

Gender and the Marketisation of Further Education: A Study of Two Colleges

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the marketisation of further education (FE) in England in the 1990s with specific reference to gender. A major restructuring of the public sector has taken place in recent years, and colleges have undergone significant changes, with reductions in funding, an increased emphasis on efficiency and accountability, and a new business ethos all evident.

This research was conducted in two inner-city colleges in 1997-98, using a combination of in-depth interviews, observation, and the examination of documents. The main aim was to identify dominant discourses and practices in the newly corporatised colleges, and to investigate the impact of these on gendered (raced, and classed) power relations. The thesis explores issues of funding and quality, new managerialism, and the restructuring of staffing, spaces and spatial relations. The importance given to new technological developments and their perceived role in the reconstruction of learning, learner and professional identities are also discussed. A further chapter explores the attention paid to equality concerns.

A Foucauldian concept of discourse is used to examine the knowledges and perspectives that are legitimised or suppressed within the new FE, and the research draws upon feminist and other critical analyses of marketisation, organisation and management. It is argued that the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, with its reification of 'rationality' and gendered implications, can be

seen to underpin the dominant discourses of the market, managerialism and new learning technologies in further education, and the thesis explores the processes by which gendered identities and power relations are maintained and reconstructed in this context.

Differences within and between the colleges are discussed, and oppositional discourses which assert professional educational values, an ethic of care and a commitment to challenging inequalities are all identified. The thesis concludes with an analysis of resistance, and an account of more recent policy developments in the sector.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis investigates the marketisation of further education in the 1990s with specific reference to gender. During this decade further education colleges in England experienced a period of rapid and marked transition from local authority control to newly incorporated institutions operating with severely reduced resources in an increasingly competitive market. This has been accompanied by new funding and accountability procedures, changes to management and the rise of a new managerialism, the restructuring of organisational staffing, structures, spaces and spatial relations, an increasing emphasis on the role of new technologies, and the reconstruction of staff and learner identities. Within all of this, equality has been reframed.

Using a case study approach to investigate two inner-city colleges, this research seeks to identify the ways in which changes in the discourses and practices of marketisation and new managerialism impact on gendered power relations in colleges.

Why Study FE?

The further education sector in the UK caters for the vast majority of post-16 year olds and adults in the education system, yet has tended to be ignored by politicians, the media, the public and the academic community. It is only in the

last few years that further education has begun to gain some attention in the national arena, with the publication of the report of the Government's Widening Participation Committee (Kennedy 1997), concerns about the need for a skilled workforce in the face of global competition, and well publicised allegations of sleaze in the sector. The 'New' Labour government also expressed grand plans for FE, with the Secretary of State asserting that 'by reaching out to the community further education can help to reduce social exclusion, increase employability and raise the nation's economic strength and morale' (cited in Education and Employment Committee, 1998, section A, para. 1).

There has been relatively little research focusing on the sector (Hughes et al. 1996) and most of that which has been conducted has been specific narrow policy related research often conducted by/for government agencies, rather than research which is theoretical or critical, although, as is seen in Chapter 2, this also has begun to change in the last few years.

The reasons why FE has been ignored so consistently in the UK are largely, I would suggest, to do with class. FE, with its roots in the provision of technical and craft education for working class men, has always been seen as the poor relation of the education system, only for those who are not academically inclined and/or have failed at school. A text aimed at parents written in 1970 for the Dept of Education and Science notes the myths that prevailed at that time, with FE seen as:

..instruction (as opposed to teaching) in craft subjects being given at night in depressing premises by part-time unqualified staff to apprentices of limited ability from humble background (Bristow 1970, p. 1).

Further education now serves a much more diverse student population. There are opportunities for students to study both vocational and academic courses, and a significant number progress on to university. It attracts both school leavers and adults and there are now more women than men studying in the sector. Yet I suspect that the myths still held by many people today do not differ too dramatically from those above. The elitism of the academic/vocational divide exercises a pervasive influence. Most middle class people who have gone through school, sixth form and university, and whose children do the same, know little about further education. Those same people are frequently the academics and politicians who continue to regard the FE sector as not worthy of attention (as long as it is meeting the labour needs of industry), yet its importance in providing education for sectors of the community previously denied it should not be underestimated or undervalued.

My own interest in further education began in the early 1970s when I left school at 16 to study for my A levels at the local FE college, then called a 'college of technology'. As a working class girl from the north of England, I was keen to escape the very middle class grammar school I had moved to in Kent, and further education provided this escape route. Not only were there many other working class students and far greater freedoms than I had experienced at school, but the middle class students tended to be those who had also not 'fitted in' in some way. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, gained 3 A levels and a passion for education and learning that I had not known since primary school. Ten years later I returned to FE, though to the rather different context of an inner-city London college as a lecturer. I began as a part-timer, moving on to a full time lecturership and finally

becoming a senior lecturer. I left the sector in 1997 having spent 14 years in it and witnessing enormous changes, including increasing marketisation and the removal of colleges from local authority control in 1993.

This research grew out of my commitment to and interest in further education, and from a desire to make sense of the changes that were taking place. With a number of my colleagues, I had long been involved with feminist campaigns and activities in the sector, both within the college in which I worked and with the advisory team of the local education authority. I initiated the setting up a college women's group; organised activities for International Women's Weeks; developed curriculum materials, anti-sexist and equal opportunities policies; organised a conference for women staff in FE within the Inner London Education Authority; and contributed to the design and delivery of heterosexism awareness training for each department and for the senior management team in the college in which I was currently working. Gradually, these activities petered out, in part, I suspect, due to broader changes including the increasing dominance of New Right politics and a backlash against both feminism and 'progressive' local authorities, whilst debates around issues of difference within feminism brought their own challenges. Yet there were also issues that seemed to be internal to the college I was working in. Increased workloads brought about by growing administrative demands and a worsening of conditions of service made it harder to find the time to meet or to engage in anything beyond the immediate demands of the job. But it also began to seem as if 'feminism' and indeed 'equality' were becoming 'dirty words', no longer acceptable in the new FE. A new language was being introduced along with what felt like alien ideas and practices from the business world. The myths of

post-feminism (Coppock et al. 1995) seemed to be sustained in the college, and I began to feel that to raise equality issues was to be labelled as old-fashioned and out of touch, not prepared to move with the times and recognise that there were new priorities for the college now.

Around this time I obtained my first senior lecturer post with a responsibility for 'quality development'. I began to sense that 'quality' meant rather different things in some of the literature and to senior managers than it did to the majority of lecturers, myself included, and I often felt as if I was walking a tightrope between these different perspectives. I later took on responsibility for the tutorial curriculum, and again began to experience similar tensions. Despite the apparent emphasis on supporting students, the resources were declining and the definitions of what support meant, and how it was valued, also seemed to be changing, as did the role of the tutor. I began to feel that many of the values and priorities held by myself and my closest colleagues were being dismissed and disregarded, yet I found it hard to pin down exactly how this was happening. Many of the new developments and procedures were presented as rational and necessary responses to changes in the funding and expectations of the further education sector, and in the best interests of students and the college as a whole. They 'made sense', and as such, to question or challenge them was to 'not make sense' or to be irrational in the face of very 'reasonable' changes. The impetus for this research came, therefore, from a very personal desire to understand the changes that I was experiencing in further education.

Aims

The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of marketisation and new managerialism on gendered (raced and classed) power relations in two further education colleges. Specifically , the aims are to:

- identify the dominant discourses and practices of marketisation and managerialism in these colleges;
- investigate how the changes in colleges were perceived and experienced by college staff at all levels, including administrative support staff, lecturers and managers;
- explore the impact of the dominant discourses and practices on gendered power relations and identities;
- identify the processes by which things become ‘sayable’ or ‘unsayable’ with particular reference to equality issues, and identify discourses and strategies of resistance;
- contribute to theoretical debates about gendered power relations in educational organisations, and to the small but growing body of research on further education.

National policy and funding initiatives, including reductions in public funding and the re-structuring of the public sector, have impacted strongly on further education, and this research aims to investigate that impact on two colleges. It is intended to provide a snapshot in the rapidly changing history of further education: an account of two colleges in specific inner-city locations in England, within the social, cultural, political and economic climate of the late 1990s.

The focus is on management, staffing and organisational matters as opposed to the curriculum and what goes on in the classroom, although, as will be seen, some of the funding and other policy implications for pedagogic practice, including the reconstruction of staff and learner identities, are discussed.

A Foucauldian concept of discourse is used to understand what things are deemed ‘sayable’ and ‘doable’ in the new FE, and to identify the ways in which some knowledges and perspectives are legitimised or valorised and others denigrated in particular contexts. Foucault suggested that:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980b, p.131).

In this research I will explore whether new ‘regimes of truth’ are being constructed in FE. A new discursive climate has been developing in further education from the mid to late 1980s and consolidated in the mid 1990s, a central aspect of which is an assumption that certain philosophies and practices of the business sector constitute the best way to organise further education (and other public services). A belief in the value of the market is pivotal to this, accompanied by new accountability and ‘quality’ practices, a new managerialism espousing managers’ ‘right to manage’, and an assumption that many college problems can be solved by organisational restructuring. ‘Image’ and marketability become important in the newly competitive climate, and a faith in new technologies as providing a magic solution to the problems colleges are facing can also be seen.

Whilst some of these elements have been identified as features of post-modernity (Hinkson 1991; Kenway 1995c), it is suggested that underpinning the dominant discourses of marketisation lies a reification of the mind, reason and rationality, and a relegation of the body, the affective and the ‘irrational’. As discussed in Chapter 2, technocratic rationality is very much in evidence and the Cartesian mind/body split, with its gendered, raced and classed implications, can be seen to be replayed within the discourses and practices of economic rationality, masculinist managerialism, the ‘logic’ of organisational restructuring, the mythologies of new technologies and the valorisation of the ‘individual learner’.

To what extent do these dominant discourses in further education at this time not only reinforce particular ‘truths’, but successfully discredit, and partially suppress, alternative readings and stances? In what ways were these discourses of marketisation challenged and oppositional discourses articulated?

An analysis based on discourse alone, however, is not adequate. Material inequalities are sustained by, and continue to construct, the discursive. A materialist analysis that can assist in understanding hierarchical power relations in organisations, and the persistence of the sexed, ‘raced’ and classed division of labour within colleges, is also important, and is further discussed in Chapter 2.

The focus of this thesis is on gender. Gender does not stand alone, however, nor is it a homogenous fixed category; it is both interwoven with and mediated through a range of discursive and material practices and relations, including those of class, ‘race’, and sexuality. Although there are common elements to discourses and

structures of inequalities, there are also differences, and as Bordo asks, 'how many axes can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?' (Bordo 1990, p. 139). Whilst gender is the chosen focus of study, therefore, there is a need for a micropolitical analysis which recognises that people 'occupy specific cultural positions, negotiate particular value systems and operate with a matrix of power relations inscribed by discourses of class, 'race', gender and age' (Troyna 1994, p. 336).

This Study

The research took place in two further education colleges during 1997 and 1998. The colleges are in some ways very similar. Both are in inner-city locations characterised by ethnic diversity and sharp contrasts between wealthy and poor neighbourhoods, with many students from local communities that have experienced high levels of deprivation and disadvantage. The colleges' historic costs have been high, to a large extent due to their more expensive inner-city locations, and both have faced severe reductions in government funding resulting in cuts in courses and contact (teaching) hours per course, as well as in staffing. At the time of this research, concerns with funding and attempts to balance the budget were taking priority in both colleges. One distinct difference between the colleges was the gender of the principal and senior management team, with College A having a man principal and only one woman on the senior management team, and College B headed by a woman with only one man on the senior management team.

Across the two colleges, in-depth interviews were conducted (both individual and group) with over 70 members of staff systematically selected to include support staff, lecturers and middle and senior management. In addition, meetings of different management teams within the colleges and some governing body meetings were observed, and key college texts examined.

Chapter 2 sets out to contextualise the research within the wider restructuring of education and the public sector, noting the trends towards marketisation and the development of a new managerialism. Some of the equality implications of the market are briefly discussed, followed by sections which explore technical rationality and theorisations of gendered power in educational organisations. The chapter concludes with an overview of the most pertinent literature and research on further education.

The research methodology is described in Chapter 3. The emphasis is on the research process, including issues of ethics and power relations.

Chapter 4 details the processes of marketisation in further education, then moves on to examine the implications for funding, quality and the desire for a corporate ethos in the case study colleges.

New managerial discourses and practices are discussed in Chapter 5, and a metaphor of (heterosexual) gendered familial relations is used to explore the ways in which power relations are enacted.

Chapter 6 considers the restructuring of the colleges as organisations, including the restructuring of staffing, spaces and spatial relations, as well as changes to communication and decision-making processes.

A different aspect of restructuring is discussed in Chapter 7: that of the reconstruction of learning, learner and staff identities in relation to the introduction of new technologies.

Chapter 8 brings the focus on to equality issues, and examines staff perceptions of the ‘state of play’ in relation to equality in each college. It becomes apparent that most of the staff interviewed feel that previous attempts to reduce inequalities have not been sustained, and the chapter goes on to explore the contextual aspects, both external and internal to the colleges, that appear to have impacted on this.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I pull together the main themes from the research. A discussion of power and resistance is followed by respondents’ visions of the future for their colleges, and the chapter concludes with an examination of more recent policy developments that have taken place since the fieldwork was completed.

Chapter 2

Marketisation, Managerialism, Rationality and Gender: Contextualising the Study.

This chapter sets out the context for the study and provides an overview of the relevant literature.

The first section focuses on the restructuring and marketisation of the public sector, and education specifically, in the 1980s and 1990s, and this is followed by a discussion of the associated developments in new managerialism. A number of writers have problematised the market in relation to equality issues, and the third section examines this literature and highlights particular concerns for further education.

A discussion of the ‘rationality’ that underpins dominant discourses and practices of education in the context of the market comprises the next section, along with a feminist analysis of gendered constructions of rationality. Consideration is then given to ways of theorising gendered power in organisations, with the final section focusing on existing research in the further education sector.

Restructuring the Public Sector and the Marketisation of Education

A restructuring of the public sector in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993; Clarke and Newman 1997; Exworthy and Halford 1999)

forms the backdrop to this research. This restructuring has encompassed a reduction in public funding, increasing marketisation, and the introduction of new managerialism across the range of public services. Education has not been exempt from these changes.

A growing body of work has documented the ways in which education has been marketised (Ball 1990a; Elliot and Hall 1994; Marginson 1994; Ball 1995; Kenway 1995b). Ball identifies a global trend in educational and social policy-making characterised by the insertion of the market, competition and business practices into education, with a culture of performativity or ‘the use of targets and performance indicators to drive, evaluate and compare educational “products”’ (Ball 1999a, p. 1). The vast majority of work on the market in education is critical of these developments, although there are a few exceptions which portray the market as the way to increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of educational providers (Chubb and Moe 1990; Tooley 1999).

A considerable amount of work on marketisation has taken place at Deakin University in Australia, with educational restructuring seen to encompass decentralisation (including devolution of management and financial matters), ‘deregulation’ (removing ‘restrictive rules’), ‘dezoning’ (opening up choice of schools) and ‘disaggregation’ (‘replacing collectivity, collegiality, co-operation with competitive individualism’) (Kenway 1995c, p. 1). These changes, it was argued, came about in order to cut public spending, devolve blame from the government and undermine opportunities for collective action. At the same time, some centralising tendencies could also be observed to retain some control over

curriculum matters. Kenway notes that the complexities of the marketisation of education then came to be seen in terms of four processes: privatisation, commercialisation, commodification and residualisation. The privatisation of previously public services could be seen as one way of reducing public spending, and was accompanied by the introduction of business models and ideas into education. Commercialisation provides opportunities for private sector organisations to enter the market as educational services and products are bought and sold in a new climate of competition. Kenway suggests that this commodification of education leads to a move away from education for personal development and social benefits and towards an increasingly narrow vocationalism. Residualisation is 'a concept developed to point to the structural implications of freedom of choice in social services' (*ibid.* p. 2), i.e. the ways in which choice for some reduces options for others and leads to a further inequitable distribution of resources. This was noted by Reay (1999) who demonstrated the consequences of middle class parents' choice of school for their children on the opportunities available for working class parents and children.

Bines summarises the changes in the public sector in the UK:

The establishment of quasi markets based on consumerism, competition, privatization and a diversity of provision and providers; consumer-based funding systems based largely on per capita use at individual service unit level; substantial change in professional roles, activities and autonomy, legitimised by a critique of professional effectiveness; the growth of managerialism as an ideological and organizational solution to perceived problems of public service management; new centre-local relations, including a growth in central government control of service definitions and funding procedures coupled with devolution of management to individual localised service units and a diminution of local government or other regional, democratically accountable responsibilities for planning and service delivery (Bines 1995, p. 157).

This aptly describes the construction of the ‘quasi-market’ (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993) of further education in the UK.

The impetus for these changes has been explained in terms of the dominance of the New Right, in particular New Right attacks on the public sector (Gleeson and Shain 1999a), and the desire to cut back the role of the State (Chitty 1997). Avis et al suggest that although the increase in centralisation and distrust of professionals is rationalised in terms of accountability and standards, ‘the real purpose of establishing so much control has been the desire to contain and neutralize the so-called “left-wing” values of what is often disparagingly referred to as “the educational establishment”’(Avis et al. 1996, p. 5), and to tie education much more closely to economic demands. It can also be seen as a desire to control the activities of so-called ‘progressive’ local authorities (Cooper 1989; Epstein 1993), something that the central Labour Party colluded with in an attempt to establish electoral credibility.

Esland asserts that a major achievement of the New Right was the production of a dominant discourse that was hard to challenge.

Education’s traditional liberal humanistic values have been derided and abandoned by the New Right and replaced by a totalizing and unreflexive business-oriented ideology expressed through a discourse based on markets, targets, audits, ‘quality performance’ and human resource management (Esland 1996, p. 20).

He continues:

The deployment of concepts such as ‘freedom’, ‘choice’, ‘efficiency’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘accountability’, ‘value for money’, ‘quality’, ‘ownership’ and ‘empowerment’ - all with carefully designed populist inflections - has been a fundamental feature of New Right stagecraft and, by seeking to dominate both message and medium, the New

Right has had considerable success in erecting a discursive platform which has been able both to define the terms of the debate and to exclude and marginalize those who do not share its values and assumptions (ibid. p. 25-26).

A ‘blame the teacher’ discourse, or a ‘discourse of derision’ (Kenway 1987; Ball 1990b) was very evident in College A in this study, and was perceived by many lecturers to devalue and dismiss their professional expertise. Furthermore Apple (1983) has demonstrated how such derision is both classed and gendered.

Yet these changes cannot just be explained in terms of the dominance of the New Right. Kenway argues that the restructuring of education needs to be seen in the context of the material, social and cultural shifts of post-modernity (Kenway 1995c), changes which the New (or centre) Left have drawn upon in a discourse of modernisation to continue the Conservative educational agenda (Cole 1998). For both Right and Left, the discursive strategies used to justify many of the changes in post-compulsory education have drawn on material changes in the global economy, work organisation and labour processes, in an attempt, in Edwards et al’s words, ‘to “normalize” a particular view of the future of economic and social life which is, in fact, contingent and challengeable’ (Edwards 1993, p. 177).

New technological developments, globalisation and post-Fordism form the backdrop to a particularly dominant perspective in relation to post-compulsory education at this time. The argument is that in order to compete in the global economy, a highly skilled and flexible labour force is required, and post-compulsory education and training has a particular role to play in this. In order to

meet the challenge, further education needs to change, to throw off the shackles of tradition and move towards a new era of flexibility, choice, open and resource-based learning, the use of new learning technologies and the unitization of the curriculum. A workforce willing and able to carry these changes forward becomes essential, hence the importance of new managerialism and the adoption of business models to ensure efficiency. Individuals become fully responsible for their fate – if they are not able to compete in the new labour market, it is because they have failed to acquire the appropriate skills or dispositions. This post-Fordist vision of a rosy future with opportunities for all, based on human capital theory, is not without its critics (see, for eg. Gorz 1989 cited in Edwards 1993; Hutton 1996; Blackmore 1997b; Hatcher 1998; Schuller and Field 1998), yet it has continued to inform government policy, with a restructuring of further education seen as an essential pre-requisite.

New Managerialism

During the 1980s and 1990s alongside processes of marketisation, there were also major changes in the management of public sector organisations in the UK and elsewhere. A ‘New Public Management’ has been identified (Hood 1995; Bottery 1996), characterised by a reduction in the distinctions between the public and private sectors and an emphasis on efficiency, measurable performance, outputs and competition. Others have referred to these new management practices as a new managerialism (Trow 1994), a term that emphasises the ideological aspects of what is presented as neutral, rational business practice. For Clarke and

Newman, managerialism has played an important role in the restructuring of the state and public institutions 'both as an ideology that legitimates the development of new organisational forms and relationships and as the *practical* ideology of being businesslike that promises to make the new arrangements work' (Clarke and Newman 1997, p. 32, stress in original). Educational institutions have not escaped these trends, and a growing body of work has documented the ways in which new managerialism has become increasingly dominant (Trow 1994; Deem 1998).

New managerialism has promised efficiency, progress, excellence and salvation, and it both legitimates and 'drives' change. Clarke and Newman point to how the new manager is constructed as a visionary, a heroic superman, in which masculine leadership images are very evident. A clear dichotomy is drawn between a 'demonised' past and the positive and visionary future, with change towards the latter constructed as of benefit to all. Management gurus such as Peters and Waterman, with their book *In Search of Excellence* (1982) argue persuasively for the transformative possibilities of a move away from the old, 'unresponsive, paternalistic and leaden bureaucracies to the customer-driven, flexible, quality-oriented and responsive organisations of the future' (Clarke and Newman 1997, p. 38). Peters and Waterman present the management, or leadership, potential as one of excitement, passion and commitment, so seeming to offer an alternative to a narrow technical rationalist approach to managing. When I was working as a senior lecturer for quality development in a further education college, the (woman) principal at that time presented myself and all members of the college management team with a copy of another of Peters' texts, *Thriving on Chaos* (Peters 1989), to the cynicism of two of the men senior managers who embraced a

much more technicist view of managing. As Clarke and Newman argue, managerialism has been so successful precisely because it has been able to garner acceptance and enthusiasm for change from different constituencies, and for some this has been by ‘a distinct political inversion of definitions of radical and conservative’ (ibid. p. 38). So change has been presented as radical and progressive, using the terminology of values, transformation and empowerment:

It is through the power of these discourses of change, we argue, that the unthinkable became thinkable; the unspeakable became speakable and things which at first appeared to be terrifying inversions of old certainties, came to be a normal part of everyday practice (Clarke and Newman 1997, p. 39).

Whilst managerialism has now become dominant, Clarke and Newman argue that it has not entirely replaced the traditional ‘bureau-professional’ order, with both co-existing in complex configurations. Their central argument, however, rests on the move towards a ‘Managerial State’, with common elements evident across the public sector. Bottery (1996) has pointed out how the implementation and form of new public management will be different in different public services; this research demonstrates differences *within* a sector.

Managerialism is not gender neutral, and Newman (1994) has provided an important feminist contribution to discussions about new managerialism in the public sector. She shows how the different organisational and managerial cultures are gendered (and raced) in different ways, and points to the difficulties for women in taking on managerial and professional identities within these different cultures, something that is also taken up by Dehli (1996).

This thesis examines the different formations of new managerialism in two further education colleges and draws on a feminist analysis of gendered power relations and gendered organisations to help to account for these differences. In further education, Leonard (1998) notes the increasing dominance of a new masculinist managerialism in the marketised sector, whilst Whitehead described the changes in management discourses and practices in colleges in terms of a move from a rather ‘benign’ paternalism to an aggressive and ‘thrusting’ entrepreneurial managerialism. He refers to this as a ‘re-ordering of dominant masculinities’ (Whitehead 1998b, p, 3), whilst Kerfoot and Knights (1993) identified a ‘discourse of masculinism’ that underpins both paternalism and strategic management. As Clarke and Newman (1997) suggest, managerialism has not completely replaced other discursive formations, and the research identifies educational professional discourses, and articulations of ‘caring’, as resistant to dominant masculinist new managerialism. In Chapter 5, I draw on familial discourses to analyse the different configurations of new managerialism, highlighting gendered patterns of interaction and identity construction amongst managers and other staff.

Equality In The Marketplace

Webb argues that:

The shift to neo-conservative political and market-oriented economic policies, widely enforced through managerialist initiatives across different agencies of the state and public sector, has weakened formal commitment to even the liberal notion of EO (Webb 1997, p. 159).

There have been some attempts, within a liberal framework, to further specific equality concerns, and those related to further education are discussed in Chapter 8. In the context of the market and new managerialism, however, the impact of these on the colleges in this study has been minimal, as will be seen. The inequalities generated and reconstructed by the market have formed the basis of many criticisms of its role in education (Ball 1990a; Ball 1995; Gewirtz et al. 1995; Mahony and Frith 1996; Kenway 1997; Reay 1999), although as Kenway notes, much of the work on marketisation has ignored gender (Kenway 1995c). Marginson points to the hierarchical power relations embedded within market forms:

Exchange tends to inequality, the capacity to consume is ranked in units of money, and producers are ranked in terms of value. Hierarchy and inequality of outcomes are necessary conditions of educational markets (Marginson 1994, p. 5-6),

although as he points out, inequality of outcomes are a feature of the old elitist models too.

In further education, colleges are under pressure to prioritise courses that make money, rather than looking first and foremost to the educational needs of students in the local communities, something that most of the respondents in this study commented upon (see Chapter 4). The pressure on resources is reducing taught hours on courses, without increasing other forms of tutoring or support. Those students who can learn 'independently' and who do not need much support will survive, although whether they are getting the breadth and depth of educational experiences they may have received in the past is open to question. Other students may be denied entry in the first place, as the emphasis on successful outputs

means that pressure is on to recruit only those students who are likely to succeed with lower levels of support.

Not only is the pressure within colleges heightened, but the financial pressures on further education students can be severe. Grants are more or less non-existent and most students are working as well as studying. For women students and those from minority ethnic groups, the pressures of a gendered and raced labour market often combine with inadequate and expensive childcare provision to make studying a logistical nightmare. The moves towards a 'flexible' curriculum all too often simply mean that women students are still juggling too many commitments with too few resources. Although we hear a lot about 'the individual' in the new FE, these aren't embodied individual students struggling with everyday problems, but the abstract individual - a mythic figure, a fantasy.

Both learner and staff identities are reconstructed within the discourses and practices of marketisation. Marginson notes the construction of market subjectivities and argues that:

The logic of markets requires people to take on the characteristics imagined by neo-classical economists: the drive to maximise individual utility, the separation of the interests of one individual from those of another, and competitive behaviours. If subjectivity is always more complex than *homo economicus* would suggest, markets nevertheless leave their mark, calling up hard-headed consumers, and efficient and entrepreneurial producers (Marginson 1994, p. 6).

Yet these subjectivities are also gendered. The market is based on economicistic notions of free-choice and the rational, autonomous 'economic man'; a 'detached cogito' (Nelson 1993) making perfectly rational and objective choices unburdened by material and social influences. As Strassman suggests, whilst this may be a

realistic prospect for white, middle-class men, it is unlikely to reflect 'economic reality for many others' (Strassmann 1993, p. 61). This separate notion of the self has been criticised by feminist theorists as rooted in men's oedipal experiences/fantasies rather than the notions of connectedness that have been identified with constructions of feminine identities (Chodorow 1978; Gilligan 1987). O'Neill argues that the 'operation of the market *and* the rational being who makes choices within it, are based on the endorsement of male attributes, capacities and models of activity' (O'Neill 1996, p. 404, stress in original).

Within further education, the independent autonomous learner, able to make totally rational choices, is the reified ideal, and is now tied closely to new technological developments (see Chapter 7). This not only ignores the ways in which such models are associated with particular notions of masculinity in western culture, but also the extent to which learning is an interactive process, where connections between learners facilitate understanding and further learning. Dehli (1996) notes the way in which cuts in funding are justified in terms of challenging cultures of 'dependency'. At the same time, Blackmore shows how the market has led to a restructuring of work relations and a re-gendering of educational labour, including a remasculinisation of the centre (where the 'hard' financial decisions etc are made) and an increasingly feminised and casualised teaching force (Blackmore 1996). A central theme of this thesis is that, despite Peters', and others, evocations of passion, values and feminised leadership, the 'thrust' of policy and the associated practices in relation to further education in this country has been to validate and valorise the masculine, and denigrate or dismiss the feminine. It is hard managerialism, technology and technical

rationality that are in favour, whilst caring, support, and embodiment are disparaged. In this discursive climate, it is not easy for a woman to be both a successful (feminine) woman, and also a successful professional, manager or indeed learner at the forefront of the new FE.

Rationality, Gender And The Body

For Hinkson (1991), educational markets today are post-modern markets, characterised by an emphasis on IT and image, the commodification of the curriculum, and the development of this new market-based construction of the individual student, or in Hinkson's terms, a post-modernist notion of the autonomous individual. All of these elements can be identified as aspects of the marketised further education sector in the UK, yet a strong legacy of a rather modernist Cartesian dualism continues to underpin the dominant discourses and practices of marketisation, and a faith in rationality is very evident. Instrumental rationality according to Gibson is 'concerned with *method* and efficiency rather than with *purposes* ... It is the divorce of fact from value, and the preference, in that divorce, for fact' (Gibson 1986, p. 7 cited by Hodkinson 1996, stress in the original).

Technocratic or instrumental rationality can be seen to underpin discourses and practices of the market (Hodkinson 1996), management (Kanter 1977; Blackmore 1989; Ball 1990c; Avis 1996; Stoney 1998), bureaucratic organisations (Ferguson

1984; Mumby 1988; Rizvi 1989; Burton 1993) and post-compulsory education (Reeves 1995; Bloomer 1996; Gleeson 1996).

The conception of bureaucratic organisations as thoroughly rational permeates organisational theory, with Weber's work (Weber 1948) being very influential. More recent developments in organisational theory have challenged this account (Reed 1992), with increasing recognition of the micropolitics (Ball 1987), sexuality (Burrell and Hearn 1989), and gender (Ferguson 1984; Shakeshaft 1987; Blackmore 1989; Ramsey and Parker 1992; Witz and Savage 1992) of organisations. Ferguson presents a convincing radical feminist case against bureaucratic organisations, arguing that:

As both a structure and a process, bureaucracy must be located within its social context; in our society, that is a context in which social relations between classes, races, and sexes are fundamentally unequal. Bureaucracy, as the 'scientific organization of inequality' serves as a filter for these other forms of domination, projecting them into an institutional arena that both rationalizes and maintains them (Ferguson 1984, p. 7-8 citing Lefort 1974-5).

Ferguson makes comparisons between the construction of feminine subjects within patriarchal family relations, and the construction of subordinates in bureaucratic organisations. For Ferguson, bureaucracies are about control and conformity under a veil of ideological neutrality. Sheppard also argues that:

The notion of organizational structure as an objective, empirical and genderless reality is itself a gendered notion. In a structure where male dominance is taken for granted, the assumption of the invisibility of gender can be understood as an ideological position. It masks the extent to which organizational politics are premised on the dominance of one set of definitions and assumptions that are essentially gender based (Sheppard 1989, p. 142).

Management has also traditionally been underpinned by a discourse of rationality. Avis (1996) points to the technical rationality of quality discourses and new managerialism, and Stoney (1998) traces the myth of rationality in the history and theoretical roots of strategic management. Indeed, the model of management and leadership presented in most uncritical management literature is that of the 'rational' manager. The management role is seen as a technical one, where a range of techniques and management styles are utilised to achieve business goals. Although some more recent management texts have recognised the 'messyness' of organisations and advocate 'capturing the hearts and minds of the staff' (Sallis 1993, p. 128)¹, gendered divisions between 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to managing are still firmly in evidence (Wajcman 1998), and in this research, a discourse of managerial rationality is apparent.

