



Managing to Lead: women managers in the further education sector

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ABSTRACT This article provides a review of the major interpretations of the changing gender relations in FE management. In so doing, the key question of whether FE, at senior level, remains a 'boy's club' is addressed. In relation to this, the article considers the degree to which those women recruited to senior and middle management positions in FE are being required to 'carry the burden' of organisational change. Drawing on recent research across the FE sector, the article reveals some of the ways in which women FE managers attempt to balance the desire for interesting and challenging work, against the demands of intensified effort in a gendered organisational culture.

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between gender and management in the recently incorporated further education (FE) sector [1], referring specifically to women managers' experiences. Six years on from incorporation in 1993, funding constraints, increased workloads and decreased pay have placed considerable strain on the FE sector in terms of its industrial relations (Burchill, 1998). Low staff moral, amid widespread allegations of bullying, sleaze and serious financial mismanagement have led to calls for greater accountability within the system (Hodge, 1998). This comes at a time when over half of colleges are reported to be operating at a loss with 21% considered to be 'financially weak' (FEFC, 1997).

Since the early 1990s, and like much of the UK public sector (Exworthy & Halford, 1999), the FE has experienced multiple restructuring along market and managerial lines on the principle of 'more for less'. However, what distinguishes FE from many other public sectors is the mass departure of staff with over a fifth of the teaching workforce being made redundant or retiring early since colleges left local authority control in 1993 (Midgely, 1998). This exit of lecturers and managers has been accompanied by a 32% turnover in principals between 1993-96 (FEFC, 1998). That there should be an increase in the number of women recruited to management positions at this time (Stott & Lawson, 1997), raises questions, then, about issues of gender, work and organisation in FE. For example, are new organisational spaces being created for women that facilitate and even validate women's preferred styles of management (Newman, 1994)? Is FE being remasculinised with women concentrated primarily in middle management and carrying

the 'burden of transformation' (Shain, 2000) in the sector (Prichard *et al.*, 1998)? Or are we witnessing an identity shift with some women managers adopting more masculine approaches to their work (Yeatman, 1990; Whitehead, 1998).

It is not possible to answer these questions in their full complexity from within such a small-scale project, as larger economic and social processes also need to be analysed. However, by drawing on data collected as part of a wider ESRC-funded project, Changing Teaching and Managerial Cultures in FE (CTMC) [2], this article offers a contribution to a growing debate focusing on the relationship between gender, management and organisational cultures within FE (Cole, 1998; Deem & Ozga, 1996a, 1996b; Whitehead, 1996, 1999; Prichard *et al.*, 1998). Following a brief overview of recent research on women in FE management, the article moves on to explore some competing interpretations of the changing statistical picture with reference to data from the CTMC project. Throughout the article the term senior manager is used to refer to those operating at executive level on senior management teams and includes vice-principals and principals. The term middle manager is employed to denote those who occupy a broad range of positions within their institutions and whose work often involves a combination of management and teaching. These include sector/school heads, curriculum/programme leaders, managers and developers and cross-college coordinators.

Changing Management Cultures: women at the top?

According to a recent FEDA survey (Stott & Lawson, 1997), more women than men (554:410) have been recruited into FE management positions since 1993. The survey sampled 3000 managers in over 250 of 452 FE colleges in England and Wales. At the end of 1997 there were 81 women principals (17% of principals compared to just 3% in 1990). This compares favourably with wider figures on women in employment that indicate just 4% of women in England and Wales reach senior executive position and 5% in European Union countries (Davidson, 1997, p. 10). Such figures also represent a challenge to men's historical numerical dominance in FE management (see Prichard *et al.*, 1998, for a discussion). However, women continue to constitute the majority of the workforce in FE, as is the case in both primary and secondary education where men outnumber women in senior positions (see Whitehead & Moodley, 1999, for discussion). Also, FE is a site where women are found predominantly in the lower levels of middle management (fourth tier and below) comprising 50–60% of this level of the workforce compared with under 20% at the very top (FEDA, 1997). As will now be discussed, there are number of competing interpretations of what this changing statistical picture signals for gender relations, management and organisational cultures in FE.

