Economic development serves to address health and wellbeing inequalities, contributing to dignity, and not solely to create shareholder profit.

The interviews with academic-managers at all levels made clear the 'meaning' that working at SmallU had for them as being aligned to the university value of 'accessible'. All levels of managers and roles interviewed identified a shared sense of common purpose around making a difference, developing others, and contributing to social justice.

'Meaning' was also derived from the sense of community. This was attributed to arising from the small size of SmallU. This was seen as contributing to being able to talk to people more easily than might be the case in larger universities. Connection was seen as something special, and not to be lost. Lynne (middle-manager professional-services) attributed this to a sense of being able to contribute and share in success:



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I think the camaraderie between staff members, because we are a small university, it's nice that we get that small organisation feel. You can have an impact on everybody. You can all help out. So its things like being involved in the graduation stuff with everybody pulling together. That's a massive thing for all those students. Although you might not have lectured that student. Everybody's had an impact.

Humanistic communication and ensuring the values of an organisation are communicated becomes harder as organisations grow (Schein & Schein, 2018). If managers' teams become too large to enable them to maintain level 2 communication (at least) there is a negative impact on the sense of shared 'meaning' and purpose. Managers who insist on trying to create time for all team members can become stressed with a negative effect of them being less able to be emotionally available to those they manage (Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020). Team size is therefore a potential barrier to humanistic-management.

#### **4.4.6 Perspectives on university values**

As discussed earlier and shown in table 4.5, university values being enacted by academic middle-managers was perceived rather positively when related to higher levels of communication. Perception of university values being experienced 'consistently' was the highest of all the CHM.

The university value of accessible is defined in the vision and strategy (SmallU, 2019e) as:

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Accessible in the learning we provide for our students, staff and community, being pro-active in promoting the value of higher education.

This is grounded in a dedication to be inclusive and fair in how we provide our services.

All academic and professional services middle-managers indicated that they aimed to be accessible to their teams, but females commented on the need to work longer hours to achieve this. Some commented about trying to ensure they gave equal amounts of time and resources to everyone. There was also a theme for female middle-managers in particular of not being able to get their own work done, due to prioritising the needs of their teams. A survey respondent (managed-academic faculty A) commented about their experience of academic middle-manager accessibility:

My manager consistently fosters a relationship that promotes dignity and wellbeing when we meet, and endeavours to be available for all staff.

However, the demands on their time are such that it is not always possible for issues to be dealt with in a timely fashion - this is in no way the fault of my manager, who is not a superhuman. There is scope for a better line-managerial or supervisory system where one person is not managing a large number of staff in addition to a large workload.

Therefore the number of people in a team might impede practice of humanistic-management due to limitations on managers having the practical or emotional resources to take desired action (Pirson, 2018a).

Four sub-concepts were notable for their relatively low scores, despite the overall positive experience of university values being enacted by managers. Three of the sub-concepts related to the university value of accessible and one to the university value of ambitious. One sub-concept (managers being supportive and taking action to help resolve things when there is a problem) was scored as being 'never' experienced by one participant from faculty B. This participant scored their manager as level minus 1 communication. Table 4.5 below compares the results for both faculties in the context of the overall aggregated survey results, where certain sub-concepts scored below 53% for being experienced consistently by managed academics.

<b>Survey results: managed-academics perceptions of their managers enactment of university values with relatively percentages (below 53% aggregated for both faculties and prefer not to say) selecting 'consistently' experienced on Likert-type scale</b>							
<b>University values sub-concept N = response count resulting in %</b>		<b>Consistently</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	
<b>Accessible</b>	Manager makes time to meet or talk to me when needed	Aggregated	43%	39%	11%	3.5%	3.5%
		Faculty A	N10 50%	N8 40%	N2 10%	N0 0%	N0 0%
		Faculty B	N1 20%	N2 40%	N1 20%	N1 20%	N0 0%
	Manager is fair, working without bias or favouritism	Aggregated	51%	28%	14%	7%	0%
		Faculty A	N12 57%	N6 28%	N2 10%	N1 5%	N0 0%
		Faculty B	N1 20%	N2 40%	N1 20%	N1 20%	N0 0%
	Manager is inclusive of me as part of wider team	Aggregated	52%	24%	14%	10%	0%
		Faculty A	N13 62%	N6 28%	N1 5%	N1 5%	N0 0%
		Faculty B	N1 20%	N0 0%	N3 60%	N1 20%	N0 0%
<b>Ambitious</b>	Manager encourages a flexible approach to work	Aggregated	50%	28%	11%	11%	0%
		Faculty A	N13 65%	N6 30%	N0 0%	N1 5%	N0 0%
		Faculty B	N1 20%	N0 0%	N3 60%	N1 20%	N0 0%

Table 4.5. Survey results: sub-concepts of university values which scored relatively low for being consistently experienced by managed-academics in relationship with their manager. Number of participant responses (N) and percentages for each faculty shown.

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The university value of accessible was assessed using three questions (shown in the table). These concepts also relate to dignity sub-concepts of 'fairness and justice' and to the wellbeing sub-concept of 'meaning' (as shown in figures 4.5 and 5.1). The scores related to being 'accessible' had relatively low scores in some cases in faculty A, even when managers were rated as working with level 3 communication. This contributes to the suggestion that where managers lack resources, such as time to be 'accessible' (due to having large teams) boundaries to enacting CHM exist. Such barriers are considered to negatively impact what is known as 'compassion organising' (Pirson, 2018a) and may result in managers' practice differing from their own aims. This is both affected by and affects managers own wellbeing. This is counter to the university strategy of being accessible to both students and staff. Interviews showed that for executive-managers that 'meaning' was related to a focus on students, whilst academic middle-managers tended to place an emphasis on the needs of their teams.

Two of the survey questions addressing the university value of accessible, 'my manager is fair, working without bias or favouritism' and 'my manager is inclusive of me as part of wider team' also relate to two dignity sub-concepts; 'fairness and justice' and 'inclusion and belonging'. These are discussed in the following two sections to aid understanding of the reasons these may have contributed to lower scores for academic-managers being accessible than the other university values of supportive, innovative and ambitious.

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#### **4.4.7 Accessible: fairness & justice**

SmallU's Dignity at Work Policy (SmallU, 2020a) states that it seeks to promote fair treatment of staff.

The concept of fairness and justice goes beyond treating people fairly without discrimination. It includes justice being applied equally and proportionally when problems arise or difficult decisions have to be taken. Workplace fairness is a complex consideration. It was directly referenced by participants at all levels of management during interviews. With regards to re-structuring, Rebecca (executive-manager) said:

You can have individuals coming into the process not believing that it's a process with any shred of integrity at all.

In this she acknowledges that whilst fairness may be the aim, it is not always perceived.

Academic middle-managers spoke of the need to ensure a fair and equitable workload of managed-academics. Sharon (academic middle-manager faculty A) explained:

Making sure everybody was treated fairly. I have desperately tried to do that. I don't think their perceptions of what was fair and equitable were what is actually fair and equitable.

Andrew (faculty B) also commented:

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in some respects with compromise no-one is ever truly happy, because everyone has to give a bit and take, but I think the key thing is that as long as everybody sees that everybody has the best intentions and that there are competing tensions but we've come to what we think is a reasonable solution.

It seems that Rebecca understood that not everyone does perceive things to be fair. There may be many reasons for such perceptions of unfairness. In the context of people going through many changes in executive-management (prior to the present executive team) and senior and middle-management, with restructuring resulting in redundancies it is not difficult to imagine that people may feel a lack of safety and trust. People also come to work with their own personal histories relating to their ability to develop relationships of trust, including their pre-conceptions about managers' intentions. Part of the hidden work of management is developing trust and helping people to believe in others as well as their own capabilities. This is why some scholars of management argue that if you really want to help people, go into management (Christensen et al, 2012). Managers generally have good intentions notwithstanding, certain policies and procedures were experienced by them as impeding their ability to be as effective in their roles as they would like.

It is difficult to perceive fairness in practice when individuals are not privy to the information about team workload that academic-managers are. There may be good reasons for this such as confidentiality around reasonable adjustment for disability. However, this may contribute to the lower scores for 'positive relationships' with colleagues as well as to lower scores for academic-

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managers being perceived as working fairly. Additionally, in cases of poor conduct if colleagues perceive that such conduct is not dealt with effectively, this can contribute to a sense of unfairness. Managers who wish to work with trust and open communication will find policies and procedures that limit this frustrating. Where they cannot secure support from policy-owners to alter policies and procedures this can lead to independent decisions about how to apply policy (or not). The implications regarding policy are an impeding factor for the practice of humanistic-management shown in table 4.5 discussed in section 4.4.6. The following sections address the remaining university values of accessible and innovative and ambitious.

#### **4.4.8 Accessible: inclusion and belonging**

The vision and strategy (SmallU, 2019e) states that it seeks to be accessible and inclusive in all its provision because:

We work better and more effectively together, whether this is with students, staff, industry or other stakeholders [and that] students, staff and external partnerships together are the university.

From the interviews with executives it was clear that there was a sense of inclusion and belonging within that team. All mentioned a sense of shared values, that this university is different to others because of the sense of civic mission. There was also a clear view that structures are important, to ensure the sustainability (even survival) of the university. However, it was made clear that the primary purpose of these was to be able to contribute to a wider common good brought by HE.

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For academic and professional services middle-managers being able to develop teams with a sense of shared identity and purpose was seen as important. This was seen as difficult work, that came with a need for difficult conversations, persuasion and where necessary identifying when people's attitudes and values were not aligned with those of the university. In these cases it was seen as important to explain to people what was needed and why, but if individuals would not or could not play their part in the team because their values or behaviours did not align it would be better for them to work elsewhere.

A sense of inclusion and belonging was conveyed by a survey respondent (managed-academic faculty A):

I value the non-hierarchical approach that sits within our department. The impact of this is that the whole team are able to contribute to new ideas and there is no professional jealousy. I feel that this promotes wellbeing for myself as, although my manager is senior to me by far in experience, I still feel I contribute to the team.

The university value of accessible scored lower when levels of communication were low. As before for other CHM, this was mostly the case in faculty B. Relating this to dignity sub-concepts discussed shows the same pattern exists, except for 'being treated fairly without discrimination'. Therefore, whilst faculty B participants rated their manager less favourably regarding fairness in terms of bias or favouritism, this was not related to perceiving discrimination.



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#### 4.4.9 Innovative and ambitious

The Vision and Strategy (SmallU, 2019e) defines the value of ambitious as:

Ambitious in what we seek to deliver for our students, staff and partners and in how we do that, recognising that there are no limits to learning and knowledge. This implies an innovative, enterprising and flexible approach; an eagerness to explore new ideas.

The survey used two statements related to the SmallU value of ambitious. Firstly, the statement 'my manager encourages striving for excellence, without excessive perfectionism'. Secondly, 'my manager encourages me to take a flexible approach in my work'. The latter was examined along with the value of accessible (shown in table 4.5), because it also scored below 53% being experienced consistently.

One executive and one professional services middle-manager raised the issue of flexible working. Both expressed the view that flexible working had not reached academia, despite being prevalent in the private sector, and valued by staff. The lower levels of communication perceived in faculty B related to lower levels of scores for academic-managers encouraging a flexible approach to work. Since the research was undertaken, the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated flexible working which SmallU has embraced. It would be useful for future research to explore whether perceptions of management flexibility (as well as the other concepts included in this research) have changed as a result.

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The final section of this chapter examines the findings regarding factors which facilitate or impede the practice of CHM.

#### **4.5 Factors facilitating or impeding the practice of humanistic-management**

As can be seen from figure 4.5, the themes from the interviews led to relationships between the CHM being identified. The relationship is further illuminated in a model of humanistic-management in figures 5.1 and 5.2 in chapter 5.

Figure 4.5 includes three sections. The sections show factors which either facilitate, impede or paradoxically both facilitate and impede the practice of CHM. The three sections relate to stages of relationship development: firstly, relationship building, secondly relationship sustaining and thirdly, psychologically mature relationships where inter-dependence (which if perceived to a sufficient degree by managed-academics) will result in a high performing organisation that delivers desired outcomes when measured against its own espoused values. The factors facilitating and impeding humanistic-management are discussed following figure 4.5.