Educational managers can be seen to remove themselves from the messiness of teaching and learning into a world of monitoring, data, inputs, outputs, efficiency measures and quality control. Ball uses Weber's 'rationalist nightmare' to argue that 'management stands in tension with its imperfect servants. The managed are fragile, prone to irrationality, atavistic practices, and surfeits of emotion' (Ball 1990c, p. 157-158). The mind/body dichotomy is clearly evident. For Blackmore, 'leadership is reduced to technique and not purpose, passion and desire' (Blackmore 1996, p. 344), but it is technique with clear connotations of control and mastery, that is, I would argue, with passion and desire. Indeed Blackmore goes on to point out how the principals she interviewed explained that:

¹ See also Handy, C. in his influential *Understanding Organizations*. 1976. Harmondsworth: Penguin.; and Peters, T. and Waterman, R. 1982. *In Search of Excellence*. New York: Harper and Row.

Leadership, particularly in a period of rapid change, is about emotions - desire, fear, despair, caring, disillusionment, pain, anger, stress, anxiety and loneliness... (but)... emotionality has been cast in opposition to and lesser than, rationality, in highly gendered ways (ibid. p 346).

The emphasis the women in this study place on 'caring' is of relevance here, and the extent to which this can be seen as an oppositional discourse to a technicist and masculinist new managerialism is explored in Chapter 5.

Kanter (1977) saw this emphasis on rationality and efficiency as the way in which the new managerial profession justified its existence, and sanctioned the degree of control exercised by managers. Greenfield argues that this scientific approach to management 'has done much to establish the belief that devalued but rational decision-making is desirable, attainable, and scientifically verifiable' (Greenfield 1988, p. 128), making life more comfortable for managers by taking away all responsibility for decisions that may impact seriously on workers' lives, such as decisions to make staff redundant. According to Hodgkinson, 'the rhetoric of technicism appeals to managers and policy-makers across a wide political spectrum, because it offers the illusion of control over complex and possibly unmanageable processes' (Hodgkinson 1996, p. 139).

Instrumental rationality can also be seen to underpin dominant discourses about the role and purpose of education and the curriculum (Bloomer 1996; Gleeson 1996). According to Reeves, colleges 'are expected to present themselves as legitimate in terms of the accepted rationality of the outside world (that is, in the case of further education, the world of business) and to adopt the same approaches to ensure their legitimacy' (Reeves 1995, p. 65). Colleges appear, therefore, to

have little choice but to behave like businesses. 'While this may not necessarily help them in delivering an education service, it assists them in acquiring a legitimacy based on the standards of economic rationality' (*ibid.* p. 69).

Ball notes how the whole concept of change in education is framed within a discourse of progress and 'regarded unproblematically as a good thing' (Ball 1987, p. 29). Reeves suggests that 'even the terms rationality and rationalisation have been appropriated to support the conviction of the inevitable triumph of the forces of modernity. All opposition, by definition, becomes irrational' (Reeves 1995, p. 93). This echoes Ball's argument that anything which doesn't fit the increasingly 'rational' world of accountability, monitoring and control, for example notions of progressivism or egalitarianism, come to be seen as symptoms of madness, as irrational (Ball 1990c). Some varieties of feminism would certainly be aligned with the irrational in this dichotomy. One wonders whether the decrease in overt feminist campaigning and activities within colleges is, in part, to do with this relocation in relation to dominant discourses. Labels of madness and irrationality tend to be attached to particular groups within society, and some women respondents in this research were very aware of this.

A recognition of the ways in which the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy, and consequent definitions of the 'rational', are gendered is missing from most of the non-feminist analyses of technocratic rationality. However, as Walkerdine notes 'the modern conception of the rational, contained in logocentric discourses, sets up as its opposite an irrational. This is invested in and understood as the province of women' (Walkerdine 1990, p. 30). The Enlightenment idea of the triumph of

reason over emotion, of the need to control and suppress dangerous passions to progress, epitomised the mind/body split, with men occupying the realm of Reason and women confined to nature. Lloyd (1984) has shown how notions of reason and rationality have been seen as essentially male since early Greek literature, in the work of Pythagoras and Plato amongst others. Progress is about, according to Philo, ‘giving up of the female gender into the male, since the female gender is material, passive, corporeal and sense perceptible, while the male is active, rational, incorporeal and more akin to mind and thought’ (*ibid.*, p 27). ‘Progress’ in this technological age is also often linked not to bodily matters but to the virtual, with progress in education being framed by the current government in terms of greater use of the Internet (see Chapter 7). Yet this mind/body division is not only gendered. Where culture is juxtaposed to nature, reason to passion, civil to savage, progressive to backward, etc., the raced elements become very evident (Williams 1993), as do those of class and disability. Where mind is associated with reason and with right, and when women, black people, working class people and those with disabilities are excluded from the realm of reason, it is easy to see how oppressive practices come to be seen as ‘reasonable’ and common sense. Much of the history of science has been concerned with the control of nature, easily translated to white male control and subordination of Others.

The dominant discourses of the market and managerialism in FE today can be seen to be continuing this same theme. Gatens (1996) makes links between human (sexed) bodies and corporate bodies. Following Gatens, I suggest there are similarities between the ‘masculine imaginary body’ and the ‘imaginary’ corporate body of the further education corporation. Both privilege rationality,

autonomy, independence, thought over feeling, mind over body. Economic theories and ideas now so permeate the world of education that they are often seen as the only ‘rational’ and efficient way of organising it. As Davies states:

The assumption behind standardised rational accountability is that it is possible to be objective about behaviour; and that true objectivity exists outside of any value system. However, as feminists may like to point out, objectivity is just another name for male subjectivity (Davies 1990, p. 18).

The concept of rationality itself is gendered and ‘can be interpreted as a commentary on the construction of a particular type of masculinity based on the exclusion of the personal, the sexual and the feminine from any definition of “rationality”’ (Pringle 1989b cited in Halford 1992, p. 171). Blackmore points out how ‘economics positions emotions in opposition to the “rational” processes of the market, yet “the market” relies for its very existence upon exploiting emotions such as greed and desire, pleasure and envy’ (Blackmore 1996, p. 348).

The changes in education can be seen, then, not simply as a result of New Right politics and the global restructuring of the economy in post-modernity, but as a direct descendant of deeply patriarchal philosophical trends in the history of Western thought. The Cartesian mind/body dichotomy, with its gendered, racialised and classed implications, can be seen within the discourses and practices of economic rationality, masculinist managerialism, and the mythologies of new technology. Far from being neutral and rational, I suggest that the marketised colleges embody those irrational and dangerous elements usually reserved for ‘Others’.

Yet there are dangers in discarding all claims to rationality and Enlightenment thinking, not least of which is feminism's own reliance on the Enlightenment project in relation to a belief in the possibility of progress, social justice and human rights (Assister 1996; Waugh 1998). In addition, a number of feminists have insisted on the need to rewrite 'rationality' to incorporate both mind and body (Ferguson 1984; Assister 1996) as part of a sustained critique of the reification of dualistic models that continue to sustain patriarchal relations.

Theorising Gendered Power in Organisations

Traditional organisation theory has tended to adopt functionalist/ behaviourist conceptions of power with a particular emphasis on power as held or possessed by post-holders in an organisational structure. This is the view of power used by Kanter in her early work on men's homosociality and the boss-secretary relation (Kanter 1977). There have, however, been moves within organisational studies to adopt more Foucauldian and post-structuralist analyses (Clegg 1989; Clegg 1990; Calas and Smircich 1991; Calas and Smircich 1996). As Kierins argues, assumptions of superiors exerting power over subordinates are too simplistic:

We should be bringing to our investigations the understanding that formalised power (the kind implied by organisation charts, for example) may well differ markedly from actual power relations (Kearins 1996, section 5).

Despite these developments in organisational theory, however, with the exception of explicitly feminist work (for example Ferguson 1984; Calas and Smirich 1991; Calas and Smirich 1996), gendered power relations have not usually been

considered. Furthermore, there are limitations to a Foucauldian perspective in analysing power in organisations (Epstein 1993; Deem 1999). Epstein argues that Foucault does not

..offer a full account for the concentration of power in hierarchies, which we can observe in social institutions like schools, nor the difficulty which people belonging to certain groups (like black women, black men or white women) have in occupying subject positions of power in such institutions. Thus Foucault does not explain adequately the role that institutional structures have in maintaining power relations (Epstein 1993, p. 12).

A number of feminists have problematised the use of Foucauldian and post-structuralist theories for feminist analysis (Diamond and Quinby 1988; Bordo 1990; Hennessy 1993; Ramazanoglu 1993). Ramazanoglu argues that 'women's experiences suggest that men can *have* power and their power is in some sense a form of domination, backed by force' (Ramazanoglu 1993, p. 22, stress in original).

A number of the people I interviewed for this research clearly saw power as at least partly held by individuals, by virtue of their position within the organisational structure and, in some cases, by their gender. Managers were identified as having the power 'to hire and fire', a possession which was regarded as particularly pertinent in these times of organisational restructurings, redundancies and job insecurity. In particular, as will be seen, some (though not all) men were seen to both possess and to abuse 'their' power as managers and men, and this is contrasted with the ways that most of the women managers are seen. The inter-relationships between the discourses and practices of new managerialism and constructions of masculinity and femininity are significant here, and Daudi's illustrations of the ways in which the discourse of power itself

produces power are also of relevance (Daudi 1986). Yet Daudi, using a post-structuralist analysis, argues that ‘it is not particularly fruitful to think of power in terms of classes. It is not unitary and its “exercise” is not binary’ (ibid. p. 263). I would argue that it is indeed fruitful to do so, whilst also recognising that there are limitations to such an analysis and that power is not ‘unitary’ or ‘binary’.

The class, race and gender stratification in colleges is, however, very evident. Few black staff make it in to management, in fact few into the teaching staff at all (only 3% in the year 2000, Whittaker 2000). Black staff, predominantly men, are more likely to work as security staff or technicians. Women are in the majority in administrative support posts and white women are now well represented in teaching, though tend to be concentrated at lower levels and amongst part-time staff. Whilst more white women are now reaching middle and senior management posts, men still hold three quarters of all the principal/ executive director posts in colleges (Jones 2000). Not only does the sexual division of labour reconstruct and reinforce men’s domination within organizations, it is also one means by which men are able to continue to exercise power over women in society (Hartmann 1979). Wajcman suggests that whilst a Foucauldian perspective has clear things to offer, ‘this focus on cultural and discursive practices has a tendency to eclipse the systematic nature of “corporate patriarchy”’ (Wajcman 1998, p. 53). In addition, as Ferguson argues, ‘class relations are both captured and disguised within bureaucratic organizations and networks’ (Ferguson 1984, p. 40). The status differences between support and teaching staff provide a clear example of the class based nature of the divisions, with limited possibilities for career progression for support staff, and almost none into the academic career routes.

Despite, then, an alleged trend towards ‘flatter’ management structures, if anything hierarchies and the importance of line management in education have been reinforced by new managerialism and its assertion of managers’ ‘right to manage’. Organisational structures and the positionings of individuals and groups within them are important in the articulation of power relations within organisations, and the sexual, racial and class division of labour in colleges is a significant factor in how power is exercised and which particular discourses become dominant within that context.

Yet organisations also differ. There are resistances; and power is also locally and discursively reproduced. Colleges differ according to the relative dominance of different departmental or subject sub-cultures and values (Ball 1987; Ball 1989), whilst, for example, the strength of trade union activity, the number of women and black staff in departments and/or in key positions, the presence of active women’s groups and ‘out’ lesbian and gay staff, the makeup of the student body and dominant management styles all help to construct the particular discursive relations in any one college. Weedon advocates a feminist post-structuralism that draws on Althusser to assert ‘the material nature of ideology, or in post-structuralist terms, discourse, the importance of economic relations of production, the class structure of society’ (Weedon 1987, p. 31); and a retention of such a materialist analysis is, I would argue, necessary for an understanding of the ways in which power is exercised in colleges. In her discussion of how to theorise class, Skeggs insists that:

Class is not just a representation, nor a subject position that can be taken off a discursive shelf and worn at will or a social position which

can be occupied voluntarily. Rather, I want to suggest that class is structural. It involves the institutionalization of capitals. It informs access to and how subject positions ... can be taken up (Skeggs 1997, p. 94).

Kenway (1995c) also advocates a materialist feminism that draws on post-modernism and notes that 'discourse has material effects; that discourse constitutes and is constituted by wider social power dynamics' (Kenway 1995a, p. 44). She also draws on Gramsci for his work on hegemony, adding 'The concept of "hegemony" has the benefit of helping us to recognise the unruly but patterned nature of systemic and widespread asymmetrical power' (ibid. p. 45). This is important in making connections between localised power relations, hegemonic masculinities in organisations and the persistence of men's domination (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1993). So too, I believe, is a concept of patriarchy, despite the debates which have problematised the term (see Walby 1990; Cockburn 1991; Witz 1992).

This thesis is therefore informed by a feminist analysis which takes into account differences in the material locations of women and men whilst seeing them as active subjects in the construction and reconstruction of gendered (raced and classed) power relations. It draws on Foucault's work (Foucault 1980a) to conceptualise power as relational, multifaceted and incomplete, and uses the concept of discourse to understand how subject positions and power relations are located and inscribed. For example, the discourse of new managerialism can be seen to construct managerial identities, and to legitimate particular knowledges and power relations. Walkerdine suggests that 'understanding the individuals not as occupants of fixed, institutionally determined positions of power, but as a

multiplicity of subjectivities, allows us to understand that an individual's position is not uniquely determined by being "woman", "girl" or "teacher" (Walkerdine 1990, p. 14), or, indeed, 'manager'. Such post-structuralist approaches are important in acknowledging the complexities of power, power relations and individual identities. Yet the material stance described above is also essential, I would argue, as is 'a commitment to the possibility of transformative social change' (Kenway 1995c, p. 10). As Weedon makes clear, 'discursive practices are embedded in material power relations which also require transformation for change to be realised' (Weedon 1987, p. 106).

Researching Further Education

Within all of this, however, there is relatively little research on FE. Elliot suggests there are a number of reasons for this: the lack of value placed on research within (further education) management studies, the lack of a research tradition or culture in FE, the absence of staff research experience, contracts of employment that mitigate against research, and the prioritising of problem solving to produce rapid solutions (Elliot 1996c).

Much of the literature is descriptive and uncritical, often reflecting the perspectives of senior managers and principals in colleges (see for example Gray 1992b; Limb 1992; Weil 1994). Whilst some texts that fit within this category are research-based (eg. Smithers and Robinson 1993), most are narrow, policy-focused and/or evaluative texts related to specific government priorities and

initiatives which are not, on the whole, critical. Elliot notes the absence of research addressing 'theoretical, qualitative, philosophical or political questions about the purpose and direction of FE' (Elliot 1996c, p. 110). There have been recent attempts to build an FE research culture, and a Further Education Research Network has been established, although strong links with FEDA, the Further Education Development Agency² (a government quango), may continue to inhibit more critical research. Indeed Elliot points out that that the policy-makers and senior managers in further education may be reluctant to support further developments in this area as research may be perceived as dangerous and threatening to the status quo (*ibid.*).

There is a body of work, however, that is rather more analytical and critical. A useful and thought-provoking collection is that by Avis et al (1996), with chapters providing sustained critiques of the wider policy context, the New Right, myths of post-Fordism, the market, managerialism and quality initiatives, and technical rationality. Most relevant to this thesis, though, is the small body of research that has explored the incorporation of further education, the market and new managerialism. The study of two FE colleges by Ainley and Bailey bears some resemblance to my study (Ainley and Bailey 1997). Their focus is on staff and student experiences of the new FE, and they raise questions about the funding methodology and the lack of co-operation between colleges. Different accounts were provided by managers and students from those by lecturers, with the latter largely negative about the changes that had taken place post-incorporation,

² The Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) was re-named the Learning and Skills Development Agency at the end of 2000, following the realignment of the sector as a result of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. As 'FEDA', however, was its title throughout this research and was used by respondents, I have retained this name throughout the thesis.

findings that are echoed in my research. Equality issues did not particularly feature in this study however, and there was no gender analysis.

The introduction of human resource management into further education is explored by Elliot and Hall (1994), with government policies seen to be driving 'hard' (i.e. quantitative) rather than 'soft' forms (although again no gender analysis is provided here). Elliot and Crossly (Elliot and Crossley 1994; Elliot 1996a) use a case study approach of a large FE college in 1993 to explore staff attitudes to the market and managerialism. Many of their findings have been replicated in my research four to five years later, including lecturers' resistance to the introduction of business models and the imposition of top-down styles of management. The lecturers expressed a commitment to student-centred pedagogy, and felt that senior managers did not understand or value their professional concerns. Elliot concludes:

Debate is constrained within a technocratic market discourse, to the point where many lecturers are experiencing the fundamental contradiction of educational practice: "the experience of holding educational values, and the experience of their negation" (Elliot 1996a, p. 21, citing Whitehead 1989).

Some of the lecturers in Elliot's study appeared to be rather more optimistic about incorporation than those in my research. This could be explained by the time difference: my research was conducted several years after incorporation allowing time for disillusionment to have set in.

A critique of new managerialism in FE is provided by Randle and Brady, whose research took the form of interviews with managers and an attitude survey of lecturers in one college (Randle and Brady 1997a; Randle and Brady 1997b). The

senior managers in their study felt that lecturers did not understand the serious financial situation of the college, and that the changes were simply happening too quickly for lecturers to adjust easily. The authors, however, suggest that this ignores the substance of lecturers' resistance. They identify a 'public service ethic' related to 'quality educational opportunities for students' pre-incorporation, and distinguish between a managerial and a professional paradigm subsequently. They also noted the different conceptions of quality. For managers it was about cost effectiveness and providing education for the many at 'conformance to requirements' standards, whereas for lecturers it was about providing a quality learning experience for students, a distinction that was also apparent in my research and which is discussed further in Chapter 4. They argue that lecturers are being deprofessionalised, in contrast to Gleeson and Shain's analysis which suggests changes in professional identities and a reprofessionalisation (Gleeson and Shain 1999b). This latter study focused on the changing workplace identities of middle managers in FE, whilst Yarrow and Esland (1998) investigate both manager and lecturer responses to the changes that have taken place.

It is very noticeable, however, that a gender analysis is distinctly lacking from all of the above. Whilst a few texts on FE mention equality issues, these tend to be descriptive rather than analytical or critical (see for eg. Flint and Austin 1994; Cantor et al. 1995). Some offer a rather more critical approach, but on the whole this remains within a liberal framework with little evidence of an understanding of the ways in which the organisations are gendered, raced and classed (see Frain 1993; Wymer 1994; Reeves 1995; Lucas and Mace 1999). Some even appear to deny that equality issues are of any concern or relevance to FE. Alexiadou (1999),

in a study of the market in two FE colleges, noted the lack of consensus amongst different groups of staff in relation to the policy changes, mirroring some of the findings of my research. Yet in relation to Le Grand and Bartlett's (1993) criteria for successful quasi-markets (responsiveness, choice, efficiency and equity), s/he states that 'the point of equity is not particularly pertinent in FE due to the virtually non-selective nature of the sector' (Alexiadou 1999, p. 64)!

One of the few pieces of research to critically explore equality issues in relation to the FE market is that by Ball et al (1998) who look at the effect of the market on how colleges perceive the recruitment of minority ethnic students. They show how 'the ways in which the mechanisms and perspectives in play in an education market create a social framework within which racial discrimination and racism are subtly and not so subtly encouraged' (ibid. p. 179). They also point to how anti-racist initiatives are marginalised within this discursive climate, something that is apparent in my research and which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. Farish et al's work on equal opportunities in colleges and universities is also of interest (Farish et al. 1995). They show how power relations and gendered subjectivities are positioned within the policy discourse, and conclude that white men have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. This is an important piece of research which provides a useful comparison to my study in relation to the equal opportunities aspects, although this research was conducted several years earlier (between 1991 and 1994).

There has been very little research specifically on gender and further education, with the exception of a few studies of FE students (see for eg. Stanworth 1983;

Skeggs 1991; Sheridan 1992; McGivney 1993; Kilminster 1996; Avari et al. 1997; Henwood 1998). Wild's qualitative study of barriers to women's promotion in FE is an exception, although she doesn't acknowledge that management is gendered, and her analysis resides within a broadly liberal feminist framework that risks placing the responsibility, and the blame, largely with individuals (Wild 1994). Leonard's research provides one of the few analyses which presents incorporation and the associated management processes as gendered (Leonard 1998). She did not, however, interview men.

Men managers in FE are the focus of Whitehead's work (1997; 1998a; 1998b). He uses a post-structuralist approach, drawing on Foucault, to deconstruct and examine the intersections between dominant managerial discourses in FE and discourses of masculinity, and notes that there has been a move in the culture of FE management from paternalism to more aggressive and competitive management styles. He argues that managers in FE have little choice but to:

Reflect, articulate and absorb ways of being (a manager), that are dominant and privileged in contemporary (educational) organisations. To do otherwise would be an act of resistance, but more importantly for men, would also be an act that served to question their potency as men/managers (Whitehead 1997, p. 152-3).

Many of the men he interviewed were unhappy with how things had changed in terms of insecurity, increased workloads and stress, but he argues:

It would be wrong to assume that the men I interviewed are somehow always victims and/or perpetrators of the wider social forces encouraging change. They are neither totally culpable nor totally 'dopes' (ibid. p. 158).

He notes that many of his interviewees had wives at home whose unpaid labour in the home supported their husbands, and he rather pessimistically finds little evidence that might suggest change.

This is an important and much needed piece of research into men in management, although I feel there are limitations to this post-structuralist account in its lack of emphasis on the power these men are able to exercise over many women in the organisation, and over other men. Whilst it provides an explanation of why men go along with oppressive discourses and practices, and the difficulties these positionings present for men, it fails to acknowledge the privileges and material benefits (apart from the reinforcement of their masculinity) that men in such positions have in terms of salary, perks and control over others.

For an understanding of the positioning of women in middle management in FE, Prichard and Deem provide an interesting analysis (Prichard and Deem 1998). They argue that there is some evidence of a feminization of middle management, but that this can not simply be seen as evidence of career advancement on the part of women and greater equity, but as part of the process of the restructuring itself, with women in these positions taking on much of the work of the new managerial project. This resonated strongly with my research, where the burdens of the middle manager were evident.

These more recent developments of research into managerialism in further education have begun to fill the earlier void of an almost complete lack of critical research in the sector which seriously addresses gender issues. The focus of these

studies, however, tends to be on management *per se*, rather than on a holistic analysis of the dominant discourses and practices of marketised colleges. This thesis is intended to build upon this critical literature to provide a feminist analysis of the impact of marketisation on further education colleges by identifying and analysing these dominant discourses and practices in further education in the late 1990s. Kenway noted the absence of 'sustained and substantial empirical and theoretical consideration from a feminist perspective' (Kenway 1995c, p. 1) in the marketisation literature and argues that 'we need to know a great deal more about the ways in which marketing discourses seek to construct different femininities and masculinities and the power relationships between them' (*ibid.* p. 7). This thesis is a contribution to that task. The intention is not, however, to research the market as such. The study is not concerned with the ways in which local markets are constructed and how educational providers such as further education colleges are located and perform within these markets. Instead it focuses on the effects of marketisation and new managerialism on the internal dynamics and power relations within the colleges in this study.



Chapter 3

The Research Process

To ignore questions of methodology is to assume that knowledge comes from nowhere allowing knowledge makers to abdicate responsibility for their productions and representations (Skeggs 1997, p. 17).

In this chapter, I provide an account of the research process. I begin by locating the study within discussions of feminist research methodology and go on to discuss the processes of selection, access, data collection, analysis, interpretation and writing. My own positioning within the research, power relations, and ethics are also discussed.

Locating the Research

The research for this thesis was conducted in two colleges of further education. It was based on a qualitative research design to enable me to explore in some depth the discourses and practices of specific organisational settings, and the power relations and identities constructed within these contexts. As Cockburn explains, ‘its legitimacy does not spring from numbers, either of organizations studied or of people interviewed. Rather it gains what authority it has from the depth of insight made available’ (Cockburn 1991, p. 4). The research methods used included in-depth interviews (both individual and group) with 74 members of staff systematically selected to include support staff, lecturers and middle and senior

management; observation; and documentary analysis of key college texts. In addition, national policy documents relating to further education were examined.

I drew on a feminist research methodology which critiques the Cartesian dualism and technical rationality of positivism, and locates the researcher within the research. The detached objectivity that Haraway characterises as ‘the God trick of seeing everything from nowhere’ (Haraway 1988, p. 581) is not something that I either aspire to or believe to be possible. There have, of course, been on-going feminist debates about *how* the researcher is located within the research, and about the relationships between ontology and epistemology, epitomised by the discussions on standpoint theories (Ramazanoglu 1989; Harding 1996; Hartsock 1998) and the role of experience in feminist research (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994; Maynard 1994). Like Stanley and Wise, I take the view that:

All knowledge, necessarily, results from the conditions of its production, is contextually located, and irrevocably bears the marks of its origins in the minds and intellectual practices of those lay and professional theorists and researchers who give voice to it (Stanley and Wise 1990, p. 39).

The difficulties of relying too heavily on ‘experience’, and in particular of regarding accounts of experience as transparent reflections of reality have been well articulated (see, for eg. Maynard 1994), but like Skeggs amongst others, I would argue that experience cannot simply be abandoned: ‘Experience is central to the production of subjectivity, to the production of raced, classed, sexed and gendered “woman”’ (Skeggs 1997, p. 38).

In this research, I was interested in respondents’ accounts of their experiences of working within further education, and regard these as accounts produced within

specific social contexts, for specific purposes, and subject to interpretation. As Holland notes, the process of interpretation is influenced by:

Feminist theory and political values, the standpoint and subjectivity of the researcher, the social event of the interview, the ways in which interviewees formulate their accounts on that occasion, and their own standpoints and values (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994, p. 144).

Clarke and Edwards (2000) provide an interesting account of the different readings and stories that can be constructed about the same data, and in order to help the reader to judge my interpretations, I think it is important to give an account of the research process and my own location within it. I also, though, have some sympathy for Patai's critique of what she sees as an obsession with self-reflexivity: 'Taking account of my own position does not change reality. It does not, for example, redistribute income, gain political rights for those that don't have them, alleviate misery, or improve health' (Patai 1994). It does, however, have a bearing on the interpretations I make and the knowledge that is constructed, and so some acknowledgement of my own positioning in relation to the conduct of the research is, I suggest, relevant.

This research does not fit the traditional prescriptions of feminist research as 'by, for and with women', and a number of feminist researchers have contributed to a considerable widening of that earlier definition (see, for eg. Kelly et al. 1994). Power relations between the researcher and the researched, whilst never straightforward, are complicated further when interviewing 'powerful' men, and the idea that one of the aims of feminist research is to 'empower' respondents is particularly problematic. As Kelly et al note, when researching men and institutions:

The ‘empowerment’ of research participants is not and indeed should not be our goal. If that concept has any meaning it must relate to the groups over which these individuals and institutions exercise power (Kelly et al. 1994, p. 38).

Deem also notes that when researching the powerful, you may actually want to disempower rather than empower (Deem 1994). The adoption of anti-racist approaches has also problematised simple notions of power and empowerment in research relations (Neal 1995).

Although on many occasions during this research I was conscious of my privileged position as researcher and the power I was able to exercise as a result of that, this was not, on the whole, my experience of interviewing men senior managers. I also often felt that I did not have the right to ask for people’s time for an interview, or to observe. Skeggs noted that she ‘was not used to being positioned as a legitimate knower’ (Skeggs 1997, p. 35), and my own working class and gendered identities were implicated in a similar sense of illegitimacy and discomfiture at adopting the gaze during observations. Early on in my fieldwork diary I wrote of feeling that I was ‘getting above my station’.

The idea that feminist research must be ‘for’ women is also problematic. Whilst I believe that all research is political, this is very different from conflating feminist research with feminist political action (Glucksmann 1994). I would argue, following Kelly et al, that this is feminist research in that I come to it as a feminist and ask feminist questions (Kelly et al. 1994), but whether it really has any impact in terms of furthering feminist agendas within colleges is another issue. During some of the interviews, respondents discussed activities which could offer support

to women and black members of staff, challenge macho management and/or confront institutional racism (for example the suggestion to set up a black women's group), and to that extent the research may, on occasion, have provided a spur to action, but to claim anything more is inappropriate. A main purpose of this research is to contribute to understandings of the processes by which gendered power relations and identities are (re)constructed. It is hoped that this knowledge may be used to inform feminist resistance and action, and issues of feedback and dissemination are important in this. But knowledge is only one of the elements contributing to the conditions under which such action becomes possible.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, I came to this research with a long-standing commitment to, and interest in, further education, and I was working in the sector when I began the fieldwork for the study. To that extent I possessed some 'insider' knowledge, particularly into the work of lecturers and senior lecturers, and my positioning by respondents will in part have reflected what they knew of my current and previous work identities as well as how they perceived me when we met. I also have a passionate engagement with the subject matter of the study, rooted in my own personal history in the sector. As Greed noted in her study of women in surveying 'I am studying a world of which I myself am part, with all the emotional involvement and accusations of subjectivity that this creates' (Greed 1990, p. 145). Following Haraway, however, I would argue that all knowledge is partial and situated (Haraway 1988), and attempts to deny or denigrate emotion are rooted in the Cartesian dualism that has been subjected to

sustained critique. My responsibility, I believe, is to make my own positioning as explicit as possible so that others can read my interpretations with that in mind.

Selection and Access

The selection of the two colleges was made through a mixture of both pragmatic and theory driven criteria. Pragmatically, I was working full-time and needed colleges that were relatively accessible to me, and to study more than two colleges in some depth would have been impossible due to time constraints. In terms of theory, my choice of colleges with very different gender balances in the senior management team was informed by the range of feminist and critical work on both gender and organisations, and women and management. I was interested in the ways in which gendered processes may play out in relation to marketisation and new managerialism, and although much of the work on masculinities and gendered management within further education in the context of new managerialism post-dates the initial design of my study, it seemed to be a fruitful avenue for investigation. It then appeared to make sense to choose colleges that were relatively similar in terms of their inner-city location, their traditions of educational provision for ‘disadvantaged’ students, and, given my interest in equality issues, their histories of positive action in this area.

This was not designed primarily, however, as a comparative study, but as two separate case studies. The colleges were not chosen as exemplars of particular types, but as convenient locations for study with some potentially interesting

features. There are some similarities in their inner-city locations and histories, and also many differences, and any rigorous comparison would need to attempt the difficult task of identifying and accounting for these differences and similarities in what are very complex institutions. I did, however, deliberately choose colleges with differently gendered senior management teams, and as will be seen, some inferences of a comparative nature are made in relation to gendered managerial discourses and 'styles' and the implications of these for staff within the colleges.

Once the colleges had been selected, gaining permission to conduct the research proved to be very straightforward and was granted by the college principals. In both colleges I was provided with a link-person who would provide me with the requested documentation and assist with setting up observations of meetings, etc. In College A this was the manager responsible for staff development, whilst in College B I was asked to liaise with the principal's administrative staff. In addition, in College B I was given a 'buddy'. This was at the suggestion of the principal, and she allocated a senior lecturer who I could go to for more general questions about the college. In the event, the 'buddy' was not too keen to be involved, and when I asked his advice about the best ways of contacting lecturers to interview, he expressed the view that very few would be prepared to be interviewed as they were all extremely busy. He could offer no constructive advice about how I should go about it. His pessimism in this regard was not borne out, and his reluctance to help may have been because the principal had asked him to do it. There was clearly a danger here that I was positioned as the principal's researcher, making some staff wary about taking part. After an initial meeting, I did not actively seek out my buddy again.

In both colleges, I wrote a short paragraph about the research for the staff newsletter, and then presented additional written details to those I approached to participate. Presenting the research to the colleges raised ethical considerations. In the initial letters and descriptions of the research that I gave to respondents, I explained ‘the research focuses on the strategic direction of further education colleges, with particular reference to management, organisation and staffing issues, the role of new technology and equal opportunities’. I explained that I was conducting the research in two colleges, and gave details of the methods I was using. In conversation, I described the research more fully, but in most cases I did not say that I was coming to this as a feminist (although my past reputation in further education meant that some people would have been aware of this, and others may have guessed or made assumptions based on my personal presentation), and did not state my particular interest in gendered power relations and identities. ‘Equal opportunities’ felt like a much safer, more neutral term. Like Mickelson who keeps in mind her answer to the question ‘Whose side am I on?’ (Mickelson 1994, p. 147), I did not feel I was able to be totally candid with all respondents.