Interpreting Change

Whitehead (1996, 1999; also Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998) suggests that the FE environment that women enter into as managers has been remasculinised in favour of a 'thrusting' entrepreneurialism, a new work culture which serves to reinforce and

validate many male manager's sense of being masculine and men. This aggressive and competitive 'boys' own' culture presents a challenge to an earlier FE environment that was marked by a 'benign liberal paternalism' (Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998, p. 437). The 'new FE' although fundamentally insecure and shifting, privileges those managerial behaviours that are indulged in predominantly by men. Women are not exempt from this culture but in order to succeed they may feel under pressure to adopt a masculine approach to their work. Moreover, Whitehead (1998) contends that like many men, some women are also likely to be seduced by the existential pull of management. Specifically, Whitehead argues that 'frantic organisational cultures' such as are seen now in FE, may, for many women managers, offer a form of ontological security, thereby replacing other forms of security and identity found more traditionally in family and home.

The competitive and instrumental arena to which Whitehead refers, has similarities with the 'competitive' organisational culture that Newman (1994) sees as a feature of the new public management of the public sector. Drawing on imagery of how the business world works, she argues that this competitive organisational culture privileges cutthroat, macho or 'cowboy' styles of working. Newman argues:

It is as if the unlocking of the shackles of bureaucratic constraints had at last allowed managers to become 'real men' operating in the 'real world' of the market place, and released from the second-class status of public sector functionaries. (Newman, 1994, p. 94)

For Newman, the public sector also contains another variant that is developing greater salience in the public sector, as it recovers from the impoverishment of the Thatcher years and attempts to rebuild cultures delivering quality services. This model, known as 'transformational culture' is primarily concerned with the empowerment of staff. Within this organisational culture leaders are expected to communicate missions and visions. Newman argues that the emphasis on cultural change:

... offers the possibility of new ways of doing things, and perhaps offers new organisational space for women. There is a recognition of the need to change the values and styles of management with a greater emphasis on the 'soft skills; (communicating with, staff and customers) at which women excel. (Newman, 1994, p. 196)

For Prichard *et al.* (1998), however, it is the concentration of women at the lower levels of middle management, especially as programme or curriculum managers, that is of significance. Due to multiple restructuring carried out in the context of funding constraints, they suggest that women are more vulnerable to 'carrying the burden' of transformation as they engage in both the tasks of teaching and management. Drawing on the work of Casey (1995), Yeatman (1995) and Deem & Ozga (1996a, 1996b) they suggest that processes of cultural change currently in train in the tertiary sector contain both progressive and inclusive elements which apparently coincide with feminist agendas and with many women's preferred styles of management. However, these processes may also challenge many women's preferences by

implicating them in corporate managerialist and economic rationalist led policy making.

Cole (1998) argues that the decline in traditional craft industries and the ascendance of the service sector is another possible explanation for the increasing participation of women in FE, both as students and as staff. Cole sees this shift occurring prior to incorporation but which was subsequently given further impetus through incorporation when colleges were pushed to go for growth. This has encouraged colleges to employ more women on service industry related courses opening up further opportunities for them to aim towards management positions. Based on current trends in the sector and with the younger profile of women senior managers in mind, Cole argues that women who leave their posts are highly likely to be replaced by other women thus creating a 'snowballing' effect (see also Cole, this issue).

In the section that follows, I draw on data from the CTMC project to explore some of these various interpretations. I focus primarily on issues of how women manage and are seen to manage, and the concept of 'career planning'. These areas are critical in terms of understanding whether there has been a remasculinisation of the FE work environment or whether the increase in senior women in management signals a shift towards more feminised or transformational management styles. Such a shift may present a challenge the 'boys' own culture' reportedly existing in the sector (Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998). The second area of 'career' is important, because if women are beginning to engage in planning their careers and are actively seeking further promotion, this may also signal an identity shift towards a more masculinised approach to their work.