**Factors facilitating (F) or impeding (I) the practice of CHM (Relationship building).**

Interview themes Facilitating or impeding factors (F, I or F & I)	Wellbeing sub-concepts	University Values sub-concepts	Dignity sub-concepts
<p><i>(F &amp; I) Paradox of leading and managing (relational tensions).</i></p> <p><i>(F &amp; I) Policy paradox (enabling and constraining trust and open communication).</i></p> <p><i>(F) Ethical-reflection enabled by: psychological maturity (self-awareness, emotional intelligence, peer support).</i></p> <p><i>(F) Psychological safety through permission.</i></p> <p><i>(F) Humanistic communication.</i></p>	<p><u>Positive relationships.</u></p> <p>Positive working relationships with manager.</p> <p>Positive working relationships with colleagues.</p>	<p><u>Supportive.</u></p> <p>Manager is supportive and takes action to help when there is a problem.</p>	<p>Experience being physically safe at work.</p> <p>Experience feeling psychologically safe to be and to express myself at work.</p> <p>I am given the benefit of the doubt when things don't go as well as hoped.</p>
<p><i>(I) Hidden work of management (limits to compassion organizing, managers wellbeing, sacrifice of leadership).</i></p> <p><i>(I) Difficulty of time to listen (including to own needs) Emotional labour.</i></p> <p><i>(I) Micro-violations of dignity when unable to fulfil own values.</i></p> <p><i>(F) Wanting people to be able to enjoy their work.</i></p>	<p><u>Positive Emotions.</u></p> <p>Positive feelings at work. (Impact for managers and managed academics).</p>	<p><u>Supportive.</u></p> <p>Manager listens to me to reach a shared understanding.</p>	<p>Recognition through validation for the contribution made.</p> <p>Perspective is taken into consideration.</p> <p>Acknowledgement through full attention.</p> <p>Individual identity respected. Treated fairly without discrimination.</p>

**Factors facilitating (F) or impeding (I) the practice of CHM (relationship sustaining).**

<b>Interview themes Facilitating or impeding factors (F, I or F &amp; I)</b>	<b>Wellbeing sub-concepts</b>	<b>University Values sub-concepts</b>	<b>Dignity sub-concepts</b>
<p><b><u>All management roles:</u></b></p> <p><i>(F) Accessible and inclusive HE.</i></p> <p><i>(F) Social justice and inclusion as shared values.</i></p> <p><i>(F) Creating the conditions (working through values &amp; this being perceived by managed-academics). Sustainability &amp; stewardship.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Meaning</u></b></p> <p>My work has meaning for me. (Shared meaning based in common values and aims). (Challenges of achieving this, especially perceptions about it).</p>	<p><b><u>Accessible.</u></b></p> <p>Manager makes time to meet with me when needed.</p>	<p>Justice is applied so that the right thing is done when difficult decisions have to be taken.</p>
<p><b><u>Academic-middle-managers:</u></b></p> <p><i>(F) Giving a voice to managed-academics.</i></p> <p><i>(F &amp; I) Fair and equitable workload &amp; making time for everyone.</i></p>		<p>Manager is inclusive of me as part of the wider team.</p> <p>Manager is fair, working without bias or favouritism.</p>	<p>There is a sense of inclusion and belonging in my team.</p>

Factors facilitating (F) or impeding (I) the practice of CHM (mutually inter-dependant relationships).			
Interview themes Facilitating or impeding factors (F, I or F & I)	Wellbeing sub-concepts	University Values sub-concepts	Dignity sub-concepts
	<b><u>Engagement.</u></b>	<b><u>Innovative &amp; ambitious</u></b>	
<i>(F &amp; I) Paradox of providing a balance of support and autonomy. (Including balancing rights with responsibilities).</i>	Engaged and motivated by work. (Due to shared sense of purpose, common values).	Manager encourages innovative new ideas.	I am accountable for the work I do (mutual).
<i>(F &amp; I) Working hard because of putting others needs first (students and staff).</i>			
	<b><u>Accomplishment or achievement.</u></b>		
<i>(F &amp; I) Coping with change management and being in the middle.</i>	Sense of accomplishment and achievement from work.	Manager encourages enterprising new ideas.	
<i>(I) Frustration with perceived inflexibility in others enactment of roles (policy and procedure). Non-participatory governance.</i>	(Negative impact and poor perception of communication between different areas & perception of 'command and control').	Manager encourages striving for excellence without excessive perfectionism.	I am independent and empowered to work in ways that suit me best.
		Manager encourages a flexible approach to work.	

Figure 4.5. Factors facilitating or impeding the practice of humanistic-management.

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#### **4.5.1 Facilitating factors: humanistic communication**

Comments by academic-managers during interviews indicated the importance they placed on developing 'positive relationships' (Seligman, 2011) and the vital role humanistic communication has in creating the conditions for good relationships and shared 'meaning'. This might indicate that all managers aimed to work in the way that was perceived by managed-academics in faculty A, but was not perceived by managed-academics in faculty B.

'Corridor conversations' are informal conversations which appeared to be hidden routes of more open communication or 'critical corridor talk' (Jameson, 2018). These are outside, but still influenced by the formal hierarchy. In some cases it was clear that female managers utilised this to circumvent the structural constraints that they found frustrated open communication, when they felt psychologically safe to do so because they trusted the person they were speaking to. This could be considered level 3 humanistic communication that is seen as safe outside the formal structures. A humanistic manager will want to communicate in this way, supported by, rather than impeded by policies and procedures that serve people, rather than people serving processes. It can also be a way of managers resisting policies they do not agree with (Jameson, 2018). Academic-managers in faculty A spoke of this type of communication, as well as being prepared to voice their disagreement with policies to their own manager and other departments. This may explain why level 3 communication was the most reported level by survey respondents in faculty A. This led to a need to understand managers' perceptions about structural barriers to open communication such as policies.

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This will be explored as an impeding factor following the section on ethical-reflection below.

#### **4.5.2 Facilitating factors: ethical-reflection**

Academic-managers in faculty A gave examples of ethical-reflection when they either gave examples of their own reflections, or appeared to me to be engaging in ethical-reflection during the interviews. This relates to the HMT focus on the need for managers to engage in ethical-reflection (Melé, 2003; Spitzeck et al, 2009; Spitzeck 2011) and develop psychological maturity in order to be able to engage in management practices that are genuinely related to CHM. Furthermore, it is evidence of testing action against personal values to avoid the erosion of these. Academic-managers in faculty B also engaged in reflection about their practice. They discussed how they compartmentalised work, including not sending or replying to e-mail outside of the working day. An example of an ethical-reflection technique was demonstrated by Megan (academic middle-manager faculty A):

So if I'm in front of the coroner and the coroner is asking me, what did you do in that situation? Again, I have to act with integrity. Actually, if I don't 100% adhere to a policy I'll put my neck on the line for that because if I'm standing before the coroner I'd rather answer that, if, it sounds a little bit arrogant if I don't feel the policy is right. But again I suppose it's that values thing about your integrity, trumping sometimes what some of the policies and procedures ... not being some kind of maverick.

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This is also an example of the importance of reflecting on values in deciding action. Academic-managers desire to maintain their integrity through employing ethical-reflection provides a moral compass for deciding how to act (or not act). Academic-managers described being prepared to challenge policy that they believed was wrong for people, rather than simply managerially enacting it. Management enacted in this way can be seen to relate to CHM since it is based in values and prioritising people.

However, the results of the survey of managed-academics regarding levels of communication showed that whilst academic-managers aim to practice in ways that are relational, this is not always perceived as found in faculty B. This may indicate a need for academic-managers to become more aware of how they are perceived and reflect on the impact they have on others. This could contribute to better relationships which have a positive impact on dignity, wellbeing and perceptions of espoused values being enacted

In terms of their own decision making process regarding enacting policy and procedures some female academic-managers gave clear examples of how they did this. Charlotte (academic middle-manager faculty A) explained how she checked her decisions against an imaginary line for appropriateness using peer support:

It makes you ask some hard questions, doesn't it? That's where people, where colleagues come in. So, I think I'm lucky in having [names removed] as colleagues, because I do, if I'm not sure and I think the line might be behind me, I can have an honest conversation and they would



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tell me, no actually its way behind you, and that's fine because I would do the same for both of them. So it's that you can have that honest conversation, I do think that's important.

Such investment in ethical-reflection may enable higher levels of communication. It may contribute to a sense of psychological safety for the manager and confidence in their right to manage (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001; Ruby, 2018) and communicate information that may be difficult for the person receiving it to accept. When a manager is confident that they are enacting their values and understands the perspective of other, they may feel ready to accept challenges. Explaining their decisions whilst showing they understand the impact on managed-academics may impact positively on perceptions about levels of humanistic communication.

Where survey participants chose level 3 communication, they also reported high scores for having a positive relationship with their academic-manager, as well as for the other sub-concepts of dignity and wellbeing. A survey participant (managed-academic faculty A) who had selected experiencing level 3 communication explained:

My current manager is the epitome of what good leadership should be. She is supportive, considerate, and clear in her instructions. I know what is expected of me and she is also accountable for her actions. There is trust and a certainty in her leadership, although she is not domineering or over-fastidious.

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This managed-academic is clear that their manager provides directive instructions, but that this is perceived as helpful and constructive rather than as power being exerted. As such, hierarchy is understood and accepted in the context of a relationship that is also supportive.

#### **4.5.3 Impeding factors: structural barriers to trust and open communication**

Whilst no values were expressed that suggested desire to command and control, structural considerations were discussed. It is unsurprising to find that change management was commonly mentioned. Change in HE is often seen to relate to managerialism both external to and within HE organisations. Change is hierarchically managed.

HMT does not deny the presence of hierarchy and sees it as appropriate, so long as human rather than solely economic needs are the primary driver of management practice (Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Hicks, 2018).

Where structure, hierarchy, sustainability and policies and procedures were mentioned in interviews it was in the context of ensuring the survival of the university. This was so that SmallU could continue to deliver its mission of providing accessible HE to those who may not otherwise benefit from it. This shared sense of 'meaning' and purpose of working at SmallU relates to the wellbeing concept of 'meaning' (Seligman, 2011) and is an important factor in satisfaction and 'engagement' at work. Academic and professional-services middle-managers understood that resources were necessarily constrained due to being dependent on external sources of funding (Pfeffer & Salancik,

1978, 2003). However, this nevertheless caused tensions related to control (or lack of control) over how resources are used.

Table 4.6 shows the NVivo™ nodes regarding managers' views of structural considerations. Four were theoretical codes (structure, hierarchy, sustainability and managerial language) and three inductive codes (policies and procedures as limiting effectiveness, policy and procedures value of, and size).

Interviews results:		Managers' perceptions of the relevance of structural considerations in their personal approach to leadership.
Number of transcripts	Structural consideration	
20	Change Management	
14	Policies and procedures as limiting effectiveness	
13	Hierarchy	
13	Policies and procedures (value of)	
10	Sustainability	
6	Size	

*Table 4.6. Theoretical and inductive codes relating to structure from interviews with managers at all levels and roles.*

#### **4.5.4 Impeding factors: governance and communication related barriers**

As shown in figure 4.5 academic-managers experienced barriers to them being as effective in their role as they would like to be. These were attributed to policies and procedures perceived as limiting their autonomy and discretion. Missing communication about restructures that were not within their area of responsibility was viewed as limiting open communication between departments. The impact of restructures on those 'left' working at the

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university and lacking formal support mechanisms to deal with distress were noted. Policies and procedures relating to staff conduct were seen as ineffective in supporting managers to deal with poor professional conduct. All interviewees were keen to stress that this was not the fault of individuals, who they felt were trying hard and had particular responsibilities in their own roles. Nevertheless it was clear that there was sense of having to operate within structures that did not suit them well and they viewed their discretion as limited in relation to them. The challenge of communication between different departments is highlighted by the staff engagement survey results (SmallU, 2018b). Notably this area is relatively low scoring (29% in 2016 and 42% in 2018).

Humanistic communication is important to dignity and wellbeing at work and whilst having improved, communication between areas / departments staff satisfaction scores remain relatively low in comparison to other measures of staff satisfaction (SmallU, 2018b). This may partly be due to a desire to maintain cordial and respectful relationships with people from different areas and that not all may have developed a sense of psychological safety (Kahn 1990; Radecki et al, 2018) sufficient to be able to voice their values (Gentile, 2010). Challenger-safety, defined as being granted sufficient autonomy to voice disagreement so that innovation can occur (Clark, 2020) is required to enable such open dialogue and work towards level two and three communication and psychologically mature inter-dependence. For this to happen, managers at all levels and roles need to be aware of how their own

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power and communication can facilitate or impede this and work to ensure that permission to challenge is perceived (Reitz & Higgins, 2019).

Policies regarding poor conduct were seen to provide a poor balance between the rights and responsibilities of team members. Academic middle-managers perceived a lack of ability to influence the application of such policies or apply their own discretion in interpreting them. This may be an unintended consequence relating to communication between different departments (academic and professional-services) regarding their perceived roles and responsibilities. This may lead to policy being perceived to be owned by professional-services departments and communication regarding this being experienced as command and control (level 1 managerial communication).

Jack (academic middle-manager faculty B) gave an example of his experiencing powerlessness to act on a serious conduct issue in his own department:

There's been student complaints that I would have deemed to have been gross professional misconduct. The member of staff gets a slap on the wrist and you know, maybe a development plan to help them with their performance. But we lost two really good members of staff and they left through pure frustration that other staff members were just getting away with things that they didn't think were appropriate and it wasn't right for the students. Their question to me was, well what does somebody have to do here to get fired?

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Jack's frustration was evident in how he spoke. His comment illustrates the paradox of managers need to balance autonomy and support. Whilst policies and procedures were seen as necessary to ensure fair treatment, they were often conversely seen as disempowering of managers. They felt disempowered by the advice (received as instruction) from professional-services departments. This was despite only one academic middle-manager being able to recall a time when they had acted against their personal values. All stated that they felt able to challenge decisions they did not agree with directly to their own managers. However, when the person with less perceived power (the managed-academic) was engaged in conduct perceived to be unprofessional, the protection afforded them by policy, procedure and professional-services department (in this case HR) was viewed as inappropriately constraining action. Jack's frustration is one example of whilst valuing and understanding the benefits of policy, academic-middle managers also felt that there were frequent incidences where these had undesirable consequences. These consequences led to stress for themselves and a perceived lack of fairness regarding the complex and sometimes competing needs of those they managed.

Academic middle-managers appeared to consider their relationships with managed-academics on both the individual and team level. In complex circumstances the need for confidentiality may justifiably preclude sharing of information, however Roger's (1978) in discussing university management suggested that when unable to take all views into consideration managers should be clear that is the case and explain why. Managing relationships in

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this way includes managing relational dynamics. This requires skilled communication, emotional intelligence and ethical-reflection to develop the psychological maturity (Rogers, 1964) about what to communicate, when and how. This should include how to understand one's impact on the dignity, psychological safety and therefore ability of others to voice values. Such ethical-reflection (checked against the experiences of others) may provide evidence of a need to challenge policy, procedure and practices that produce unintended negative outcomes. A humanistic manager's role includes the need to balance individual autonomy with developing team accountability. Development of a relationally psychologically mature team leads to inter-dependence (Pink, 2018) and enables the team to constructively hold each other to account over behaviour. The manager's ethical role in such a team is to ensure that everyone receives the greatest possible freedom, so long as it is compatible with the rights of others (Declaration of Humanists International, 2002).