In each college, I asked for a range of documents, including policy statements, newsletters, etc (see Appendix 1) and these were provided without any difficulty. It was not easy, however, to obtain any statistics, or named lists, of staff by grade, gender and ethnicity. The named lists would have been useful in constructing my sample, whilst the statistics would have provided an indication of the overall gender and race division of labour within the colleges. Although all staff were

required to complete an ‘Individualised Staff Record’, the data from which was collated and returned to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), it proved almost impossible to get access to this in either college. Part of the problem was that these were new requirements from the FEFC and the colleges’ management information systems did not appear able to produce the data I had asked for easily. The main difficulty, however, was that the FEFC had not asked colleges to provide a sophisticated breakdown of staff grades by gender and ethnicity. For FEFC purposes, staff were grouped as ‘teaching’, ‘support’, or ‘other’, and this is how the national statistics are presented. ‘Support’ includes those staff directly supporting teaching in workshops, etc (but not actually ‘teaching’), whilst ‘other’ includes everyone not covered by the teaching or support category, including building maintenance, cleaning, catering and administration. Senior managers are subsumed under this last category. It was therefore impossible to obtain data on the gender and ethnicity of college senior managers from national statistical records.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, College A provided me with some uncollated information on grade/job by ethnicity, by gender and by age, whilst College B presented a report written in 1996 for the college ‘Equalities Action Group’ which gave an overview of the gender, ethnicity and age profile of the staff, but without reference to job or grade. There were also limitations to the amount of financial information I gained from each college, and in both, some papers (for example from governors packs) were withheld as ‘commercially sensitive’. A detailed study of the financial management in each institution was not, therefore,

undertaken, and arguably the amount of work this would have involved could have justified a separate research project.

As Ball notes, sampling, 'in terms of naturalistic coverage and the problems of selectivity' (Ball 1984, p. 75) is necessary when researching educational institutions. For each college, I used the organisation chart and list of staff members to select staff to interview, aiming to include women and men, and black and white staff where possible. A table of respondents is included as Appendix 2. My sample did not include cleaning, catering, or security staff, the majority of whom in both colleges were now employed by private companies contracted to provide a service to the college. To have included them would have given an interesting additional dimension to the study as the privatisation of such services has been a central aspect of the marketisation of colleges, and the staff predominantly affected are working class black and white women (Newman 1994), but I did not feel I could justify extending the study in this way on time grounds. The same applied to students, who were also notably absent from this research.

The sampling criteria I used resulted in considerably more women than men in the study. To a large extent this was because the vast majority of administrative support staff in both colleges were women: I found only one man in this category who agreed to be interviewed. Although more managers in College A were men, by attempting to get a balance of women and men at all levels where possible, this did not result in a re-balance of the sample in favour of men. In addition, more

men than women lecturers in College A whom I approached declined to be interviewed due to time constraints and the demands of the job.

Setting up interviews with managers in each college was relatively straightforward and all those I approached agreed to be interviewed. In College A, I attempted to construct group interviews consisting of lecturers from different departments in order to generate discussion of departmental and management differences, and this worked well, although it proved extremely difficult to find times when a group of lecturers (and I) could meet together. In the end I resorted to calling in to staff work rooms and asking for volunteers, and relied on the snowball method, whereby lecturers who had agreed to take part brought along a friend. In all, 13 lecturers were interviewed in this college, with three groups ranging from two to five members of staff, and three lecturers interviewed individually.

In College B, in part in response to my buddy's warning that most staff would not co-operate, I decided to not worry about getting lecturers from different departments in one group interview, but to concentrate on getting some group interviews set up. In most cases I rang the lecturers I had identified, and where I managed to speak to that person, they always agreed to take part. When I explained I was aiming to interview a group of lecturers together, they usually offered to discuss this with colleagues and try to set up a group for me. I also called in to staff workrooms, as in College A. In the event, each group interview in this college consisted of staff from a single department. I interviewed 14 lecturers in all, with five groups of two or three, and one individual interview.

I planned to conduct two group interviews for administrative support staff in each college, and I had obtained the Principals' permission to conduct these in work time. In College A, I contacted staff directly, liaising with their line managers about the timing where necessary. In College B, one of the P.A.s to the senior managers offered to set up two groups for me, following the guidelines I had given her. In the event, this proved, initially at least, to be a mistake as it became clear that these members of staff had been told to attend and thought that I was connected to management. Following considerable reassurances on my part about my independence, issues of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the research, the interview finally went ahead with much lively and interesting discussion. The second group at this college was unproblematic, in part, I suspect because word had got around that I was OK and not an agent of the senior management. Gewirtz and Ozga note some of the problems of access and the use of gatekeepers:

There are very many possible difficulties here, including misrepresentation of the research intention, loss of researcher control, mediation of the research process, compromise and researcher independence (Gewirtz and Ozga 1994, p. 192-3).

My experience with the administrative staff above was indicative of some of these difficulties.

Gaining access to observe college meetings was also not straightforward. In College A, I was refused access to observe the college senior management team meetings as one member of the team had objected when the Principal had passed on my request to them. All of these senior managers were, however, happy to be

interviewed separately. In an interview, individuals can decide how they want to present themselves and be in control, and as senior managers I suspect that they felt fairly confident that they would be able to ‘manage’ the interview. In a team meeting, however, the presentation of self that they may wish to make may not be possible: here I would see how they presented themselves to colleagues and the relations within the team which may be thought to be more revealing or less under the control of the individual. I did manage to observe a couple of site management meetings (with none of the senior managers present) and a few other management meetings, including the extended management team where senior managers presented issues to all managers from SL level and above.

In contrast, permission was given by the Principal in College B to observe all college management meetings, including the senior management team, though I do not know if she consulted the other members beforehand. At these meetings I was positioned as one of the team, asked to take a seat at the table and, on occasion, asked by the principal if I wanted to add any comments to the discussion. Whilst this felt very welcoming and inclusive, I also found myself feeling uncomfortable: I was not a member of the team and felt that this rather confused my preferred positioning as non-participant observer. It also risked positioning me, yet again, as the Principal’s researcher.

In both colleges, I was given permission to observe several governing body meetings by the Principal in consultation with the Chair of Governors, and again I suspect other members were not given the opportunity to object. In retrospect, I would have set this up differently and provided information sheets about the

research for all members of the Boards in advance. At the time I did not feel able to do this as I felt I was 'in the hands of' the Principal and the Chair of the Board. It appeared that they had particular ways of doing things, and I fell in with this for both pragmatic reasons and because of my different status as an outsider and a woman, in particular in relation to College A.

Interviewing

For all of the interviews, I used a semi-structured schedule with a list of topics I wanted to cover (see Appendix 3), with minor variation depending on whether I was interviewing, for example, a senior manager or a lecturer. Most of the interviews lasted about an hour, although a few were shorter and some longer than this. I decided to aim for group interviews for lecturers and administrative support workers, as there were significant numbers of staff on similar grades and I felt the group format would enable discussion of issues amongst participants, not just with me, which would yield interesting data. I was also, like Harding (1996), interested in collective experiences. I did not attempt group interviews for staff above these grades, although the basis for this decision was not well thought out at the time. In part, I felt it would be far more difficult to get a group of managers together than a group of lecturers, and far easier to set up individual interviews with them. I also thought that some managers might talk more freely if their colleagues were not present. Their jobs were such that they had highly visible individual responsibilities, and the pressures to present the official line could be even greater in the presence of their colleagues than in a confidential interview with me alone.

I was also intending to observe some management meetings which would have provided me with an opportunity to observe the interaction between these respondents. Looking back, I would like to have tried a group interview with senior lecturers, another with heads of department and a further one with senior managers in each college as I think it could have generated interesting data, but I am not sure I would want to have given up the individual interviews with these participants.

I wanted the interviews to be as pleasant and unoppressive as possible, and my 'natural' inclination was to adopt a fairly conversational style and to work to establish rapport with the interviewee(s). I used the interview schedule flexibly to give space to issues raised by respondents, but tried to ensure that I had asked my key questions at some point during the interview. This conversational approach worked most successfully when interviewing those with some similar positionings to myself: women (at different levels), and lecturers/senior lecturers. On a number of occasions in these interviews, there was an acknowledgement of shared experiences of working within the sector and the empathy that a number of feminist researchers have both valued and problematised (Oakley 1981; Finch 1984; Kelly et al. 1994).

In a number of the interviews, especially with lecturers and senior lecturers, I saw a commitment to further education which appeared to be based on a 'working class girl/boy made good through education' history not unlike that of my own. Although class was not often overtly on the agenda, I would suggest that it occupied the status of tacit knowledge within many of these interviews. Yet for

many support staff I was either a senior lecturer, and therefore a member of the more privileged academic staff in further education, or a university researcher and so assumed to be middle class. As has already been seen, I was in some cases thought to be an ally or lackey of the Principal initially, and it may have been that my whiteness also located me as 'on the other side' for some black respondents (see Edwards 1996).

As Phoenix notes, gender, race and class will enter the research process in unpredictable ways, so notions of needing to 'match' researcher and researched are simplistic (Phoenix 1994). I was, however, concerned that some black members of staff may not feel able to raise issues of racism with a white researcher. Black staff did talk about racism they had experienced or witnessed in the colleges, and by asking questions about equality issues, and in some cases making clear my own anti-racist stance, I hope that I did what I could to enable these issues to be discussed openly.

Some discussions were, however, difficult and tense at times. Rather than being the 'rational scientific' activity it is sometimes assumed to be, research processes are imbued with emotion, and perhaps no less so than when discussing issues of equality and power relations. Some respondents became very distressed during the interviews, and often this was directly related to discussion of equality issues. Several women described their interview as useful therapy. I also experienced a number of the interviews as distressing, and found the data on equality most difficult to study and write about for this reason.

Interviewing more senior men was a rather different experience for me than interviewing women. Initially I had approached these interviews in the same way, adopting an informal conversational style, although in an interview with a man senior manager in College A this failed miserably and I realised the limitations of this approach with men in such positions. It was clear that this man wanted to talk and control the interview, and I had difficulty finishing the sentence when asking a question, let alone being able to 'join in' the conversation. Others have noted the ways in which those in powerful positions (Ball 1994; Walford 1994) and men (McKee and O'Brien 1983) may be very adept at controlling the interview, yet also may be very happy to talk with women positioned stereotypically as listeners (Gewirtz and Ozga 1994). Some men, however, clearly found it harder to talk about how they felt about their job on a personal level. In many cases when interviewing women I did not need to ask about this as they spoke about it during the course of the interview, but none of the men talked personally in this way without being prompted. One man senior manager clearly felt threatened by the question, asked me why I wanted to know this, then answered without making any eye contact at all, which was in sharp contrast to his demeanour throughout the rest of the interview.

Mickelson, drawing on Reinhartz (Reinhartz 1992), argues that 'when feminists engage in research on men, upper-class people and those with considerable power, they are likely to demand less from their subjects. It is crucial, however, that feminist researchers persevere and consciously probe' (Mickelson 1994, p. 139). I tried to do this, yet I also did not want to appear confrontational and put the interview at risk. Thom (1999) concludes that she had not probed as much as she

should have done when interviewing men, which she felt in part was an attempt to be ‘gender-neutral’ and not too overtly feminist for fear of silencing her interviewees. I was much more conscious of how I presented myself in interviews with senior men managers, and although I always dressed in a fairly smart but casual style for all the fieldwork (which was on a par with my usual work attire), I always made sure I wore a jacket to the interviews with senior managers. This was part of my attempt to appear professional, assertive and in control, to both perform in a middle class context and, like many women in the workplace, to ‘manage’ my sexuality in a masculinist heterosexual environment. This echoes Brewis and Sinclair’s findings that for women in their study ‘the association of work, and more especially management, with men and men’s bodies mean that they have to work to manage the signifying effects of their biological bodies in work organisations’ (Brewis and Sinclair 2000, p. 194-5). For me these interviews were very much performances, but then, no doubt, they were for my interviewees too.

Adopting a non-confrontational approach does, however, have its drawbacks. As Neal (Neal 1995) has so well articulated in her descriptions of trying to use both feminist and anti-racist approaches in her research, there are some contradictions here, and at times I felt implicated in not directly challenging something that had been said in an interview. Yet as Phoenix argues:

Since the whole point of interviews is to evoke respondents’ accounts rather than hear one’s own discourses reflected back, I would argue that this is usually interesting data rather than upsetting and that it is manageable within the interview context (Phoenix 1994, p. 56).

It was not, however, always easy. A couple of times white lecturers made comments which could be seen to be drawing on new racist discourse, clearly assuming that I would share the same perspective. Back and Solomos note how:

In the interview context the identity of the interviewer was also being constructed by the person being interviewed. Repeatedly it was assumed that Les Back's whiteness would mean that he would agree with assertions which were often informed by racism (Back and Solomos 1993, p. 188).

In one interview with three women lecturers, two of whom were white and one black, one of the white women spoke of the problems that previous positive action policies on racism had caused, explaining that now everyone was afraid to challenge black staff for fear of being called racist. I felt uncomfortable by both the tone of her comments and the drawing on a new-racist discourse of fear, and did, on this occasion, ask further questions with a view to problematising her initial interpretations of events. The black member of staff, who had looked uncomfortable at the beginning of this discussion, also then came in to argue for a different perspective, and I felt as though my approach here, rather than potentially threatening the whole interview, had been productive. Yet I was interviewing three women lecturers, all of whom identified as working class or in some other way as outsiders. The power relations between researcher and researched were very different than when interviewing a middle class man senior manager, where any attempts on my part to challenge what was being said may well have been received rather differently.

Observation

Most of the observation conducted as part of this research was of specific meetings, although I did 'hang around' the colleges to some extent, especially in the more public arenas of the cafes and library/learning centres. I was also able to observe the spaces in which people worked prior to and during interviews, and the interactions, for example, between senior managers and administrative staff. It was particularly noticeable that when men senior managers in College A offered me coffee, they always asked a (woman) secretary to make it and bring it in to the room. In College B, a woman administrator made coffee for everyone at the senior management team meeting I attended, but when I went to interview the Principal, she not only went to make the coffee herself but also offered the administrative worker in the room one too. I got the impression that this was not an isolated event. Even brief and sporadic opportunities for observation elicited interesting data, and I kept a fieldwork diary in which I made detailed notes of my visits to the colleges. Restrictions on my time, however, and trying to do the fieldwork whilst also doing a full-time job, meant that any more extensive ethnographic-type methods were out of the question.

In all the meetings I observed, I made a seating plan of the participants, then observed the interactions that took place, noting down who spoke for how long and on what topic. I also made notes of facial expressions, body language, the meeting room environment and occasions when two or more participants engaged in their own private conversations. Where possible I obtained a list of members,

their roles and minutes of previous meetings as well as the papers for the meeting I was observing.

These meeting observations could only, however, provide a snapshot of activity in the colleges. Ideally, I would have observed each committee or team over a longer period of time, which would have enabled me to get to know the participants more, and for them to become more accustomed to my presence. The data I was able to collect on college governance was inevitably limited by these time restrictions, and by the absence in my research design of any interviews with governors.

In College A, I spent much of the first Governing Body meeting trying to work out who everyone was which made it harder to record the interactions. I also felt that some members, in particular the Chair and senior managers, were acutely aware of my presence, to the extent that on several occasions asides were made for my benefit. The day after this meeting I met one of the staff governors who felt that my presence had also changed what was talked about – with a far greater emphasis on equality issues from senior managers than she could remember before. At these meetings I sat on a chair at the back or side of the room, away from the large table around which members of the board were seated, and I felt that by the second meeting, people began to forget about my presence.

In College B, members of the Board had name plates in front of them which considerably helped my identification of who everyone was, but on arrival at my first meeting I discovered that a place had also been set for me at the table, with a

name plate. I felt uncomfortable with this as I was not a member of the Board, although I suspect it was done to make me feel welcome and part of the proceedings. The disadvantage was that it was harder to take notes when those next to me could see what I was writing. Although a couple of people looked at me with interest at the first meeting, I did not get the sense that my presence particularly affected the discussion or behaviour of members, although of course I would not necessarily recognise this.

This differences in access, physical location and positioning in relation to observing meetings in the two colleges was, of course, interesting data in itself and could be seen as related to the different, and gendered, forms of managerialism which are discussed in Chapter 5.

The observations provided me with useful information about the priorities of senior management and the main issues being discussed in the colleges at the time of the fieldwork. I gained an insight into financial issues, restructuring plans, discourses of equality and quality, gendered patterns of interaction, and some of the tensions between, for example, some governors and senior managers. Observation was particularly useful in enabling me to see senior (and some other) managers in action, providing a different perspective from the account that they had given me in interviews. In one case, I interviewed a man senior manager in College A who many other staff in the college had spoken about disparagingly, with some describing him as a bully. During the interview, however, he came over as a warm, caring and thoughtful man, deeply committed to education and equality issues, and I found myself both liking him and beginning to understand

some of the management issues he had to deal with. There were times in the interview when I gained some not so pleasant insights into some of his other views and what appeared to be a desire to control, but it was only when observing him in several meetings that I saw this in action, and could make more sense of the account of his management style provided by some other staff. Observation therefore provided a useful additional source of data to that collected in interviews.

Examination of Documents

The documents were initially used to provide background information about the college, such as the organisation of departments, the existence and content of particular policies and the ways the colleges chose to present themselves to internal and external audiences.

Like Farish et al (1995), I examined both content and language. In addition to the topics covered, I looked for any evidence of priorities in the documents and what was omitted: the silences in the texts. The overall presentation, and in some documents the use of images as well as text, provided another source of data, and I also tried to identify which documents were available to whom, and how easily they could be obtained.

In addition to examining specific documents, I looked at particular themes across a number of documents. For example, to illuminate discourses, practices and

priorities related to equality issues, I examined not only the equal opportunities policy, but its presentation (or absence) in staff and student handbooks, strategic and operational plans, staff newsletters, minutes of governing body meetings and prospectuses.

Analysis, Writing and Feedback

All interviews were transcribed, and the texts imported into Nud*ist qualitative data analysis software. I initially coded the data to particular topic nodes related to the questions I had asked, and fairly quickly established a complex tree structure for the coding. As I focused on each section in depth, I sometimes recoded the data to match my developing ideas about it. For example, initially I had coded all the data on equality to three nodes, as I was not familiar enough with the data to know what the important themes might be. I later went back and recoded this data so that in the end I had 17 nodes in this part of the tree alone. Later on, some of these were merged.

At the same time, as more overarching or second order themes were developed, for example to do with power and resistance, connection/distance, fear and dependence, I created free nodes as these did not fit obviously within the tree structure. Each time I added to the coding structure, I made a note of which transcripts I had coded to it, so I could go back and recode other transcripts with the newly developed themes and codes in mind.

I generated volumes of paper as I printed out reports based on searches of the data. For example, in many cases I generated reports for all the senior management responses coded to particular themes, all the lecturer responses and so on. At that stage I tended to work with the paper printouts, highlighting extracts and making notes in the margins. As I began to make interpretations, I would often go back to read the original transcripts, and test out the interpretations on other data, looking for examples where they did not fit. I also drew on field notes and documentary sources to see whether the interpretations I was making made sense in terms of other sources of data. The process of data analysis therefore became an iterative one of coding and recoding, moving between the transcripts and Nud*ist reports, from paper to electronic data and so on. I am still conscious of the other possible avenues for analysis that I did not explore for fear of never finishing the thesis.

I take full responsibility for the interpretations I have made. Skeggs (1997) writes about the value of producing interpretations through dialogue with her respondents, but this has not been a feature of this study. At the beginning, I considered asking those who had participated if they would like to be invited to a further meeting at a later stage to discuss the issues that were emerging from the data and to contribute to the interpretations, but this would have presented a number of difficulties. Perhaps most importantly, my respondents were differently located in an organisational hierarchy, and it would have been extremely difficult to create a situation where administrative support workers, lecturers and senior managers, for example, all felt able to say what they thought about the data in the same meeting. I could have offered different opportunities to respondents

according to their job and level in the organisation, but even then, I could imagine that any discussion of gender and race issues, for example, would have been difficult for certain respondents within the organisational setting. Of course many people may not have taken up the offer anyway, especially given the pressures of their work. As Kelly et al (1994) note, it is the researchers who have the time and resources to do the analysis. In the event, my own time restrictions were such that I did not offer this possibility to any of the respondents.

Instead, I offered all respondents the opportunity to read and comment on the transcript of their interview. Most wanted a copy of the transcript, but only two interviewees sent me any further comments. Both of these women, who were managers in College A, made some positive comments about the research but also reiterated that it was important that they not be identifiable in any written accounts. At no point did anyone request that statements were removed from transcripts, as occurred with Farish et al. In organisational settings, however, even if one is careful to disguise the organisation itself, prominent individuals within that organisation can all too easily be identified by other staff, especially, for instance, if an individual is the only black woman in management or the only woman lecturer in one department, something also recognised by Back and Solomos (1993). Ball asserts that 'apart from careful use of pseudonyms I fully intend to ensure that I actively mislead any readers as to the location or identification of the school or schools concerned' (Ball 1984, p. 93).

I have attempted not only to disguise the colleges and their location, but also to make it very difficult for particular respondents to be identified by other staff in

that college. It is for this reason that I have not used pseudonyms in the text, and in many cases have referred only to the respondent's gender and occupational positioning as, for example, lecturer or senior manager. In some cases, for example where there were a number of lecturers in a subject area, I have used broad descriptors for their department (see Appendix 2), but I have not done so for managers as this would automatically identify them, and in other cases I have omitted department or gender where, for example, there was only one woman lecturer in a male dominated section. For the same reason, senior managers are always referred to by either gender or college, but never both. Unless it is essential to the interpretations being made and respondents' identities can be disguised in other ways (for example by omitting to state which college they are from or disguising their occupational status), I have not included information about ethnicity: there were so few black staff in each college in most occupational categories that to include ethnicity descriptors as a matter of course would have enabled black respondents to be identified. I have also kept to very broad 'black' and 'white' descriptors for the same reason. In sum, I have included whatever information I could about respondents without risking their possible identification by other staff within the college.

Stake stresses that 'those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment: loss of standing, employment, self-esteem' and he argues they should receive drafts of written accounts with the researcher taking serious note of any concerns that are raised (Stake 1994, p. 244). Although I have done my best to ensure that responses are anonymously reported, I did not offer respondents drafts of my written accounts of the research. Lack of time on my

part would have made this difficult, but this was not my only reason for choosing not to do this. Some of my interpretations, grounded in a feminist paradigm, would, I suspect, have been very unpalatable for some respondents. Whilst their responses to drafts of my work might have provided interesting data, I was not prepared to concede control over what was published. As Deem noted ‘to ask governors in our study to vet our draft publications would have raised important questions about our political and academic autonomy and our right to be critical of the status quo’ (Deem 1994, p. 164).

A number of researchers have stressed the importance of respondent validity, and ‘credibility’ and ‘plausibility’ have been identified as important indicators of the validity of research findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Hammersley 1992). Whilst, however, my interpretations may be very credible for some respondents and readers, others, I suspect, would reject them. As Ball notes, ‘schools are political arenas where opposing ideologies and competing vested interests are played out. Any case study which taps into these facets of institutional life would seem to stand little chance of consensual agreement’ (Ball 1984, p. 90). This is not to say that issues of validity are ignored in this research, but questions of credibility and plausibility need to be considered in terms of ‘plausible to whom?’. Skeggs also stresses credibility when she writes: ‘I take valid to mean: convincing, credible and cogent in which the analysis made can be evaluated as rigorous and responsible and the account given substantial and satisfactory’ (Skeggs 1997, p. 32). I have endeavoured to be both systematic and rigorous in data collection and analysis, in the hope that my interpretations will be judged as credible and convincing to many in the wider research community and amongst

my respondents. But I do not expect to have convinced all. As Du Bois suggests, 'if our work is not in some way threatening to the established order, we're on the wrong track' (Du Bois 1983, p. 113).

I have, however, promised to provide feedback on my findings to each of the colleges. The issues raised above obviously impinge on this, and as yet I have not resolved, nor discussed with the colleges concerned, the form that this feedback should take, although the Board of Governors in College B requested that I report back to them. Whilst reports to the Governors and/or senior managers will, of course, be important, I also have concerns about how to disseminate the findings to other groups of staff, both in these colleges and more widely. The form(s) and content of feedback and dissemination therefore need considerable thought.

In terms of dissemination to an academic audience, aspects of this research have been presented at several seminars and conferences, and some parts of the thesis have already appeared in print, albeit in different forms. These publications include a discussion of some of the theoretical underpinnings that are presented mainly in Chapter 2 (Leathwood 1998); a consideration of new technological developments from Chapter 7 (Leathwood 1999b); an account of changes in spaces and spatial relations that forms part of Chapter 6 (Leathwood 1999a); and a discussion of gender and new managerialism which appears here as Chapter 5 (Leathwood 2000).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an account of the research process and my own positioning within it, and discussed some of the issues and dilemmas that were met with regard to access, data gathering and making interpretations. The case study approach has enabled a relatively in-depth and holistic examination of the impact of marketisation and new managerialism on selected aspects of the two colleges. As Stake (1994) emphasises, case study research is about optimising understanding rather than generalising beyond the case, but along with Mitchell (1983), I think it is legitimate to draw theoretical inferences that extend beyond the boundaries of the cases in the study. The following chapters provide an account of the main findings.

Chapter 4

Marketised Colleges: Funding Quality?

This chapter places the two case study colleges in the context of the marketisation of further education. It begins with an account of the key events and changes that have occurred nationally, and then moves on to explore the implications of the funding regime for ‘quality’ in these colleges.

The discourses and practices of the market, funding and quality are all apparently neutral and rational, devoid of values and politics. Yet it becomes clear that processes of marketisation, and the cuts in funding that have accompanied these, are not neutral. Provision is being ‘streamlined’ and ‘rationalised’; that which fits within a market and technicist framework (i.e. is cost-effective and measurable) is retained and valued as the ‘core business’ of the institution, whilst everything else is denigrated, devalued and expendable. The perception of the majority of staff is of a fundamental reorientation of the colleges’ priorities, and the differences between educational and managerial discourses of quality are discussed. A masculinist technical rationality is very evident, and new quality discourses can be seen not only to ‘rationalise’ the cuts, but also to deny difference and sustain gendered, raced and classed power relations. The implications of the desire for a single corporate ethos are also considered.

Marketising Further Education

Whilst further education colleges could be said to have operated in a market for a long time (Gleeson and Shain 1999a), changes instigated from the mid 1980s have resulted in an increasing marketisation of the sector (see Appendix 4 for a list of key policy documents and events). ‘Efficiency’ became the new driving force in further education with the publication of the influential government report *Managing Colleges Efficiently* (DES 1987), which followed an earlier Audit Commission report calling for greater efficiency in colleges and reductions in teaching costs (The Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales 1985). *Managing Colleges Efficiently* describes the contemporary context as one in which student numbers in the 16-19 age range were likely to decline significantly, and where there were major changes in the labour market leading to uncertainty about employer demands. As such, the report states that ‘the service faces an uncertain future’ and that ‘a high premium will be placed on its efficiency and effectiveness, including responsiveness to employer needs’ (DES 1987, p. v). Although ‘effectiveness’ is also stressed, driving down costs appeared as the major priority, with pressure to reduce staff-student ratios (SSRs):

The case studies and HMI’s report suggested that SSRs could be tightened by increasing course enrolments and average class size, and by reducing average student hours in many colleges. Action of this kind is not likely to have an adverse effect on educational quality (*ibid.* p. vi).

Such conclusions were influential in the move to resource-based learning and the seemingly unquestioned faith in new technological developments which are discussed in Chapter 7. Reducing staff-student ratios inevitably meant reducing the numbers of staff employed, and efficiency in both staffing and other resources

such as space utilisation was recommended in the report. The beginnings of the construction of new management identities, distinct from those of lecturer and curriculum leader, are evident, and the report also notes that the employers' objectives in the pay and conditions of service negotiations that were taking place at this time included 'a salary award weighted towards the senior and managerial grades' (*ibid.* p. 8).

The 1988 Education Reform Act followed on from this report, and began the process of removing colleges from the control of local education authorities with budgets, and responsibility for management and development, devolved to the colleges. At the same time the membership of governing bodies was changed to reduce the influence of local government, with a requirement that local authority members or nominees constitute no more than 20% of the new board, and that a minimum of 50% of places be allocated to local businesses. The Government white papers on further and higher education (DES 1991; DES et al. 1991) continued this trend, with a faith in the market and an emphasis on efficiency clearly evident (Bines et al. 1992). The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act furthered this process and turned colleges into independent corporations, thereby removing the last vestiges of local authority control and planning.

Incorporation, which took place on 1st April 1993, was in many ways the epitome of the changes that have been occurring in further education over the previous decade. The 1992 Act also established the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), a new quango with responsibility for further education funding and inspection, which replaced the previous devolved budget from the local education

authority with unit based funding tied to a student's enrolment, retention and successful completion. Whilst many college principals welcomed the new 'freedoms' anticipated with the incorporation of colleges following the 1992 Act, the new funding arrangements, tying funding to targets based on a set of national performance indicators, ensured tight control from the centre.

Colleges were encouraged to grow with no increase in funding. FEFC core annual budgets to colleges were set at only 90% of the previous year's allocation, with colleges having to bid for any extra funding on the basis of additional 'units' delivered. As Ainley and Bailey note, 'the result was that the amount paid per student dropped by an average of 3.5 per cent per annum. The system meant that a college could not stand still and failure to grow would set a college budget on a downward spiral' (Ainley and Bailey 1997, p. 20). The possibility of attracting extra funding was present with a 'demand-led element' (DLE), whereby colleges could bid for additional units, paid at a lower rate, for taking on extra students. This drive for growth proved, however, to be rather more successful than the government had predicted, causing a furore from college principals, who had recruited extra students, when the Government threatened to withdraw the funding (FEDA 1997).

A further financial constraint on some colleges, notably inner-city ones and including the two colleges in this study, was a policy of convergence to reduce the historic differences in funding between colleges. Inner-city colleges with higher overheads and the additional costs associated with providing for large numbers of predominantly working class disadvantaged students found their average level of

funding (ALF) decreasing each year. The House of Commons Select Committee report on further education noted:

From 1993-94 to 1997-97, a time of tight controls on overall public expenditure, the FE sector has experienced a reduction in funding for full-time equivalent (FTE) students of 27 per cent, on the FEFC's figures (Education and Employment Committee 1998, para. 12).

This drive for 'efficiency' was not, therefore, a neutral process concerned simply with ensuring 'best value' for public spending, but an attempt to drive down that spending and cut costs. As will be seen, many staff in the case study colleges would support Welch's assertion that 'the rising tide of "efficiency" in contemporary education often masks not only a reduction in both the quality of education provided, but also attempts to increase productivity levels' (Welch 1998, p. 158).

Further Education was, therefore, repositioned from a local authority service to a new independent sector operating within what has been called a 'quasi-market' (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993), and although there remains a great deal of state intervention, as Bottery states, 'there is little doubt that the influence of the market *is* felt' (Bottery 1999, p. 27, stress in original). The privatisation of services such as cleaning, catering, and security was ensured through compulsory competitive tendering. Competition, consumerism and commodification all became apparent, and 'student as consumer' discourses were reinforced by college and government charters (DfEE 1993). Competition between colleges and other post-16 providers was constructed and reinforced by the funding methodology, and marketing, image and the 'glossification' (Gewirtz et al. 1995) of publicity materials becoming major priorities. The reductions in government funding and the

demands for growth reinforced these pressures. Gleeson and Shain point out that ‘behind the marketing, new foyer facades and rebranding exercises there has been a 30% turnover of senior management and lecturing staff since 1993, following endless college “restructurings”’ (Gleeson and Shain 1999a, p. 549). New managerialism and ‘quality’ discourses emphasising efficiency and effectiveness can be seen to rationalise and facilitate these processes, which have included not only the restructuring of college staffing and decision-making, but also of spaces, as well as the reconstruction of lecturers’ and managers’ positionings and identities. Gleeson and Shain suggest that ‘ostensibly, the FEFC funding mechanism and the forms of managerialism which support it have been introduced into FE as a rational process’ (*ibid.* p. 548), and some colleges, arguably responding ‘rationally’ to the financial pressures they faced, engaged in a variety of dubious activities which resulted in sleaze allegations, instances of fraud and one of the most bitter industrial relations disputes of any other sector of British industry in the years immediately after incorporation (Kingston 1999).