Women Managing to Lead?

The research informing this article draws on the accounts of 23 middle and senior managers. Fieldwork was conducted between January 1997 and 1998 during the transition from Conservative to New Labour control of education. In all, over 150 interviews were conducted with key individuals across five FE institutions including governors, teachers, support staff, union representatives, and senior and middle managers. The colleges were selected from three counties across middle England. They included two large colleges (one located in an inner city); two mid-size colleges (one located in a town centre and one in a suburban setting); the fifth institution was a small sixth form college situated in a rural town community.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all ten senior managers (including two principals and one vice-principal) in post at the time of interviewing. Thirteen academic middle managers were selected from a wider sample of middle managers. All were white, which is not unrepresentative of the wider picture in FE (e.g. 98% of FEDA respondents were white). Unlike the women interviewed by Deem and Ozga (1996a, 1996b) in their study of feminist academic managers in F/HE, the women in the CTMC project subscribed to a variety of political views and opinions. They ranged from those who effectively downplayed or denied the sexism of the system and their colleagues (see also Marshall, 1993) to those who saw gender

as a fundamental organising principle in their work and referred to the sexualisation and eroticisation of their positions within the organisations (see also Sheppard, 1993, for discussion).

Gender, Management and Organisational Cultures: women at the very top

At the time of conducting the research, considerable turnover in senior personnel had been experienced across FE. This was reflected in the study, in that four out of the five colleges had appointed new principals during the period 1995–97; two of these were women. An interesting theme emerging from the interviews concerned the comparative management styles of ‘old’ and ‘new’ guard of principals; the former being characterised in terms which could be regarded as highly ‘masculine’. Though there were variations, the terms overwhelmingly used to describe two of the outgoing principals and one outgoing vice-principal (all men) included ‘brutal’, ‘aggressive’ ‘unwilling to listen’, distant’ and ‘bombastic’. Another outgoing principal was commonly described as ‘a shy intellectual man’, but nonetheless a ‘distant’ principal who was not readily accessible in comparison to the incoming female principal. This ‘aggressive’; ‘hardline’ and confrontational style was not necessarily restricted to men but was applied to women senior managers in gender-specific ways. One such hardline or confrontational senior woman manager was referred to as ‘some sort of awful fairy tale character, like the Ice Queen or something’. This suggests that the militaristic language widely drawn on both in the language of FE strategy (Mahony, 1997), and in describing the particular styles of ‘oppressive’ men managers, does not lend itself easily to the description of such ‘hardline’ or ‘confrontational’ women. As Court (cited in Sachs & Blackmore, 1998, p. 272) argues, such confrontational or angry women are typically described in different ways to comparable men, for example, as dragons, spitfires, nags or as sharp tongued, cruelly nasty, whiningly unpleasant or persistently annoying.

By comparison, the newer guard of FE senior managers appointed during 1995–97 were predominantly characterised by organisational others as ‘open’ ‘willing to listen’ ‘approachable’, ‘energetic’, ‘visible’, ‘team building’, ‘collaborative’ and ‘visionary’ (though the extent to which this was a shared view among staff varied from one college to another). Such terms reflect the language of corporate culture as advocated by management gurus such as Peters (1992; see Salaman, 1997; Maddock, 1999, for discussion). Corporate culture advocates such as Peters endorse apparently ‘softer’ more ‘feminised’ approaches to management because these are seen to be more productive in binding individuals to the corporate aims and objectives of the organisation. In FE, this is a particularly important task since managers are expected to achieve this binding in the context of a particularly fractured environment following a wave of industrial action and low staff morale over pay and conditions (Shain & Gleeson, 1999).