#### **4.5.5 Impeding factors: sustainability related barriers**

Financial sustainability was one of the key concerns voiced by executive-managers and is of wide concern in HE. All interviewees understood and accepted the need for financial constraints, which they saw as being due to limited income into the university. However, for academic middle-managers processes such as vacancy control, lack of control of their own budget and that electronic systems and documents that replaced (or impeded) person-to-person communication were experienced as frustrating and inflexible. This led to relational tensions. Academic middle-managers explained the effect on

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their own wellbeing and that of their teams as causing stress. Whilst they tried to understand the perspectives of others, there was a sense of feeling the victim of a process which was experienced as rigid and disconnected from the effects on people.

Academic middle-managers also identified a rather protectionist focus of policy and procedure by departments perceived to be the owners of policy. This included a perceived focus of policies and procedures being about protecting from complaints, rather than promoting wellbeing. Document analysis showed that policies and procedures do not usually allude to the values in the university vision and strategy. Additionally, they did not specify positive behaviours that could be aligned with wellbeing or dignity concepts. This is representative of a difference between the externally published mission and the internal organisational policy artefacts which should support its implementation. It was felt that there was scope for specific policies that were aimed at promoting wellbeing, rather than solely dealing with poor conduct.

It was also pointed out that there is a greater focus on student rather than staff wellbeing. This differs from the stated aims of the vision and strategy, which include staff wellbeing. However, it was clear that all managers experienced 'meaning' in working to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for students and staff and were prepared to make significant sacrifices to achieve this. Managers (especially female) talked about trying to give time to listen to all team members, and working extra hours to achieve this. This forms part of the hidden work of management, relational working



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and serving others. Whilst this may to some degree seem laudable, it is unsustainable and could be detrimental to managers' health and wellbeing and become a barrier to them being able to work in line with CHM (Pirson, 2018a). Ian (senior-manager) explained:

When you're tired with it. I think it's not a great combination because you tend to be a little bit more tense and uptight about things. You tend to try and I think sometimes you just try and double check your decisions. But you're not even in a good place to do that double checking. I think ultimately it's about being able to take a step back or trying to take a step aside.

The importance of managers having the time, emotional energy and commitment to high level humanistic communication skills and to implement policies and procedures with trust and open communication cannot be overstated. Without these there can be a negative impact on the experience of managed-academics as explained by a research survey respondent who chose level 2 communication commenting:

My manager is a genuinely good, honest and inclusive person. I have had to mark my manager down simply because at times they have to toe the party line and impose procedures upon us which are outside their remit to alter or change. There is also a touch of my manager having to impose certain things in an effort for them to achieve their own goals of progressing up the ladder and to do so they must be seen supporting initiatives that they do not believe in.

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The importance of level 3 communication was emphasised by senior and academic middle-managers when they talked about the strong and supportive relationships they had with their own managers. In giving examples of when they had been able to act according to their own values they expressed that in the context of these relationships they could challenge ideas and decisions respectfully and be listened to. As a result of this they felt able to understand and justify to themselves and others why these decisions were taken. They could then carry these decisions forward, even when they may not have been decisions they would have taken themselves. Sometimes, with the benefit of additional information, they indicated that they would have made the same decision in light of this. This was not the case for middle-managers in relation to policies and procedures which they felt belonged to, and were enforced by people from other departments.

Professional-services middle-managers were aware that they were sometimes seen as the 'bad guys', enforcing policies and procedures. This may support the idea that departments seen as policy-owners are experienced by academic-managers (and managed-academics) as working with 'command and control' managerialism, even when those responsible for enacting such policy do not see themselves or their values in that way. This relates to basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein, 2017) about who should be responsible for which aspects of work and decision making. Luke explained such basic assumptions using a powerful metaphor:

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I think there had been a view of [department redacted for confidentiality] as almost the police force of the university and I don't think we can be that anymore. We are not the police force, it has to be more, I can flag risks, but if you are telling me this needs to be done obviously we will do it and we as a team we are not the ones to stop you from doing anything. A good analogy I use actually is I often think of the academic team as the doctors, they are the ones doing the doing and we are the nurse mopping up after ... we tidy up afterwards, make sure the drip is plugged in etc. but we are not the reason why students come to university, they come to university for the benefit of the academics [sic], they want knowledge that academics have. We're just here to make sure they stay alive during that process.

The staff survey (SmallU, 2018b) returned a low score for the effectiveness of communication between departments at 29% in 2016 and 42% in 2018 in comparison to communication in their own area / department, which scored 65% in 2016 and 76% in 2018 (SmallU 2018b, 2019d). This could relate to a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of others and a perception of professional-services departments implementing policies in managerial, rather than relational ways. As can be seen from Luke's comment, there is a desire to change and work in more collegial and supportive ways in his area of responsibility. However, it does rather imply (as was the case for other professional-services middle-managers) a perception that academics cannot be trusted with certain things. A mismatch appears to exist between a stated need to change and believing this will have a

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successful outcome. These related to administrative processes. Abi (middle-manager, professional-services) suggested that this was because managed-academics had other things to focus on in their own roles.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings from the interviews with managers at all levels and role as well as the survey of managed-academic staff. Findings for the document analysis provided context regarding expectations of manager's practice and triangulation with the findings from the interviews and survey.

The central importance of humanistic levels of communication has been made clear. Exploration of where lower perceptions of CHM existed confirms the findings by showing that lower levels of communication relate to lower experiences of dignity, wellbeing and perceptions of university values being enacted by managers. The lower the level of communication perceived, the worse the experiences were scored. This does not negate the positive findings regarding the aims and intentions of managers, and that these were experienced to high levels by managed-academics in faculty A.

Managers' perceptions of their underlying values and aims for practice have been presented along with barriers academic middle-managers experienced that may explain the lower levels of communication being offered than they themselves aimed to achieve. The findings have been placed in the context of the extant literature. They show that in faculty A, humanistic practice was both aimed at by academic-managers and perceived by managed-academics. This

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differs from the literature on management in HE and contributes to new knowledge about management practice in HE. Factors which were found to facilitate humanistic-management (humanistic communication and ethical-reflection) and impede it (structural barriers to trust and open communication, governance and communication related barriers and sustainability related barriers) were found. The following chapter discusses the findings in the light of the research questions and offers a model of humanistic-management based on what has been found at SmallU.

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## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter critically discusses the findings of the research and demonstrates the thesis' contribution to knowledge. The findings resulted from interviews to gain managers' own perceptions, a survey to understand how managers' practice was perceived by managed-academics and document analysis for understanding the governance context and triangulation.

Literature about HMT and managers' values in higher-education is sparse. It largely ignores the values of managers by focusing on the ills of NPM. This has led to poor understanding regarding the implications of academic-managers' values and how these impact on university governance. This chapter explains why values matter in academic-management, discusses the importance of surfacing underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager' (related to policy-ownership and implementation) and highlights how the hidden work and emotional labour of middle-management impacts on the dignity and wellbeing of academic middle-managers and managed-academics within SmallU.

### **5.2 Contribution to knowledge**

I propose a model of humanistic-management which advances theory regarding management in HE. The model has potential utility to aid reflection and surface underlying assumptions held by academic-managers and policy-owners. This should enable improved communication between policy-owners (professional-services departments and executive-managers) and academic

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middle-managers so that governance is a collaborative process owned by all. Humanistic-management enables development towards becoming a more relationally inter-dependent and psychologically mature organisation. This would contribute to improved dignity and wellbeing of managed-academics and academic-managers. Additionally, it would provide the conditions for continued innovation and organisational success through improved alignment of espoused values with operational practices.

### **5.3 Structure of discussion**

Before presenting the model at the end of this chapter I first discuss the three key themes which led to the development of the model. The themes are (i) why values matter in academic-management, (ii) underlying assumptions about policy 'ownership' and non-participatory policy implementation and (iii) hidden-work and emotional labour. Each section starts with a summary of findings. Then emergent theory and implications for practice are discussed in terms of factors facilitating or impeding the practice of humanistic-management.

### **5.4 Why values matter in academic-management**

#### **5.4.1 Summary of findings**

Values matter in academic management because they underpin and drive behaviours. They relate to our deepest sense of who we are (Gentile, 2010). Interviews with managers at all levels and roles at SmallU indicated pro-social values, which were congruent with the espoused university values. This was

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the case whatever the level of manager, from executive to middle-manager, and also for academic-managers or professional-services managers.

Literature considering NPM in HE assumes that managers put values aside, or at best states that they may not be driven by underlying neoliberal ideologies (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al, 2007) whilst foregrounding the negative effects of managerialism as perceived by managed-academics. This is important from the perspective of those who are managed and therefore seen to have less power, but it also reduces the agency of managers. Moreover, it misses the opportunity to explore the actual values of academic-managers and what may impact on their ability to demonstrate these. Whilst researchers have highlighted the challenges faced by managed-academics in their roles including a lack of training (Preston & Price 2012; Floyd, 2016; Ruby, 2018) there has been a paucity of research into managers' values and how these impact on their management practice in HE.

The findings of this study show that managers' values are pro-social and that their underlying assumptions (Schein & Schein, 2017) about 'how to be a manager' include opinions about the skills and attributes required to be effective in their roles. For middle-managers these included the importance of communication, supporting their team and experiencing frustrations of their autonomy including lacking permission for use of discretion related to governance policies and procedures. Ethical-reflection on motivations and personal values prevents transgressions into behaviours that do not fit with our sense of who we wish to be (Gentile, 2010; Christensen et al, 2012).



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However, managers may lack capacity to engage in such reflection. Capacity may be affected by ill health, workload, undeveloped understanding of the implications of values and underlying assumptions for practice, and lacking preparation for the psychological maturity and emotional intelligence required in management roles. Training may improve managers' ability to manage in humanistic ways. Developing the ability to engage in ethical-reflection about personal values and underlying assumptions could improve awareness of the impact these may have on their own behaviour, as well as how their position as 'manager' may affect how they are perceived by others. Some managers in this study demonstrated the ability to engage in ethical-reflection, including utilising peer support to do so. This appears to be a facilitative factor in managers engaging in higher levels of humanistic communication, with concomitant positive effects on the dignity and wellbeing of managed-academics.

Humanistic communication (including Schein & Schein's 2018 'trust and open communication') related to positive experiences of dignity and wellbeing at work for managed-academics in relationship with their academic middle-managers. All concepts of CHM were more positively rated by managed-academics in faculty A when they experienced humanistic communication, than faculty B, where low levels of communication were perceived. This difference in communication was associated with reduced dignity and wellbeing being reported by managed academics in faculty B (and one in faculty A). This was despite managers holding similar pro-social values and

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views of 'how to be a manager' in both faculties. Nevertheless, it could negatively impact organisational performance if not addressed.

Evidence from the staff survey in 2016 and 2018 (SmallU, 2018b, 2019d) also shows a difference in staff satisfaction between the faculties. This triangulation supports the trustworthiness of the survey research instrument. The results of the staff engagement survey over the last four years have improved. However, for both faculties (and indeed the wider university) there continues to be a consistently low score for 'communications between different areas/departments are effective' (29% of respondents agrees in 2016 rising to 42% in 2018). This was notably worse than 'communications are good *within* my area/department. In 2016, 65% of respondents agreed rising to 76% in 2018. This is explored further in section 5.5 regarding underlying assumptions, policy 'ownership' and non-participatory policy implementation. Prior to this the following two sections consider emergent theory and implications for practice regarding why values matter in academic-management.

#### **5.4.2 Emergent theory**

Managers' aims for practice are based in their values and personal practice based theories of 'how to be a manager'. These values closely related to CHM both in terms of how managers saw themselves and how they were perceived as enacting these concepts by managed-academics in faculty A. These values led executive-managers, senior managers, middle-managers in faculty A and B and professional-services middle-managers to work in HE in

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the first place, as suggested by Floyd (2016). Their past experiences of managing and being managed developed their underlying assumptions of 'how to be a manager'.

Middle-managers indicated empathy and compassion for those they managed. Experiencing powerlessness (and wanting to stand up for the teams they managed) reinforced a sense of 'rightness' of their position when frustrations regarding policy implementation were experienced. Academic middle-managers recognised that policy was necessary, but they perceived that policy was 'owned' by professional-services departments and that it limited their enactment of their own values, autonomy and underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager'. This led to experiencing stress resulting from threat to psychological safety. This was due to lack of policy-owner understanding of their perspective (underlying assumptions) of 'how to be a manager' and was an impeding factor for their practice of humanistic-management. Delayed decisions due to required processes had negative consequence for academic-managers and managed-academics. Delays resulted in significant additional emotional labour, on one hand arguing, negotiating and persuading for needs to be met, and on the other supporting, reassuring and convincing managed-academics about decisions whilst needing to appear professional and civil to all parties. This tension was acknowledged by professional-services middle-managers who were aware that their departments were sometimes seen as 'the bad guys'.