Financial Concerns

The FEFC noted that funding and financial considerations were dominating FE (FEFC 1997b), something that was confirmed by the vast majority of staff interviewed when discussing the main priorities for their colleges. Comments like those following from lecturers in College A were repeated in interview after interview:

Money, targets and retention and you know markets (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

To make money (Woman Lecturer, Science, College A).

Breaking even (Woman Lecturer, Arts and Media, College A).

Bums on seats (Woman Lecturer, ESOL, College A).

Staff in College B were particularly aware of the pressures of convergence. One lecturer articulated the main priorities for his college as:

Entirely entirely to get to convergence so that they don't have to every year go through this process of redundancies and all the rest of it to get on to an even keel, to remove courses that can't pay their way according to the funding criteria, to contract basically as much as possible, and any areas of expansion must be at full cost (Man Lecturer, Science, College B).

Whilst for another, survival was the priority:

Well I'd also say survival. I've been in further ed a long time, I came into it by complete accident and the FE college that I'm in now is virtually unrecognisable from when I started. . . . Nowadays it's all about survival, do this course because it'll bring in more units, it'll bring in more money and the college will survive (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

The 'efficiency fetish' (Lingard 1995, cited by Mahony 1998) is a term which not only clearly reflects the experience of a number of staff in these colleges but also usefully challenges the rationality paradigm within which concerns for efficiency have been largely framed. One lecturer in College B made clear that efficiency was taking priority:

I think the main emphasis is you know it's not about education, it's efficiency, it's about how efficient, how much blood they can get out of a stone . . . It's based on efficiency and, you know, form filling (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

The sense that the overriding priority was financial was shared by many middle and some senior managers:

The first thing is that we have got to be financially solvent. So, we've got to take whatever steps we can to be financially solvent, and we've

got to let staff know that that is a key strategic aim (Senior Manager, College A).

I think our main priority has been one which is about saving money. Whether that's right or not is another matter, but for the last four years and particularly during the last three the senior management team of the college has become almost completely focussed on achieving reductions, in particularly staffing costs of a £1 million a year, and that for me is absolutely wrong. Not in terms of you know whether the money should be saved and there's no doubt there's room for some improvements in efficiency, but I certainly question whether the amounts that have been required from an institution like ours are right. There's, there's not a proper recognition of the costs of operating in the environment we do or with the types of students we do. So I think it's.. I think the level of cuts is wrong in terms of the funding of the FE system. But I think the other thing that I would say, and I think it's a matter that applies right across the whole FE sector, is that the whole generation of senior managers who should have been looking at how they improve the quality of delivery of the service, how they improve retention and achievement of students, how they open up access, have become transfixed by achieving a level of financial saving which Margaret Hodge and the select committee report on further education say you know was unique out of any public service, the level of efficiency saving that's been required, and it's just transfixed and divided a whole generation of managers literally. So that's a real problem, but that has been where our focus has lain (Senior Manager, College B).

Whilst the senior manager from College A would, I am sure, have welcomed a greater level of funding, he appeared to relish the challenge of reducing costs. In contrast the manager from College B problematises this drive for efficiency, and as will be seen, the management of this college has committed itself to actively campaigning for a better deal for further education.

Planning for Cuts

It is not surprising that the strategic plans of both colleges included strategies for reducing spending and increasing income. College A's Strategic Plan identifies the need to expand non-FEFC income and plans to appoint a 'Director of Business Development', a new senior manager, in order to do this. In terms of reducing spending, this is to be achieved through its accommodation strategy (i.e. reducing sites) and by reducing the costs of curriculum delivery through '*new working/delivery methods*'. It is stressed that '*convergence poses a severe threat to the financial stability of current provision*' and that options being discussed to further reduce costs include changes to curriculum delivery, accommodation, staff contracts and partnerships with other institutions. Their document further acknowledges that '*the size of the gap to ensure financial viability is so large that these options will have a profound effect on the curriculum of the college and may threaten its current mission*'.

College B's Strategic Plan indicates the need to narrow the range of provision whilst increasing depth to increase progression and effectiveness, and to close courses with poor recruitment. A significant section of the strategic planning documents is, however, devoted to a forceful rejection of the government's convergence strategy. It is stressed that the college inherited a very high Average Level of Funding (ALF) on incorporation, in the region of £33.50, and that cost reductions had brought that down to £20.85 by the time of this study (1997-8). The target ALF for the college is £16.20 which it argues is unrealistic for a college in an area of very high deprivation. The college is continuing to cut costs

every year with an ongoing pay freeze and redundancy programme, and will save money on site closures. It is acknowledged, however, that the yearly redundancies have had an adverse effect on staff morale, and that the convergence plan which was being drafted '*could have a dramatic impact on the mission, shape and priorities of the institution*'. As such, a key objective was to '*seek a fair funding system*', and the Principal was actively involved in campaigning for this in collaboration with other colleges and the trade unions.

What becomes clear, then, is that both colleges are potentially in very serious financial difficulty, and it is no surprise that 'survival' and financial considerations have taken priority over everything else. The impact on educational provision and equality concerns is a cause for concern for many staff in both colleges. Lecturers spoke disdainfully about government policies in relation to further education funding, and those in College B in particular were keen to place the blame for the position colleges found themselves in firmly at the door of the government. This suggests that a major plank in the logic of devolved funding, to remove the (apparent) responsibility for further education from the State, has not been very successful. One lecturer in College B explained:

This college has just been through a number of cuts which are related to the way that the government is trying to plan the further education sector, that is convergence and cutting costs, so it's really, it's depressing because you're seeing less resources to do the same or more work and that's fundamentally one of the problems that you've got (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

Some staff here did not, though, feel that their senior managers were doing enough to challenge these developments, despite their stated commitment to do so, with one lecturer stating:

They're not radical, they're not standing up and saying 'no' (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

In contrast, her colleague argued that the managers had little choice:

Because it's handed down from somewhere else . . . so they have to follow or go under you see, that's what I think. . . I still feel that yes the college is trying to do something and they probably to some extent are trying to provide a quality education, but I think it's a big major political thing and I think they're all handing out, handing down these political agendas and it's either the college go with it or it sinks. So either way what could they do to survive? . . . So they have to go according to the trend (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

A middle manager is explicit:

It's not senior managers fault, we have been forced into a position where we're thinking very short term (Woman Head of Service Department, College B).

In College A too, some accepted that the college had little choice but to sort out their financial situation as a major priority:

The funding is so important at the moment, getting that right, you know what I mean, that in a sense I feel that curriculum has gone out of the window, you know, because it's all about funding, and quite rightly. That needs to be sorted out. Do you know what I mean? So that's got to be the priority (Woman Lecturer, Computing, College A).

However, staff anger about the changes they saw taking place in College A was much more likely to be directed at senior management than in College B, in part, I suggest, due to the management styles identified with some senior managers (see Chapter 5), and the more explicit adoption of business and managerial language. In College A there was no reference in the strategic planning documents to campaigning against the funding policies, and although senior managers stated

that the level of funding was insufficient, one senior manager clearly felt that overall FEFC policy was beneficial:

What's changed I think, . . . I don't know how many other senior managers you have saying this, but I actually think the funding mechanism is absolutely correct, has transformed FE, and has made us address those issues about outcomes, about achievement, about being much more client focused. My only problem with it is the quantum, the quantum for each unit. The quantum's wrong, and I think that is beginning to be addressed now, but the notion itself that you get the tranche of money on entry, on programme for achievement, that you get then additional bits for additional learning support, you know, or childcare, it's never the full cost for those things but they are major things, they've given us a steer. So although the FEFC describe themselves as a Funding Council and it's not driving the curriculum, those changes have made us drive curriculum changes in what we do. And I think, I personally think they are absolutely for the best (Senior Manager, College A).

This is in strong contrast to the explicit public rejection of government policy on FE funding by the management of College B, where the Principal's determination to campaign on this issue, is, I would suggest, one reason that lecturers here appear less likely to direct their anger at senior management. In this way, the Principal had identified common concerns between management and the staff, thus in some part bridging the 'distance' which has opened up in the spatial relations of managers and other staff post-incorporation (see Chapter 6). This does not, however, mean that the gap is closed:

I just think probably the main priorities of the college management are really weathering the, as best they can, the financial crisis which is affecting further education right across the country and that's an on going crisis. And we're now sort of into the second or third year of that crisis so that that means that their eyes are on one particular ball and that is you know how to make the economies that have been forced on them by the FEFC. And unfortunately I think that puts us at variance with senior management all the time because obviously our jobs and our conditions are on the line and it's a very insecure and difficult place to work in. Morale is extremely low and it also means the there is no, there's no real focus on the thing that we consider to be most important and that is the needs, the needs of the students. We

feel that at the moment and I think I speak for everybody (Man Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

Educational Implications

For the majority of lecturers in both colleges, the new funding arrangements meant that the emphasis on financial matters was at the expense of educational concerns and the curriculum. In College B, the lack of priority given to curriculum matters was seen to be epitomised by the lack of a senior manager with specific curriculum responsibility following the non-replacement of the previous post-holder:

What curriculum? We haven't had a curriculum manager for is it two years? Just astonishes me. I find it mind blowing. I mean the curriculum does seem to be the least important of the managers' interests because finance has become so overriding in interest that the curriculum has just gone really . . . There doesn't seem to be anybody looking over and saying you know we could develop this course or we could do something around this, this is an interest area let's build it. Nothing. There's no expansion at all, it's just contraction (Woman Lecturer, Access, College B).

Senior managers in this college acknowledged that curriculum leadership had been neglected and there were plans to appoint a new member of the senior management team to take on this responsibility.

There was a general consensus across the departments that the financial stringency and drive for efficiency was damaging to both the curriculum and to students:

Courses are being cut . . . that's what's offensive really (Woman Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

It's anticipated the offer of different courses is going to become narrower and less broad and perhaps in the long term less helpful to

the community it's situated in (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

In College A, the staff were aware of the cost-cutting strategic plan objective to develop '*new working/delivery methods*' for the curriculum, and this proved to be the main focus of comments about the educational impact of the cuts. These developments were largely presented to staff as important for students in terms of increasing flexibility, enhancing access, and using new technologies to enable students to work at their own pace, but, as discussed in Chapter 7, most lecturers disputed whether these developments would really be of benefit for students, rejected the further reductions in course hours, and insisted that they were driven primarily by economic motives.

Oh well, I mean they're setting up a learning resource centre downstairs for engineering but there's a lot of hoo hah about that . . . I think it's good because I think the more resources you offer kids it, you know, it is good but you know everybody knows that they want to cut down on teaching hours and increase student directed hours which basically means, you know, piss off and get on with it yourself, you know, the FOFO approach, fuck off and find out (Woman Lecturer, Science, College A).

Several other lecturers discussed the appropriateness of this for many students.

One said:

I question whether there is much connection between the people we recruit and who need to learn and the strategic aim of the college because I don't think the strategic aim of the college has anything to do with those disadvantaged people, ('No I think you're right' – Man Lecturer, Arts and Media) because I think we are increasingly wanting people who already have all those skills, you know we can stick them in front of something and just say go on and do it. So it's hard on those people who haven't had the education (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College A).

In both of these colleges, a number of lecturers argued that the cuts would impact negatively on particular groups of students, such as those who could not pay for their courses and those needing more support.

Although retention was mentioned by a number of respondents as one of the college's priorities, this was seen by most lecturers not as a concern for the students and their progression, but as another way of balancing the books.

Quality Assurance

It became increasingly clear that despite a discourse of 'quality', and the introduction of quality assurance systems in colleges, the majority of lecturers felt that the quality of education students received was at risk or already declining:

Because it seems there's all these different changes that's coming into the college and the college wants to adopt them all but at the expense of the quality of education, the quality of their staff, and something has to lose or something has to burst and it seems it's the education standard, standard of education, the standard of staff that you know, the equality of staff is becoming a burden on them (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

One of the priorities well it is to provide quality education to people in the area who need or want that education whether it's for employment or whatever. I suppose that is a priority but having said that I think it's it's very cynical, it's sort of quite wrong to say that because of the squeeze that is being put on by central government, in that it is now, I would say, not really possible to provide a quality and comprehensive education service to people in the locality, I just don't think that that's possible with what they're doing (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

Some managers too questioned whether it was possible to maintain quality with continual cuts in resources:

The point is this is the balance you now have as a manager is how much more can you cut where quality is really on the cusp and you are actually eating into it, you can't deliver quality (Man Head of Academic Department, College B).

In College A, quality assurance (QA) mechanisms, to some extent framed within a business management discourse, had been explicitly introduced, and these were rejected by a number of lecturers as paper exercises that had little relevance in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning, echoing Elliot's case study in a further education college (Elliot 1996b). Elliot examined the attempts to introduce a new QA system and concluded that 'the lecturers feel such efforts to be marginal in their effects upon learning and teaching' (ibid. p. 13). Here two lecturers from different departments discuss the quality procedures in College A:

Man Lecturer: But I'm also cynical of those sort of exercises such as the supposedly self assessment process and so on, as are what used to be valuable exercises such as the course team reviews. The fact is that currently there doesn't seem to be any time put aside for course team meetings, there doesn't seem to be, the management don't recognise that if you're going to follow the strategy, then you've got to make time available for it. You've got to allow members of staff who teach in the same team to meet together in teams to reflect and review their work, but the whole exercise it seems to me now is a paper exercise and there is very little concern about the content of the reviews, simply the heads (of department) demand to have one in order that he can collate them together, oh sorry, he or she, I'm thinking of my own at the moment, that he or she can report back to the next tier of management who then presumably they collate and report to the highest tier of management or the corporation itself, you know. And then they get put in a drawer.

Woman Lecturer: Well ours are being used slightly differently. We are being asked to look at how we can alter things and to alter them and to refer back.

The latter lecturer was in a different department and clearly felt that there was some point to the exercise. This department was one with a woman head who was generally liked and respected by the lecturers in her department that I interviewed, whilst the first lecturer was in a department headed by a man who seemed to be

generally regarded as a bully. It may be, therefore, that part of the difference in response here is to do with the approaches to management adopted by the different heads of department, and, possibly, the greater achievement of women managers in 'selling' new managerial practices to their staff (see Chapter 5). It is also possible that the woman head of department presented the process within an educational discourse of course review and reflection rather than a technocratic and managerial one of quality assurance systems.

For other staff at this college, the extra administrative burden placed on staff is perceived as directly damaging to quality and their ability to do the job of teaching well:

Woman Lecturer, Business: *You know just over the past week I've been thinking more about this thing, about teaching and learning and my role and my function and I have just clarified to myself, I think partly because of this new advertising thing that that the Labour Party are doing, the Government are doing about 'you never forget a good teacher' yea, and I thought to myself, I wonder how many of my students in very recent years would remember me as a good teacher compared to students that I taught earlier on in my career? And I just decided that what is preventing me I think being a good teacher is the amount of admin that I have to do, and I kind of made a resolution to myself that I was going to be a teacher first and an admin person second and not try to balance the two and not try to get management's priorities paper-wise done first. . . . We are racing all the time to do everything but I think that I am much less of a good teacher than I was really because of that, because it is impossible to square the circle and I think as long as we all keep making that tremendous effort to do it management has no incentive to employ more admin people or whatever needs to be done to to make the job doable . . . I think it's that, to come back to the whole crux of the thing is that we're not teaching to our best and our students aren't learning to their best. I don't think they are despite our efforts.*

Woman Lecturer, Computing: *Which is why the classes are so small.*

Woman Lecturer, Business: *Exactly . . . the management look at retention as a paper thing, as something that if we do this and we do that, if we do admin well, our students would be retained and what I know is right is that if I teach my students well from the beginning of the year then I would retain my students. And I haven't retained my students that's why I know that I cannot be doing well. I haven't*

retained the students this year and I know that it was because I had so much extra work to do . . . and the teaching suffered, so I think that if they realised that if they freed us up to teach well they would, the retention would become much less of a problem.

The ‘caring’ discourse espoused here was a common feature of many of the interviews with women respondents, and is discussed further in Chapter 5. The lecturers’ educational professional discourse around retention is also very clearly spelled out. These lecturers were concerned about poor retention, and went on to discuss the consequences for those students in a group who do stay and attend. However, they saw improving retention as less about setting targets than about providing the resources, including staff time, to enable them to do their job properly. Gleeson suggests that:

The chief concern of government legislation is not primarily with improving the quality of education and training but with regulating labour markets and driving down costs. It is, therefore, misleading to assume that current rhetoric associated with quality control and quality assurance has anything to do with improving the quality of provision: rather the opposite (Gleeson 1996, p. 92).

Improving Quality

For both colleges, primacy in the strategic objectives was given to improving quality. In College A, the first objective in its Strategic Plan was to raise the quality of teaching and learning wherever it was less than ‘*good or outstanding*’ by implementing college policies on curriculum planning, tutorials and quality assurance, encouraging good teaching, monitoring retention and achievement against set performance indicators, the use of annual self-assessment and target setting, and expanding areas of highest quality whilst closing those that do not

improve to the necessary standard. The one thing that appears to be missing here is the recognition of the resourcing requirements raised by lecturers. The objective stems from a more distanced management perspective of effective policy implementation and monitoring, rather than the 'on the ground' experience of lecturers about what is necessary to support students in staying the course. The increasing distance of senior managers from lecturing and support staff is discussed in Chapter 6.

A senior manager in this college articulated this strategic objective:

I mean the first priority I see is all around improving the quality of what we do and that I would see from two points of view: the way we work on the process, and the outcome for our students, and if I talk about outcome first. The outcomes I am interested in as priorities for the college are retention which actually reach back I think into the way we choose students as well. Not that I'm saying you can ever make yourself sort of retention proof, but I think we've been very subject to a sort of through put model which people panic at the last moment and enrol anybody sort of thing. . . . So retention I would link with that and then achievement in terms of outcomes for students and the extent to which one can basically you know shift achievement upwards, I think, in terms of aspirations, in terms of norms, in terms of the way things are done. So that's one important area. The other one is changing the way we do things and it's the quality of teaching being consistent; thinking more laterally about the way we do things; and that's very much tied up with getting more classroom observation going in the college, opening the doors of classrooms. So, that is one important area. The promotion of learning and student achievement and retention (Senior Manager, College A).

Again there is an emphasis on retention, but also on increasing achievement, both of which can be seen as important for student learning as well as maximising FEFC funding. The issue here, however, is how that is going to be achieved. In part this is through changing student recruitment and selection practices, though as some of the lecturers in this study suggest, this could potentially reduce access and ensure that only the already advantaged students are selected (i.e. the ones

most likely to succeed). For Bensimon (1995), this control of raw materials in order to achieve a certain standard is a key feature of TQM (Total Quality Management) discourse, illustrating one of the difficulties of introducing business practices and values into an educational setting.

The other strategy given above for increasing retention and achievement is to improve the quality of teaching and make it 'consistent'. Here the major problem with quality is not that of resources, including staff time, as identified by lecturers, but of poor teaching, echoing the 'blame the teacher discourse' or what Kenway and Ball call a 'discourse of derision' (Kenway 1987; Ball 1990b) which has been evident in many government statements and practices in recent years. The emphasis on consistency can be seen as part of the pressure towards sameness and lack of variation that Bensimon notes is not only common to quality initiatives, but also tends to favour the norm, i.e. white men at the expense of 'others' (Bensimon 1995). It is also clear too, that although this manager mentions process as well as outcomes, the emphasis is on the outcomes, and questions about which outcomes are not generally discussed.

In College B, the first objective in the Strategic Plan was also to '*develop and deliver improved quality in teaching and more effective learning programmes*'. A retention strategy was in place which included a staff development conference to develop ways of improving retention. In addition the college will continue to develop key skills provision, tutorial programmes, additional support, and the use of learning technology. For a senior manager in this college:

OK, I think the main priorities for our college in let's say short term, let's take the next year, I think it's actually to concentrate on raising

achievement and I think that's about retention, punctuality, attendance and examination and outcome related success, and that doesn't necessarily have to be in terms of formal qualification but does need to be actually a way of marking and celebrating the achievements of students at all levels. I don't think it's high enough here, I think it could be much higher and I think it's not always recorded in a way that portrays the organisation in the best way so I think raising achievement would be my first priority (Senior Manager, College B).

Again the emphasis is very much on outcomes, though there is an acknowledgement that these outcomes may be different from those demanded by the FEFC, i.e. 'marking and celebrating the achievement of students' which may not be through formal qualifications. In this college I did not find evidence of the 'blame the teacher' discourse identified in College A. The 'achievement fetish' (Mahony 1998), however, is evident in both colleges. In addition, the concern expressed here with recording results '*in a way that portrays the organisation in the best way*' is an example of the pressure to play the game of performativity, or, in Ball's words, to engage in 'a perverse form of response/resistance to and accommodation to performativity that I call fabrication' (Ball 1999b, p. 6).

Caring for 'Customers'?

One aspect of business models of quality assurance is an emphasis on the customer, and this has also been evident in further education with the Government's Charter for Further Education (DfEE 1993). Whilst student charters are now required for all FE colleges, a 'student as customer/consumer' discourse was more evident in College A. Here all administrative support staff had been

required to take part in customer care training, and in this discussion, an educational discourse of quality, comparable to that of lecturing staff, is evident:

Woman General Office Administrator: *They have said to us about a year or two years ago, it's all about customer relations and then they completely scrap that idea. Our training was you know you've got to see your students as customers and be nice to them and then they don't look at that point of view when they're moving bodies around do they?*

Woman Departmental Administrator: *No, absolutely.*

Woman General Office Administrator: *Because you're not going to be nice to people if you're under pressure all the time. It's just human nature that you'll lose all that you know. We've always been nice to students and nurtured them and all that in adult education, we've always had more or less time to do that, even in enrolment when you haven't got time it doesn't matter so much because you know that's just a short period and that's going to die down, but if they start moving people around and you're constantly under pressure you end up being horrible to the students don't you?*

The reference to ‘*moving bodies around*’ concerned a restructuring of administrative services that was currently being implemented. The use of the term ‘bodies’ rather than ‘people’ here is interesting and may stem from a tacit acknowledgement that (human, alive) bodies are usually an ‘absent presence’ in organisations (Hassard et al. 2000).

Another group of administrators at the same college discussed the college’s priorities, with one saying:

They say customer care but without the staff then you can't provide that (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A).

They extended this discussion to include the teaching staff too, and the difficulties of providing high quality for the students when there were not enough teaching staff to cover when someone was sick.

The 'student as customer' discourse was explicitly articulated by two managers in this college. An upper middle manager raised the issue of fees being proposed for higher education students and said:

If you pay £1000 for a course you make damn sure you get the best lecturer you possibly can get. You moan if he doesn't turn up, and make a scene. And I think that pressure in its own right will be actually beneficial to FE . . . More power to the consumer . . . Consumer pressure I think is actually critical to the whole issue. I don't think our students push for a good enough deal by any means whatsoever in a lot of areas, well not a lot of areas but many areas in the college they are short-changed I personally believe. So ultimately, it'll be their taxes which pay for the FE system twenty years down the line so they've got to think are they getting value for it when they are actually receiving a portion of it? (Man Head of Service Department, College A).

A senior manager in this college used customer demands to rationalise the use of performance indicators:

Destinations, we do not systematically track destinations. And I think that, you know, we are going to have to do that actually. Almost whatever the resource implications we are going to have to do that. And not because the FEFC demand it but because I think our customers are going to increasingly demand it. They are going to want to know. I would want to know. If I was going on this course or if my children were going on this course where do they go afterwards? And not only ten of them went to university but which universities did they go and what were they studying? And I think there is no doubt that people have become (more customer focused), so it's not just the jargon of everybody saying people are becoming much more customer focused, the students themselves are; they have an expectation which is very different and without wishing to sound like a Thatcherite, I think that is absolutely right. I think there was a customer revolution over the past 10 years. I think our expectations are all higher and I think that is absolutely correct (Senior Manager, College A).

On one level, this focus on the customer can be seen as consonant with lecturers' concerns to meet the needs of students, with the emphasis on the individual learner meeting equity principles. Avis (1996) has noted the similarities between quality and curriculum moderniser discourses, but he warns that:

A notion of technical rationality is present, the concern is to enhance performance without engaging in a critique or in reflection around the social relations in which work is placed. It is through this silence that the quality debate becomes appropriated by a conservative logic (*ibid.* p. 109).

The business model of customer service is not conducive to equity concerns. In the business world, customers who are rich get a different service from those who are poor, whose choices are limited by the money they have to spend and the shops available locally. The discursive elision from ‘student’ to ‘customer’ signifies a change of dominant discourse from one centred on educational concerns to that of the market, and ‘the idea that market mechanisms can produce *quality* outcomes for the population as a whole may be a dream of idealogues but it is not reflected in real life’ (Pfeffer and Coote 1991, p. 17, stress in original). Quality assurance discourses and practices can also be seen as a direct challenge to professional educational concerns and identities. Miller & Innis, in their advice for senior managers in further education, stress that ‘the college has to be *managed* on the basis of the service it offers the user, rather than being administered at the convenience of the professional’ (Miller and Innis 1992, p. 25, stress in original). In this way quality discourses can be used to undermine the terms and conditions of employment of lecturing staff on the basis that the student is paramount.

The issue then is who the student or customer is. The abstract individual student is, I suggest, based on a white, male, middle class ideal who is nonetheless presented as neutral, gender and race-free, an argument that is further developed in Chapter 7. Bensimon, drawing on Haraway (Haraway 1989), suggests that the administrative view of quality ‘implies that functioning like an efficient machine

is a sign of quality ... the “customer” is a faceless, genderless, raceless human being whose view of quality is the view from everywhere’ (Bensimon 1995, p. 607). Attempts to find out the customers’ perceptions, including student satisfaction surveys, are also fraught with difficulty, and they tend to again focus on the individual, rather than on collective or community needs. They also rarely provide opportunities for students to express concerns about sexism, racism, homophobia or eurocentric curricula, for example. To raise such issues is to step outside the discursive framing of the survey and is therefore not likely to happen frequently.

Customer care training is also not without its problems, as has already been seen by the experiences of administrative staff in College A. It rests on the assumption that the problem lies with individuals who are not doing their jobs properly, rather than on the resources and systems in place which enable a quality service to be delivered. It has also been critiqued for requiring staff to manage their emotions: ‘emotion has always been a social experience, but only recently has it become an *administered* experience’ (Ferguson 1984, p. 54, stress in original). Adkins’ study of women working in the service industry indicates what a customer care policy can mean for women staff (Adkins 1992). A narrow customer care focus disregards employment issues, health and safety and equal opportunities, all of which are crucial to the quality of the service provided (Centre for Public Services 1992).

Quality Discourses

Very different discourses of 'quality' are clearly evident. For lecturers, administrative support staff and some managers, quality was framed within a professional educational discourse to do with providing a quality educational experience for students, and this necessitated staff having the time and other resources to do their job well. The emphasis, particularly in College A, on monitoring and target setting was indicative of a managerial or business model of quality. Randle and Brady (1997a), in their research in a further education college, concluded that for managers, quality was about cost effectiveness and providing education for the many at 'conformance to requirements standards', whereas for lecturers it was about a quality learning experience. Whilst many managers in both colleges in this study articulated elements of a professional educational discourse, in College A the more prevalent adoption of business language and approaches, and the apparent welcoming of some aspects of the new funding regime, suggests that the 'conformance to requirements model' was the dominant one, although as has been indicated, there appeared to be some differences between the implementation in different departments. Wilkinson and Willmott suggest that when this model is applied to the organisation of work, quality means 'the development of "uniform and dependable" work practices that are congruent with delivering products at low cost with a quality suited to the market' (Wilkinson and Willmott 1995, cited in Randle and Brady 1997b, p. 130). Elliot argues that QA systems:

.. by virtue of their common origin and expression through a market ideology, ... carry with them a powerful temptation for those that introduce them to educational institutions to impose a market model of quality which is at bottom reductionist, deprofessionalising, and

contrary to the idea of education as a shared learning experience. In the market, quality becomes muddled with efficiency, and quality as a system becomes muddled with quality as a value (Elliot 1996b, p. 18).

This epitomises the concerns of lecturers in this research, who were not happy with minimum 'conformance to requirements' standards (though some were clearly questioning whether even this was being met in many cases), but wanted to give students 'the best'. Given the 'in search of excellence' (Peters and Waterman 1982) rhetoric of some quality 'gurus', it is ironic that this would appear to fit best with an educational rather than managerial quality discourse. The 'minimum standards' approach risks valorising a minimal but common core at the expense of variation and difference. If equality concerns are not thoroughly embedded within this common core, they are likely to be further marginalised and, possibly, pushed off the edge of the curriculum. There was some evidence in this research of a narrowing of the curriculum offer and indeed such a trend is evident from the strategic plans in both colleges. Some lecturers gave examples of courses being closed that raised particular equality concerns, included minority languages and women-only courses. Bensimon, drawing on Fish (1992) suggests that:

What is particularly disturbing about TQM is that its preoccupation with eliminating variation resonates closely with calls by anti-multiculturalists for common standards and a common culture, including a common ideal of quality (Bensimon 1995, p. 603).

In a context where niche marketing and 'flexibility' are also espoused, there are clearly contradictory and competing tensions here, although the flexibility may well mean simply flexible access to packaged units which meet the minimum 'conformance to requirements' approach.

Signs of Change and the New Corporatism

Despite the pessimism about funding and lack of attention to the curriculum in both colleges, there was some sense that things were beginning to change in College A. Although there were still very real financial concerns here, there was a feeling amongst some managers that they had ‘weathered the storm’ so that more attention could now be paid to curriculum matters.

One senior manager insists that at the centre of the college’s strategy must be ‘*an educational mission*’. He goes on:

I think for us as a college, although staff on the ground may not agree, I think the educational mission has changed very little post incorporation. I think you’ve got more sophisticated about it and you would want to talk about technology . . . and transparency . . . inclusion rather than exclusion . . . achievements (Senior Manager, College A).

For some managers, however, the curriculum had been neglected, though this was something that was beginning to change. Noting the promised ‘widening participation’ funding following the Kennedy report (Kennedy 1997), a head of department says :

It looks like (this college) will get more money or at least won’t have to fight so hard to make cuts . . . Making efficiency savings has really been the main priority up to now, but I think it is changing. I think there is going to be major changes in delivery in coming years and we are being asked to respond to a whole range of things and make everything much more flexible and respond to actually begin to make better use of technology. I don’t think the colleges have at all. I don’t think the universities have either, but better than we have. So I mean we are making efficiency savings at the same time but there is certainly moving towards more resource based learning and cutting course hours even more, is going to be a priority, but it’s under a sort of curriculum development umbrella rather than a simple sort of funding and efficiency umbrella. . . . I think the curriculum is beginning to have its day again. I mean that was always going, that

was always predicted, but it's been a long time coming. But it is a very much changed curriculum in terms of how it's delivered, you know, so the main priorities for the college is really to make its curriculum so flexible that people can come in at any time. And I think what's driving that change through is this whole New Deal, Welfare to Work stuff, certainly for this college. So that we are able to be responsive to anyone at anytime, you know, so we can, we don't have to tell students as we have in the past, wait until September (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

Although, therefore, this manager expresses the view that greater attention is now being paid to the curriculum, it becomes clear that efficiency and cost-cutting continue to underpin the changes, and that only the '*umbrella*' has changed. In this sense professional concerns with educational matters and the curriculum are used to justify continued 'rationalisations' of both curricula and resources. This could be seen to support Avis' claim of an 'implicit alliance between curriculum modernisers and educationalists sympathetic to post-Fordism and managerialism' (Avis 1995, p. 57).

The on-going managerial agenda is clearly evident here:

Man Head of Service Department: *I think we are just on sort of a saddle point of change. I think it's very clear that the last three years, well since incorporation really, the main focus has been to be financially stable. That in many ways has just about been achieved over the last 18 months. I think the switch is now very much in evidence in terms of driving up quality of the curriculum delivery. So we're moving out of the emergency phase of actually stabilising the college and into the sort of long term strategy phase of actually improving the curriculum delivery.*

Researcher: *And how do you see that happening?*

Man Head of Service Department: *Being brutally honest I think they will be quite ruthless in how they weed out poor courses and poorly performing staff. I think there is a lot to come over the next few years in terms of, on the one hand staff training and staff development, but on the other hand a much more ruthless approach of poor performing curriculum staff members* (College A).