While some managers made strong connections between ‘being’ a woman and the adoption of such feminised approaches to management [3], evidence from the project suggests that men too perform this ‘inclusive’ feminised style. For example, Jim a recently appointed principal in a college facing financial difficulty (and one

that had been described as aggressive and macho in its previous organisational culture), was also described as open, approachable and responsive:

[The culture] has become much more open ... [Jim] mixes with the staff. He comes into the refectory. He will sit and have his lunch with you if he is sitting there. He knows who people are. He has been around lots and lots of classes and met lots of students and spent time with them and talked with them. He has been out to all the local schools. He has made links with the local schools trying to repair the damage that has been done and I think you could send him an email and know that he wouldn't be cross and he replies to emails as well which is absolutely amazing. (Louise, programme manager)

This 'inclusive' feminine style of management is further supported by some evidence of networking and collaboration between colleges in this study. In the context of wider Dearing (1996), Kennedy (1997) and Hodge (1998) agendas [4], it is tempting to view this emergent feminine style as a challenge to the hegemony of the masculine or 'boys' own' culture. However, in spite of official discourses of collaboration and partnership, New Labour remains committed to the previous government's principle of 'more for less'. Within managerialist discourses such as performativity, where managers work towards the achievement of externally defined targets (Halford *et al.*, 1997), both women and men managers can find themselves having to promote the managerial 'bottom line'. The study also found reports of bullying, indicating that the macho style is alive and well (see also Nash, 1999). The current FE sector appears, then, to be characterised by competing organisational cultures manifesting themselves in the tensions between 'hard' and 'soft' versions of new managerialism (Legge, 1993). Such tensions can be seen to be 'lived' by some women managers as they attempt to balance the (emotional) needs of individuals with the need to 'get things done'. For example, Maria (a principal) speaks of a situation in which she had to deal with the family of a recently deceased member of staff:

I took personal responsibility of speaking to the press on the issue of writing to the family and to the staff who had known this member of staff and going around and talking to them, arm around when necessary. In terms of dealing with staff ... it is knowing which things you can delegate and which you shouldn't shirk, ... both balancing the humane and the need to do something. The other thing is keeping in touch with mentors outside the organisation; you can't have an internal mentor. You can consult with your colleagues and ask them for advice but you can't give innermost feelings to them.

Such accounts suggest that

women in traditional male positions are faced with the dilemma of balancing rationality as demanded by institutional norms, and the effective dimension of emotionality, which for them is a preferred mode of negotiating social situations. (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998, p. 269)

Maria's account indicates that she is expected to be good at handling people and their emotions, and required to provide the nourishing emotions of care, warmth and patience which maintain the 'greedy organisation'; that is, those work sites that demand more and more of an employee's time and emotional commitment to work. However, Maria must remain firmly in control of her own emotions. For to display these even in 'justifiable' contexts, might invite characterisations of her as 'weak', non-rational or psychologically inadequate' (Blackmore, 1998; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). This tension between the 'hard' and 'soft', (the rational and emotional) could also be said to penetrate the roles that women and men are assigned to in FE management. Despite an increase in the number of women recruited to senior executive management positions, women in FE and certainly in the CTMC project, are overwhelmingly concentrated in particular roles (e.g. curriculum, human resources, student services and marketing) that are seen as 'softer' within FE organisations. Set against the discourse of performativity, it is the 'hard' functions of estates and finance that are seen to constitute the 'core' business of FE (see also Stott & Lawson, 1997). Women are not only found predominantly in 'softer' roles, but they remain in the minority in senior management positions (in the CTMC project women were outnumbered by men two to one). Moreover, as the wider FE picture reveals, the majority of women managers find themselves located in middle management, particularly at the lower levels (Prichard *et al.*, 1998).

Doing the 'Dirty' Work: middle managers

Middle management involves not only the management of budgets and people in the pursuit of greater efficiency, but also the mediation of tensions and dilemmas associated with rapid and unpredictable change (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Gleeson & Shain, 1999). While inclusivity and partnership may define the discursive reality of senior management (though not unchallenged), middle management emerges as a key site wherein tensions, stress and examples of bullying behaviour proliferate. This suggests that 'crisis and stress are increasingly being pushed further down the line' (Watkins, 1993), to where the majority of the women recruited to management positions since 1993 are located (FEDA, 1997; Prichard *et al.*, 1998).