Academic middle-managers wanted to be able to communicate openly with their teams but experienced ownership of policy by other departments as

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preventative of them doing so. In some cases in faculty A, in addition to challenging, negotiating and persuading policy-owners (employing ethical-reflection about what was ‘the appropriate thing to do’) academic middle-managers were prepared to act outside of perceived policy confines if they felt strongly enough. They found ‘workarounds’, including informal conversations when they allowed themselves to be vulnerable (Brown, 2018) and trusted managed-academics not to use this against them. The differing results in faculty B may partly be explained in that academic-managers in faculty B described using strategies such as compartmentalising work and personal life separately and not responding to or sending e-mails out of working hours. This may have resulted in managed-academics’ perception of them communicating in less open and trusting ways, despite their values being similar to those of academic-managers in faculty A.

#### **5.4.3 Implications for practice**

Even though all managers interviewed were found to hold pro-social values, humanistic communication was not perceived in faculty B. This shows that whilst pro-social values are a necessary condition for humanistic-management (Spitzek, 2011) they are not sufficient to ensure that it is practiced by academic-managers or perceived by managed-academics. In order for this to happen structural and agential conditions need to be met. The low scores in the staff engagement survey may indicate that it is also not experienced *between* departments, since policy is experienced as owned, rather than shared. However, this was not probed in interviews so causality cannot be determined. Practices, (such as policy implementation) that are

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based in unexplored underlying assumptions can lead to unintended factors impeding the enactment of organisational values (Schein, 2004). The dignity and wellbeing of managers (who are also staff) could be negatively impacted if a culture in which voicing their values and underlying assumptions about how to enact them is not developed and maintained. Better understanding should be gained about the reasons for the perception of poor communication between departments, since better communication about this may lead to more participatory policy implementation and improved dignity and wellbeing. Non-participatory policy implementation is discussed in the next section.

## **5.5 Underlying assumptions about policy ‘ownership’ and non-participatory policy implementation**

### **5.5.1 Summary of findings**

The findings of this study show that policy artefacts (Schein & Schein, 2017) at SmallU do not usually refer explicitly to the espoused values of the university. Espoused values are detailed in the vision and strategy (SmallU, 2019e) which was developed in consultation with managed-academics and academic-managers as well as professional-services colleagues. The vision and strategy states that staff will be listened to in shaping the university community. However, to date this has not extended to the development or review of policies and procedures.

The tension created by policy-ownership perceived by academic middle-managers was not perceived by executive-managers. Perhaps their relative separation from the day-to-day challenges of middle-management (Heffernan

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& Bosetti, 2020) despite their understanding of this from their own past roles has led them to believe that consultation and agreement over organisational values is sufficient to underpin the development of policies. They did identify similar skills and attributes required for effective middle-management as middle-managers themselves identified. Academic middle-managers experienced significant barriers to being as effective as they would like in their roles related to perceptions of lack of autonomy in regards to their discretion over policy implementation.

Academic middle-managers' perceived policy as 'command and control' and 'computer says no' communication. Systems were seen as masters rather than existing to provide a service. Schein (2004) identifies that it is common for different underlying assumptions to exist in different operational areas and teams, and that being aware of this can aid leaders in identifying problems which may have negative effects on organisational culture. It may be that an underlying assumption for academic middle-managers is that person-to-person communication, rather than the use of 'form filling' is the most effective and desirable way to work. The ability to discuss directly with decision makers about time-sensitive issues when dealing with competing demands, or even better, to have the autonomy to make decisions themselves may be significant to them. The implementation of such systems (and associated lack of budgetary control) may contribute to a sense of reduced autonomy for middle-managers and a sense that they and their teams serve the system, rather than vice versa. Human needs rather than economic needs should be primary in humanistic-management. Such perceptions about policy-as-master

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are a factor limiting the practice of humanistic-management. This may be explained by the perception of these being 'owned' by professional-services departments, resulting from a lack of consultation regarding their development as well as lack of focus on values and CHM in policy documents.

### **5.5.2 Emergent theory**

Universities (like all forms of social structure) require governance. There is no universally agreed definition of governance in general or governance HE (Dobbins & Jungblut, 2018). I adopt Shattock's (2006, p1) definition of university governance as "the constitutional forms and processes through which universities govern their affairs". Governance has been related to instrumentality, with a focus on processes and procedures (O'Connor, 2014). It has been stated that HE governance has been altered since 1992, with a move from a self-governed to a regulated system (Shattock & Horvarth, 2019), resulting in organisations attempting to find a balance between institutional autonomy and state control (Henkel, 2005; Kolsaker, 2008).

More widely, governance is understood to comprise of all processes of governing, whether by government, market, community, family, or organisation whether this be through laws, norms, language or power (Bevir, 2012). Governance is developed from processes of interaction and decision-making among actors relating to collective problems. It leads to the creation, reinforcement and reproduction of social norms (Hufty, 2011). Governance aims may be recorded in artefacts such as policies (Schein & Schein, 2017). Important work has considered how policy implementation processes affect

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outcomes (Trowler et al, 2003) and highlighted the impact of hierarchy, the carrying of policy between different levels of management and the importance of collaborative policy development in achieving change (Trowler et al, 2003; Saunders & Sin, 2015). It has been proposed that a relationship management structure may enable a more participatory form of collaborative governance (Vitasek et al, 2011) resulting in “a governance structure with insight, rather than oversight” (Vitasek & Manrodt, 2012, p8). This is in keeping with Pirson & Turnbull’s (2011) call for a more humanistic view of governance seen as stewardship. Involving stakeholders to replace economic ‘command and control’ style policies is suggested to better suit the reality of work. People prefer to work relationally since they desire friendly and cordial relationships (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) due to the drive to bond (Pirson, 2017a, 2017c). It also aids sharing common ‘meaning’ and purpose which are important to wellbeing. This would fit with a humanistic approach to management which relies upon an agreed upon set of rules (Melé, 2016).

Since humanistic communication is associated with managed-academics experiencing dignity, wellbeing and enactment of university values by academic middle-managers, it follows that developing higher levels of communication between policy-owners and academic middle-managers will aid managers also experiencing greater dignity and wellbeing at work. It was clear from interviews that there were significant pressures experienced by managers in regard to their experiences of ‘command and control’ policies, despite a clear desire not to blame individuals. This echoes literature regarding managers being caught in the middle between executive-



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management and managed-academics 'below' (Saunders & Sin, 2015) and blaming systems rather than their immediate managers (Hoecht, 2006). The findings of my research have highlighted additional factors impeding managers' dignity and wellbeing and resulting impediments to practicing humanistic-management. Missing permission from policy-owners for inclusion in policy design and review (to provide opportunities for voicing values and perspective), lack of understanding of underlying assumptions and hidden emotional labour all have potential to negatively impact on policy enactment. Enabling departments to gain better understanding of the underlying assumptions of each and developing mutual accountability by developing understanding deeper than shared values (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein, 2017) would enable more humanistic-management practice. A greater focus on the dignity and wellbeing of all who make up the employed university community should ensue.

Notwithstanding the common *values* found for managers at all levels from both academic and professional-services roles, developing better understanding of basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004, Schein & Schein, 2017) between academic and professional-services departments has potential to contribute to creating the conditions for greater psychological safety, leading to improved perceptions of communication between departments and enhanced experiences of dignity and wellbeing. If this is not done, there is the possibility that people will tolerate micro-violations of dignity and lower wellbeing, attributing it to a worthwhile sacrifice for the shared common purpose. However, such sacrifice is unsustainable for managers and

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managed-academics due the hidden emotional labour and stress involved. The psychological tension of hidden emotional labour and perceived reduced autonomy could have negative consequences for trust and relationships over time if all perspectives are not included and positive change is not experienced. Providing opportunities for academic middle-managers to voice a personal perspective and perceiving this to have effected change could improve the dignity of academic middle-managers through recognition and validation of their perspectives.

### **5.5.3 Implications for practice**

The findings of this research indicate that academic middle-managers' implementation of policy is informed by their understanding of their personal values and underlying assumptions of 'how to be a manager'. This contrasts with literature which supposes that managers' practice is managerial (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Winter, 2009) or that managed-academics tolerate managerialism when they can carve out niches to exercise autonomy (Kolsaker, 2008). Such literature may not necessarily imply that managers lack values or agency, but focusing on managerialism may contribute to a narrative of management as bad (Dierksmeier, 2016; Freeman, 2018). Instead, my research indicates that relationships are genuine, managers care about and seek to support their teams and that this is recognised by managed-academics when humanistic communication is experienced. Furthermore, managers seek to promote dignity through respecting autonomy. Additionally, when their disagreement with actions expected by policy-owners is sufficient to cause stress to them and those they manage

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they find workarounds to make their implementation more palatable to themselves and those they manage. Stress may have consequences including diminished psychological and emotional capacity, which in turn could result in reduced capacity for ethical-reflection.

To enable policy enactment that is in line with both espoused organisational values and the underlying assumptions of middle-managers about how to 'be a manager' permission and support is required from executive-management to question assumptions and share experiences of such policy enactment.

This should invite trusting and open communication about underlying assumptions of all who make up the university community, in different roles and from all departments to surface these issues in a psychologically safe way. The findings of my research have shown that all managers interviewed share common 'meaning' and pro-social values, but their differing underlying assumptions about how to enact these can have unintended consequences.

Development of psychologically mature, inter-dependent relationships between academic-managers and managed-academics, as well as between policy-owners and academic-managers and facilitating ethical-reflection should be prioritised in universities that seek to demonstrate their pro-social aims more explicitly. This should include training about how to communicate challenge constructively whilst being respectful of dignity through understanding CHM. Appropriate levels of communication lead to developing trusting relationships in which psychological safety can lead to better understanding of perceived power and powerlessness. This would also be in

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keeping with the commitment in the vision and strategy (SmallU, 2019e) to listen to all staff about how the university community is shaped.

If such work is not undertaken, missing understanding of underlying assumptions could lead to tensions. As Hicks (2018) states, conflict is unavoidable in the work context. However, creating the conditions for the surfacing of disagreements prevents the development of a culture toxic to dignity and wellbeing and contributes to one that is aligned with espoused organisational values. Such cultures are vital in organisations where innovation is desired and where work is complex (Schein & Schein, 2017, 2018; Clark, 2020; Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020). I have been able to apply the learning from my research to request the opportunity to meet to present a business case to decision makers in place of the usual systems based process. This demonstrates that the executive-management at SmallU are open to humanistic communication, offer challenger-safety and include the perceptions of middle-managers. As Hicks (2018) states, dignity is a two way process so middle-managers should feel able to make requests and not wait for permission.

Purposeful inclusion of all middle-managers' voices in policy development has the potential to improve the staff experience and concomitant survey scores regarding communication between different areas. Underlying assumptions about policy-ownership, exercise of discretion and opinions about 'the way to be a manager' of those inhabiting different roles in regards to policy implementation should be sought. This may enable understanding beyond shared espoused values, to include the usually invisible underlying

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assumptions (Schein, 2004). Identifying desired positive behaviours by involving all those who will apply policies (and those who they will be applied to) in contributing to an agreed set of agreed on rules (Melé, 2016) and should reduce the burden on academic-middle managers, experienced as hidden work and emotional labour. These are discussed in the following section.

### **5.6 Hidden work and emotional labour**

Shadow work is work that must be completed, but usually goes unnoticed and may even not be recognised as work by those undertaking it (Illich 1981). As it is unnoticed, or taken for granted, it may be described as hidden. Crucially, “its unpaid performance is the condition for wages to be paid” (Illich, 1981, p38). Middle-managers in my research (especially females) spoke of not having time to get their own work done due to needing to spend time and emotional energy supporting managed-academics (as well as persuading, negotiating with and overcoming obstacles). This can be understood as emotional labour and also as an underlying assumption about what is required to be a middle-manager.

Emotional labour was first defined by Hochschild (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). It refers to regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one’s professional work role. This can either be at surface level (pretended or faked) or deep level when the person tries to change their emotional state to match the desired state. Hochschild’s (1979) work focussed on the need for workers to manage emotional expressions with customers and how the expectation of emotional labour is inculcated within families. Grandey and

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Sayre (2019) are clear that this is relevant to working with colleagues and managers to be able to get work done. The prevalence of emotional labour amongst academic staff in HE has been highlighted (Coin, 2018) and how academic work, especially for women is framed as a labour of love and can become abusive if completed in anticipation of rewards that do not materialise. Beckley et al (2019) compared the effects of the emotional labour required to “get the job done” (p1025) between managed-academics and academic-managers. Despite the study being limited to one university in Nigeria and being rather unclearly written, their findings suggest that whilst managed-academics had high levels of psychological distress related to emotional labour, this was worse for academic-managers.

### **5.6.1 Summary of findings**

#### **5.6.1.1 Unintentional causes of emotional labour**

The pressure on universities to be financially stable is much commented on, and framed as a consequence of NPM and marketization (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Middlehurst, 2004). Externally imposed metrics act as a form of control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2003). Many who work in universities, whether in management or not will therefore be familiar with scarcity of resources and requirements for all spending to be justified. Scarcity can be experienced as psychologically threatening where past experience of scarcity (either of financial or emotional resources) has been part of someone’s developmental experience (Brown, 2018). Managing personal

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experiences related to fear of scarcity, as well as the experiences of others regarding this forms part of the emotional labour of middle-management.