The emphasis on ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’, and the identification of poorly performing staff as the major problem (rather than lack of resources, the lack of training and support for staff, or issues related to appropriate curricula and pedagogy), appears to be a continuation of trends that have been identified by staff, particularly in College A, since incorporation. This discourse is indicative of the new managerialism that has become evident within further education and is discussed in Chapter 5. If this manager is correct in his predictions, things are not going to get any easier for staff, and the quality of the educational provision for students is likely to remain contested.

This sense that ‘the corner has been turned’ and that things would now get better was not something that was shared by the majority of the lecturers I interviewed in this college. For them, seemingly irrevocable changes had taken place since incorporation, epitomised by the move from educational to business values whereby financial survival in a competitive market was the driving force. The prioritising of finance over educational concerns, although acknowledged by many staff as necessary in the current context, was seen as evidence of the incursion of business values. Several members of staff in both colleges commented on ‘image’ and presentation as a major priority now, aspects that Hinkson identifies as features of post-modern markets (Hinkson 1991). For some, this was done to disguise the ‘reality’ of what was happening in colleges:

Well I think they’re very keen that the public image of, you know, the public face of the college should be a good one, that there shouldn’t be any outward signs of things not going right in the college, you know that the public face should be without fault (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

Yet the concern with presentation and image extended beyond the risks of bad press:

I think it's quite visible in terms of you know, with some senior managers in terms of the . . . classic sort of symptoms of corporatism, you know, the way people dress and the mobile phones and the office suites and so on . . . while there is more of a them and us type of sort of feeling within the college and lack of, you know, far less accountability (Man Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

The values underpinning this focus on image and presentation at a time of cutbacks were questioned by several respondents. One said:

Yea but as you, as staff you see things that haven't, one minute they say we've got no money, we can't do this, you can't do that, and the next minute you know you see new things. You know they're measuring up for carpet where I am and I thought well we've only been here a year, why have we got to get new carpet you know? One section, four people share a computer. What's going on? (Woman General Office Administrator, College B).

Nothing is on or is a possibility unless it's to do with management, with management's own agenda and their worries and I can see why they're worried, I know it's a very dire situation, they're like business sections now there's money for everything. I mean we were joking last week about are they going to be giving us money for uniforms next you know. There's money for posters to put up in the rooms and ridiculous things which won't be available next week when the inspection's over I imagine. It's just you know everything's got to be viable and worthwhile in financial terms, no other terms matter, like I was saying earlier about student achievements in other ways or courses that are expensive or labour intensive or whatever (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

Whilst the reference to uniforms was described as a joke, dress codes could be on the future agenda for this college:

Now I'm saying all that because there's huge feeling against corporate management ethos isn't there? It seems a very suspect, I mean the language itself sort of derives from Coca Cola or somewhere, and in fact to get anything done in the world you need to be a team, you need to have common goals, common objectives and we do need a corporate ethos. But even simply things like the way, I mean I would actually like to have a dress code. I don't mean that in a fascist way at all but I think students are entitled to feel that.., I mean I

think the way people dress often indicates the respect they have for the people who they're dealing with. I mean it does, so you know I'll put my best suit on for the Governing Body sort of approach. Now I think that's very much lacking, you know. We have no corporate ethos around that for example, the way we should present ourselves to our students and present ourselves to the world. Now I'm not going to put that on my agenda at the moment because, you know, I wouldn't get anywhere with it. You've got to go a long way first and it sounds rather trivial but it isn't, it's very, you know it's really semiotics is what I'm saying (laughter), the way people dress. And it's saying something about the way they see themselves in the organisation. I mean I had a really amusing example of this at a meeting I was at with some staff in (one site), and there's been again, as there always is, there had been a lot of upsets about behaviour and students not behaving themselves and things. And we were actually talking about that, it had actually come up in the discussion, and then there was a huge sort of rumpus outside the door. So, I said, well, I suppose I'd better go outside and do something about this because we were talking about people being responsible for behaviour. So I went outside, the door was open and there were these couple of students horsing around at the drinks machine and I can't remember what I said to them, but I said something and they immediately said 'yes Sir, certainly, yes Sir sorry, sorry for interrupting' etc. etc. and they were as meek and mild as anything and went off. And everybody heard this. They were laughing about it and then they said they only did that because you were wearing a suit. But I think you know I think that it is significant. Why did they respond to that? If that's the reason. Now what I think I'm trying to say is that there is a huge need for corporate ethos if we look at it positively and there is a hell of a lot of resistance to it. And again for people like (the SLs) and Heads (of Departments) and people, they're very much caught in the middle of this. And I think dress is a good, a good symbol of this. They will be very careful about where they would pitch their dress between mine and the other lecturing staff, perhaps some of them, you know, it may sound a bit crazy what I am saying, I am trying to use this as a metaphor and we really do need a corporate management ethos if you like to use that phrase, in which we are all confident you know that we are doing the same thing, we are going in the same direction. (Senior Manager, College A).

Here dress is part of establishing a corporate image and a common culture: moving from the 'us' and 'them' discourse of the lecturer above to a hegemonic 'them'. Rhetoric about diversity becomes a bounded 'diversity' within the frame established by the dominant discourse. It evokes Lorde's words about:

A mythical norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows ‘that is not me’. In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society (Lorde 1984, p. 116).

Reeves notes how the incorporation of colleges, and the national frameworks for mission statements, have resulted in greater uniformity: ‘local idiosyncrasies, including any alternative aims of further education, are swept away. There is a new uniformity’ (Reeves 1995, p. 33), with staff expected to adopt the corporate values. Bartlett asserts that the main problem with strategic management approaches is that their main objective is to ‘minimize the idiosyncrasies of human behavior’ (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1994, p. 80).

These attempts to create one corporate ethos and identity (and in some cases to have staff knowledge of the mission statement and organisational objectives tested in the Investors in People award scheme which College A had committed to) seem designed to manage emotions (Blackmore 1996), and contribute to the denial of difference and conflict to convey an ordered, rational world. Indeed, the notion of ‘incorporation’ is itself of interest here. Dictionary definitions of ‘incorporate’ include the following:

unite; form into one body or whole . . . become incorporated . . . combine (ingredients) into one substance, include; blend, mix . . .; closely united (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1991).

Incorporated . . . embodied (Penguin English Dictionary 1977; emphasis in the original).

Burton argues:

The idea of a corporate culture, which establishes the place of values, traditions, norms, language, ritual and myth in organizational life, allows them in but in curtailed form. The human characteristics we

value appear to be driven by our rational (for rational, read administered, socialized) selves in such a way that we, the human resources of the organization, have reasonably aligned our personal goals with that of the organization, so that we 'fit in' and the individual and the organization benefit from the association (Burton 1993, p. 160).

Burton explains that monitoring and feedback ensure that we are put back on course if we stray. At a time when more colleges talk about recognising 'diversity', when the market promises consumer choice and yet delivers increasing inequalities, and when the 'individual' is elevated beyond any notions of societies, groups, communities or, indeed, power relations, this notion of one corporate body is rather interesting.

The unifying dynamic of the corporation, of corporate culture, is a restriction, in Gatens' words, 'to one voice only: a voice that can speak of only *one* body, *one* reason, and *one* ethic' (Gatens 1996, p. 23, stress in original). As Burton notes, to acknowledge diverse interests appears to imply that the organisation is not operating efficiently (Burton 1993). Within the corporate world of further education, some black women managers have felt the need to become 'culturally white' in order to further their careers (Powney and Weiner 1991). Here there is no space for the ubiquitous 'diversity' that so many equal opportunities statements, mission statements, etc. refer to. Newman argues that within the 'transformational' culture of new managerialism:

Differences cannot be recognised since this would undermine the consensual values . . . the gender and racial inequalities of power operating beneath the surface of the seemingly consensual teams and workplaces remain. Women are, then, operating within contradictory sets of meanings: contribute fully, but remember your real place (Newman 1994, p. 197).

The one voice, reason and ethic is a middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, white male one. As Haraway notes 'Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters' (Haraway 1985, p. 72).

In the incident described by the manager above, his authority is likely to have stemmed not only from his suit, but perhaps most significantly from his gender. A woman, whether dressed in a suit or not, is unlikely to have been perceived in quite the same way by two young men students. The identification of management as masculinist is relevant here, and is discussed in the next chapter. Although this senior manager would probably protest strongly at any suggestion that 'sameness' is his intention, some staff in this college clearly felt that they were 'other' to the desired norm. One lecturer, rather cynically discussing her career prospects, said:

Maybe part of my career development I'll get a suit and try another path, but I really think that's the only possible way to progress. I think as long as you hold on to the values that we've got and priorities that we have we won't get anywhere (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

The desire for one corporate ethos is not only stifling of diversity, but also of creativity and innovation. Indeed a number of businesses are now relaxing dress codes precisely because they recognise that acknowledging difference and freeing people up to be 'more themselves' provides the spaces in which innovation and creativity can grow. Some lecturers in this study clearly felt that their creativity and enthusiasm were being stifled:

When I first came here there was a real pressure to be innovative the whole time, to develop new things and start new courses and get this going. There was this pressure you know, you had to be, to do this, do this. (Woman Lecturer, Social Care: 'a buzz'). Yes there was a buzz and that was quite exciting, and now it's like, don't do anything new because we haven't got enough resources for it, stop developing and

stop moving forwards, and it's kind of clamped down and squeeze what you've got. (Man Lecturer, Arts and Media, College A).

Many lecturers in this college felt that the culture had changed, and creativity and innovation appeared to be suffering not only from the imposed ‘corporateness’ and the associated technocratic discourse of the market, but also from lack of resources, insecurity, demoralisation and bureaucratic overload. Yet the senior managers in this college were also aware of the need for creativity and innovation, but regarded the changes that the college was going through as part of a rational process through which they would inevitably progress:

Where colleges have gone through this process sooner, you know, the lesson to learn is that you do come out the other side of it (Senior Manager, College A).

All that is needed to ensure this is ‘good’ management. The senior manager quoted above in relation to dress codes also recognises the need for innovation and creativity in meeting the college’s strategic objectives:

Actually addressing many of those objectives demands an enthusiasm for innovation and creativity and a focusing on educational objectives which isn't going to come from the top of the organisation, it is going to come from the teams of people who actually deliver the college. And we are much weaker on that, I mean much weaker, and what that requires, it does require very good management (Senior Manager, College A).

The assumptions that ‘good’ management will provide the solution and the college will ‘come out the other side’ are indicative of the technical rationality that continues to exert a powerful influence within the world of further education. Here progress is inevitable and the solution to problems rests with the straightforward application of management techniques. Issues of politics, power

relations and the distribution of resources are nowhere to be seen. As Avis points out:

Flowing through all these discussions is the notion that consensus is easily obtainable – that all of us through rational processes can and will be able to see quite clearly the benefits of such a management regime organized around quality (Avis 1996, p. 108).

It is apparent from this research that such consensus remains extremely illusive. Resistance is also evident, although constrained, and the reasons for this are discussed further in the following chapters.

Chapter 5

Managers, Managerialism and Parental Discourse of Control

A new managerialism has accompanied the cuts in funding and marketisation of further education. Elements of decentralisation are evident, with the new managers taking responsibility for the full range of corporate management duties, including managing college budgets. At the same time, however, there are indications of a renewed centralisation, with the State keen to steer the direction in which colleges are heading and firmly setting the agendas for the new managerial project.

This chapter focuses on the different forms of new managerialism within the case study colleges. It identifies the discourses and practices of new managerialism as gendered, and identifies gendered patterns in both the ways in which management is performed and perceived, and staff identities are constructed, in these colleges. New managerialism can be seen to both legitimise and carry through the restructuring of the further education sector, although the valorisation of masculine ways of being at the expense of the feminine that is evident in the dominant discourses of the new FE may not, as will be seen, be the most ‘effective’ way to do this.

Familial metaphors are drawn upon in this chapter in an attempt to make sense of organisational relations and identities. There are some points of similarity between organisations and families in terms of gendered power relations and the

undervaluing and exploitation of women's labour (Delphy and Leonard 1992), especially in relation to nurturing and support, that are of relevance to the arguments presented here. The metaphor of familial patterns of authority for organisational relations is not new and can be seen to have its roots in family-based work organisation, where the (male) head of the household is not only master of 'his' family with higher status and a higher standard of living than other family members, but also controls the means, processes and outcomes of production. Differences in the income, standard of living and status of senior managers and the people that they manage in organisations can be seen to replicate these traditional Western family patterns.

Paternalism, authoritarianism and 'bully-boy' tactics are all evident in this research, whilst family discourses can be read into the patterns of authority and control, and are indeed sometimes explicitly utilised by staff themselves in their attempts to make sense of organisational relations and the performance of management. Yet it is not only masculine gendered familial identities that are referenced; mothering discourses are also evident in the ways in which women managers and lecturers articulate their activities, values and priorities, and are perceived by others. It becomes apparent that within the organisations, contradictions and tensions within the gendered familial discourses of control, caring, dependence and independence are present. It is suggested that such discursive practices can be seen to not only reflect, reinforce and reconstitute gendered power relations and to 'smooth' the transition to the new FE (Prichard and Deem 1998), but also in many cases to resist dominant masculinist managerial discourses.

Labour relations in further education are changing. Are aspects of a familial discourse being used by some managers in this study in an attempt to invoke a cosy image of harmonious work relations at a time of increased managerial control and discord within colleges? To what extent might familial discourses be seen to disrupt and resist the changes that are occurring? This chapter will consider these questions and explore the ways in which a familial metaphor may be helpful in making sense of the changes that are occurring in further education management and labour relations.

Masculinities and Management: Father Figures and Recalcitrant Children?

Paternalism has been seen as a particularly successful and enduring form of authority, resting in part on tradition and what is 'natural' and legitimate, and on images of the 'provider' or father figure who uses his authority for the benefit of those for whom he is responsible. The family and the home as 'the Beau Ideal' (Davidoff et al. 1976), a safe, warm and welcoming haven from the world outside, supports this positive portrayal. But as Davidoff et al have pointed out, 'there was an ugly, exploitative underside ... paternalism easily became either overbearing officiousness or even tyranny' (ibid. p. 145), and the actual or potential use of economic and physical coercion was never far away (Delphy and Leonard 1992).

Kerfoot and Knights argue that 'paternalistic management is a way of controlling employees through the pretence of family imagery, thus providing space for the

manager to act as “caring” and “protective” head of the industrial “household” (Kerfoot and Knights 1993, p. 665). Paternalism is successful in reducing tensions in organisations by ‘simulating typically patriarchal, family-like relations where power is exercised for the “good” of the recipient’ (*ibid.*).

Several of the men senior managers in the study justified their actions by explaining that they were acting in the best interests of the staff, and indeed were taking care of them. One explained:

I mean what staff don't understand enough is how gentle a ride they have had of it over the post-incorporation years compared with many other colleges. And I'm not just talking about financial difficulty; I'm talking about how looked after they have been. And they don't know this (Man Senior Manager).³

This manager felt that he and his colleagues had done their best to protect staff from some of the worst excesses of marketisation, and he was clearly hurt that staff did not seem to appreciate this. Indeed, in comparison with some other colleges, staff here had ‘got off lightly’ in that compulsory redundancies were relatively limited and the local contract for lecturers that was finally agreed by the lecturers’ union, NATFHE, was better than that which was achieved in many other colleges (albeit still representing a significant worsening of conditions of employment).

It was not only that staff were protected, however. They were also ‘helped’ by their managers. The same senior manager explained the meetings he would have

³ In parts of this chapter, I do not state which college is being referenced as I wish to foreground the gender of senior managers, and to identify the college would, in some cases, mean that individuals could be identified. Later in the chapter I do, however, summarise the different forms of new managerialism in each college.

with middle managers to discuss their targets using performance data from the college management information system:

If you just sit down and go through all this with people and discuss the ones which are problematic and put pressure on people to recognise that you know, really we can't be happy with (a particular course) for example, because, OK the retention is particularly brilliant but then the pass rate is only 60%. So actually at the end of the day more than half the students are not getting anything out of that course. Now I think that sort of accountability, and that's one role of management, is helpful, and I think it is helpful to that person that that person feels.., They shouldn't feel overly got at over it. I mean if the whole thing is a mess they probably should, but they should feel pressure on them to go back and talk to that course team about it, and feel that they can talk to that course team not just themselves having picked on it. (Man Senior Manager)

Here management is being 'helpful' in two ways: firstly in bringing the issue of the pass rate on the course to the attention of the middle manager (on the assumption that they would not have either obtained this data or have been concerned about those students who had failed the course without their manager drawing attention to this), and secondly in providing support to the middle manager later on when they raised it with the course team concerned. This concern with supporting and 'standing by' middle managers was expressed by many senior managers, though it is clear that such helpfulness in this instance includes putting on pressure and 'getting at' the middle managers when necessary. In this way, disciplinary power is cascaded down through the organisation; senior managers exert their control over middle managers who in turn are expected to control their staff. Another senior manager makes this very clear. Whilst acknowledging that it is his role to help his managers to achieve their targets, he set limits on this helpfulness:

My responsibility is to make sure that the strategic aims of the college are realised and my skill has to be with my middle managers to make sure that I am not taking those tasks away. So my job is to make sure

that the tasks are done, but not that I do them . . . I have just taken over 2 new people this year, two new appointments, and I have said to both of them . . . don't come to me and say "how do we do this?" . . . I can't do the thinking at that detailed level in all the areas that I'm responsible for and people just need to know that (Man Senior Manager).

Middle managers are thus constructed as autonomous, responsible individuals whilst at the same time subject to the surveillance and control of their line manager whose only concern is that targets are met, not the means by which this is achieved. This manager appears to have thoroughly embraced the 'hard' form of new managerial discourse (Trow 1994), and compares the present corporatised management with that of the pre-incorporation days:

I think there was a public sector slothfulness really. I think there was a virtual circle about low expectations . . . and it was fed by the use of poor management, under resourcing, and all of it became part of an explanation for why people didn't do a great deal more . . . and it's not good for people and I still see people locked into that, and I think part of our job has to be, can we help them out of that, and if we can't, can we help them out, because they're not doing themselves any good, but in the long run they are not doing our students any good (Man Senior Manager).

The traditional family metaphor of paternal protection and the commitment of family members to 'stick by' one another clearly does not apply here. Indeed the short-termism characteristic of new market discourses and practices also suggests that traditional family patterns of (theoretical) life-long relations have little meaning in this context. There is certainly no evidence of a commitment to support subordinates in sickness and in health! The context is one of relationships which are entirely contractual. Yet senior management still 'knows best'. As Kerfoot and Knights explained, the manager, like his counterpart the patriarch in the family, is seen as the 'fount of all corporate wisdom' (Kerfoot and Knights

1993, p. 665). This manager is also being helpful to his employees by helping them to move away from outdated and inefficient ways of doing things which are not good for them. And if they do not respond, he will 'help them out' of a job. This reference to the power that senior managers are able to exercise over their employees by virtue of their structural positioning illustrates the potential economic coercion that underpins paternalism. Overt forms of control are never far from the surface, and one senior manager made explicit reference to this, locating its cause with the external political and economic context:

We are having to make real savings of around 6% plus every year and that's a very demanding management task to do that and develop, deliver the same volume of work. So all that actually pushes us into a tight control, management from the top, managerialism if you like. Control systems, around finance, IT, and staying competitive within that framework which means doing things about buildings, improving the environment all those things. So all that makes for a fairly short term, finance driven command economy, if you like, to use an old fashioned phrase . . . As I said, I think we are somewhat schizophrenic about it at the moment as a management, because we are still very nervous of losing control as well (Man Senior Manager).

This hints at a sense of the precariousness of management control, something that was also very evident from the research of men managers undertaken by Kerfoot and Whitehead (2000), and at the lack of trust in what might happen, or staff might do, if that control is lost. Trust is an important element in paternalistic forms of control, but if staff do not recognise 'how looked after they have been', a compliant workforce that trusts management to act in their best interests is not likely to be the result. There was little evidence of staff perceiving these man managers as benevolent patriarchs. One issue here is the perceived distance of senior managers from 'front line' staff, something that is discussed further in Chapter 6. As Davidoff et al (1976) explain, deference is more easily sustained in face to face contexts where personal relationships are possible. Paternalism is

therefore likely to be less successful in large colleges, with senior managers both physically removed and seen as 'out of touch'. The 'identification of the workers with their "betters"' that Newby identified within paternalistic relations (Newby 1977, p. 425) is also notably absent here.

What is clear then, is that this is not simply about paternalistic management. Whilst these senior managers drew on paternalistic discourses to justify their authority and actions, at the same time they demonstrated their commitment to a 'hard' managerialist practice (Trow 1994), hence the reference to 'schizophrenic' management. It was the managerialism, and the more overt coercion associated with it, that most of the main grade lecturers and support staff perceived. One women member of staff who worked in a counselling and advisory role talked about a meeting of counsellors with one of these senior managers and a man middle manager:

We were told quite clearly a number of times, and that felt quite brutal, that we didn't know how lucky we were, we were being protected as a service . . . and we have no idea how hard they are working and how hard they are trying for us to be allowed to be continued . . . because there's some colleges that got rid of counselling completely (Woman Counsellor).

There are resonances here with children who are 'spoilt' by their parents, although the threats underpinning the 'protection' are explicit and were perceived as such by this member of staff. She added:

It became very clear in the exploration of the purpose, in what the purpose of our service was, because the message came across very strongly that it is no longer acceptable, like that, it was quite scary, you know that we're going to get our heads chopped off if we talk about student development . . . and what was made very clear was that's just not acceptable . . . that the language we have to use and what we say, that we have to be constantly watching for kind of 'Big Brother': the inspectorate, the FEFC.

What is acceptable in terms of quality of service is clearly contested.

This member of staff frequently referred to the gender dynamics of this meeting.

She felt that part of what was going on was a '*male/female point of view*' and identified the managers' approaches as '*a very male way of working*'. This perception of management as gendered was not uncommon amongst women staff at all levels. One lecturer spoke of a senior manager who '*manipulated and bullied*' his way through a meeting to get his own way, described a culture of '*corridor meetings*' where decisions were made, and concluded that:

It's like an old boys' network . . . I think it's a very male way of doing things, it's this thing of doing things behind closed doors . . . it's bully management I call it, it starts at the top . . . it's this sort of bullying macho type of thing and kind of what goes with it is that they don't care what goes on as long as something gets done (Woman Lecturer, Computing).

Another lecturer described her head of department as:

Very bad tempered and angry and unreasonable. He seems to pick on people in turn (though) he's quite consultative and open to suggestion . . . and will sometimes give you power in terms of time and money or whatever to actually carry things out . . . He's a presence and he's quite supportive (Woman Lecturer)

She then added, however:

But I know he definitely relates differently to women . . . but I feel I've learnt to stand up to him much more. I'm just very, very careful you know, on my guard.

This need to constantly be on one's guard is also something characteristic of many domestic violence situations. Another member of the same department described this manager as:

Extremely autocratic – people in my department have frequently been bullied (Woman Lecturer).

but she felt there was nowhere to go to complain:

If you have a problem with your manager there's nowhere to go with it, I think it's very difficult you know, so they have a lot of power in that sense and they seem to club together. It seems to be all the boys together really.

A man lecturer in a different department described the management style in his department in very similar terms:

It is extremely autocratic - there is a great deal of bullying, you know within my sector, school or whatever they call it. Well he can get away with it, that is the classic hallmark of the bully isn't it? (Man Lecturer).

Despite new managerialism's pretensions to neutrality and a form of rationality that is defined as an emotion-free zone, some emotions displayed by some (men) managers are clearly permissible. This dominant form of masculinity can be seen as a mixture of Collinson and Hearn's 'authoritarianism', characterised by bullying, rejection of dialogue or dissent, and dictatorial control, and their 'entrepreneurialism', a competitive and hard-nosed prioritising of efficiency, targets and managerial control (Collinson and Hearn 1994). The rather unsuccessful attempts to make these more acceptable by invoking paternalistic discourses has already been discussed.

There is evidence here of Clarke and Newman's 'competitive order' which they argue is characterised by macho management (Clarke and Newman 1997). Newman argues that in this competitive culture, 'it is as if the unlocking of the shackles of bureaucratic constraints had at last allowed managers to become "real men"' (Newman 1994, p. 194). Kerfoot and Whitehead, in an exploration of the

identity work of men managers, explain that 'such identity work involves masculine/managerial actors seeking to sustain a sense of self as purposeful, powerful and in control (Kerfoot and Whitehead 2000, p. 184), and 'the discourse of new managerialism in FE is consonant with, and constitutive of, a form of masculinity that achieves validation through control and power over others' (ibid. p.192).

Macho management behaviour, which would not have been tolerated previously, appears to have gained legitimacy in the new FE. On a number of occasions, women members of staff, managers, lecturers and support, felt that men 'got away with' behaviour in a way that would not have occurred in the past, such as sexual jokes and innuendo, and making appointments on the basis of sexual attractiveness. The ways in which (hetero)sexuality enters the workplace and indeed is integral to power relations within it become clear in these examples, yet the pleasure for (some) women that Pringle (1989a) identifies as a constitutive element of these relations was not something that emerged in this research. Rather, masculine sexuality was linked in many instances with bullying and the abusive exercise of power, lending support to Adkins' assertion that sexuality within organisations is structured by male dominance (Adkins 1992).

Of course not all the men managers in this study aligned themselves with this dominant masculinity and many that did would, I suspect, be horrified by the descriptions of bullying. One senior manager described his own management style as open, democratic and caring about individuals, a portrayal that was supported by other interviewees who he line managed. In another example, a head of

department adopted paternalistic modes and discourses rather more successfully than the senior managers previously described, perhaps because he was able to distance himself from some of the excesses of the competitive and hard managerial climate which characterises much of the further education sector. As a middle manager, although he had to implement cuts and redundancies, he was opposed to these, but acknowledged that in the current financial situation he may have to lose some staff to save the majority. He was also 'closer' to his staff, physically and metaphorically, than were the senior managers. Particularly important to this manager was his relationship with his female line manager who set the tone of supportive and familial relations. He described his working environment as '*very family-oriented*' which was important to him, and himself as '*a family person*' who would always put his family first. He presented his department's organisation chart as '*my family tree*'. Although he did not use the language of 'caring' in the way that many women managers did, the manner in which he talked about his staff and his department was one that suggested that he cared deeply about them. His department was a male dominated one, and the discourses of 'mateship' that Prichard and Deem (1998) noticed were evident here, raising questions about the positionings of the (few) women in this department. A group of men lecturers that I interviewed had a number of complaints about senior management, but did not refer to their local management (i.e. this head of department) at all. It was as if he was not included in the category 'management'. What was also clear, however, was that some other heads of department of both sexes saw this manager as rather old-fashioned in the slightly disdainful yet affectionate manner in which they spoke about him.

To be 'old-fashioned' is perhaps one of the most serious offences within new managerialist discourse with its optimistic emphasis on the future and progress.

One head of department identified himself as 'a traditionalist' and said:

If I applied for the next grade up, director of something or another, I'd probably be perceived as being too old at this stage because they want to take on people that are in their 30's. So it's a shame. And they probably don't want people of my age either, because if you've been in education for anything like 20 years as we've discovered talking here now, I'm hankering for the past, and they don't want that, they want to move on to the future (Man Head of Academic Department).

This manager feels he doesn't fit the youthful positive image of the successful senior manager in FE today. One women lecturer articulated the ways in which particular masculinities were dominant in her description of a middle manager:

I don't know how long he'll last, he's gonna have to make up his mind which way he goes. I think he's probably being too nice, too approachable and reasonable and stuff and he doesn't dress.., always dress in a suit but he does sometimes come in in his cycling gear. No, I don't think he'll last long, seems a nice guy (Woman Lecturer, Business).

Dominant masculinities not only exclude women, but also other men who do not fit in with the youthful, optimistic, positive and 'thrusting' image. Hanlon's distinction between social service and entrepreneurial professionalism is relevant here (Hanlon 1998). Although he does not comment on gender, his 'entrepreneurial professional' appears to fit well with some of the men senior managers in this study.

A consequence of the paternalism, authoritarianism and desire for control embodied in the 'father-figures' of the organisation, is that staff become positioned as children. In part this is the deskilling and deprofessionalising process that Apple (1983; 1993) and others have identified as one aspect of the

New Right agenda in education. As one woman business lecturer in this study said: '*I don't think that we are considered to have any expertise or any wisdom or any insight into the learning process*'. Yet I want to suggest that what is occurring is not only a challenge to teachers' skills and professionalism, but to their identities as adults: in short, a process of infantalisation. This is also something that Kenway noted as a consequence of new accountability mechanisms which 'implicitly infantalise teachers and imply they do not understand, cannot be trusted, must be shamed into good practice and will be blamed if change does not occur' (Kenway 1997, p. 335). On several occasions in this research, staff explicitly referred to feeling that they were treated like recalcitrant children where the only form of resistance was to be '*naughty*'. In one story that was recounted to me by a lecturer, in a meeting between a man senior manager and a group of lecturers, the manager compared the lecturers to his children, who were presented as irrational and troublesome when they wouldn't do what he told them to do.

One senior manager, discussing the difficulties facing middle managers, explained:

They get dragged down into operational matters. It makes you angry at staff, you know you get angry with staff which is wrong, but they argue with each other, managers have to sort it out . . . instead of working together it all becomes a polarised issue. I don't know how you can ever escape from it, it's the biggest problem. It may be to do with, it may have its roots in culture, why people go into teaching in the first place . . . And very often it's because they don't want to take on responsibilities outside that which they know and love which is to do with their own experience of students and so forth (Man Senior Manager).

Here lecturers are positioned as irritating, troublesome and irresponsible children, creating extra work for their parents who have to sort them out. This same manager continues:

I think bringing forth radical curriculum change is a huge burden on a middle manager who is up to his or her neck in operational detail, much of which I think is unnecessary, much of which is a token of excessive dependence by teachers on managers.

The desirability of managers achieving a professional/bureaucratic distance, of the kind noted by Davies (1996), is evident here. Yet it would seem that there is a conflict between the rejection of staff dependency, and a corresponding reliance on compliance (as opposed to independence) as an element of the tight control that many of these managers seek over their staff. Indeed the infantalisation of staff positions them as dependent children. Yet this rejection of dependency and the valorisation of the self-reliant individual is a particularly dominant discourse within further education at the present time. It is not only evidenced by new managerialism's emphasis on the autonomous manager who is seen as having the freedom and responsibility to manage as they see fit (provided they meet their targets), but is also indicated by the ubiquitous discourse of the 'independent learner' in the new FE (see Chapter 7). It draws on gendered notions of the abstract independent individual who is free to choose (Ferber and Nelson 1993) and unencumbered by domestic responsibilities. The concepts of dependence and independence have particular resonance within traditionally gendered familial relations. As Witz and Savage point out:

The whole concept of 'dependency' within the context of gender relations acquires an interesting new twist, for it is men who are dependent upon the concretizing activities of women in order to sustain their involvement in the everyday world of, for example, bureaucratic administration. (Witz and Savage 1992, p. 26).

Similarly, Kerfoot argues that 'men are often concerned to play down their links with others, and managerial work is characterised by being at once dependent upon others and at the same time distant from them, hierarchically, symbolically and, frequently, physically' (Kerfoot 2000, p. 232). The distance of senior managers from other staff is discussed further in Chapter 6. Dependence on the caring skills and activities of women in the college was something that was raised in this research and is discussed in the next section.

It was not only, though, that staff were infantilised. Instead of being positioned as children, one group of women lecturers said they felt dismissed as '*nostalgic old women*'. No doubt old women would also be seen as overly dependent in an ageist and misogynistic culture.

Women Managers and Femininities: Caring Mothers?

The women managers in this study overwhelmingly presented their own management styles in ways that are consonant with much of the research on women managers (Ferguson 1984; Shakeshaft 1987; Valentine and McIntosh 1991; Marshall 1992; Court 1994): open, democratic, consultative, supportive, fair, consensual, listening, encouraging and drawing on people's strengths. One senior manager said:

I think my role is largely about enabling and motivating others . . . I think some of those kind of essential values that I talked about earlier on like you know kind of valuing teams and fairness and delegating but on the other hand holding things and always being there if they start to go wrong. I think those are very much things that women actually bring to organisations and I think they certainly are things

that women at the top bring . . . You have a much healthier happier organisation because actually if you can rant and rail openly in any relationship then you feel better, even if nothing changes, you feel better because you're heard (Woman Senior Manager).