The ambiguity referred to above produced a range of responses among middle managers in the CTMC project. However, for most, a feeling of vulnerability appeared to characterise the experience of being 'caught in the middle'. This was in part due to the fact that much of the unpopular restructuring ongoing at the time of the research was focused at middle management level. In Oldhill College for example, nearly 200 redundancy notices were announced, the majority at middle management level. Such continual reorganisation and restructuring means that managers live in fear of being 'restructured out' of the organisation. In such highly insecure environments, where there is considerable ambiguity over status and roles, managers may revert to using particular forms of aggressive and confrontational masculinity to deal with such insecurities. The following accounts, referring to a particular man manager in one college, give an indication of such tensions:

The ethos of the college is not one of fear but we have got somebody who has come in and basically he is a control person but he thinks he is a democratic leader ... Belinda, curriculum coordinator)

I had to establish that I wasn't his secretary. I had to establish that I was his equal ... but I do find that it is a stress for me because I am caught between staff whom I like, and unfair behaviour. I do believe that if you are a middle manager you do have to do that dirty job of actually, if there is something going wrong and there are students who aren't getting their fair share really ... you do have to go and say 'Look this isn't on' ... and that is very, very difficult but I think by adding an element of aggression it just makes it worse. (Isabel, programme developer)

The 'dirty job' of middle management to which Isabel refers, means that many women work long hours to balance the various demands of teaching, management and other responsibilities. Many of the women managers considered they worked an average 10–15 hours longer per week than many of their male colleagues. For some, this was tied to the desire to achieve further promotion, suggesting a possible shift towards a masculine approach to work. Others, however, referred to a 'streak of perfectionism' as a characteristic of women's approach to work. Brenda and Hilary, for example, discuss how women's ability to deal with multiple tasks simultaneously, and their desire to prove themselves, means they are 'ripe' for potential exploitation:

I've seen women managers at middle management and senior level cope better with all this change ... women can juggle more things in the air and be more flexible. ... Women have to be adaptable, ... it could be why there are a lot more women principals and a lot more senior managers now. ... I get the difficult jobs to do here, internally in terms of communicating with staff ... the ... appropriate way [to deal] with people. (Brenda, vice-principal)

One of the positive things about [previous principal] was that he liked working with women and we also had a Finance Director [****] who liked working with women [because] he said that woman felt they had got to prove themselves and therefore if you paid a woman a certain amount of money to do the job the same amount as you would pay a man you would get more out of the woman because they would be trying harder to prove themselves and therefore ... he thought financially they were a good thing to have; he got more out of them for the same money. (Hilary, director)

A number of women also complained that they were paid less than their male peers for carrying out comparable work. In Monica's case, this marginalisation also extended to her being excluded from the senior executive level, despite being a 'director'. For her, this results in feelings of marginalisation and lack of recognition:

I was very pleased when we appointed a new principal who is a woman. She is very good but I did feel marginalised and irritated [under the previous regime] because I had done a lot of good work and I never felt the

recognition was there. I don't want people to thank me or pat me on the back but just a slight 'You really did well on that' would help now and ... so I look forward to working with [the new principal] and taking up opportunities she may offer to widen my experience.

The above account suggests that managers such as Monica see the appointment of women principals as a positive move towards redressing issues of gender discrimination at work. However, this means that women principals can suffer from a 'burden of representation' (see Shain, 2000, for discussion), since their presence signals on the one hand that other women too can 'make it to the top', but, on the other, it can also dissuade women from seeking further promotion. This may be because they see in the experiences of such women the contradictions and tensions that are a central feature of working within highly competitive and masculine cultures. The next section explores in more detail such issues with reference to conceptions of career and promotion.