The findings of my research show that the emotional labour of HE managers at all levels is complex and manifold. All understood that financial resources were constrained and related to scarcity due to NPM reforms. However, they framed their understanding not in command and control, or profit over people managerial terms, or indeed as being required to deliver on metrics such as league table positions. They were of course not oblivious to these, but were cautious about them, preferring to frame their understanding of financial stability as sustainability. Executive-managers were clear when describing their criteria for judging the success of the university, that they saw their roles as being to maintain its 'survival'. This was in order that it could continue to exist to deliver HE to those who may not otherwise be able to access its benefits. In contrast to the literature, the executive-management of SmallU can be described as managing for sustainability, which I define as meeting the needs of the organisation without compromising the ability of the people who work within it to meet their own dignity and wellbeing needs. Rather than fitting an economistic model, their descriptions of what was important in their roles fits a stewardship model. This is in keeping with humanistic-management practice where stewardship of the organisation to meet the needs of all stakeholders includes responsible management of finances (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) to secure profit (in the case of universities this is usually expressed as 'surplus' income due to charitable statuses) which enables re-investment to further its stated aims.

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SmallU has had particular financial challenges. Having become a university not much more than a decade ago after universities were first allowed to raise fees to £9000. SmallU (in contrast to the vast majority of universities) set its fees lower, with the aim to remain as affordable as possible to its often disadvantaged students. Rather than effecting increased or maintained enrolments, they fell. This was in part due to the loss of two large government contracts for professional education during re-tendering processes. It is possible that the lower fee was received as a price signal of lower quality (Hemsley-Brown, 2011). Following the resignation of the VC, an interim executive-management team was appointed and a large restructure undertaken. The fees were raised to the maximum, in line with other universities' practice. The present executive-management team replaced the interim team. All have been in place throughout the period of this study. Focus on achieving financial sustainability has resulted in the university reporting an operating surplus for more than two years. Additionally, staff surveys have shown improved satisfaction during their tenure.

This past (and continuing) experience of scarcity seems to have led to an understandable focus on financial sustainability. Middle-managers (and even senior-managers) have limited control over the budgets devolved to them. The policies and procedures academic middle-managers found so frustrating to their autonomy related to having to gain approval for spending and related decisions about staffing. Most often mentioned were HR issues. Frustration is an emotional state which requires self-management in order to retain the desired appearance of being professional, calm and reasonable (Grandey &



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Sayre, 2019). As such it is emotional labour at either surface (faking) or deep (genuinely seeking to change one's own feeling to match the desired state) (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). It appears that academic-middle managers experienced systems based processes as distancing them from decision makers and creating additional emotional labour. The need to negotiate with those perceived as controlling or owning policy whilst supporting managed-academics was experienced as an infringement of autonomy, through limiting their discretion to act despite their being accountable for outcomes. There seems to be a lack of trust in the professional judgement of academic-managers, despite executive-managers valuing middle-managers role in understanding and communicating what happens on the ground. Such constraints on decision making, despite being understandable, have negative effects on managers' perceptions of their autonomy and therefore dignity. They have the responsibility to ensure that their department meets organisational objectives, but lack the means to effect decisions without a significant amount of emotional labour, which they experience as resulting in stress. If unresolved, such unintended micro-violations of dignity may reduce wellbeing and even lead to the unintended consequence of burnout.

The World Health Organization definition of burnout (WHO, 2019) clarifies that it is an occupational phenomenon rather than a medical condition. Burnout is defined as a "syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." It has three key features: these are feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from or cynicism and negativity toward one's job, and reduced

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professional efficacy (WHO, 2019). The link to individuals who do 'people work', including education, has been long established (Maslach et al, 1996, p192). 'Accomplishment' is important to wellbeing at work (Seligman, 2011). The findings of my research include showing that middle-managers are happy to work hard because of the 'meaning' they experience from their roles. Experiencing 'meaning' from work is related to experiencing wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). 'Meaning' for managers at SmallU was found to include developing others, being authentic in their care for their teams and working to ensure fairness. Such 'meaning' suggest that they are inclined to engage deeply in relationships. This was evident in their desire to be supportive, which all managers felt was an important aspect of their roles. The dignity sub-concept of 'perspective taking' (Hicks, 2018) would be negatively affected by excessive stress because stress reduces the ability to engage emotionally and empathically. Chronic stress can lead to depersonalisation which further reduces the ability of managers to use emotional coping strategies (Zapf, 2002) and affects their ability to care about others.

#### **5.6.1.2 Systems as master**

Communication through systems that are seen as master rather than serving those who need to utilise them is representative of 'command and control', rather than humanistic communication. This can lead to negative impact on dignity and wellbeing of middle-managers. Interviews revealed that there were differing assumptions between academic middle-managers and professional-services middle-managers about academic-managers role in policy implementation. Academic middle-managers perceived limited discretion to

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challenge these further than with their own manager. Explicit permission to challenge such systems inter-departmentally must come from policy-owners including executive-managers. Such permission enables higher levels of communication which are beneficial to managers, managed-academics and to the organisation.

Middle-managers need to experience psychological safety in order to feel empowered to overcome their desire to conform in order to maintain their sense of psychological safety. The highest level of psychological safety is challenger-safety, defined as providing respect and the permission to dissent in order that that innovation can be achieved (Clark, 2020). If challenger-safety is not provided, middle-managers experience unintended micro-violations of dignity when their perspectives are not sought about matters they may have important knowledge of. Those more senior in the hierarchy must be aware of how their situational power may unintentionally impede others from speaking up (Reitz & Higgins, 2019) and find ways to provide challenger-safety so that this can happen (Clark, 2020). This applies to all levels of management.

### **5.6.2 Emergent theory**

Whilst there is significant literature addressing emotional labour and academic work in HE, there is a relative paucity of research on emotional labour in HE management. A notable exception (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020) found that emotional labour had a considerable toll, especially on middle-managers, both male and female. This emotional toll was seen as being in part due to the

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requirement to undertake managerial tasks related to external policy maker requirements. They state that managers took on the role despite knowing it would be difficult, and in line with my findings, with a hope that they could help make things better. Heffernan & Bosetti (2020) also found that managers' did not feel that the job advertised was reflective of the true complexity of the role and did not feel prepared. Particular challenges included hearing distressing stories about the lives of those they were responsible for managing and feeling responsible for harm caused to managed-academics by restructures. Managers' values were not explored in their study.

Emotional labour is an important consideration in HMT due its emphasis on the importance of relationships and communication. Relationships are seen to underpin humanistic-management because most people prefer to have cordial and constructive relationships (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) due to the drive to bond (Pirson, 2017a). Emotional labour is evident when middle-managers have to take decisions (even when they agreed with the reasons for them) which they knew would have a negative effect on people's lives (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020) and where they lacked autonomy and discretion about policy implementation. Impeding factors to "compassion organising" (Pirson, 2018a) include managers lacking the psychological and emotional capacity to work constructively in relational ways, through lack of preparation for the role. This can be further impacted by managers experiencing psychological distress (Pirson, 2018a). An important factor in psychological distress is the expectation to feel and behave differently than fits with self-concept, related to personal values (Rogers, 1957).

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Emotional labour in middle-management includes ethical-reflection to enable managing feelings at a deep level (Grandey & Sayre, 2019) due to the desire to authentically inhabit a management role which prioritises care for managed-academics. This led to managers needing to work longer hours to be able to spend enough time 'shared' between team members. Time engaged in emotional labour as hidden work raises the issue of how managers' workload can take into account how much time such work requires. As pointed out by a survey respondent in my research, if managers have too many people in their teams there can be negative consequences such as having insufficient time to focus on dignity through acknowledgment and attending to managed-academics. Having large teams may reduce the amount of time managers have to spend with each person. Negative consequences for experiencing dignity and wellbeing at work could result from lower levels of humanistic communication and open and trusting relationships.

### **5.6.3 Implications for practice**

There is lack of preparation for academics transitioning to middle-management roles (Preston & Price, 2012; Floyd, 2016; Ruby, 2018). This discounts the importance of training for skilled, professional communication which is an explicit aspect of training for other caring professions. Aspiring academic-managers would benefit from preparation for the reality of management roles such as understanding personal values and underlying assumptions, ethical reflection and humanistic communication in order to protect their own dignity and wellbeing and enhance it for those they manage. This would increase the likelihood that they possess the necessary skills to

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enable them to undertake their roles effectively. This is salient to becoming aware of the potential for unintended micro-violations of dignity and the associated negative effects on wellbeing resulting from command and control processes rather than humanistic communication.

Senior and executive-managers should seek to understand differences in underlying assumptions between departments about 'how to be a manager' and provide permission to academic and professional-services middle-managers to voice their underlying assumptions and develop ways for all to be involved in policy design, development and implementation. This would ensure that all who make up the community can contribute to the shared rules (Melé, 2012, 2016) and how they should be enacted.

Emotional labour is hidden work. It is often conceptualised as soft skills employed in relational working. However, such soft skills involve emotional intelligence and the hard work of managing one's own emotional state, whilst judging how to act in relation to the wants and needs of others. Such work can be very satisfying if it is congruent with personal feelings and values.

Nevertheless, it has the potential to be damaging if misunderstandings of underlying assumptions create additional emotional labour over and above the norm expected in roles that involve caring about others genuinely. If unresolved this can lead to burnout.

Psychological distress is a hidden cost of emotional labour related to lack of communication about underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager'.

Providing language to describe and develop understanding of how it relates to

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CHM represents progress in theorising humanistic-management practice in HE.

Even in organisations with high performance regarding dignity and wellbeing, maintaining the culture is an ongoing process. Understanding and developing culture is not easy (Schein, 2004). For SmallU, there is an opportunity to build upon a strong set of agreed values which contribute to wellbeing through a strong sense of shared 'meaning' and purpose. Paying closer attention to underlying assumptions, related to governance and differing departmental assumptions regarding these could result in improved experiences of dignity and wellbeing for middle-managers and managed academics as the next natural step in the development of the organisation. If underlying assumptions are not understood they can result in negative effects for dignity and wellbeing which would have negative consequences for the people involved, as well as unintended organisational limitations through failure to congruently enact espoused values.

### **5.7 A model of humanistic middle-management in HE**

The final section of this chapter presents the model of humanistic-management developed through this research. The model synthesises CHM and provides a way to visualise how these may be related to espoused organisational values. It is purposefully presented in a way that avoids suggesting a hierarchical relationship between the concepts to acknowledge that the relative importance of each will differ between individuals and from organisation to organisation.

Figure 5.1 shows the model of humanistic-management towards improving dignity and wellbeing. Reading outwards from the centre it has 5 key elements (ACPWD):

- Achieving personal and organisational values.
- Creating the conditions for psychological safety through humanistic communication.
- Permission to surface underlying assumptions.
- Wellbeing is prioritised.
- Dignity is respected.

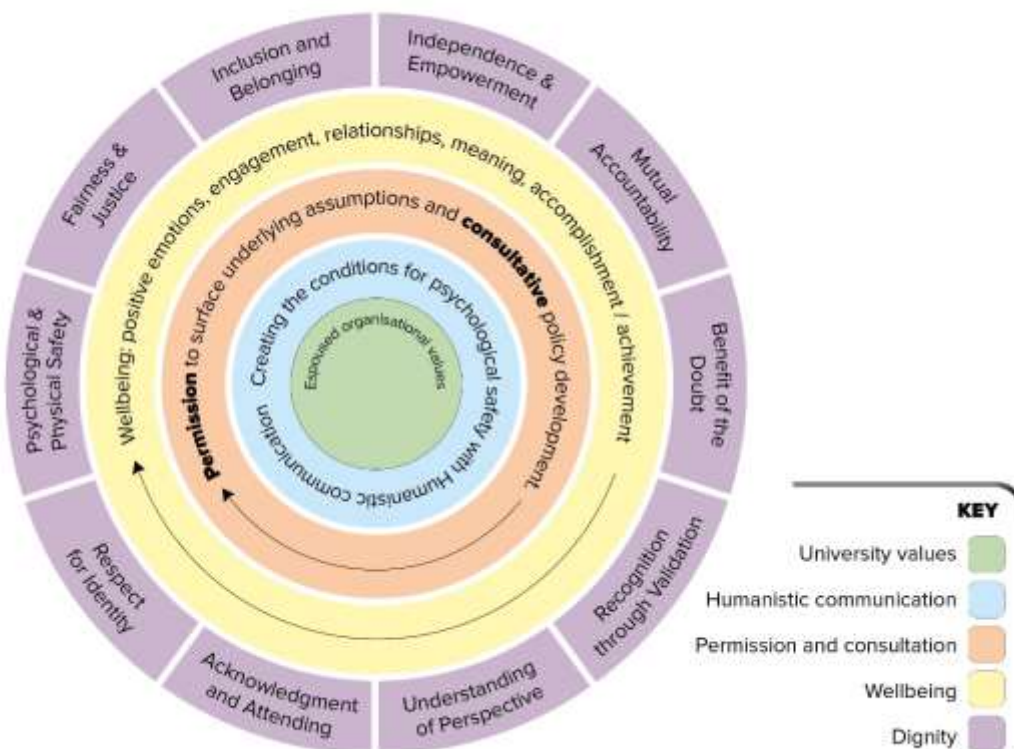


Figure 5.1: A model of humanistic-management towards improving dignity and wellbeing.

This model may be transferrable beyond the present case to aid in the preparation of staff for management roles. It may have further utility in



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enabling university executive-management or consultants to managers at all levels and roles to recognise underlying assumptions and work towards humanistic modes of communication. Additionally, it could encourage greater focus and emphasis on the meaning of dignity and wellbeing at work by providing language to discuss these concepts more fully. This would aid recognition of micro-violations of dignity in order that appropriate reparation can occur, thus improving wellbeing of managers and managed-academics through improved relationships. Including all of the university community in contributing to the development of policy through surfacing underlying assumptions would improve communication between departments and result in agreed upon rules. The agreed values should be included in policy artefacts to aid consistent practice.