A head of department drew on her experiences of bringing up children to articulate her approach to managing staff:

I think the difficulty of a job in management is managing people because what you realise, it's like having kids you know, you realise that you can't actually control another human being, and that human being has a will of their own and needs of their own, and they may not be, you know, they may not match yours and so it's a bit like that. And I think women are probably better at managing people because they have learned, not all women but maybe some women have learned, not just having children but in relationships generally, to let go of trying to decide what that person ought to think or what that person ought to be doing. I think, well in my experience, I think women are more likely to be able to just let go of something rather than sort of battle to say, you know, this person will do what I want (Woman Head of Academic Department).

Within such a discursive framework, control takes on very different meanings. There's a sense of letting go, but also 'holding things' and 'being there' if things go wrong. This is echoed by another manager who identifies the role of senior management as:

It's to do with boundaries, sharing, debating, and identifying and then helping, helping the middle managers drive forward because they know the best way of doing it (Woman Senior Manager).

The family metaphor is clear to see here, with women drawing on their own experiences of mothering and on constructions of femininities. In terms of parenting practices, patterns of the disciplinarian father and supportive mother are emerging, patterns that Valentine (1997) found were still enduring with mothers tending to reason with their children and fathers more likely to adopt an authoritarian role. Yet it was not that these women managers avoided making 'tough' decisions where they felt these were necessary. As managers, they were

required to exert control over their staff, but their relationships with power appeared rather different from those of many of the men managers in this study.

Within this discourse staff are not infantilised in the same way as in the discourses of masculinist managerial control (although they may well be in other ways), but instead regarded as people who have their own values and ways of doing things, and know best how to do their job. This approach to management was valued by many staff, both men and women, that I interviewed. One woman lecturer from College A said '*I do think the style in our new (department) is actually quite good and we are helped as much as we can be helped*', whilst a man colleague from another department in the same college felt that '*certainly in our department we have a very nice, a good style of working and I can relate to that*'.

This suggests that women in middle management roles may subvert resistance to new managerial practices and help to 'smooth the passage of managerial work' (Prichard and Deem 1998, p. 20). Ozga and Walker also argued that new managerialism 'co-opts women managers into using their "people and process" skills in improving economy and efficiency' (Ozga and Walker 1999, p. 111), whilst Newman highlights the emotional labour expected of women managers in managing change and the pain of redundancies (Newman 1994). One woman manager in this study said '*it was quite clear to me that I was brought in to bring about change*'. The first change she attempted to bring about, however, was for some men managers to address the emotional nature of change for themselves,

something she felt they were reluctant to do. This was not, perhaps, the change they were anticipating.

Being a supportive manager is not without its stresses for the managers involved.

One woman head of department said:

I think managing people is difficult, and particularly at a time like this when you are asking people to do things and you know they've got all sorts of problems and things happening at home, you know, but the thing is the parameters of your horizon begins and ends with this college as it relates to them, and that you have to say 'well this is what the service needs and I am aware that things are really difficult for you but..'. So I think that is quite hard. That's quite hard because I would like to say to people 'Oh no don't come in, you know, have the day off and it must be awful for you' you know, and I do from time to time that sort of.. but you can't . . . you just have to have some boundaries, you know, and say this is all I am responsible for (Woman Head of Academic Department).

The tensions between her managerial and feminine identities are evident here.

Similarly for another head of department:

It's actually quite hard work being a supportive collaborative manager because you've got to keep thinking ways through situations. You know there's a lot of nurturing involved, and it's obviously giving a lot (Woman Head of Academic Department).

She described her style of management as:

..collaborative, consultative, drawing on people's strengths and allowing people to sort of develop in areas where they lack confidence

but added:

That style I think has led to an expectation that management will take care of things.

During the interview, this manager began to question whether adopting a more authoritarian style would enable her to cope more, but rejected this. A woman

performing in an authoritarian manner is likely to be perceived very differently from a man doing so, and the cost to her sense of herself as a woman and a feminist would be high. On one level she is expressing her frustration at what she sees as the excessive dependency of her staff, echoing the masculinist new managerial discourse within which she is now at least partly positioned. She was also angry that the bureaucratic aspects of her job and the prioritising of finance over education meant that she did not have the time to support her staff in the ways she felt were needed. Yet on another level, she was resisting the demands that she perform as the all-giving, constantly available mother, a role all too often allotted to women teachers and managers (Walkerdine 1990; Court 1994; Acker 1995; Morley 1998), although such resistance was not without guilt for her. The ambivalence and difficulties of occupying a managerial subject position, yet still maintaining a hold on her own values and her positionings as a feminist teacher are possible to see in this; in Prichard and Deem's terms she is 'wo-managing' (Prichard and Deem 1998).

Of course, women doing the supporting and facilitating in the workplace is not new (Brooks 1997; Bagilhole and Goode 1998; Deem 1999) and it mirrors the sexual division of labour within the family. Lecturers in this study gave a number of examples of both their pastoral work with students and their interventions, at times, with male members of staff. One woman business lecturer from College A described a dispute between a man lecturer and a man student where the lecturer was '*sizing up*' the student '*in a very macho way and we had to intervene and try and calm it down*', but added '*why should we have to sort it out for him?*'. Whilst women staff valued 'caring', there was clear resistance to the idea that they should

take on all the emotional labour for the organisation. This was highlighted when some women lecturers in this college were discussing a senior management suggestion to make personal tutoring a ‘voluntary’ activity on the basis that some lecturers did not know how to tutor and do it badly. The lecturers’ reactions were that it would then become even more gendered, with the women taking on all the tutoring, and men allowed to get away with being unwilling and/or incompetent at performing what these women saw as an integral part of a lecturer’s role.

What becomes clear is the extent to which this caring discourse is often a contradictory one for women. Caring is a key element of constructions of feminine identities and as such is implicated in the extant subordination of women (Vandenberg 1996; Wajcman 1998). It also, however, relates to ‘the values that are structured into women’s experience – caretaking, nurturance, empathy, connectedness’ (Ferguson 1984, p. 25). Whilst a number of feminists have stressed its importance (Martin 1993; Acker 1998), it is dismissed and denigrated in an instrumentalist masculinist culture.

Caring was repeatedly stressed, however, by women members of staff at all levels. This emphasis was particularly strong for those women working within a very masculinist managerial context, where a recurring theme was that caring was undervalued and dismissed, something that was also noted by Cotterill and Waterhouse in relation to women in higher education (Cotterill and Waterhouse 1998). One woman senior lecturer expressed the view that the college could not function without this emotional and support work performed by women, providing yet more evidence that women may inadvertently be helping to reduce

organisational tensions, conflicts and resistance that would otherwise arise from the new managerial and marketisation projects. This emphasis on care also intersected with professional concerns, expressed by the vast majority of lecturers, both women and men, that I interviewed, which prioritised education over finance and which were discussed in Chapter 4. One woman upper middle manager in College A felt that teachers still cared about their students and were doing good jobs but said: '*I think that the latent new value system in the college is you know we don't care about anything but making the books balance. That's a problem*' (Woman Head of Academic Department).

Many lecturers and support staff in this college felt that the management did not care about them. Here two lecturers discuss this:

Woman Lecturer, Computing: *If I was to say well I am just going to leave next week I'm so fed up they'd just probably say great goodbye thank you very much and get in somebody cheaper*

Woman Lecturer, Business: *A cheaper part timer*

Woman Lecturer, Computing: *And not think to say well you know don't leave because you've got this experience (unclear) pretty good, it's just like there's no care and we're always going to find somebody else because you can always go to an agency and always get somebody in the room even if it's just, it doesn't matter*

Woman Lecturer, Business: *No it doesn't matter*

Woman Lecturer, Computing: *Who who they are*

Woman Lecturer, Business: *They think the body doesn't matter*
(College A).

In a 'hard' managerial context, both the discourses of professionalism and caring, as espoused by many staff in this research, are dismissed as out of date, irrelevant and time-consuming distractions to the real task of achieving targets and outcomes. Yet both can be seen as forms of resistance to masculinist new

managerialism. Cotterill and Waterhouse, with reference to higher education, note:

Managerial tasks and research count more highly than pastoral care. Viewed as rational, unemotional enterprises, they are allied with a 'masculinized' model of task accomplishment and completion, the quality of which can be scrutinized, policed and quantified. Care remains, as it always has been, qualitative, process oriented, ongoing and unmeasureable (Cotterill and Waterhouse 1998, p. 13).

Colleges as Caring Organisations?

The women and men in this study do appear, in general, to be managing differently when in similar positions in the organisation, in contrast to Wajcman's findings (Wajcman 1998), and in some ways to be mirroring classic gendered parenting roles. A major difference with Wajcman's study, however, is that this is an educational context, and many of the women managers in this research still retained self-identities as women (and sometimes, feminist) teachers. What is emerging here is a highly gendered picture of further education colleges within the material and discursive context of marketisation and new managerialism. Of course men also talked about caring, and women also spoke of targets and efficiency, but the general patterns highlighted here were evident in the two colleges that were part of this research. College A had a man Principal and a men dominated senior management team and here Trow's 'hard' managerialism seems to have been embraced quite wholeheartedly by most of the senior managers, evidenced by a firm belief in the 'right to manage', a lack of trust in the staff, and a concern with measurable outcomes, monitoring and control (Trow 1994). Educational priorities and values are clearly stated, but predominantly within a

market discourse of the student as an individual consumer. Overall, lecturers, support staff and some middle managers saw the senior managers here as out of touch, distant, autocratic and uncaring. They were perceived to prioritise funding issues above all else and to have little concern for education per se. Words such as '*dictatorial*', '*bullying*' and '*macho*' were quite frequently used to describe the management styles. There were exceptions to this portrayal, with two women managers describing the senior management style as '*gentle*', though still masculinised, in contrast to what they regarded as the worst excesses of macho management. One said:

I think it's very gentle management here, and not the sort of new wave of bully managers that I think probably belonged to the early nineties and may have had its day (Woman Manager, College A).

This view was more in tune with the way these senior managers appeared to see themselves, although it remained a minority perspective within the college as a whole.

College B, in contrast, had a woman Principal, and it is more difficult here to locate evidence of this kind of hard managerialism. In some ways, Trow's soft managerialism is nearer to what appears to be occurring in this college, supporting Deem's suggestion (Deem 1998) that women may be more likely to resist the 'hard' forms of new managerialism that appears more in favour amongst men senior managers in College A. In College B, business models have not been adopted uncritically and the norms and traditions of further education, as defined by educationalists themselves, are recognised and valued by managers. This is not to say that harsh decisions and actions have not been made. Indeed, in relation to redundancies, in many ways the approaches taken in this college could be

described as much more heavy-handed and overtly brutal than those adopted by College A. Managerialism was not, however, as dominant a discourse amongst both women and men senior managers. Here, whilst funding issues were clearly demanding constant attention, there was much less emphasis on monitoring and control, and more on consultation, fairness and openness, again from both women and men managers. As in College A, many lecturers, support staff and middle managers here perceived the senior management as distant and out of touch, but they were more likely to locate the responsibility for the cuts in funding at the door of the government, with the college senior management seen as trying to do their best in very difficult circumstances. Senior management were criticised, many staff objected to the lack of 'real' as opposed to token consultation, and most were very angry about the redundancies, but individual senior managers were often described as nice people who did attempt to listen.

Interestingly, whilst a number of members of staff in College A identified the senior management styles as '*macho*' or '*male*', most members of staff in College B felt that the gender of the Principal and senior management team was irrelevant. Here, rather than women being the 'gendered' and men being the 'norm', the reverse seems to be the case. Perhaps this is connected with the way the men senior and some middle managers in College A are perceived to draw on their masculinity, and so for women members of staff, highlighting the gender divisions was a way in which to resist the new managerial culture, as identified by Leonard in her research (Leonard 1998).

The differences between these two organisations can be seen in some ways to embody Liedtka's distinction between a market orientation and a caring one. In the former, employees are expendable and replaceable whilst senior managers are crucial to plan, control, monitor and supervise. In a caring orientation, employees are crucial and senior managers are there to support, 'to create a caring context and systems which provide resources and decentralised authority that enables employees to care for customers' (Liedtka 1996, p. 188). There was also some support for Wajcman's (1998) findings that the organisational context impacted on management styles, although this was less the case for women whose articulations of their own management styles bore a great deal of resemblance across the two colleges.

Despite the differences between these two colleges however, they are both operating within a wider context of marketisation and managerialism in education. Labour relations are changing, and new lecturers' contracts are indicative of this. The old contract provided clear limits to teaching and working hours; under new contracts, these limits have invariably been raised with lecturers expected to teach more hours during the week and to work as many hours as necessary to do the job. The increasing administrative demands and intensification of the workload (Apple 1983; Apple 1993) has meant that for many, the job seems never-ending. In some ways, then, perhaps this is becoming more like family work – open-ended, an inequitable distribution of resources, and working all the hours needed. In families, this exploitation of women's labour is usually mystified by discourses of love; in education, 'quality' discourses and procedures, and lecturers' commitments to their students mitigate against their resistance to exploitative

work patterns. The intensification of work has also meant that staff do not have the same time, energy or opportunities to meet together. This further restricts possibilities for collectively organised resistance and support, something that was remarked upon by a number of lecturers in this study. Managerial and patriarchal control are reinforced by keeping workers, or wives, isolated from each other (Newby 1977; Delphy and Leonard 1992).

Yet the ethic of care and the approaches to management espoused by the majority of women managers in this study can be seen to operate as oppositional discourses to the masculinist 'hard' managerialism that is dominant in much of the further education sector. They are also consonant with both a number of feminist articulations of management and organisational practice (Blackmore 1989; Martin 1993; Acker 1998), and with some of the management literature that has emerged on 'caring organisations' (see for eg. Scott et al. 1995 below). From this point of view, masculinist managerialism can be seen as out of step, and yet another desperate attempt by white middle class men to hold on to patriarchal power. Collinson and Hearn draw attention to the potential negativity of the dominance of men and masculinities in organisations, including 'lack of long-term vision in policy, strategy and investment decisions, low employee morale, poor communication and negative working relationships' (Collinson and Hearn 1994, p. 17). Morale amongst staff in further education has, perhaps, never been lower, and although that probably applies to both colleges in this study, the elements of macho, bullying management that have been identified give particular cause for concern. There are suggestions that this continues to be a problem nationally too. A survey conducted by the lecturers' union, NATFHE, found that six out of ten

lecturers who responded reported experience of bullying, usually by superiors (Kingston 2000a).

The ethic of care can be supported by organisations. Acker (1998) focused attention on the organisational aspects of care, and examined the ways in which primary schools contributed to an ethic of care, thereby supporting teachers in caring for pupils. In a health care context, Scott et al argued that organisations have a responsibility to give staff 'opportunities, skills and contexts that allow them to deal with their patients in caring and compassionate ways' (Scott et al. 1995, p. 81). This requires time and continuity of relationship, both of which are being threatened in the marketised health (and education) service with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity. They cite studies which suggest that 'having control over one's work, experiencing group support, having opportunities to use one's skills, and gaining feedback on the value of one's role all alleviate stress' (ibid. p. 83) and notes that where staff have job satisfaction, patients tend to be satisfied too. In contrast:

Emotional exhaustion, an antecedent of detachment and the depersonalization of clients, tends to be higher among staff who perceive themselves as having little influence on policies and decisions of the employing organization, for those who have to deal with more bureaucratic inconvenience or demands, and for those who have fewer opportunities to be creative in carrying out their work (ibid. p. 84).

This analysis could equally well apply to a number of further education contexts, and the similarities with the way many lecturers and support staff in College A in particular talk about their working experiences are striking. Staff involvement in decision-making processes is discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the ways in which familial discourses and relations may be used to shed light on the changing management and labour relations in further education today. There are clear limits to the appropriateness of a familial metaphor, yet I suggest that it still has its uses, especially in highlighting the gendered discourses of control, dependence, support and care that have emerged as contested arenas in this research.

Managers' identities are complex and multifaceted, but gendered patterns have emerged, and are all too reminiscent of the heterosexual familial relations that are implicated in the continual reinforcement and (re)construction of gendered identities and power relations.

The ethic of care can serve to discursively disrupt masculinist new managerialism (Lander and Prichard 1998) and constitute an oppositional discourse, yet most of the lecturing and support staff in this study who articulated an ethic of care felt relatively powerless in the face of managerial control and the wider political, material and discursive context in which further education colleges are currently located. Caring, something that was highly valued by most of the women I interviewed, is one of the things that appears to be both denigrated and expendable in the rationalisation of FE. The ways in which 'caring' is discursively constructed is, of course, contested (see Marks 1997). If it becomes co-opted by new managerialism, there is no doubt a danger that we will end up with

performance indicators of caring outcomes, check boxes for monitoring caring competencies and league tables of most caring teachers, departments or colleges!

Chapter 6

Restructuring Colleges: Staff, Space and Spatial Relations

This chapter explores the processes of restructuring. This encompasses changes to the organisational structure and staffing, physical spaces and colleges sites, spatial relations and decision-making processes. Whilst the focus is on the changes that have occurred in the two case study colleges, similar restructurings have taken place across the further education sector (Farish et al. 1995), and continue to do so.

Restructuring is a managerial strategy to cope with the cuts in funding and the increasing emphases on efficiency and accountability. It can be seen as indicative of post-Fordism and post-modernity as hierarchies are, in theory at least, replaced by flatter structures and more flexible ways of working, although as Gleeson shows, evidence for such moves is contradictory at best (Gleeson 1996). In further education at this time there is a great deal of talk about the need to be flexible and responsive, with cuts in resources providing a powerful lever towards reductions in staffing costs.

Far from being neutral, rational arrangements, organisational structures are gendered (Sheppard 1989; Acker 1990; Wajcman 1998), raced (Nkomo 1992) and classed, and further education colleges are no exception to this. Avis (1996) compares FE now to Handy's 'Shamrock' organisation (Handy 1989), with its core of highly paid qualified staff, and two fringe groups - self-employed contractual professionals and low paid low skill service workers. Newman notes

that Handy sees potential benefits for women in terms of flexibility in the new arrangements, but this is, according to Newman, simply 'part of an ideological gloss on the new flexibilities' (Newman 1994, p. 187). Avis comments on the stress, insecurity, intensification of work and gendered labour patterns in FE and concludes that 'the paradox is that these changes are presented in a benign form warranted by economic imperatives and the move to a post-modern world of continuous change' (Avis 1996, p. 113). Far from being benign, it will be suggested that the newly configured structures, spaces and relations of these further education colleges reconstruct structures of inequality based on gender, race and class.

Restructuring Staffing

Processes of organisational restructuring appeared to be ongoing in the case study colleges. Since incorporation, both colleges had undergone several management restructurings, some departmental mergers and/or regroupings, and the restructuring of central, support and administrative services. Some redundancies had taken place in both colleges, although the majority of lecturing staff in College A had not been directly affected by these, as opposed to those in College B. It is perhaps for this reason that restructuring was raised as an issue by more staff in College B.

In this college, the senior management team had been cut from ten posts that had been the result of earlier mergers, to three posts currently. A senior manager explained:

That was significantly about us leading from the front in terms of making cuts and reductions and given the levels, huge level of redundancies that we've seen, we've wanted to show that we could be a part of the savings from the beginning (Senior Manager, College B).

There had been four major restructurings in eight years and there was a sense in this college that the structure had changed so often that no-one knew who anyone was anymore. One lecturer said '*We get a management structure, a new one, every year, you may have realised that, but you can't identify who's responsible for what*' (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

Redundancies had also affected other staff in the college, with all the lecturers receiving redundancy notices at one stage, and the equivalent of 30 full-time lecturers being made redundant. There was considerable anger about this, and some lecturers expressed cynicism about the rationale for the choice of areas to be targeted for redundancy, not believing the senior management reassurances that decisions were based on curriculum-related criteria. They clearly had some justification for this mistrust as one head of department explained:

I put my worst staff in the redundancy rings, there's no question about it you know. I mean they were constructed, you could construct them, but I mean we did it (Woman Head of Academic Department, College B).

It is clear that restructuring is not the rational, technical and neutral process it is often presented as, nor could it be if we conceptualise organisations not as value-

free rational bureaucracies but as imbued with power relations and arenas of conflict.

The largest number of redundancies, however, was of support staff. A manager discussed her role in this:

I mean for the last four years I've had to do it, every year, in fact sometimes twice a year I've had to go through the process of you know.. Because I started off with something like 130 people and that was with you know one area . . . so I've had to do some major cuts in services and some of it I hadn't actually agreed with, I have to be honest, I haven't agreed with it because I think it's had a real impact upon the service's ability to deliver because there's just too few people on at ground level and you just need one person to be off sick (Woman Head of Service Department).

The quality implications are again raised. These processes have also had particularly damaging consequences in terms of equality, something that many staff at this college commented upon. The impact of restructuring and redundancies on black and women staff is discussed in Chapter 8.

In College A, the management structure was also restructured and tiers of management were removed. Overall, however, the management insisted that the core business of teaching would be protected as much as possible, and the college would do what it could to avoid lecturer redundancies. As such, although lecturers had been unsettled by some of the changes, restructuring here had far less of an impact on lecturers than in College B.

Support staff in College A were, however, less fortunate, and were very angry about the ways in which they were affected by various restructurings. At the time of this research, another administrative restructuring was taking place and some of

the staff that I interviewed were having to compete with each other for a reduced number of jobs. One said:

I think it's absolutely appalling in the way that they are currently dealing with their staff in general, people like us are ultimately going to be suffering. We're being shunted around, we're not being told what's happening, what will be happening and they are looking after themselves. I mean they are doing everything for their own needs you know (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A).

The morale of support staff here appeared to be very low indeed, with staff feeling that they were not respected or valued at all. Another member of staff from the same group added:

I think they think our duties are really quite easy. I don't think they think we work. They don't think we're value for money that's for sure, that's been proved time and again by the way that they've tried to down grade the posts each time. (Woman General Office Administrator, College A).

Although they were aware of the financial difficulties of the college, the purpose of restructuring was perceived to be either about getting rid of 'dead wood' (although there was some dispute about whether management were doing this effectively), or, in the words of another administrator:

It's to keep you on your toes . . . makes you feel insecure, you know, it takes away your power when they can shift you around like that (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A)

Management's 'right to manage' is evident, and these administrative staff, the vast majority of whom are women, have not accepted the 'rational' justification for restructuring as a neutral and objective process aiming to provide a technical solution to organisational and financial difficulties. A senior lecturer also saw the removal of the upper middle management tier as about power and control:

I am more and more believe it's actually the SMT that want to get rid of that tier of management because they thought that they were blocking them (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

The other main element of restructuring taking place in College A related to the position of senior lecturers. At the time of this research, those SLs who had curriculum and line management responsibilities (as deputies to heads of department) were being offered £2,000 to go on to the management spine. This can be seen as part of the process of constructing new managerial identities, distinct from teacher/professional ones. A group of lecturers discussed this with one saying:

It never came to a union meeting, it was all discussed amongst them, the (SLs) were given a one off payment of £2,000 to go onto the management spine . . . and I really feel angry about the divide and rule of that because I think the way that they got together and made the decision which some people argue, and I think I'd go with this, that it wasn't actually their job entirely to give away because if one of them leaves then promotion prospects for any of us ever are this management spine job with much more much severely limited holidays and all that (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

When an ESOL lecturer in this discussion group suggested that they should complain to the union, the business lecturer continued:

It's done, they've done it, it's done, they've signed, they've got the money, they had the money in their last pay packet. That's why they're smiling, that's why they bought new suits (laughter).

Not all senior lecturers were happy with the way this had happened, and one clearly felt compromised when she explained to me:

This is not being discussed with the professional associations at all. It is seen as very much an offer to individuals and you're made to think that if you don't go on to it then somehow you're not one of them (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

As far as I could ascertain, however, all of the SLs who were offered this incentive to go onto the management spine took it, and indeed one or two SLs who had not received this offer (who were in cross-college posts without line management responsibility) asked to be included. This is, perhaps, not surprising as it offered some staff, predominantly women, an opportunity for progression in a context where few other opportunities existed. Similar developments were also being mooted in College B.

Despite the incentive offered to SLs in College A, and the possibility of gaining additional increments on the management spine, the salaries offered were not much higher than the SL salary scale, and yet the management and administrative demands on these departmental deputies exceeded those expected of staff on the traditional senior lecturer scale. A review of the recruitment advertisements in the *Guardian Education* and *Times Education Supplement* indicates that this is not unusual. Posts with curriculum management responsibility that would previously have been advertised at deputy head of department or head of department level are often now advertised at the lower end of the management spine (i.e. equivalent to the old SL and at a much lower level in terms of grade and salary than deputy or head of department). Similarly, responsibilities that would have previously attracted a senior lecturer grading are now regularly advertised on the main grade lecturer scale (albeit at the upper end of this scale). Widespread concern was expressed about this, with several lecturers describing how their duties were previously undertaken by senior lecturers. The lack of a career structure for lecturers was also raised as an issue, and this is something that makes progression

to middle and senior management posts particularly difficult for women and black staff (Newman 1994).

Lecturers and administrative staff in both colleges identified increased workloads and redundancy as seriously damaging to staff morale and hence to the quality of service provided to students. These comments by one lecturer were reiterated by others:

In terms of our work load it's increased dramatically and I think as a result of that it makes it very difficult to provide the top quality or the quality of education that students are supposed to get or we're being paid to deliver (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College B).

The increase in lecturers' administrative burden is recognised in a recent report from the FEFC (2000a), and some lecturers, administrators and managers said they felt they were being de-skilled, providing further support for Apple's argument that a process of deskilling and deprofessionalisation is underway in education (Apple 1983; Apple 1993).

Shain and Gleeson, however, argue against any simple theory of deprofessionalisation. They suggest that 'residual elements of "public sector" or "old" professionalism are drawn on and reworked by lecturers through their practice in highly managerial and competitive contexts', resulting in a re-professionalisation as well (Shain and Gleeson 1999). It is not clear, though, that this is how the majority of lecturers in this study would interpret the changes to their professional status. Shain and Gleeson also do not discuss the ways in which the new professional identities are gendered, yet as Davies has argued, 'profession, at least as much as bureaucracy, celebrates and sustains a masculinist

vision' (Davies 1996, p. 669). I believe that such an analysis of profession as gendered is crucial to an understanding of the re-construction of professional identities in FE. As was seen in Chapter 5, managerial identities are not 'neutral', and in Chapter 7 the ways in which lecturer and tutor identities are being reconstructed and re-gendered are discussed. Administrative support remains low status women's work, with yet more burdens being placed on those in these posts.

Restructuring appears to have had a negative effect on staff morale in both colleges. As Bartlett pointed out 'successive waves of restructuring, delayering, and retrenching weaken any reserve of corporate loyalty' (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1994, p. 81). Here it has increased the pressure on those that remain, and the lack of opportunity for promotion, both within these colleges and within further education generally, adds to a sense of powerlessness that was all too evident. The history of attacks on conditions of service for lecturers and the instigation of new contracts has also not helped. As one lecturer in College B said:

In terms of staff wages and staff conditions, they're abysmal and have got worse and worse and worse and that's obviously something to do with the finances and that you know the changeover to incorporation (Woman Lecturer, Access, College B).

The role of the trade unions appeared to be relatively muted in both colleges. In the 1980s trade unions had been under attack from the New Right and were seen as a serious impediment to the free market, global capitalism and the rights of the new corporate managerialism to manage (Clarke and Newman 1997). Restrictive trade union legislation, on-going redundancy programmes and a long drawn out and largely unsuccessful contracts battle had left NATFHE scarred. Although the local branches in both colleges had achieved some successes in staving off the

worst versions of the new contracts and had managed to protect some conditions of service, conditions had still deteriorated and staff demoralisation was very noticeable. The climate of fear in these colleges, something that is discussed in later chapters, also mitigated against effective trade union resistance.

The restructuring of staffing and departments consumed a considerable amount of time and energy in these colleges, and both were also planning further restructurings. This seems to be a never-ending process of attempts to provide a technical (and cheaper) solution to the problems colleges face, although the on-going nature of the process suggests that such solutions are elusive. Perhaps one element in this is the failure of such technicist approaches to consider the '*bodies*', (referred to by the departmental administrator quoted in Chapter 4, p. 101), that get moved around in the process.

Restructuring Sites and Spaces

It is not only staffing that has been restructured. The two colleges in this study, like many around the country, are products of amalgamations between an adult education institute, a sixth form college and one or more further education colleges. Economic priorities have lead to the closure of many smaller sites and to the concentration of educational provision in larger centralised venues. In a competitive educational market, prestigious new buildings and 'state of the art' technology also become marketing essentials, providing another incentive for the

'rationalisation' of buildings.

A Head of Department in College A explains:

The big issue for finance in many ways apart from the ongoing day-to-day issues is the contraction in the number of sites. The strategic plans takes us down to six sites within a couple of years and bearing in mind we were 14 at incorporation, so that's quite a long, a long process. Reducing a number of sites generates staff savings and savings in other areas of the budgets as well . . . and I'd say we are looking at closing (3 sites) within the next two or three years (Man Head of Service Department, College A).

In College B, a group of lecturers estimated that eight to twelve sites had been closed, with the college now concentrated on two larger ones, one of which was a purpose built, award winning campus.

In both colleges, there were concerns amongst staff that the closure of some sites resulted in the college being less accessible to many students. A number of lecturers emphasised the importance of having small, friendly, local sites near to where students lived, and felt that the costs of transport to the new or remaining sites would be prohibitive for many students. One senior lecturer in College B explained:

Physically I mean we've got so few sites now I just think for a lot of people education has got to be where they are in the first instance, they need to go to somewhere local (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

Large sites with (men) security staff and in some cases turnstiles, were felt to be intimidating to many, and to be hampering rather than enhancing access. In College A, one site that was closed was one of the few that was fully accessible to

wheelchair users, and a spirited though ultimately unsuccessful campaign was instigated by staff and students to save it.

Different levels of status and prestige were clearly allocated to different sites. One group of lecturers expressed the view that those, like themselves, who were not on the 'main' site, felt isolated and deprived of the best and most up-to-date resources. Whilst large main sites may have their problems, they are at least at 'the centre' with the associated status and prestige, rather than marginalised on the edges of the organisation. Sometimes being 'on the margins', away from the central locus of institutional power and control, can open up spaces for resistance and for doing things differently, but little evidence was presented that staff felt able to make use of these potential possibilities. In particular, lecturers in both colleges teaching students for whom English was not their first language thought that their students were disadvantaged in terms of sites and access to resources. In College A this included being moved to a more remote site which was due to be closed down, whilst in College B, the concern was to do with being moved from a smaller site with their own base rooms, to a large campus where they were the last group to be allocated rooms and so were 'squatting' all the time. Many of these students were refugees for whom 'home' and issues of displacement were particularly sensitive.

Underpinning these concerns was an awareness of the educational market and the prominence of financial rather than educational priorities. It appeared that in some cases, those courses for which students (or employers) were paying the full cost (or more) of the course were housed in the best rooms and provided with the most

up-to-date resources - resources that were not available for all students. A lecturer in College A described an electrical course which is followed in two different modes: block release (from employment) and a full time student mode. The students on the block release programme are all employed:

99.9% of them are white kids. . . . Our full time class who are doing the same course are mostly black, Asian or refugees or whatever, and they get the shit facilities (Woman Science lecturer, College A).

The different make-up of the two groups is indicative of the racialised and classed labour market. The block release students bring in external funding, and there is a contract with the college to provide a certain level of resources, ensuring that they get priority treatment. Reay notes that 'to be a working class pupil is to accrue a lower value in the educational market place' (Reay 1999, p. 102), though 'working class' is not a homogenous category and other issues of difference are also significant.

Accessibility is clearly not only about the physical characteristics of the built environment and its location, although they are important, but also related to the meanings and social relations that are inscribed within these spaces and localities. Who is making space, and for whom? Are these spaces and spatial relations acting to 'reinforce power, privileges and oppression and literally keep women in their place?' (McDowell and Sharp 1997, p. 3). A senior manager in College B articulated concerns about meeting the needs of very diverse groups of students on a large campus and added:

We have got, as all organisations have who have got young men around, a very boisterous and noticeable group of young men. They always take up five times more space than young women do anyway. What impact does having them all together on one site have? (Senior Manager, College B).