Changing Conceptions of Career: routes to promotion

The majority of participants in the research, both men and women, when talking about their backgrounds, considered that they had 'fallen' into FE more by accident than by design. However, women were more likely than men to make reference to career breaks (e.g. to have children). This supports Ozga's assertion (1993, p. 1) that 'women do not have access to the experience of unilinear career progression open to men, nor do they choose to pursue such limited versions of career development'. In common with Stott and Lawson's study (1997, p. 110), women senior managers and especially principals, have not as a rule, planned their careers over the long term. However, recent career moves are more likely to have been planned. As Wendy (a recently appointed principal) explains:

I am great fatalist. I always knew I wanted to teach. I always thought I would like to be a Principal. I knew I would not be able to do what [female vice-chancellors] have done because I didn't have that kind of background but equally I wasn't sure I wanted to be in schools so I think I started planning probably about 5 years ago let's say, to this kind of goal but up until then I was just anxious to get what I could earn ... and gather qualifications as I went along.

Although she had only begun to plan her career in the last 5 years her advice to new entrants in the profession was indeed to have a goal:

I would say to anybody 'I think you ought to know what your goal is'. You asked me if I knew what my goal was and I probably didn't. I have had short-term goals I suppose but I think somebody coming in ought to know why they are coming in. (Wendy, principal)

At senior levels there was evidence of recent career planning corresponding to Wendy's approach. Maria, for example, had chosen her particular college with a view to obtaining a national FE position on retirement. Such findings present a

challenge for research that suggests women are not career planners. Monica, referred to earlier in the article, adopted what could be seen as a masculine approach, with her husband preparing her meals, so that she could spend more time actively pursuing further promotion. There was also some evidence that networking was occurring with women senior managers approaching women principals for advice on career success. However, other women, especially those occupying the lower levels of management, were less likely to have planned their careers and indeed some confessed that they would not have actively sought promotion without being invited to do so by their line managers. Many women in the project adopted a rather cautious approach to further promotion as the next section reveals.

Why Women Say 'Stuff It' to Promotion

Alimo-Metcalf (1995) suggests that women managers are tempted by posts which are interesting and which involve their personal development, being motivated by organisational goals rather than by the promise of promotion. They tend to seek self and organisational improvements indicating that many women are focused on change and transformation as well as career development. This argument is supported by Angela's acceptance of a pay decrease in her next employment because personal development is prioritised over further promotion within her current institution:

I am prepared to earn less money because I think the job is sufficiently interesting and challenging and I think it is going to be rewarding enough and I see it as perhaps something I will do for 2 years and then maybe I will move to something wider. (Angela, programme manager)

Such accounts are supported by other evidence in the literature indicating that women and men appear to hold different 'career concepts', with women rating self-development, satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and the desire for challenge more highly than promotion (Stott & Lawson, 1997). Recent research suggests, however, that such 'choices' can be explained by reference to a complex interrelationship of a variety of institutional factors that both facilitate and mitigate against women's promotion to leadership positions (Bolton & Coldron, 1998). For example, Sachs and Blackmore (1998, p. 267) in identifying these as 'structural factors', argue that 'particular dominant organisational cultures, images of leadership and perceptions of administrative work and professional cultures may exclude or unequally integrate women, individually or collectively'. In other words, organisational cultures contain both enabling factors that facilitate women accessing leadership positions, but also disabling factors, preventing women from successfully negotiating organisational cultures. This means that due to the detailed knowledge women possess of existing cultures within their organisations, many women are aware that promotion effectively means a choice between *either* work or family (Halford *et al.*, 1997). Belinda for example, talks of the resentment she feels at having to work during vacation periods. But it is the particular organisational culture within her own institution that

indicates to her that her work would still be 'hidden' and undervalued were she to seek further promotion:

My resentment is the time it takes away from my family because at Christmas ... I marked 150 essays ... I think my resentment is that it is not valued ... It is hidden work that nobody knows about and therefore it is part of the job that people don't recognise ... don't value. Now I have just been into a meeting and the [male] Principal says: 'I and [male vice-principal] are sad because we have spent the whole of Christmas sorting out the structure'. ... The way it was said would seem to indicate that they are the only ones who have done any work over Christmas and it is simply not true. (Belinda, curriculum coordinator)