To apply the model to different settings the sub-concepts of dignity and wellbeing would be rotated and moved around the model to reflect the different situation found when applying the research instruments. The inner rings reflect the need to surface underlying assumptions using humanistic levels of communication. Finally, the espoused organisational values at the centre would be placed in terms of how they align with wellbeing and dignity concepts. The model therefore could be used to examine organisational values and culture through surfacing underlying assumptions and their effect on dignity and wellbeing. This would enable identifying areas requiring attention and development.

Developing the model at SmallU showed that the espoused values of the university aligned in a particular way with certain concepts of wellbeing and

dignity. It highlighted the central importance of humanistic rather than command and control communication. Finally, the importance of explicit permission and consultation (and in this case it's perceived absence in relation to certain aspects of governance) became clear. Figure 5.2 below shows how the model related to practices at SmallU.

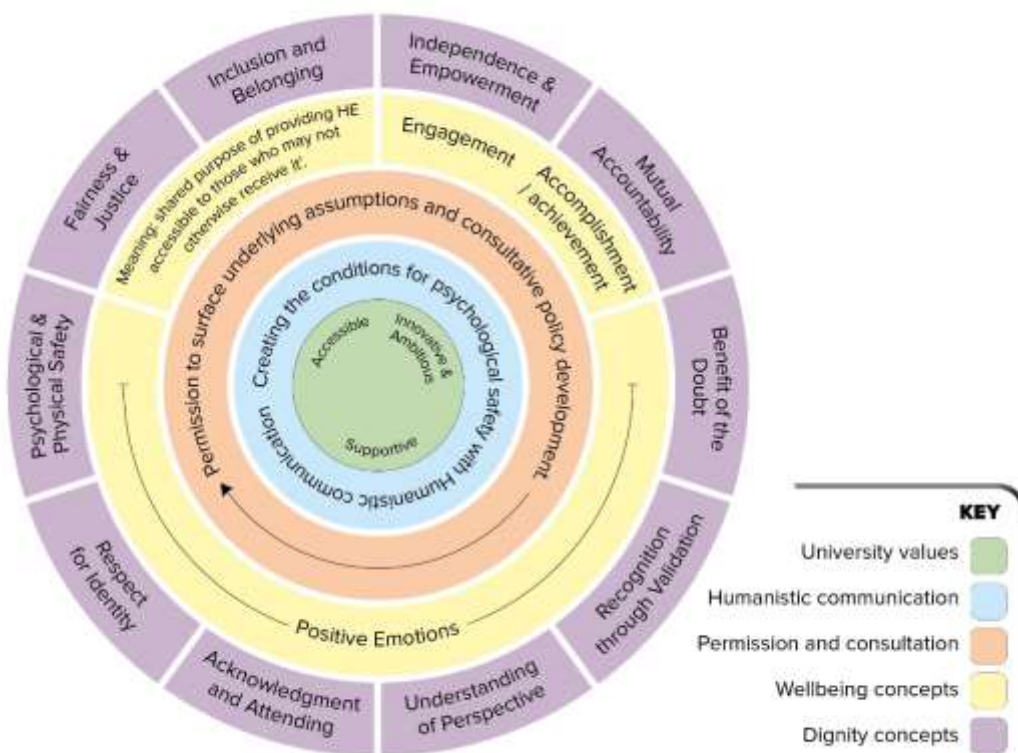


Figure 5.2: Humanistic-management at SmallU.

Whilst in reality all of the CHM are inter-related and inseparable, they are shown as discrete in the model to align with the way that they were separated for the purpose of investigation. This should not be understood as an attempt to reduce people or relationships to a few aspects (Melé, 2016), but rather to look at them closely to understand them better.

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The figure (reading from the inner most circle outwards) aims to show the relationship found at SmallU between CHM that relate to managers and managed-academics experiencing dignity and wellbeing in their relationships.

The university value of 'accessible' relates to the wellbeing concept of 'meaning'. 'Meaning' was derived from the shared purpose of providing HE accessible to those who may not otherwise receive it. This 'meaning' in turn relates to the dignity sub-concepts of 'fairness and justice' and 'inclusion and belonging'. Having a sense of shared 'meaning' and working for a purpose seen to be higher than self is associated with 'engagement' and wellbeing (Seligman, 2011; Pink, 2018). The shared values at SmallU were evident in the interviews with managers at all levels and in both academic and professional-services roles. This is congruent with the artefact of the university vision and strategy.

The university value of 'supportive' was found to relate to the wellbeing concept of 'positive emotions', since developing others and supporting them was a positive experience for all levels of managers interviewed. In faculty A, academic middle-managers were experienced as supportive by managed-academics. Academic middle-managers also wanted managed-academics to experience their work positively (including enjoying it). This in turn relates to several dignity sub-concepts ('psychological safety', 'respect for identity', 'acknowledgement & attending', 'understanding of perspective', 'recognition through validation' and giving the 'benefit of the doubt'). These concepts relate to listening, empathising, understanding and validating others by recognising and valuing their contributions.

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The university values of 'innovative' and 'ambitious' both relate to the wellbeing sub-concepts of 'engagement' and 'accomplishment / achievement'. These in turn relate to the dignity sub-concepts of 'independence and empowerment' (which can also be understood as autonomy) and mutual accountability. High performing organisations achieve innovation by empowering people to challenge norms and engage in change. In order to do this they grant a high degree of autonomy and challenger-safety to those who have earned the right to work autonomously (Clark, 2020).

Psychological safety and benefit of the doubt are related to permission and consultation in SmallU. They are shown spanning the equator on the model because both impact on the ability to voice and practice all other aspects of dignity, wellbeing and university values.

## **5.8 Summary**

Reliance on shared espoused values obscures underlying assumptions (Schein & Schein, 2017) about governance. Policies are seen as 'owned' and perceived as 'command and control' communication because they are developed without consultation with academic-middle managers who are expected to deploy them. This results in hidden work as additional emotional labour for academic middle-managers (and also professional-services middle-managers). This emotional labour is evidenced by managers reports of the challenges of coping with 'being in the middle' and reports of stress associated with requirements to implement policies in ways that they believe are not always appropriate. Academic middle-managers appeared to

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experience reduced dignity due to perceived limitations to their discretion. This can be understood as a micro-violation of the dignity concept of 'independence and empowerment' or autonomy. Such micro-violations add to emotional labour and have deleterious effects on academic middle-managers' dignity and wellbeing. Reduced wellbeing of managers has the potential to result in poorer management practice (through resulting in lower levels of communication). The need to limit their psychological and emotional availability to their teams in order to protect themselves from the stresses of negotiating with policy 'owners' will have negative consequences on how managers are perceived to communicate. Such communication difficulties are evidenced by the differences found between faculty A and B levels of communication and by the staff survey results which show that 'communication between different departments' is rated poorly when compared to other staff satisfaction scores.

I have proposed a model of humanistic-management which could be utilised to enable reflection and discussion about underlying assumptions regarding governance policies and procedures. This focuses on the importance of communication, psychological safety and managers' understanding of how their power can give permission (or unintentionally deny permission) to speak up (Reitz & Higgins, 2019). Utilising this model in the preparation of those who are to undertake middle-management roles would enable understanding of the concepts of dignity and wellbeing and how values and underlying assumptions relate to emotional labour for academic middle-managers in HE.

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The following chapter will offer a final review of the research questions, highlighting recommendations for practice and potential directions for future research.

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## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter I revisit the original aim of the thesis and respond to the research questions. I reflect on the effectiveness of the research design in addressing the research questions, including limitations of the research. The central part of this chapter highlights how the research has addressed a gap in the current knowledge about humanistic-management in HE. The resulting model of humanistic-management presented in chapter five offers important contribution of a humanistic perspective on management in HE. The contribution was made through considering managers' own values, personal practice-based theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1974) and underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004; Schein & Schein, 2017) about 'how to be a manager', and how these relate to managed-academics experiences of dignity and wellbeing at work. The research questions are answered and suggestions for improvements in practice and policy are offered, before a final outline of fruitful avenues for future research.

### **6.2 Research aim**

The aim of this thesis was to explore management in a UK university from a humanistic perspective, to explore what this might add to understanding management in HE, whilst avoiding contributing to the managerialism / collegiality dualism (Macfarlane, 2015). Meeting this aim through a mixed-methods single-site embedded case-study design (Swanborn, 2010; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2012) required an inclusive approach in which the perspectives of

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managers and managed-academics were taken into account. While HE literature usually analyses management as managerialist, my research has shown that such an approach does not account for all management values and practices in HE. Managerialist values and practices are neither the aim of managers, nor are managers always perceived as simply managerial. In order to achieve the aim, one over-arching research question guided the research. This was supported by four sub-questions which are reviewed individually in section 6.6 of this chapter. Prior to this I address the methods, contribution to knowledge and limitations of the study.

### **6.3 Methods**

The methods employed were threefold. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with managers at all levels, including executive, senior and middle-managers who held academic or professional-services management roles. Secondly, a survey of managed-academics operationalised the concepts of the theoretical framework for testing in both faculties of SmallU. Thirdly, document analysis enabled gaining a deeper understanding of the strategic, operational and governance context of the university.

### **6.4 Originality and contribution to knowledge**

The theoretical framework for this thesis brought together the concepts of dignity, wellbeing, humanistic communication and values in a novel way to investigate management in HE from a humanistic perspective. Such investigation has been lacking in research into management in HE (Clegg & McCauley, 2005). This enabled the development of a theoretical model which



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can be inferred in the HE sector more broadly. Additionally, it may have theoretical value for other sectors where managers may have pro-social values, wish to work relationally and there is an emphasis on improving the dignity and wellbeing of those who they manage. Testing the model in one setting by operationalising defined CHM was effective in finding that in one faculty (A) humanistic communication was related to high levels of dignity and wellbeing for managed-academics. This was not found in faculty B, where the response rate was poor, despite the pro-social aims of managers in both faculties. Managers in faculty B were more likely to be male. Further research is needed to understand any effects of gender on managed-academics perceptions of their managers' practice of humanistic-management.

Nevertheless, this is important progress in knowledge about humanistic-management in HE. HMT however is not new. A humanistic perspective on management has existed in reaction to economic models explained by Melé (2014) as existing since Follett and others proposed that business problems are human problems, rather than humans causing problems that business needed to solve. Rogers (Rogers, 1959, 1978), a founder of humanistic psychology, proposed group leadership and the politics of administration as important directions for research. This was based on his experience as an academic middle-manager at the University of Chicago Counselling Centre for twenty years from 1945 (Rogers, 1978). There is wide awareness amongst educators in HE about humanistic approaches to teaching and learning following Rogers (1969) ideas about freedom to learn. Calls for attention to more humanistic forms of management in HE (Clegg & McCauley, 2005) have

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not resulted in research that often explicitly considers humanistic concepts relating to management in HE. This lack may have contributed to wider opinion that managers are motivated by managerialism. This appears to relate to a reaction to universities becoming organisations and a ‘business sucks’ narrative (Freeman, 2018). However, as mentioned in chapter one, other businesses and sectors are moving toward more humanistic-management and recognising the importance of wellbeing. It has been proposed that reclaiming our humanity and practicing humanistic-management is better for our health (Pirson, 2018b, 2018c). Universities may wish to explore ways in which they can develop humanistic-management practices towards achieving greater dignity and wellbeing.

It is notable that the setting for this research was a British post-92 university, where the literature suggests managerialism is more, rather than less prevalent due to perceptions about difference between pre and post-92 universities (Kok et al, 2010). This thesis indicates that it is possible for academic middle-managers in a newer university to work in humanistic ways, based in their own values. Academic middle-managers aim to work relationally, in line with their personal pro-social views of ‘how to be a manager’. This involves struggle, negotiation, humanistic communication, ethical-reflection and emotional labour. Academic-managers are committed to maintaining their own integrity and autonomy as well as supporting the dignity and wellbeing of those they manage. A focus on managerialism hides the counter-movement of the human-centric approach of academic-managers. This may unintentionally contribute to the levels of emotional labour required

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in the role by contributing to a narrative that managers are managerial.

Greater emotional effort may be required to demonstrate their care is genuine.

The model I have developed addresses calls for more theoretical research into the practice of humanistic-management (Pirson, 2017c). It provides a tool and language which can be applied to promote understanding of the potential for humanistic-management in HE to improve the dignity and wellbeing of those who make up the employed members of university communities. This provides another way of conceptualising management in HE, and makes a theoretical contribution to knowledge in this under-researched area. It provides those who seek to work in humanistic ways with evidence that it is possible to work relationally, in line with pro-social values and that this is also an effective form of management in HE.

## **6.5 Trustworthiness**

### **6.5.1 Single site study**

This research was conducted in one university with distinctive values and particular student demographics. Since SmallU has a strong focus regarding social inclusion, it is unsurprising to find pro-social values amongst its managers. However, the small size enabled interviews with all executive and all middle-managers, giving a detailed picture. I had imagined that there would be differences between executive and middle-management views of management, in line with literature proposing that academic middle-managers are caught between those above and below (Saunders & Sin, 2015; Floyd & Dimmick, 2011). However, it was the similarities found in their values,

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notwithstanding the tensions found regarding policy ownership and implementation, that affected humanistic-management practice.

The resulting model has potential theoretical relevance for other settings since it may aid in understanding processes and patterns occurring in other universities (Hammersley, 2012) that have not previously been examined from a humanistic perspective. This thesis addresses the gap regarding understanding academic-management from a humanistic perspective and thereby aids understanding of the complexity of HE management.