Whilst women students are now in the majority in further education, the closure of smaller adult education sites in favour of larger campuses could be seen as a move from what were often ‘women-friendly’ environments to potentially hostile masculine-defined ones, and mitigate against access for many working class students for whom locality is important (Pugsley 1998), although differently so depending on gender and ethnicity (Connolly and Neill 2001).

Changing Spatial Relations

These new spaces of learning, along with restructured worker/professional identities, also construct and are in turn constructed by new spatial relations.

The closure of many smaller sites was mourned by a number of lecturers and seen to impact on relations both between staff and between students and staff. One woman social care lecturer in College B explained ‘*we were on a wee site on our own, it was lovely, it was cosy, the building was falling down, it was leaking but it was lovely*’. These words evoke what Davidoff et al (1976) called ‘The Beau Ideal’, referring to the concept of the ‘home’ as a warm, safe and friendly place. As Davidoff et al demonstrated, such an image disguised many less positive aspects, yet ‘place’ is important to people’s sense of identity and belonging, and the words of this lecturer convey images not only of the place, but of the social relations within it. A number of members of staff spoke affectionately about these old, smaller sites where fewer people resulted in a more personalised environment. Another woman lecturer from the same department felt that ‘*the*

relationship between . . . staff and the students was much more intimate'. Safety was also evoked by the friendly face of the school keeper on sites where security was not deemed to be an issue. A librarian explained the move from small sites to a large one:

It's been quite a hard transition from . . . very small sites where we knew the students, we knew most of them by name, we knew quite a bit about them and it's you know, now we can have anything up to 2000 students a day, sometimes more and a lot of them are very young. They don't know why they're here, they're just sort of roaming round the space and because it's such a big space, it's very noisy and that sort of sets other students off complaining . . . And I think because you haven't got those contacts with them . . . you're completely anonymous to them, they're anonymous to you. . . . If you're teaching . . . you can build up some sort of relationship with people, you know something about them, whereas we don't have that and that's something that's been very hard (Woman Librarian, College B).

Here proximity, closeness and connection provide not only a more meaningful and satisfying working environment, but also seem to be connected to a sense of being in control. The benefits of smaller sites were also articulated by a group of administrative staff who felt that on smaller sites where everyone knew everyone else they were better informed and so able to respond to enquiries much better than on the larger more anonymous campus.

What seems to be happening is that relations between students and lecturers, and between different groups of staff, are changing. Despite the reduction in sites, proximity and connection are being replaced by distance and separation. This is not only to do with the size of the site or campus. As course hours for students have been cut, they are spending less time in classrooms with their lecturers, and less with other students as individualised modes of learning take primacy. The intensification of lecturers' workloads means that they have less time and space

for their students and relationships become more fleeting. This mirrors the less personalised relationships that have been noted in higher education between academics and students (Parker and Jary 1995). A senior lecturer from College A explained that one consequence has been a change in selection procedures which now work against those students who are likely to need a greater level of contact and support.

The ways in which relations between groups of staff have changed to ones of increased distance were articulated in a number of ways, with reduced time for course team meetings, lack of staff common rooms and increased work loads making communication and collaboration more difficult. Several lecturers and administrators commented on the value of the previous thriving staff rooms, where the regular contact between staff enabled useful work to be undertaken. Both lecturers and librarians also felt that the curriculum and students suffered as a result of the lack of collaboration now possible between library staff and course teams. The same librarian in College B said:

I mean it just feels so disjointed now with everybody like pulling off in different directions. A lot of it is just to do with plain communication, we don't know what each other's doing, we don't know what's available you know. . . . I do think we waste an awful lot of time here by people doing the same things rather than sharing what they've got (Woman Librarian, College B).

The financial constraints, redundancies and increasing competition also impacted on relations between staff. One lecturer described '*everyone withdrawing into their shells*' (Woman Lecturer, Access, College B), and another suggested '*I think it has, it's had an effect on relationships as well because everyone is fighting for their own corner*' (Woman lecturer, Social Care, College B).

Distance is also marking the relations between senior managers in colleges and both lecturing staff and students. In this research, staff used the metaphors of 'Ivory Towers' and 'The Bunker' to refer to the spatial areas inhabited by the senior management teams. The 'Ivory Towers' was used in College A where senior management occupied one of the upper floors of a tower building, and could be seen to signify not only physical distance and separation, but also that management had their 'heads in the clouds' and were all white. In College B, the senior managers were based on a ground floor protected by two security doors. Closed circuit television added to the defensive image of separation, distance and barriers. It is worth noting that the management in the 'Ivory Towers' were mainly men, and those in 'The Bunker' mainly women, highlighting the gendered elements of these spatial metaphors. Within the Ivory Towers, spaces were also gendered, with the all women administrative support staff located in an open plan area outside the (almost entirely male) senior managers' offices. In the Bunker, administrative staff had their own shared offices. As Massey (1994) notes, the physical spaces and the meanings that are attached to them can be seen to structure, and be structured by, the social relations that inhabit these spaces and localities. In both colleges, there was a sense that senior managers 'hid' in these spaces for most of the time, avoiding contact with other staff.

The distancing of senior management has implications not only for staff relations, but also for decisions that are taken about teaching and learning, with the majority of lecturers in this study feeling that management were too 'out of touch' to make appropriate decisions. Within this hierarchical division of labour, the greater the

distance from the day-to-day contact with students, the greater the status, prestige, financial rewards and positional power. Distance and separation, or 'not getting one's hands dirty' has its own rewards, in contrast to the 'connected' work with students. Anecdotal evidence, both from this research and from colleagues suggests that students are also less than happy with what they see as insufficient contact with their teachers.

Distance, separation, connection and proximity are not gender-free concepts. Masculinities and femininities are constructed in opposition to each other in part through a distance/connection dichotomy. Chodorow's psychoanalytic perspective highlights the salience of separateness and distance from others in the construction of masculine gendered identities. In contrast, she argues that the achievement of feminine identities does not demand separation in the same way and is more likely to be marked instead by relatedness (Chodorow 1989). Such developmental perspectives have been subject to criticism (see Davies 1996), and this is not intended to evoke a world of cosy feminine connection. As Hey (1997) notes in relation to girls' friendships, they are marked not only by intimacy and connection but also antagonism and disconnection. It is also not suggested that connection and proximity are always preferable. Yet feminine subjectivities are constructed in relation to others, in particular as carers and nurturers, in a way that masculinities are not. Collinson and Hearn suggest that the distancing of senior management is an aspect of managerialism that 'reflects and reinforces masculine modes of being' (Collinson and Hearn 1996, p. 88), whilst the transcendence and disembodiment promised in virtual relations are also framed as masculine. In

these ways spatial distancing, physical, emotional and metaphorical, contributes to the continual reconstruction of gendered identities and power relations.

There is one way, however, in which gendered, raced and classed hierarchies are being challenged. In College B, a determined effort is being made by the Principal and senior management team to bridge the divisions between teaching and support staff, although this is not without resistance. One head of department said:

There is a view that actually we're all equals, so the view has been put to me at a very senior level that actually everyone is equal, from the caretakers to security to the canteen staff to the admin staff to the teachers. I think the view is yes they have an important role in the institution but actually we are judged, we are inspected and we are funded on the teaching, the learning of our students, that's the core business and that's what I think the institution should be moulded around (Man Head of Academic Department, College B).

The operational management team in this college (and in College A) includes heads of both teaching and support services, which has resulted, in this college, in heads of teaching departments being in the minority. This same head of department added: *I think fundamentally the issue is the power relationship, I think, and administration heads of service are far more powerful than the curriculum*'. A lecturer also commented, *It has been stated that that the admin and teaching are equal partners but if you get rid of the teaching what are the admin doing?* (Woman Lecturer, Access, College B).

The issues here are complex. For these heads of department, a major concern was around the centralisation of administrative services into separate and 'equal' departments instead of these services being integrated into, and managed within, academic departments. These managers felt strongly that centralisation increased

bureaucracy and resulted in a less efficient and effective service, and it was clear that some mistrust and lack of understandings were present between service and academic heads.

The resistance of academic staff to such moves towards equality also needs to be seen in the context of the broader attack nationally (and internationally to some extent) on teacher professionalism, and the increasing power and status of administrative services can be interpreted as one aspect of the encroachment of business practices and values into education. Indeed one of the 'mantras' of total quality management is about valuing all staff equally, removing obvious symbols of privilege such as separate canteens, and moving towards flatter structures. What is not usually on the cards, however, is a levelling up of salaries and conditions of service, as opposed to a levelling down to the lowest common denominator.

Yet the lack of status and respect accorded to 'lower grade' support staff, where women, black and working class members of staff predominate, is something that has a long history and is in dire need of challenge. One departmental administrator in College A said:

Oh we're the lowest of the low aren't we? Minions . . . Like for instance staff development had a list you know a list of courses, workshops and there was stress management for teaching staff and there was time management for admin staff, support staff. I just think that says it all really doesn't it? (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A).

It appeared, however, that the greatest divisions between teaching and support staff were evident in College B where explicit attempts were being made to value

all staff equally. In College A, support and lecturing staff seemed to be generally united against a common enemy – the senior managers.

Communication and Decision-Making

The increasing distance of senior managers was accompanied by changes in communication, consultation and decision-making processes. Most lecturers and support staff, as well as some middle managers in both colleges felt that communication had deteriorated, that consultation either did not exist or was not meaningful, and that decision-making was now firmly in the hands of senior managers.

In College A, the focus of some of these criticisms were the management ‘road shows’, where two or more senior managers would tour the sites making presentations to staff about particular changes that were taking place. One lecturer said:

It's supposed to be about consultation isn't it but it's so meaningless as to be untrue, and then when you don't attend to show how off you are, you get a five line whip telling you that you'd better be at the next one or else, which is not really consultation (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College A).

The lack of information, discussion and consultation was a common theme, with administrative staff complaining that senior managers never asked the people doing the job their views about how things should change, as a result of which the service was not improved in the way it could have been, and often deteriorated further when uninformed decisions were made.

Formal meetings in this college were strongly criticised. A number of lecturers criticised their departmental meetings for being uninformative, lacking any possibilities for discussion, and being dominated by the head of department. One lecturer said:

We've only had two (departmental) meetings in the year . . . so there is no information exchange anyway. So what it is now is basically (the head of department and deputy) sort everything out between themselves down the pub or wherever, and the (department) is not involved in any decision making, . . . But if people don't feel they're part of any decision making process they will be equally reluctant to attend a meeting where they are just sort of talked at and told off for not doing their registers and so on (Woman Lecturer, College A).

The college's academic board also came in for criticism from lecturers. One described her attempt to influence the decisions made about IT provision in the college:

And the way (the Principal) manipulated and bullied that Board was awful and that really really depressed me actually. I thought, what's, you know, you just can't change things, even though you know you're in the right. . . . (The Principal) wanted it through and he got it, because people are too frightened to say 'No', you know, 'let's delay this'. He was determined to get it through. So that was very demoralising (Woman Lecturer, Computing, College A).

Another woman business lecturer who was a member of the Board confirmed this view and talked about the academic board as the Principal's '*nodding shop*', as no-one challenges him.

Some management meetings also came in for criticism on a similar basis with one senior lecturer describing the extended management team meetings that took place once a term prior to the current academic year:

Generally there was 50, 60 people in a room, someone at the top, from the top, at the front talking to you distributing bits of paper . . . They didn't encourage any kind of discussion, and it was the same old people dominating the meetings, usually one or two. . . . Four men in suits one after the other all going up to do their 30 minutes worth does not make you feel a part of anything and certainly doesn't make you feel that you are part of a team or you are involved with the decisions or where the college is going, it's just it's already decided, here is another bit of information for you (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

Even this was missed, however, when these meetings had ceased to happen in the current academic year. This same senior lecturer continued:

At least you felt that you were part of a management structure - that you were important in terms of conveying to other members of staff what was going on, whereas I now feel that I am supposed to meet with staff twice a term, . . . I don't know the answers, I am relaying from a bit of paper what I think they're saying, but I haven't had the chance to discuss it with anyone other than my direct manager who is relaying to me what she thinks they're saying. I don't think that's on. And I think it really undervalues the kind of role of middle managers or what they're calling us, - the Operational Managers. We are the ones that have to put this into operation, we are the ones that have to come up with a timetable as to where we are going to chop, where we're putting the resource based learning, which units we're going to take out of programmes that can be delivered in that way. If at that kind of operational level we are not part of anything, how do they think it's going to work?

On one level this middle manager appeared accepting of her newly constructed managerial identity as the unquestioning implementer of policy decided further up the management structure. Her main complaint appeared to be that she was not sufficiently informed to do this job effectively, rather than a desire to be directly involved in and able to challenge the decisions made.

The lack of informative or consultative meetings was also raised by another senior lecturer:

As a middle manager for example, I am not involved in any management meetings apart from meetings with my own line managers. So we used to have an extended management team - that seems to have died a death really. The (Academic) Board never meets any more, Boards of Studies don't meet. I mean I have very little idea really what's going on or how the college is preparing for these things. . . . So the communication within the institution is another area that needs to be urgently looked at. There was actually a communication document . . . about what turn around time should be, in terms of between meetings, but it's sort of missing the situation that these meetings don't take place (laughter). And I think course team meetings were supposed to take place twice a term. They were the group of staff that were supposedly to meet the least - it seemed to me rather bizarre (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

It is an interesting reflection on the priorities that managing a course is deemed relatively unimportant, and the description staff gave of college meetings and decision-making forums fits with the 'hard' managerial style already identified as particularly dominant in this college.

In College B, poor communications were a recurring theme, with a number of staff feeling that the move on to fewer, larger sites had had a negative rather than a positive effect. Here the main focus of staff criticism was not of meetings but of the college newsletter. One lecturer said:

They just really grate, I find them really irritating, in particular that magazine that they put out, the management magazine, it's just peddling propaganda . . . You'll find some information in there, . . . it's just not enough for you to really latch on to exactly what's happening. You can't quite make enough of it and it's this gloss that they seem to put on it (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

Rather than its official title of 'Staff News', this newsletter was referred to by most staff as 'Management Views'.

In this college, some staff felt that there was some consultation, at least to the extent of them being asked their views and being listened to, but the views of this

lecturer were commonly expressed: '*there is consultation but nobody really feels that anything you say is really taken on board and then act acted upon*' (Man Lecturer, ESOL, College B). An administrator working in the front office said:

We're not sort of represented. Everything, decisions are made at sort of like a higher level and I think a lot of staff, well people who I've spoken to, they don't feel part of the organisation, they don't feel valued (Woman General Office Administrator, College B).

As in College A, some of the middle managers also felt that they were insufficiently informed and involved in decision-making. Here the operational management team included the senior managers and heads of all academic and service departments. This was followed by a 'team briefing' to which senior lecturers were also invited. The team briefing was very much an information giving forum, with minutes produced rapidly and circulated to all those entitled to attend, and some staff saw these quite positively:

I think we're told we're actually given information on the need to know basis, but there are efforts made for example we have briefings in terms of what, you know, the amount of funding is going to be this year, how many units we need to get to achieve those sort of funding, so I think every effort is made to sort of give staff a kind of a sense of ownership and a sense of sharing of the kind of difficulties we're in (Woman Senior lecturer, College B).

Others, however, complained about the lack of two-way communication at these meetings. One woman head of department felt that the ethos of consultation was '*a sham, I think we pay lip service to it*', although a man head of a different department could be seen to draw on new managerial discourse when he argued that the senior managers were paid to manage and that there was '*a lot of stuff*' that he would not tell his staff.

As far as staff on the ground are concerned, the balance between managers' right and ability to manage and the level of involvement in the process accorded to other staff has not been satisfactorily achieved in either college. As indicated in Chapter 5, some teaching and support staff in College A clearly felt patronised and infantilised by the approaches taken by senior managers, and as one lecturer expressed it:

I do actually think that from their point of view if we consult with them they're just gonna you know hold things back, complain a lot and what we're deciding is better and this is the way the college needs to go so let's just do it (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

It appears that major decision-making has become very firmly concentrated in the hands of senior managers within both colleges. Many staff criticised this, in part on the basis that the best decisions would not be made without the involvement of the staff who knew about that aspect of the service and would need to implement the decisions. Bartlett and Ghoshal argue that the problem is the assumption that the senior managers are the best people to make all the decisions: 'In an environment where the fast-changing knowledge and expertise required to make such decisions are usually found on the front lines, this assumption is untenable' (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1994, p. 81). It is interesting, however, and perhaps a reflection of their newly constructed manager identities, that a number of the middle managers in both colleges wanted the information to do their job properly rather than making a case to be consulted.

Before leaving the area of decision-making, it is important to note the role of the Governing Body or 'the Corporation' in this. As has already been noted, changes to the composition of governing bodies in favour of at least 50% of business

members were made following the 1988 Education Reform Act, although at the time of this research this was in the process of being changed. Evidence to the Select Committee on Further Education suggested widespread concern about the lack of accountability of governors (Education and Employment Committee 1998), and a DfEE consultation paper *Accountability in Further Education* (DfEE 1998) proposed that the representation should be widened, and that no single constituency should have a majority on the board in the way that business members were currently able to. The proposals called for business members to constitute no more than a third of the board, with one to three staff, student and LEA nominated members.

Two board meetings were observed in each college. In both colleges, men outnumbered women on the board, and the majority of board members were white. Both boards were chaired by white men. Most of the discussion was taken up with items of business, such as budgets, accounting, targets, accommodation strategies, and redundancy plans.

In College A, at all the meetings attended, more men than women were present. A list of members dated November 1997 indicated that there were 10 men and 8 women members, although this did not include the 2 to 4 men senior managers who were 'in attendance' at all the meetings I observed. There appeared to be only 2 black governors, a man and a woman; the latter was attending her first meeting. In the meetings, the men did most of the talking and told the jokes, with the Principal often leading on the joke-telling. To some extent this reflected the men's managerial status within the college, but a male support staff governor, with a

very different professional status, also joined in and told a few jokes, and male bonding seemed in evidence. When women spoke, it was invariably to make a serious concise point, and they spoke for shorter times than most of the men. Economicistic discourses of technical rationality were very obvious, with much talk of targets, and this appeared to be led by the senior managers present.

Educational discourses were, however, apparent, voiced mostly by one woman co-opted member with expertise in adult education, and also by one other woman business member (a solicitor) and one man who was defined as a business member, but was listed as an educationalist. It appeared that the educational agenda, and a focus on equality issues, were kept alive not by college staff and managers, but by external representatives. One woman said that she had asked for equal opportunities monitoring data at the last meeting and still had not received it, and she was clearly prepared to persist and challenge the senior managers. It was also clear at the meetings I attended that men seemed to be the ones giving information on the whole, with women doing most of the questioning of policies and documents presented, and this obviously reflected the different positionings of members. I also observed the Principal appearing to get irritated by the questioning, with his manner on a couple of occasions becoming that of a stern father irritated with children who persist in asking difficult (silly?) questions, providing further evidence of the infantalisation discussed in Chapter 5. Yet this questioning and opposition from women and occasionally from one or two of the men (notably the educationalist), did delay decision-making, and on several occasions a couple of the women demonstrated that they were prepared to take a stand and refused to be pushed into approving things 'on the nod'. In this way,

these members of the board provided an important counter-balance to the apparent priorities of the senior managers and other governors.

At College B, the meetings again had more men than women members, although there appeared to be rather more black members (4 out of 18 present at one meeting). The meetings were also very business focused with discussions of budget and tax-saving strategies, and the importance of having members with accountancy skills were apparent. Here it was only really the staff governors, and to some extent the Principal, who raised the educational agendas, and this was a distinct difference from College A, perhaps reflecting to some extent the different priorities and managerial orientation of the senior managers in the two colleges.

At one meeting, there was a discussion about the government's plans to change the constituency of governing bodies to increase local community accountability and reduce the dominance of business governors. The tensions between these governors and the educationalists, in this case the college staff, including most senior managers present, was evident on this issue. One business governor was very opposed to the changes and appeared threatened by them. He expressed the view that only business governors and not parents or community representatives could manage the budget. Other governors, including the Principal and the two staff governors, argued for the government's changes, though the Principal in particular was very diplomatic and insisted they did not want to lose any of their current governors.

There was also evidence in both colleges of governors calling the college managers to account on a number of issues, and obvious attempts by the senior

managers to 'manage' the board in terms of the presentation of information. Further research than was possible within the confines of this study would be necessary to present a thorough analysis of the power relations in play, though it was apparent that these were gendered. Deem (1991) demonstrated the ways in which school governing bodies were gendered, raced and classed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and a similar study of FE corporations would, I suspect, prove very illuminating.

Academic boards⁴, which of course pre-date incorporation, are the bodies that traditionally have a major focus on curriculum matters. In College B, this board was continuing to meet twice a year, although I was unable to observe any of the meetings due to prior commitments. The board was not, however, mentioned by staff during interviews, and did not seem to have a very high profile. Indeed a common complaint in this college was that the curriculum was seriously neglected, and the academic board did not appear to offer a counter-balance to this for the majority of the staff.

In College A, as has already been indicated, a number of consultative and management meetings had ceased to take place at the time of this research, and so it was not possible to observe an academic board meeting. The stories from lecturers who had been present at these meetings before they were abandoned suggest, however, that they did not provide opportunities for constructive and

⁴ The composition of Academic Boards in further education includes both ex-officio and elected members of staff, with one or two student representatives. As Ainley and Bailey (Ainley, P. and Bailey, B. 1997. *The Business of Learning: Staff and Student Experiences of Further education in the 1990s*. London: Cassell) note, in practice, the Principal and senior managers tend to direct the business of the Board.

open debates.

Conclusions

Restructuring has been a significant element in the strategic planning of both of these colleges, in both reducing costs and further consolidating the possibilities for control by senior managers. It is beyond the scope of this research to be able to make any judgements on the extent to which such restructurings have 'improved' efficiency and effectiveness in the ways that were intended, but it is clear that they have not enhanced staff morale, and that is likely to impact on the quality of provision to students. In addition, the lack of communication and meaningful consultation, the on-going managerial assumption that managers know best, and their distance from staff and students 'on the ground' raise serious questions.

The rational model of organisations that predominates in restructuring and change processes (Burton 1993) clearly does not apply quite so unproblematically, and restructuring does not appear to be bringing about the one corporate ethos much admired by some senior managers. It does, however, have serious implications for equality. The increased distance in spatial relations, the re-articulation of professional identities, and the reaffirmation and reconstruction of the gendered, classed and raced division of labour within colleges that is further discussed in Chapter 8, all serve to inscribe these organisations as sites of gendered power relations.

Chapter 7

Technological Futures: Reconstructing Learning and the Learner

This chapter focuses on another aspect of the restructuring of further education: the reconstruction of learning and the learner. Reductions in the public funding of further education have meant that reducing staffing costs, the biggest element of a college's budget, has become an important goal of managers, and the idea that these costs might be reduced by the introduction of more computers has had a particular appeal in the sector. New technological developments are therefore seen to provide another means by which to 'rationalise' further education provision. In this vision, students spend more of their time learning 'independently' using computers, and less time in classrooms with a lecturer. Learning, the learner and the lecturer are reconfigured, resulting in the re-construction of learner and professional identities. Gendered identities and power relations are reconstituted in this context.

The chapter begins with an examination of the wider policy context to examine the discourses and practices surrounding the introduction of new communications and information technologies in education. One notable omission from the dominant discourses in this area is any explicit reference to gender, despite the volume of research and feminist theory which highlights the gendered construction and use of new technologies. Data from the two case study colleges is used to explore the different ways in which new technological developments are perceived by staff within these colleges, and the concerns that are expressed. As

becomes apparent, distinct differences are evident between these two colleges, and between senior management and lecturers (in particular in College A), and different discourses are articulated. It is suggested that one of these discourses in particular not only encompasses a degendered view of technology but also draws upon masculinist visions of learning and the individual student to construct newly configured, yet still gendered, visions of learning. This is a discourse that appears to retain a certain dominance with further education managements nationally and it is notably evident amongst senior managers in College A. The reconstruction of staff identities in relation to this, and the implications for the gendered division of labour, are also considered.

The Policy Context

In the late 1990s, as the millennium approached, we were promised a new 'Age of Achievement' which 'will be built on new technology' (Blair 1996), with education a central part of this vision. The links between progress, the future, technology and education are firmly established within this political discourse.

As the Minister for Education, David Blunkett, wrote in the Government's Green Paper on lifelong learning:

We are in a new age – the age of information and of global competition. Familiar certainties and old ways of doing things are disappearing. The types of jobs we do have changed as have the industries in which we work and the skills they need. At the same time, new opportunities are opening up as we see the potential of new technologies to change our lives for the better. We have no choice but to prepare for this new age in which the key to success will be the continuous education and development of the human mind and

imagination (DfEE 1997a, 1.1.).

Within this policy context, technological determinism and the perceived need to 'stay ahead' in the global competitive market are intimately connected to notions of progress and improvement, developmental discourses that underpin much educational theory and practice too. Increased access to education and the flexibility to learn at a time and place to suit the individual are promised, and although both the Kennedy (1997) and Fryer (1997) reports acknowledge that care needs to be taken to ensure that these facilities are available for all, the tenor of Government policy documents is one that promises a rosy future, if only we engage with all that technology has to offer.

The absence of explicit references to gender in policy pronouncements and in much of the current research on communication and information technologies (C&ITs) and education is a matter of serious concern, yet to even raise it amidst all the optimism and hype seems churlish. In this post-modern, post-feminist, post-gendered world where material (sexed, raced, aged) bodies can be transcended, in an age of girl-power and cyberfeminism and where (some) girls and women are seen to excel educationally it can seem as though gender is no longer an issue. Yet the history of both western education and technology is a history in which dominant conceptions of knowledge, 'truth', learning and development have largely been constructed by men, for men, as have the principal institutions of these disciplines. To assume that when the two come together in the ways we are now witnessing, gender would be irrelevant is, to put it mildly, either extremely optimistic or naive.

Volumes of feminist theory and research demonstrate the ways in which educational processes and institutions continue to be gendered (Walkerdine 1990; Weiner 1994; Deem 1996), and technologies constructed as gendered artifacts and processes (Griffiths 1988; Kirkup 1992; Gill and Grint 1995; Lander and Adam 1997). Cartesian thinking not only permeated the development of the computer (Janson 1989), but is also implicated in more recent developments in artificial intelligence (Adam 1998) and the learning models based on it. Balsamo argues that 'virtual reality technologies are implicated in the production of a certain set of cultural narratives that reproduce dominant relations of power' (Balsamo 1997, p. 123), whilst Sofia (1993) makes links between computer culture, rationality and male supremacy. Men still dominate the industry, and as Spender argues:

The changes in the medium of information, and the exclusion of women from its production, are going to have profound consequences for society, power and gender, the construction of academic knowledge and our ways of seeing the world (Spender 1993, p. 42).

Such concerns are not, however, present in the national policy agenda. Instead, new technological developments in education are presented as both inevitable and unquestionably desirable – both for (degendered) individuals and 'the nation'. Further education colleges have been expected to embrace the new developments, not only in terms of curricula and student learning, but also to meet the administrative requirements of the Further Education Funding Council, with the latter driving the development of computerised student record systems. New technologies are seen as the saviour by many FE managements in terms of providing the management data demanded by the government and assisting management in its monitoring and surveillance. They are also regarded as crucial to a more 'rational' and efficient use of resources, which will, so the assumption

goes, reduce the amount colleges need to spend on teaching staff. Computers can also be seen as neutral, neat, clean, rational machines, that don't answer back, wear clothes that conflict with the corporate image, or talk radical politics - they can be controlled more easily than teachers can. Hinkson (1991) uses Lyotard's notion of pure communication - communication without 'noise' as a description of computerised communications. Some current FE management strategies and discourses seem to be about reducing 'noise' - messy things like emotions, politics, indeed bodies, which have no place in this 'rational' world.

The college of the future will be dominated by 'learning centres' rather than classrooms. Learning is being redefined and re-envisioned as a much more individual experience, with computers as facilitators. It becomes a thoroughly intellectual endeavour, rational, unhindered by messy things like inter-personal relationships. It is a masculine vision masquerading as a gender-free one, and one that all too often ignores material issues of access to the technology and a suitable working environment.

The pressures of the market and new managerialism are very evident, with competition, concern for image, and the perceived need to stay ahead joined by demands for increased accountability and monitoring of both students and staff. Yet the implementation of policy initiatives is never even and straightforward, and clear differences emerge between the two colleges in this study in the extent to which they were embracing these developments at the time of this research.

New Technologies in the Case Study Colleges

In College A, new technological developments were high on the agenda, and the Higginson Report (Higginson 1996) had been influential. In 1993 the FEFC established a learning and technology committee to advise on measures that needed to be taken 'to promote the use of technology to enhance the provision of further education' (ibid. p. 3), and this report recounts the committee's findings. The report recommends a sector wide strategy to enhance the use of technology in colleges based on:

a conviction that more effective use of technology will be a key factor in making further education available to a wider audience and in making students' experiences exciting and relevant to their current or future working lives (ibid. p. 1).

College A's strategic plan identified information and learning technology, a '*flexible curriculum*' and '*flexible learning*' as the main ways of meeting the college's objective of '*adapting to student needs*', with resource based learning, an intranet and multi-media seen as facilitating this flexibility and enabling more individualised learning. A separate strategy document on information and learning technologies summarised the state of play of C&IT in the college in 1996, and identified several factors which made the need for a college IT strategy '*imperative*': the increasing '*squeeze*' on funding; the competitive environment in which colleges are operating meaning that '*colleges face an imperative to keep up with technological change, or lose students*'; and the demands of higher education. However, the Higginson Report is critically evaluated in the document, and there is a section on '*the benefits of IT for teaching and learning*' in which the idea of computers replacing teachers is resolutely dismissed:

The idea that sitting in front of the computer as a magic box can somehow transform your head is as ludicrous as the notion that putting a textbook under your pillow will help you swot for exams in your sleep.

Benefits of the use of computers within a structured learning programme are, however, articulated and the document calls for the further development of the IT infrastructure in the college, staff training and a student entitlement for IT. Although the use of computers to replace teachers is rejected, the document does argue that:

The college should consider the implementation of ILT⁵ across the curriculum by replacing some taught hours in some courses with open learning time for the accessing of material that reinforces learning in the classroom.

This document was largely written, in consultation with other interested parties and ‘experts’ within the college, by a woman upper middle manager with an interest in using learning technologies and its pedagogical implications, hence the emphasis on educational concerns. The college has since developed ‘learning centres’ (a combination of libraries with open access computing facilities); joined the Further Educational National Consortium (FENC) for access to prepared online learning materials; held staff development sessions; and, at the time of this research, was cutting some course hours, replacing them with timetabled access to resource based learning centres.

Most of the senior managers saw these developments as very important for the college and its students, and clearly felt that the way learning took place, and the roles of lecturers and tutors, would change quite dramatically. Senior managers had been impressed by visits to other colleges which one senior manager

described as ‘*way ahead in this area*’. This senior manager went on to explain the vision for learning centres:

It's equipped with a network and materials and you have someone there attached to it who runs it and who works closely with the tutors and the lecturers. And students can go in and tap into their assignments, do their assignments you know with supervision to hand and with resources to hand. And the whole thing is linked to a college-wide intranet so that in any learning centre and in the central learning centres, learning material can be accessed and dealt with . . . It is really exciting to see with young sort of people, tend to be young graduates who are again quite sort of enthusiastic, looking after them who are up-to-date with all the latest IT developments because they're young and this is part of their generation, and the students really develop the capacity that will see them through into what should be a lifelong learning approach (Senior Manager, College A).

These developments were a live issue in the college, and, as will be seen, many lecturers were concerned about the move towards resource based learning, interpreting the motivation as primarily financial rather than educational.

In College B in contrast, there was relatively little emphasis on resource based learning and the replacement of teaching hours with open learning. As in College A, open access computer facilities were provided in the libraries and in some other dedicated locations throughout the college, but this appeared to be seen by the majority of staff, including senior managers, as an important additional resource for students, and something that there was not enough of, rather than something that would replace taught hours. The college's strategic and operational plans made little reference to ILT, other than in terms of the need to improve the delivery of key skills and the importance of IT skills for students. Whilst there is a acknowledgement that ‘*the college overteaches relative to colleges with the lowest ALF*’, and hence a reference to the need to reduce course hours ‘*where*

⁵ Information and Learning Technologies.

possible', this is not linked to new technological developments and resource based learning in these documents.