Experiential knowledge of the particular organisational culture is a critical factor in determining whether women 'opt' to apply for promotion. Emma (a director) has, against the odds, experienced a rapid rise into senior management. Now in her mid-30s and one of the few senior managers in our study with young children, she has effectively 'decided' that she is not 'cut out' for principalship:

... 12 months ago I would have said I'd be a principal. I'm not so sure now. [long pause] I think I have learnt more about it. I think I was more naive perhaps in my perceptions of what the role entailed and what it involved. I don't think I am disillusioned ... but I am not sure whether I can be the politician, whether I can play the games in terms of the politics ... You have to present in a certain sort of way. You have to fit a certain sort of type. You have to behave in a certain sort of fashion. You have to manage in a certain sort of style and I am not everybody's cup of tea. I am not everybody's type because I am too outspoken in many respects and therefore I am not sure that I want to change that.

Although Emma has 'played the game' to date, achieving a rapid rise to seniority, it is this final identity shift involving, as she sees it, strict control of emotions and behaviours that dissuades her from seeking promotion as a principal. Similarly, for Isabel, a middle manager, it is the fear that she may be swallowed up entirely by corporate culture that is too high a cost to pay for promotion:

It is more my fear (and ambition could be very much linked with fears) that I would be removed totally from the person that I originally was and I don't particularly want that and that I would turn into paper woman. (Isabel, programme developer)

While there is evidence of some women adopting masculine approaches to work and actively seeking promotion, there are other women who are not prepared to pay the costs in terms of their personal lives or in terms of the identity shift that is needed. Just as Whitehead (1998) claims some women are being seductively pulled into management in their desire for ontological security, it could be argued that these are the very conditions that effectively turn other women 'off' from the thought of further promotion.

Conclusion

The changing statistical picture on women in FE management is a complex one, revealing as many contradictions as it does answers to the questions set out at the beginning of this article. At first sight there would appear to be a shift towards more feminised styles of management. However, a closer analysis reveals that despite being adopted by many women and some men, this way of managing has not replaced the masculine competitive values that underpin policy and practice in the FE sector. Ozga and Walker (1999) argue that first and second wave public sector managerialism (the thrusting competitive cost-cutting entrepreneurialism of the early 1990s and the team building and empowering approach of the late 1990s) are two sides of the same managerialist text. What this may indicate for many women managers is that as tensions and contradictions are experienced in the FE workplace, they are expected to perform and manage a variety of masculine and feminine identities in (gender) 'appropriate' contexts.

Despite the language of partnership, inclusivity and collaboration, there also exists evidence of 'bullying' in some colleges, particularly at the level of middle management, which is where the majority of women managers are concentrated. Here, the 'boys' own' culture does still proliferate (cf. Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998). This suggests that there has, indeed, been a remasculinisation of the FE work environment with the majority of women performing the 'dirty job' of middle management in a highly insecure and fractured environment (Deem & Ozga, 1996a; Prichard *et al.*, 1998). Analysis of the various career trajectories of women managers suggests that a complex network of cultures and relationships both facilitate and mitigate against women's promotion to formal leadership positions. While some women are indeed being seduced by managerial identities (cf. Whitehead, 1998), many others are not willing to pay the price in terms of their personal lives.

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Notes

- [1] There is insufficient space here to provide a detailed account of the policy implications of the 1992 FHE Act which brought about the incorporation of the sector. For a more detailed account of these processes see Shain and Gleeson (1999).
- [2] The CTMC project is concerned with the impact of the 1992 FHE Act on the local and institutional level of FE through a case study of five colleges. Specifically, the research seeks to understand the way that work and identity are being reshaped through processes of incorporation and marketisation in this sector.

- [3] See Shain (1999) for a more detailed discussion of such responses.
- [4] Such agendas emphasise widened participation, inclusivity and partnership.

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