The research design and resulting model are purposefully flexible. The CHM could be applied to different espoused values in other settings. Additionally, managers who seek to promote the dignity and wellbeing of those they manage, as well as understanding the impact of humanistic communication are provided with a model to reflect on important CHM in their own practice. Managers may need developmental training in order to develop skills related to ethical-reflection regarding their values, motivations and humanistic communication. Such training is becoming increasingly common in other sectors and is a cornerstone of other professions in the health sector.

### **6.5.2 Insider researcher**

As an insider researcher, holding a management role my position of relative power led me to decide not to interview managed-academics. This limited the depth of understanding reasons why managed-academics perceived their relationship with their managers positively or negatively. However, the free text comments box included in the survey elicited detail which illuminated the

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quantitative data. It is possible that survey respondents from the faculty in which I work may have been motivated by a desire to be helpful to me, or to show SmallU in a good light.

A limitation in understanding perceptions of managed-academics about whether they perceived their managers as being appropriately accountable to them for respecting their dignity arose. The sub-concept 'I am accountable for the work that I do' was notable for the high percentage (76%) of managed-academics who experienced this consistently. I reflected on the phrasing of this question in the survey to analyse why this may be the case. Hicks (2018) considers leaders' accountability to relate to them being accountable for their actions. My phrasing of the question placed the emphasis instead on the managed-academics being accountable to the academic-manager. This is an unintended micro-violation of dignity in removing the emphasis and power from the managed to the manager. This is evidence that even whilst intending to act according to values, in line with the literature it is not always achieved. Ethical-reflection regarding errors and working to learn from and correct them is proposed by Hicks (2018) as an important quality for managing with dignity.

The low response rate, especially in faculty B may be attributed to my decision to close the survey without sending a reminder to participate for ethical reasons. The first Covid-19 lockdown in the UK on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 happened shortly after the survey was opened. A larger response rate may have provided sufficient data to analyse factors such as the length of time employed, gender, and specific level of academic role held for comparative purposes such as if these related to differing experiences of managed-

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academics practice. Having an insufficient response size to do this means that none of these factors has been analysed deeply and limits the findings because managed-academics were grouped by faculty only. However, the research design included triangulation utilising document analysis. The difference between faculties was also found in SmallU staff engagement surveys. Rigour in the mixed-methods case study design, including piloting of interviews and survey to ensure competence and construct validity contributes to trustworthiness of the conclusions.

## **6.6 Review of research questions**

The overarching research question which guided this study was:

***How is academic-management practice in a UK university related to humanistic-management concepts?***

Subsidiary questions aimed to ensure that the mixed-methods utilised included multiple perspectives. This approach provided rigour to support theorising the complexities of middle-management related to CHM in one setting. The research design discussed in chapter three demonstrates how these questions employed the mixed-methods: interviews, survey and document analysis. Simply stated, the answer to the overarching research question is that:

***Academic managers in a UK university employ the principles of humanistic-management, based in their pro-social values and underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager'. They aim to respect dignity, promote wellbeing and enact the values of the university in their relationships with those they manage. The critical***

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***factor that determines whether or not managed-academics experience dignity, wellbeing and the enactment of espoused university values in their relationship with their academic-managers is whether or not they experience humanistic communication. Relationships based in humanistic communication are associated with higher levels of dignity, wellbeing and perceived enactment of university values.***

Academic-managers experienced factors which facilitated or impeded humanistic-management. These are detailed in section 6.6.3 which addresses the sub-research question: ***What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?***

Firstly sub-research questions two and three are addressed.

#### **6.6.1 How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?**

Interviews with managers at all levels including academic and professional-services at SmallU indicated they held pro-social values, which were in line with the stated university values. This was the case whatever the level of manager, from executive to middle-manager, and also whether they were academic-managers or from professional-services. There was clear alignment between shared values of inclusion and social justice. This provided a sense of 'meaning' and belonging in their roles. Managers perceived that providing support to managed-colleagues and contributing to developing others was a core part of their role. Managers personal practice based theories of 'how to be a manager' align with CHM. Furthermore, the sub-concepts of dignity and

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wellbeing have been shown to be related to each other in particular ways in this setting as discussed in chapter five.

Having certain values does not always lead to these being perceived by others, or to the holder always behaving in line with their values. This is evident when there are considerations of power and a lack of explicit permission from executive-management or policy-owners to include academic middle-managers in decisions about policy design, ownership and enactment.

### **6.6.2 What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers?**

Central to this thesis is the finding that humanistic levels of communication (including Schein & Schein's 2018 'trust and open communication') related to positive experiences of dignity and wellbeing at work for managed-academics in relationship to academic middle-managers.

Humanistic-management was experienced by managed-academics in relation to their experiences of academic-managers in one of the two university faculties (A). Whilst academic middle-managers in both faculties shared values and opinions of how to enact these to create the conditions for managed-academics to enjoy their work, this was not experienced by managed-academics in faculty B.

The findings of the survey of managed-academics showed that in faculty A, academic middle-managers were perceived as providing relationships that



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created the conditions for psychological safety, dignity and wellbeing through providing high levels of humanistic communication. The research survey results were consistent with the biannual university staff survey, so triangulation enhanced the trustworthiness of this conclusion.

It cannot be ignored that managers in faculty B were more likely to be male, and other research shows that males may be perceived as more controlling and directive (Larsson & Alvinus, 2020) even though this may not be their intention. In this case, this may be related to managers in faculty B appearing to engage in less open and trusting communication, due to compartmentalising, structuring relationships and appearing to implement policy in the way policy-owners require, rather than in seeking ways to overcome it that were described in faculty A. It is also possible that the perception of managed-academics may have been influenced by their expectations of 'male' management and may be impacted by past personal experience, or even expectations that management is managerial due to the prevailing narrative of managerialism and neo-liberalism about HE. In the following sections I will address factors that were found to either facilitate or impede the practice of humanistic-management addressing the final sub research question.

### **6.6.3 What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?**

Factors that either facilitate or impede the practice of humanistic-management led to the development of the three key themes discussed in chapter five.

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Underpinning all of these factors is the central importance of humanistic communication and how this is related to higher levels of dignity and wellbeing at work. The following sections discuss factors which were found to facilitate or to impede the practice of humanistic communication.

### **6.6.3.1 Facilitating factors: the Importance of values and ethical reflection**

A dependence on shared espoused university values contributed to a sense of shared 'meaning' and purpose. This was facilitative of managers' enacting personal values, such as being supportive and seeking to develop others. Such shared 'meaning' from enacting personal values contributes to a sense of personal 'accomplishment' and therefore to wellbeing (Seligman, 2011; Brown, 2018). However, reliance on the espoused university values as sufficient to guide practice misses the opportunity to examine hidden underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager', policy-ownership and discretion over policy implementation. This may contribute to explaining the 'poor communication between areas' found in the university staff surveys (SmallU, 2018b). Since communication is key in HMT, poor communication between departments is an impediment to developing a culture of humanistic-management for the wider university.

Ethical-reflection on personal values and managers' own views of 'how to be a manager', (either alone or through peer-support) facilitates humanistic-management practice. Ethical-reflection requires psychological maturity (Rogers, 1964), emotional intelligence and the capacity to reflect on personal

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values, assumptions and attitudes. Therefore, it is important that values, assumptions and attitudes can be openly and constructively surfaced. This could be achieved using some mechanisms already in place within SmallU, such as opportunities to share research and other examples of good practice with colleagues in staff development sessions. However, as it has the potential to impact the strategic direction of university governance, its wider implementation would require the support of executive-managers. Such permission notwithstanding, academic and professional-services middle-managers taking action to develop their understanding of the CHM as presented in the model in chapter five could aid in their purposeful ethical-reflection about their own practice.

In addition to factors facilitating the practice of humanistic-management, this thesis has highlighted factors impeding managers' own dignity and wellbeing which could result in impediments to practicing humanistic-management. These barriers to trust and open communication, included non-participatory policy implementation and the hidden work of emotional labour. These impediments were experienced by academic-managers as negatively reducing their discretion and autonomy and increasing stress. Conclusions resulting from these themes are presented in the following two sections.

#### **6.6.3.2 Impeding factors: Non-participatory policy implementation**

Academic middle-managers experienced significant barriers to being as effective in their roles as they would like. These related to their perceptions of a lack of autonomy in regards to their discretion over policy implementation.

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The perception that policy is 'owned' by professional-services departments limited academic middle-managers' enactment of their own values. This led to a sense of reduced autonomy, which is an important sub-concept of dignity. Lack of autonomy contributes to stress, resulting from threat to psychological safety. Stress from reduced autonomy is an impeding factor for the practice of humanistic-management as it reduces psychological availability for constructive open communication and relationships.

However, seeking to relieve psychological distress (stress), through enacting personal values can result in managers using their own discretion about policy implementation. This may not always be in line with the underlying assumptions of what actions should or should not be taken in the view of policy-owners. It was clear that this action was uncomfortable for those managers who decided to act in this way. Clearer permission for managers to be involved in policy design and to use their discretion would benefit managers' autonomy and therefore dignity.

#### **6.6.3.3 Impeding factors: hidden work and emotional labour**

It appears that academic-middle managers experienced systems based processes as distancing them from decision makers and creating additional emotional labour. The need to negotiate with those perceived as controlling or owning policy, whilst supporting managed-academics was experienced as an infringement of autonomy, through limiting their discretion to act despite their being accountable for outcomes.

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Explicit permission to challenge such systems inter-departmentally must come from policy-owners and executive-managers. Such permission enables challenger-safety (Clark, 2020) which benefits managers, managed-academics and the innovative capability of organisations.

Emotional labour is an important consideration in humanistic-management due to its emphasis on the importance of relationships and communication. Relationships are seen to underpin humanistic ways of working because most people prefer to have cordial and constructive relationships (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) related to the human drive to bond (Pirson, 2017c) as inherently social beings. In this way all human relationships require some degree of managing one's own emotions in order to negotiate the complexities that accompany inter-dependant relationships. However, impediments to humanistic-management can occur when managers lack the psychological and emotional capacity to work constructively in relational ways (Pirson, 2018a). If managers have large teams they may lack time to engage in deep relationships with their teams. Furthermore where managers' experience a lack of autonomy resulting in psychological distress this may reduce their ability to engage empathically with those they manage. It is important to draw the distinction between caring about others as part of the norm at work arising from genuine pro-social values, and emotional labour resulting from managers being required to enact policy in ways which are incongruent with their own values. It is this additional emotional labour, rather than caring per se which can have deleterious effects. Implications for practice and policy follow, addressing the final sub-research question:

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#### **6.6.4 What is the significance of the findings for deploying concepts and theory associated with humanistic-management to better understand management in HE contexts?**

Even in organisations such as SmallU where performance regarding dignity and wellbeing are relatively high, maintaining the human-centric culture is an ongoing process. Understanding and developing culture is not easy (Schein, 2004). For SmallU, there is an opportunity to build upon a strong set of shared values which contribute to wellbeing through a strong sense of shared 'meaning' and purpose. Moving beyond reliance on shared values towards improving understanding of the differing underlying assumptions between academic-managers and professional-services departments could result in improved experiences of dignity and wellbeing for all. This is a natural step in the development of an organisation with shared pro-social values.

Purposeful inclusion of opportunities for academic middle-managers' voices to be heard in policy development has the potential to improve humanistic-management practices. This could be measured through scores in the biennial staff survey regarding 'communication between different areas' aligning with those for 'communication within their own department'.

Underlying assumptions about policy-ownership, exercise of discretion and opinions about 'how to be a manager' of those inhabiting different roles in regards to policy implementation should be sought. This may enable understanding beyond shared espoused values, to include the usually invisible underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004). Making the espoused values clear and Identifying desired positive behaviours within policy artefacts and

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involving all those who will apply policies (and those who they will be applied to) in contributing to truly agreed rules (Melé, 2012, 2016) should reduce the emotional labour burden on academic middle-managers.

Having large teams reduces the amount of time managers have to spend with each person. Negative consequences for experiencing dignity and wellbeing at work could result from resulting lower levels of humanistic communication and open and trusting relationships. Therefore, attention to managers' workload, including the impact of emotional labour, which is usually unseen is important.

Aspiring academic-managers and those already in such roles would benefit from developmental opportunities about the reality of management roles in order to protect their own dignity and wellbeing. Developing easily accessible training to use the model of humanistic-management and mentoring or peer support to reflect on humanistic communication, dignity, wellbeing, underlying assumptions and values would increase the likelihood that they possess the necessary skills to enable them to undertake their roles effectively. This is salient to becoming aware of the potential for unintended micro-violations of dignity and the associated negative effects on wellbeing resulting from command and control rather than humanistic communication. Senior and executive-managers should seek to understand differences in underlying assumptions about 'how to be a manager' between policy-owners and academic-managers. This should include providing permission to academic and professional-services middle-managers to voice their underlying

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assumptions and develop ways for all to be involved in policy design, development and implementation.

### **6.7 Directions for future research**

Further research is needed to examine the perceptions of managed-academics about humanistic-management practice related to gender, and whether managers' gender may affect how managed-academics perceive their communication (Larsson & Alvinus, 2020). It may indicate a need for managers to adapt their communication towards more humanistic communication levels to enable greater experiences of dignity and wellbeing for those they manage.

Future uses of the research design presented in chapter three could include expanding the research across multiple HE settings, of different types (pre- and post-92 and different nations) and sizes. This would contribute to widening understanding of the values of managers and their personal theories of 'how to be a manager' in different settings and establish if humanistic-management is present in other universities.

Furthermore, the theoretical model and research design could be applied in other sectors to test their relevance in organisations where espoused values are pro-social, and there is a desire to focus on improving the dignity and wellbeing of people at work.



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## Appendix One: Interview questions mapped to research questions.

<b>Overarching RQ: How is academic management practice in a UK university related to humanistic-management concepts?</b>		
<b>Management level</b>	<b>Question asked</b>	<b>Research Question addressed</b>
All levels and roles	What organisational practices are aimed at promoting dignity and well-being?	Sub RQ 1: How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?  Sub RQ 3: What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?
	What do you think are the most important skills and characteristics a middle-manager in a continually changing environment should possess?	Sub RQ 1: How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?
	How do you try to motivate those around you to discover beliefs and values in the organisational culture?	
	Has your view of management changed over time, if so, in what ways	
	Why did you originally choose to go into management in HE?	
	Is there anything else that might be useful to the research I haven't asked you about that you would like to add?	Potential relevance to all questions.
Executive only	How do you define success for the organisation and as a leader	Sub RQ 3: What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?
	What understanding of change did you come into the role with was aimed at understanding personal and mid-range theories of change	
Executive and Senior	What do you think the main needs of middle-managers to be and how they tried to meet them	Sub RQ 1: How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?
	When there are tensions between organisational and human needs, what do you draw on in decision making?	Sub RQ3: What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by
	Has your view of management changed over time, and if so in what ways?	

		academic-managers in this university?
Senior and Middle managers	What if any barriers exist to you being effective in your role?	Sub RQ1: How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?  Sub RQ 3: What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?
Middle Academic-managers only	Why did you want to take on the role of associate-dean?	Sub RQ1: How do managers' personal practice-based theories about 'how to be a manager' relate to humanistic-management concepts?
Middle Academic and professional-services managers	Has your view of the role changed since taking it?  What do you believe the main needs of academic staff are and how do you try to meet them?	Sub RQ 3: What facilitates or impedes the practice of humanistic-management by academic-managers in this university?
Sub RQ 2 addressed through survey of managed-academics: What do managed-academics in the sample perceive about humanistic-management practices in their relationships with academic-managers?		
Sub RQ 4 to synthesise mixed-methods findings: What is the significance of the findings for deploying concepts and theory associated with humanistic-management to better understand management in HE contexts?		

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## Appendix Two: Qualtrics online survey of managed-academics

### Academics' perceptions of middle-managers impact on dignity and well-being.

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When answering questions, please only consider middle-management i.e. your recent or current line-manager. If your line-manager has recently changed you should answer about the manager you have most experience of working with as your manager. This might be an Associate-Dean, Principal-lecturer, or a Professional-lead depending on the area you work in.

You can navigate through the ten question sections using the arrows in the red boxes at the bottom of the screen.

#### Start of Block: Dignity

Q1

Dignity has been defined as "an attribute we are born with - it is our inherent value and worth" (Hicks, 2018).

Please use the slider scales to indicate how much you typically experience respect for your dignity at work in your relationship with your line-manager.



There is a sense of inclusion and belonging in my team	
I am able to be independent and am empowered to do my work in ways that suit me best	
I am validated by being recognised for the contribution I make	
I experience being physically safe at work	
I experience feeling psychologically safe to be and express myself at work	
My perspective on things is taken into consideration	
Justice is applied so that the right thing is done when difficult decisions have to be taken and acted on.	







End of Block: Dignity

Start of Block: Well-being at Work

Q2 Well-being and flourishing are considered to be the "ultimate purpose of human existence" (Pirson, 2017a). Well-being is further defined as "positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment" (Seligman, 2011). Please slide the bar to represent the level of well-being you experience at work and how others impact on this.

Never Rarely Sometimes Usually Consistently

0 1 2 3 4

I have positive feelings at work	
I feel engaged and motivated by my work	
I have positive working relationships with colleagues	
I have a positive working relationship with my line-manager	
My work has meaning for me	
I experience a sense of achievement from my work	

End of Block: Well-being at Work

Start of Block: Relationship

Q3 Four examples (adapted from Schein & Schein, 2018) are given below of ways in which managers may build relationships with their teams.

Please select the option which best represents the kind of relationship you have had with your manager during the time you have worked with them. Click a box to select it.

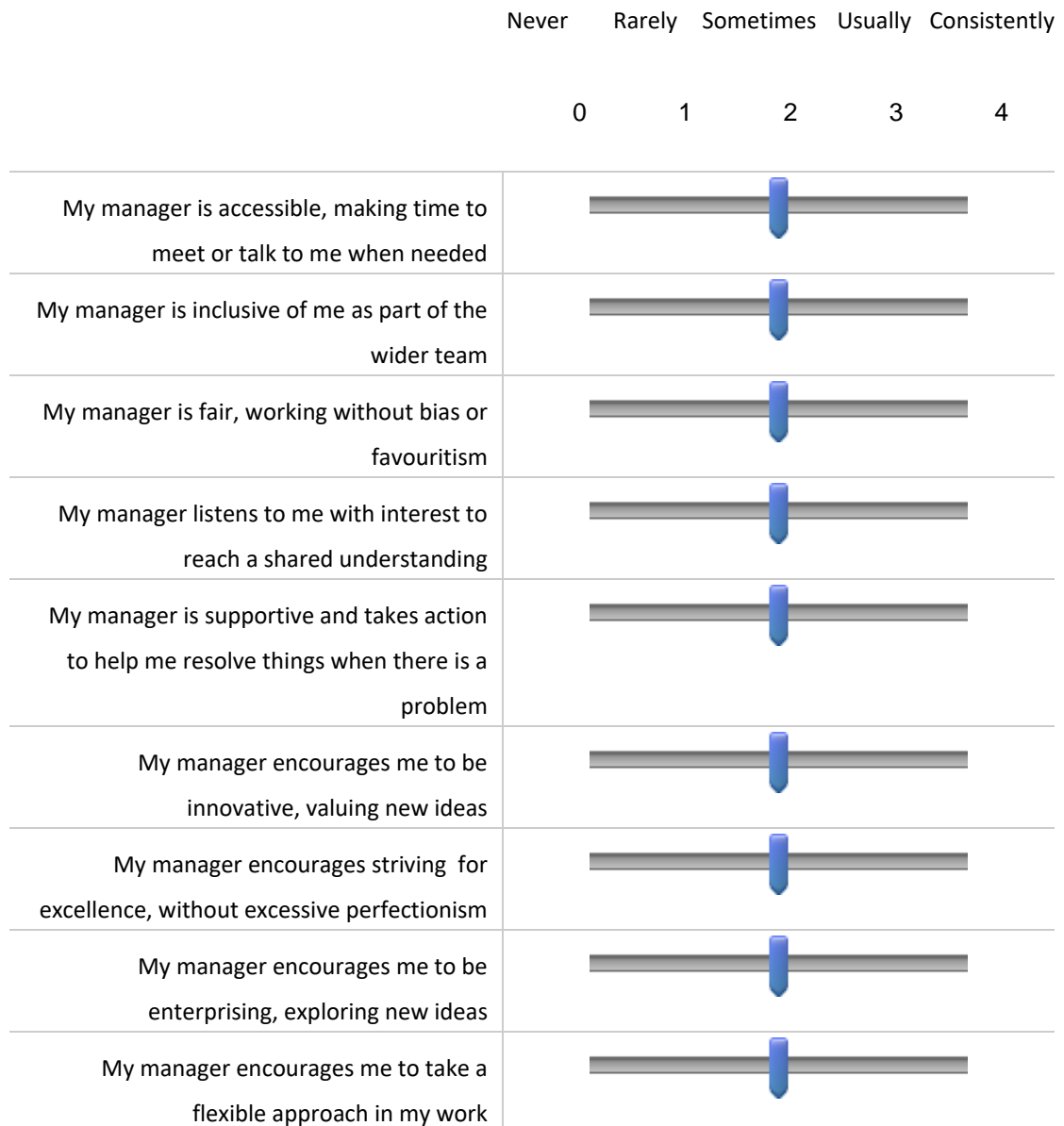
- In my area it is clear that one person or group is in control, and dominates everyone else.
- We tend to work according to our defined hierarchical roles and don't know much about what motivates each-other.
- Our relationship has some personal features, I can share things about myself and my manager sometimes shares things about themselves with me.
- There is a real sense of trust and open communication between us.

End of Block: Relationship

Start of Block: University Vision and Strategy to 2025 - Values.

Q4

To what degree does your line-manager demonstrate the university values of Accessible, Supportive, Innovative and Ambitious as outlined in the Vision and Mission to 2025?



End of Block: University Vision and Strategy to 2025 - Values.

Start of Block: Opinion

Q5 If there are any comments you would like to add about your line-manager's impact on your dignity or well-being, please include this in the box below.

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End of Block: Opinion

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Start of Block: Demographic information

Q6 Which Faculty do you work in?

- Faculty B (*redacted to maintain confidentiality*)
  - Faculty A (*redacted to maintain confidentiality*)
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q7 Which academic role to you hold at the university?

- Graduate Teaching Assistant
  - Sessional-lecturer
  - Lecturer
  - Senior-lecturer
  - Principal-lecturer / Professional-lead
  - Professor
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Q8 How many years have you worked at the university?

- Less than one year
  - One to two years
  - Two to four years
  - Four to six years
  - Six to twelve years
  - I have worked here more than twelve years (i.e. before university status was gained)
- 

Q9 How would you describe your gender?

- Female (including transgender woman)
  - Male (including transgender man)
  - Prefer to self-describe: for example - non-binary, gender-fluid, agender, please specify by typing in your preferred term in the box provided below
- 

- Prefer not to say
- 

Q10 What is the nature of your employment at the university?

- Full time permanent
- Full time fixed term
- Part time permanent
- Part time fixed term
- Sessional

## Appendix 3: Report of NVivo™ nodes.

'TF' indicates theoretical coding, 'I' indicates inductive coding.

NVivo™ Nodes	*TF or *I	Files	Reference
<b>Structure</b>			
Hierarchy	TF	13	37
Managerial language	TF	0	0
Metrics		5	7
Policies and procedures (value of)	I	13	45
Policies and procedures as limiting effectiveness	I	14	53
Size	I	6	8
Change management	I	20	122
Sustainability	TF	10	55
<b>Dignity</b>	TF	1	4
Acceptance of identity	TF	10	17
Accountability	TF	17	60
Acknowledgement through full attention	TF	14	21
Benefit of the doubt	TF	9	17
Fairness and Justice	TF	10	22
Inclusion and belonging	TF	20	67
Independence and empowerment	TF	14	34
Recognition through validation	TF	13	26
Safety physical and psychological	TF	17	48
Understanding of perspective	TF	18	54
<b>Levels of Communication</b>	TF	0	0
Informal or Corridor conversations	TF	5	14
Level 1 transactional relationship	TF	4	13
Level 2 L a personal relationship	TF	12	28
Level 3 mutual trust and open communication	TF	8	31
Level minus 1 command and control	TF	1	5
<b>Voicing values</b>	TF	0	0
Adapting, justifying	I	11	24
Trust (as an aspect of psychological safety)	I	8	15
Not voicing values	I	7	25
Opportunity to state your view (be listened to)	I	15	57
<b>Wellbeing</b>	TF	5	12
Accomplishment or Achievement	TF	19	54
Engagement	TF	18	41
Meaning	I	17	53
Positive emotions	TF	9	20
Relationships	TF	17	59
<b>Culture creating the conditions</b>	TF	14	51
<b>Tensions between organisational and human needs</b>	I	7	27
<b>University Values</b>	TF	6	14
Accessible	TF	3	3
Ambitious	TF	2	4
Innovative	TF	0	0
Supportive	TF	2	6
<b>Management</b>	TF	0	0

Management (Practice based theory of management)	I	20	225
Management (Reasons for going into management)	I	13	61
Values – Implicit and declared	I	Figure 4.2	
Management (Skills and attributes needed as a middle-manager exec, snr and MM perspective)	I	Figures 4.3 & 4.4	
MM (perceptions of needs of academic staff)	I	10	30
Management (Defining middle management by role grade)	I	12	44
<b>Dignity not as two way</b>	I	2	3
Management as other	I	7	21

**Appendix 4: Results of SPSS™ one sample non-parametric chi-square (goodness of fit to theory test) for dignity sub-concepts.**

Concept from theoretical framework: Dignity	SPSS Results One Sample Chi square test		5 point scale points named: (0) Never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) usually, (4) consistently.			
	Asymp. Sig. (p value) if p < (less than .05) statistically significant and null hypothesis is rejected	True / False		Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
<b>Q1. Dignity has been defined as "an attribute we are born with - it is our inherent value and worth" (Hicks, 2018). Please use the slider scales to indicate how much you typically experience respect for your dignity at work in your relationship with your line-manager.</b>						
My individual identity is respected	.003	True		3.21	1.01	1.03
I am accountable for the work I do	.008	True		3.62	0.76	0.58
I am acknowledged through receiving full attention when I need it	.000	True		2.76	1.22	1.49
I am given the benefit of the doubt when things don't go as well as hoped	.030	True		3.07	1.05	1.10
I feel that I am treated fairly without discrimination	.000	True		3.28	1.08	1.17
There is a sense of inclusion and belonging in my team	.020	True		2.85	1.32	1.75
I am able to be independent and am empowered to do my work in ways that suit me best	.000	True		3.25	0.91	0.83
I am validated by being recognized for the contribution I make	.067	<b>False</b>		2.96	1.02	1.03
I experience being physically safe at work	.000	True		3.79	0.62	0.38
I experience feeling psychologically safe to be and express myself at work	.003	True		3.04	1.05	1.11
My perspective on things is taken into consideration	.085	<b>False</b>		3.04	1.00	1.00
Justice is applied so that the right thing is done when difficult decisions have to be taken and acted on.	.020	True		2.75	1.27	1.62