A senior manager expressed the view that it was important to look at the role of learning technologies, but spoke mostly about the need to overcome technical problems and provide all staff with computer access and email. Another senior manager said that they did not, at this stage, see technology as fundamentally altering or changing the role of the lecturer. This manager expressed some ambivalence about the technology, seeing it as potentially changing and improving the way they deliver to students, but also stressing the social aspects of education for the majority of students:

By and large what we've done is to respond to what's taking place in the big wide world and to equip students with the skills that they need to meet the challenges that are out there, so I think we've used technology more to stay up to date with, you know, teaching art and design students multimedia or teaching engineering students CAD⁶ and we've used technology to respond to equipping people with the latest skills rather than using technology to transform the way in which we deliver (Senior Manager, College B).

It was acknowledged that there may be some scope for changes in this, and that if a senior manager for the curriculum had been in post it may have resulted in '*more radical change*'.

The college had bid for funding to support the development of new technologised centres of learning within specific subject fields (eg media), and summaries of an FEFC inspection report on the use of information and communication technologies in FE colleges were provided in the staff newsletter. Some senior

⁶ Computer Aided Design.

managers also had clear ideas about what they would like to see in the future, including opening up access to people in the local estates by enabling them '*to tune in to the college's learning station*'. For the majority of lecturers in this college, the concerns expressed were about the inadequacy of networks, students' access to computers, and staff resources in this area, rather than a worry that computers were being seen as a way to reduce taught hours.

Issues of Access

The idea that the use of new learning technologies would necessarily widen access was problematised by staff in both of these colleges, and they expressed concerns that access to the technology was inadequate and unfairly distributed. The computer networks and facilities for teaching and learning were often described as unsatisfactory, with many instances recounted of network crashes, continual technical problems, too few accessible computers and outdated hardware and software. This was seen as a problem for students and staff, especially those without access to a computer at home.

Email access was only just coming on stream for staff in both colleges in 1997-98. For most this was a desirable development, although there were seen to be injustices in who was connected first and who was still without access, and a few members of staff expressed reservations about yet another way for managers to get to them. One lecturer said:

For anything important I would rather sit down and talk face-to-face. I do think again, this management culture, it's again distancing

further and further with increased technology (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

This echoes the concerns about the increased distancing in spatial relations between senior managers and others raised in Chapter 6.

Access to the best rooms and facilities in the college was, again, seen to favour some groups over others, as was discussed in Chapter 6. In particular, ESOL lecturers felt that their students had access to only the poorest facilities in the college, with one saying '*there is this assumption that you know anything will do when it comes to ESOL students I think*' (Woman ESOL Lecturer, College B). The 'value' apparently placed on different groups of students in marketised colleges is evident, and student 'consumers', although often presented as a homogenous group, are clearly differentiated. Although these ESOL lecturers focused on the disadvantages for their students, I would suggest that they also felt that they were less valued than their colleagues teaching more prestigious subjects.

The gendering of technologised spaces was also raised as an issue. A senior lecturer in College A said:

If you look at who is using the Learning Resources Centre here it is completely and utterly male dominated and the women students are saying 'I don't want to go in there, I feel uncomfortable, I feel I am being forced off the machine' (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

My own observations in this college also confirmed that there were usually far more men than women on the computers, even though women outnumbered men in the student population. On several occasions I noticed that the men tended to work on their own on a computer, whilst the women were more likely to be

working together in small groups. This was despite an attempt by the staff to enforce a 'one person per computer' rule due to the difficulties caused by noise and behavioural problems, with an increase in the latter seen to be a result of the increase in both student numbers and less supervised learning (Crequer 1998). Whether the women's patterns of working relates to the adoption of positive strategies to deal with being in a male-dominated environment, or to preferred styles of learning, is unclear. There is, however, evidence that girls learn and achieve more, and are more highly motivated, when they work collaboratively around a single computer (Inkpen et al. 1995).

A member of the library staff in College B described frequent '*confrontational situations*' around who is using the computers and said '*we've had a few instances with people, mainly women actually, who in that situation will just say "Oh forget it, I'll come and do it another time"*' (Woman Librarian, College B). A group of lecturers who worked on social care courses with mainly adult women students confirmed that many of their students would not go near this learning centre, whereas similar students had made full use of the computers available previously in the library on a (now closed) small site.

The creation of technologised learning centres, and increasing provision of open access computer use, are clearly recognised as important in both of these colleges, and they do go some way towards enhancing access for some groups. However, public access is not the same as access to a computer at home, although the latter is also gendered (Gray 1992a; Durndell and Thomson 1997; Reinen and Plomp 1997) and still very dependent on social class (Office of National Statistics 1999).

A senior lecturer discussed a range of initiatives to take computing resources out to the community but said:

The problem of cost is just vast and it's not just even the cost of the equipment. We did 'making your own website' which had been requested on a community centre four week course and after the first week the tenants association would say 'Oh but this is really really expensive because we've got to be on the telephone all the time'
(Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

Access to the technology requires not only the physical access, however, but also the knowledge and skills necessary to use it, and in both colleges, the importance of developing students' IT skills was recognised with dedicated classes for this. Gender issues, however, remain, with women vastly under-represented in computer education in the UK. There was nothing in either colleges' prospectus suggesting that these colleges were actively attempting to encourage more women into computing subjects at the time of this research.

Whilst new technological developments (such as accessing the Internet through a television set) are coming on stream and may enhance the accessibility of the technology for some groups, at present it appears that fears of a growing divide between those with access to the technology and those without may be being realised (Merrick 1998). Tysome (2000c), commenting on a recent report from NIACE (Sargent 2000), noted that 'more adults are taking up education and training, but new technologies have widened the gap between the "learning rich" and the "learning poor"'. The report showed that people with access to the Internet were twice as likely to take up learning than those without, and that this reflected the social class aspects of the growth in adult learning.

Access to What?

Further concerns expressed by a number of lecturers, particularly in College A where moves towards resource-based learning had received greater prominence, were the quality of what was available on-line, and the inadequacy of many resources for some students. At present, much of the knowledge available on-line, and the software to access it, is produced by western white middle class men and reflects their interests and priorities. The appropriateness of much commercially produced educational material for diverse student groups is questionable, and its suitability for students whose first language is not English was a particular concern of some of the teaching staff I interviewed.

The difficulty of producing materials that would enable the majority of students to work with relatively little assistance was highlighted by some computing and business lecturers, who explained that they tailored their materials to specific groups and in some cases, to particular students. Yet it is clear that some managers saw the provision of standardised on-line materials, either purchased or developed by in-house 'material developers', as a way to enhance quality. One senior manager in College A explained:

Obviously we need an Intranet within the college and we need to increasingly get materials and information on to that Intranet . . . We really can move away from all the different teachers of BTEC Intermediate Computing producing their own handouts which are pretty tatty anyway (Senior Manager, College A).

The derision with which lecturers and their handouts are sometimes regarded can be seen here. A head of department in the same college said:

We will still have highly qualified teaching staff but they will be material, course material designers, in many ways they will be developing the curriculum delivery that is then delivered by computer. I think it will be a very strong force for coherence across our curriculum delivery for quality control and that side of things (Man Head of Service Department, College A).

So much for the frequently hallowed 'diversity'. This also highlights the different perceptions of quality discussed in Chapter 4, with the lecturers expressing educational concerns about meeting individual student needs and some managers appearing to be concerned primarily with standardisation and measurement. Yet, as Grundy (1989) points out, attempts to apply technocratic solutions to what is essentially an interactive and unpredictable process, much of which is unmeasurable, are doomed to failure. The inputs and outputs of the education system, and the effectiveness of specific teaching and learning strategies for particular students cannot be adequately measured and accounted for in the ways demanded by technological means where the face-to-face element of professional diagnosis and judgement is lost. The unitisation and commodification of the curriculum goes hand-in-hand with these developments, potentially providing new restrictions on both professional teacher discretion and the knowledge available to students.

The senior manager above who spoke of the benefits of lecture notes, assignments and other course materials on-line highlighted the use of the technology that was most often mentioned in this college. The idea of videoed lectures, and on-line links to university lectures, were also mentioned. Whilst there are clear benefits to students to be able to access lectures they have missed or view ones they could never have attended, the danger of further reifying particular forms of knowledge and the 'expert' is clearly present. Lecturers can become even more remote,

indeed omniscient, and the student further disempowered in this dynamic. Whilst students may, in some cases, be able to communicate with the lecturer and other students on-line, the image of a lecturer on a television screen, a 'star', makes this a rather different experience than the equivalent lecture in 'real-life'. The lecture becomes a finished artefact, fixed, published, complete. During a face-to-face class with lecturers known to the students, there is likely to be more opportunity for those lecturers to become 'real' people, with students getting to know their foibles and vulnerabilities as well as their strengths and knowledge. The reduction in course hours that is taking place in further education is likely to further exacerbate this process, increasing the distance between staff and students discussed in Chapter 6.

So long as teachers hide the imperfect processes of their thinking, allowing their students to glimpse only the polished products, students will remain convinced that only Einstein – or a professor – could think up a theory (Belenky et al. 1986, p. 212).

There are dangers of new technologies compounding, rather than alleviating this dynamic, despite euphoric predictions of greater democracy on-line, the blurring of identities and the irrelevance of social, professional or cultural status.

The processes of standardisation, and the reification of particular knowledges which these technological developments can be seen to facilitate may, therefore, reinforce rather than subvert dominant epistemologies. There are ways, too, in which the introduction of new funding methodologies and computerised management information systems in further education colleges is contributing to the valorisation of computerised information, with certain kinds of knowledge seen as more valuable than others. A senior manager I interviewed from College

A was commenting on the forms of knowledge used in course evaluations and the '*lack of systematic use of performance indicators at course team level*'. This same manager went on to say:

People were dramatising what they saw humanly speaking through what they knew about the students and their colleagues instead of actually saying, well that is one important view on it but the other is just what are the actual trends, what are the real figures? (Senior Manager, College A).

Although the experiential and personal knowledge of teaching staff is acknowledged as important, the use of the word 'dramatising' seems to suggest that this type and source of knowledge is less valued than the more 'real' information available on the computer records system.

Discourses of Technology, Learning and the Independent Learner

The introduction of new technologies into further education is accompanied by new constructions of learning and the individual learner, constructions that are, I suggest, also gendered.

In public policy documents concerned with C&ITs and education, and the data generated by this research, two particular discourses stand out. The first, I have termed the 'Learning Enhancement Agenda'. This is epitomised by terms such as 'the learning age', 'lifelong learning', 'the learning community', 'widening participation', 'enhancing learning' and 'increasing access'. It is a discourse that emphasises the positive, is optimistic about the potential, and that also prioritises learning and the learner over the technology. Evidence of the benefits is

abundantly available, from Spender's descriptions of ways in which girls' and women's education can be enhanced (Spender 1995), to a report on the Government's Superhighways Initiative which lists six main benefits for the learner:

.. improved subject learning, the development of network literacy, improved vocational training, improved motivation and attitudes to learning, the development of independent learning and research skills, and social development (DfEE 1997c, p. 7).

The second key discourse I wish to highlight is what I have called the 'Techno-Managerial Agenda'. The main focus here is on funding, specifically ways of coping with cuts in funding and increases in student numbers. This is very explicit in the Dearing Report with reference to higher education:

C&IT will have a central role in maintaining the quality of higher education in an era when there are likely to be continuing pressures on costs and a need to respond to an increasing demand for places in institutions (Dearing 1997, 13.2).

The cuts in funding are not questioned, the political choices remain hidden and technology will come to the rescue. In practical terms, this discourse is epitomised in FE by the move to resource based learning, where traditional contact hours between lecturers and students are replaced, in part, by giving students access to learning centres filled with computers and staffed by learning assistants or instructors paid a fraction of what a lecturer would earn. It is part of a managerial agenda of reducing costs (and lecturers are expensive) and also ties in with a focus on management information systems, monitoring and control. An economicistic input/output model is evident. It can also be seen as another aspect of the attempt to make education 'teacher-proof' (Morley and Rassool 1999).

What I have presented is, perhaps, an ‘ideal type’ characterisation of what are complex, constantly shifting and continually reconstructed discourses that are part of a much wider discursive climate. The ‘enhancement of learning agenda’ can be seen as people-centred and semiotically assigned with constructions of femininity, and the techno-managerial discourse is marked as ‘hard’, technical, managerial and masculinist. Staff I interviewed in colleges did not necessarily espouse either discourse in its ‘pure’ form and most made some reference to the enhancement of learning. Given the wider discursive climate and funding pressures in FE it is perhaps not surprising, however, that it is the techno-managerial discourse that appears to be becoming increasingly dominant, and this was particularly evident amongst most senior managers in College A. In College B, senior managers were more ambivalent, and the majority of lecturers and many middle managers in both colleges aligned themselves with the learning enhancement agenda. The gender balance of the senior management teams in the two colleges, discussed in Chapter 5, is, perhaps, relevant here.

In both of these discourses, ‘education’ is replaced by ‘learning’, free from institutional ‘baggage’ of all sorts, from physical ‘walls’ and boundaries, to ‘old fashioned’ classrooms, teaching and teachers. The new independent learner is free to choose, in control of their learning, and able to access ‘it’ at any time and place that suits. It is this elision from ‘student’ to ‘independent learner’ that helps to provide the rationale for the techno-managerial discourse in further education, and has particular implications in terms of gender.

The new technologies, and the provision of learning centres in FE, are clearly seen as facilitating this move to the 'independent learner'. As one senior manager in College A explained:

I am sure it does lead to greater self sufficiency and it makes possible the whole business of lifelong learning (Senior Manager, College A).

Another describes a vision of the future in FE:

I see it as being about empowered individuals who know what they want, who have an expectation about what colleges can offer them. I think students will be much more sophisticated about their demands, much more instrumental (Senior Manager, College A).

Whilst a vision of empowered learners getting what they want from the educational system certainly has appeal, 'empowerment' is not an unproblematic concept (Morley 1998), and 'instrumental' is not gender-free in its connotations of a masculinist conception of 'reason'. Given that in FE there is 'a general move towards students studying on their own' (FEFC 1998), such 'empowered individuals' are however, deemed to be necessary.

The aim is a move from dependency to independence. In the government's vision of the 'learning age', we are assured that:

For individuals, learning will encourage independence. For the nation, learning will offer a way out of dependency and low-expectation towards self reliance and self-confidence (DfEE 1997b, p. 6).

Not only does this evoke right-wing and explicitly gendered exhortations to move away from the 'nanny' state, but 'independence' and 'dependency' have long been assigned with gender, as well as having race and class connotations (Ruddick 1996).

In the western philosophical tradition, independence and autonomy have been regarded as the preserve of men. To be autonomous is to act rationally in the public arena, a domain from which women have traditionally been excluded. Pateman (1988) demonstrates how, in the foundation of the liberal state, only men were regarded as individuals and able to enter into contracts, whilst Griffiths (1995) points to the contributions of Hegel, Kant, and Rousseau, amongst others, to the enduring construction of independent autonomous individuals as male in western society. The rational, independent, choice-making individual learner is constructed as one who wants to succeed and achieve, and will be 'single-minded' and 'self-disciplined', suppressing bodily desires to achieve the rational goal of success in their career. Yet ambition and desire to succeed are marked as masculine in the west, presenting particular difficulties for women and others excluded by this normative model (Gilligan 1987; Debold et al. 1996). The individual learner is also constructed as exercising 'free' choice about where, what and how to learn.

This economic model of free choice within the educational market is a gendered one, based on the archetypal 'economic man' (Nelson 1993) making 'rational' objective choices unburdened by social and material considerations. Indeed, within this philosophical tradition, women's role is to be subservient to men and to cater to their needs, just as the capitalist economy has traditionally used the unpaid labour of women in the home to support the (male) labour force. Even now, where women's paid employment outside the home in this country is increasing rapidly (albeit often in casualised, part-time, low paid work), women

still bare the brunt of domestic responsibilities (Central Statistical Office 1998).

As Walkerdine argues:

Bourgeois democracy operates in relation to a nexus of practices which aim at the production of a self-regulatory citizen ... The self-regulating citizen depends upon the facilitating nurturance, caring and servicing, of femininity (Walkerdine 1990, p. 56).

Kirkup refers to the ideal type distance learning student as 'the turbo student', i.e. one that requires the minimum of support and completes in the shortest possible time (Kirkup 1996), and this description fits well with the idealised independent learner. Kirkup argues that women are less likely to be regarded as living up to this ideal student as 'they are seen as psychologically dependent, that is more "needy" than men, rather than as individuals who have communicative and affiliation skills which are valuable and need to be exercised' (ibid. p. 155). This model of the autonomous independent individual is not only a masculine one, but specifically western, white and middle class. It assumes cultural homogeneity and ignores material and social factors that impinge on people's learning.

In this formulation, those who need support are pathologised. In discussing resource based learning, Brown and Gibbs state:

The idea that expensive and logically difficult human contact can be done away with is very attractive to managers. It is certainly true that some very good students do not need contact and will cope well without it (Brown and Gibbs 1996).

Presumably, those that need support or contact are 'bad' students.

This emphasis on independent learners came most strongly from some senior managers in College A, all of whom were men, and was absent from the discourse

of senior managers in College B. Most of the lecturers and senior lecturers that I interviewed in College A, however, felt that the hallowed notion of independent and resource based learning that the new technologies are seen to enhance, is one that excludes the vast majority of FE students. One senior lecturer in this college said:

Well it's this independent learner isn't it? The trouble is in FE, and a lot of students in HE, you know for whatever reason, they're not independent learners and that's the very reason why they're here (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

A business lecturer in this college, referring to the management emphasis on resource based learning, said:

I don't think they're taking into consideration the learning needs or the learning styles of our students. I think we're churning out more and more students who know less and less, and they're less prepared (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

Another feared that '*the students will no doubt dive in their achievements*' (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A). There appeared to be a general consensus that these developments were uncaring, educationally unsound and based on financial rather than educational motives. Of course part of this was the suspicion, voiced by some lecturers here, that the main motive was to get rid of lecturers and replace some of them with lowly paid teaching assistants.

Several lecturers in College B also felt that most students would not be able to work on their own. Here a senior lecturer voiced concerns about independent resource based learning:

I think (for) our students often the problem is they don't know how to learn, they have to learn how to learn . . . It doesn't actually matter what the content is, it's the process they need to go through and need a lot of encouragement for them to get themselves organised, for

people to be chasing them, to be seeing them, to be sorting out this and that, to be you know giving them an ear when they've got a problem with this child or that child or the creche or the you know, the roof and the parents and all the other things that they come with. And all that needs to somehow be put into a framework and I think it would probably be fine for some courses; I don't think it's the answer to everything (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

In this formulation, the student, and processes of learning, are not removed from material concerns, and the role of the affective is implicitly recognised. A senior manager in this college also felt that teachers were essential:

I do think you need somebody to check back on how things make sense, to monitor and to facilitate and to encourage your learning. . . . Teachers and tutors are very very important aren't they, particularly when you are thinking about the kinds of students that we have who lack a lot of basic self confidence (Senior Manager, College B).

Some senior managers in College A also acknowledged that resource based learning would not be appropriate for all students. One said that some students '*will need to work towards a level of competence and proficiency particularly in IT and study skills before they can actually be this responsible for themselves*' (Senior Manager, College A). This rests, however, on an assumption of a developmental pathway, the end of which is 'independence'. Yet such developmental theories not only assume a unified humanist subject who progresses, in a relatively straight line, from dependence to independence collecting the necessary skills, abilities and attitudes along the way, but have also been largely written by men and based on studies of white western male children and adults. Kolberg's influential theory of moral development (Kohlberg 1981) is a prime example of this, with women seen as less likely to attain the ultimate heights of development on this scale. The normative standard is a white western middle-class male one, with everyone else labelled as deficient in comparison (Bing and Reid 1996). The apex of such development is one of rational, abstract,

objective independent thought and judgement. Gilligan's work on different forms of reasoning has been particularly important in critiquing this ideal (Gilligan 1977). She distinguishes between a 'morality of rights' based on abstract rules and judgement more likely to be adopted by men, from an 'ethic of care' and responsibility. The latter represented a form of reasoning that more of the women in her study adopted, and was associated with relationship and connection rather than distance and individuation, a distinction which Chodorow (1978) identified as stemming from gendered identity construction.

The limitations of this model of independent learning do not only apply to FE students. Johnson et al, in relation to PhD students, argues that 'autonomy is achieved by rejecting the emotions, embodiment and human dependency' (Johnson et al. 2000, p. 140) and that pedagogies which emphasise the autonomous scholar:

..may work for those who are 'always-already' in part shaped as the form of personhood that these practices seek to produce. But it does not necessarily work so effectively, at least, for a more diverse, mass population - particularly for that group, women, for whom the form of personhood currently required as an independent scholar potentially involves the negation of the values and modes of operating historically associated with their gendered identities (ibid. p. 145).

In their research with women about their 'ways of knowing', Belenky et al suggested that 'connected' as opposed to 'separate' teaching and learning was preferred by more of the women they interviewed. This emphasised 'connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate' (Belenky et al. 1986, p. 229). Whilst insisting that such preferences are socially constructed, there still appears to be a danger of reifying traditional 'feminine' qualities of care and nurture that have trapped women in subservient

roles. Martin suggests that 'the general problem to be solved is that of uniting thought and action, reason and emotion, self and other' and she argues for education to incorporate some of the values traditionally assumed to be feminine ones 'the three Cs of caring, concern and connection' to be linked to what are assumed to be masculine qualities of rationality and independent judgement (Martin 1985 cited in Luke and Gore 1992, p. 153). We also need to redefine rationality. As Dubold et al state: 'rationality that does not reinscribe mind separate from body would reconceptualise knowing through corporeality, through the sentient body, and authorize diverse, complex subjects' (Debold et al. 1996, p.102).

A key question then, is the extent to which communication and information technologies might facilitate this more holistic approach, if not an embodied one. Haraway argues that whilst 'high technology' is often seen to deepen mind-body dualisms, 'high-tech culture challenges these dualisms in intriguing ways. It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine' (Haraway 1985, p. 71). Whilst C&ITs are clearly seen as challenging traditional didactic teaching and enabling some forms of collaborative learning, can they be said to facilitate 'connected' learning and disrupt Cartesian dualisms? The themes of relationship and connection came up in some of my interviews with lecturers, all of whom stressed the importance of face-to-face teaching over learning by computer. One science lecturer said:

The best teaching is when you've got a good relationship with somebody, when you like them and you are interested in your subject
(Woman Lecturer, Science, College A).

She describes students who come straight from school who:

..still want to have a school feel, they want to be held a bit, they want a class and they want to have pals and they want to have a teacher and I think they still want that security.

Several lecturers emphasised the importance of knowing the students and having time with them in order to be able to help them to learn, and were not convinced that the use of technologies could facilitate this.

A major problem with the techno-managerial discourse, is that a particular (masculinist) mode of learning is being seen as the 'best' or only way. Whilst this may suit some learners, I think it is unlikely to be beneficial for the majority, both women and men. A science lecturer in College B, discussing the dangers of any move towards resource based learning, said:

It really ought to be considered as one method of teaching students and one method of assessing them but I sense that if it takes over large chunks then it only really is geared towards the more motivated students. The less motivated student who gives up perhaps or is unsure just gets lost in that sort of thing (Man Lecturer, Science, College B).

Another lecturer in the same discussion group added:

It's not a panacea to good learning practice, in fact it may be the opposite you know. I don't know. I think for some it's all down in the end to educational technologists or others believing that people aren't individuals you know, and that you can subject them to whatever it is, this uniform experience, and the uniform experience is what they need and the uniform experience will give a uniform result (Man Lecturer, Science, College B).

This lecturer is also using a discourse of individual students, but based within a teacher-professional framing, whilst at the same time challenging the idea that the techno-managerial agenda is actually concerned with flexible customised provision for 'real' individuals. A lecturer from College A also felt that:

There's definitely a place for computers and resources . . . (but) I mean education has got to be flexible, you've got to have different approaches, different ways of doing the same thing and good resources yeah, but you can't have just a single method (Woman Lecturer, Science, College A).

She went on to express the views of the majority of lecturers in this college:

The only reason they're choosing that method is because it's cheap which is not a very good educational reason is it, just because it's cheap and cheerful, you know. In fact why not let them all stay at home and we'll post them out their work and they can phone up for tutorials you know, that's cheap. I mean they would do that if they could get away with it, I'm sure they bloody would.

Blackmore's assertion that 'the under-resourcing of teaching has meant a shift from "fat" to "lean and mean" pedagogies' (Blackmore 1997a, p. 92) would be supported by many of these lecturers.

A further concern is whether or not C&ITs are seen as a total replacement for face-to-face teaching. One scenario that has been mooted is the 'virtual college' model. There are commercial pressures pushing at least partly in this direction, as Noble (1998) has argued in higher education. Indeed, a '*Marie Céleste* college' where students log in from home was a fantasy of some FE college managements (Reeves 1995). Senior managers in both colleges rejected such fantasies, with one from College A saying, '*I think it would be pretty bloody lonely*'. This manager argued that learners '*have to have a collective experience and they have to feel supported in that*'. All the lecturers I interviewed would concur with this and many asserted that greater use of C&ITs would be very beneficial as long as it was in addition to, and not a replacement for, current levels of class contact between lecturers and students. The importance of face-to-face learning experiences is also recognised in the Dearing Report:

Personal contact between teacher and student, and between student and student, gives a vitality, originality and excitement that cannot be provided by machine-based learning, however excellent. When free to make a choice, even though it costs more, individuals are likely to choose to receive information and experience in the company of others, rather than alone, and to receive it from a person who is there to respond, even as part of a group (Dearing 1997, 8.21).

For many members of staff, social and interactive models of learning were favoured over independent ones. One manager in college A, challenging the enthusiasm for independent learning that predominated amongst the senior management in this college, said:

I think people under-estimate particularly to start with, the amount of support people need in order not to become discouraged by that form of you know independent or isolated, and it's an interesting balance, learning. . . . I think in its right place it's an exciting tool. But in its right place. I don't think that anything actually stops the emotional response that a learner needs with the person who is helping them learn. . . . So all of that is not necessarily a popular thing to say at the moment but I certainly think it's something that needs hearing (Woman Manager, College A).

Yet a partial replacement of face-to-face teaching is on the cards, particularly in College A. One senior lecturer explained:

I think we are moving towards a completely different method of delivering and I think the kind of strategy for the future is very much a reduction in the role of the lecturer and much more on this kind of resource based learning. So I think the whole role of the lecturer is changing as part of the strategic direction of the college (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

She went on to explain what this would mean a reduction from the current 15.5 hours for a full time course to about 13 hours from the forth-coming September, with the other two hours being in a resource based learning centre. She added:

That may well be staffed by actual lecturers in the first instance because we are not going to have enough work for them, but in the long term I would see that as being staffed by assistants.

In College B the cuts in course hours appeared to be less of an issue, perhaps because many courses were just being cut to 16 hours. Some lecturers, however, felt that this was going to disadvantage many of their students.

Learning, Support and Re-Gendered Divisions of Labour

Finally, I will consider some of the possible consequences of these dominant constructions of learning in terms of the staffing issues and the gendered division of labour. The construction of new staff identities, in particular manager and lecturer identities, has already been discussed in relation to the changes in organisational structures and relations, and the demands of the market and new managerialism. Yet the passion for doing things differently, for finding new ways of working has not only come from the techno-managerial agenda, but can also be seen as part of the learning enhancement discourse. This is where some consonance can be seen between curriculum modernisers and new managerialism (Avis 1995), and is expressed by one head of department in College B:

Technology is going to have a major impact on the way we work and we shouldn't be frightened of discussing it, we should be trying to redefine the way we work and be more.. Ultimately every level of staff should be able to be more creative in the way they work and have more fulfilling roles (Woman Head of Service Department, College B).

Yet there are dangers in the ways in which some of this redefinition appears to be moving. One of the interesting elements of the new technologised vision of learning that seems to be a prominent part of the techno-managerial agenda is the separation of 'support' and 'learning'. Learning is something that is regarded as a

largely cerebral activity, devoid of the passion, desire, emotion and embodiment that is central to some feminist visions of learning (see for eg. hooks 1994), and the idealised learner is one who can do this alone at their computer, without ‘support’ and its connotations of emotional need, dependence and inadequacy. So rather than seeing support as part of learning, it is separated off, distinct from the ‘real’ learning done independently. Whilst there is a clear role for support for learning in the ‘new’ FE, it is in the form of additional learning support, an add-on extra for those who need it, and not something, therefore, that would be seen as part of the mainstream lecturer’s remit.

One senior manager from College A explained:

We have got to decide what is hard teaching, what has got to be taught. We have got to decide what is supporting learning and where, then who does that and where we do it, and it is back to my question about are the teachers the best persons to do it? (Senior Manager, College A).

So, real teaching and learning is ‘hard’, and support, by implication, ‘soft’. Not only does the ‘hard’ teaching seem rooted in foundationalist epistemologies and the ‘expert’, but the gendering of these roles is clearly apparent. This same manager goes on to discuss the changing role of the tutor:

So it is teaching, supporting learning, tutoring. Who is the tutor? And that becomes so important. It is not about the pastoral bit, the pastoral bit is good if you can get it done, but it is about guidance, making sure that we have people properly skilled and able to guide our students.

Guidance is a ‘rational’ process, clearly and sharply defined, precise and goal oriented. It is rather different from the ‘messiness’ of the traditional role of the tutor.

The division of labour between teaching, supporting learning and tutoring is, I would suggest, likely to lead to a more fragmented, and less 'connected' experience for the students. The implications for the workforce, and the potential for increasing the gendered division of labour becomes apparent as the same senior manager explains:

We will have a smaller, but more highly regarded professional cohort of teachers. We won't view them as Jack of all trades, they won't be seen as low grade people, and we will have a much more flexible group of staff who probably won't stay with us as long, who support learning.

The downgrading and casualisation of the support role is clearly apparent.

The gender implications of this were evident to a group of women business, ESOL and arts and media lecturers in College A who were discussing the idea of having separate 'professional' tutors. Whilst one lecturer suggested this could be good for students as then they would be tutored by members of staff who were keen to do it, another said '*if that happens you watch the gender breakdown that there would be*' (Woman Lecturer, Business). A third added,

I've heard people say to me, to my face you know, 'I haven't got time for all that mothering'. All that girly stuff was what was meant. You know I've been told 'I don't waste valuable time on that stuff' (Women Lecturer, Arts & Media, College A).

A senior lecturer in this college spelt out the demands on the tutor's role and suggested that senior management really did not understand what was involved:

Do you know how many issues there are, how complex the problems are that they have? You know, students with nervous breakdowns, students being beaten up, students that are homeless, where you've got 16 year olds who are completely demotivated, never achieved anything in their lives, think they have no skills and nothing to offer and their behaviour is absolutely appalling, they've spent most of their life being suspended from school or in special units, they're here

with very little support. If you manage to retain three of them I think you are doing an incredible job but that isn't recognised, and the amount of tutorial time that goes in to those students just doesn't seem to be acknowledged anywhere (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

She went on to suggest that it was the women rather than men tutors in her department who take the tutorial role seriously and as such, women students with a male tutor often sought support from other women teaching on their course, thus adding to the work load of women members of staff. She continued:

I think many of the skills that the female staff have in relation to that kind of tutorial role are really being undervalued, all the kind of interpersonal skills of working with students, getting them through, which I think is much more a focus of women teachers, I think is being lost.

Of course, women taking responsibility for emotional support and caring is nothing new, nor are the pastoral demands on staff from ethnic minorities (Coffield and Vignoles 1998) and those on lesbian and gay staff who are called upon to support lesbian and gay students. For women, such caring is tied in with constructions of femininity, 'progressive' educational practice and its oppressive consequences for women (Walker 1990), and feminist pedagogies. Skeggs discusses the pressures on women's studies teachers in the 1990s, with both cuts in education and the raised expectations of an entitlement culture, and suggests that 'sometimes it's all more than any human body can withstand. Maybe this is why cyborg feminism is so popular' (Skeggs 1995, p. 482).

There is, though, another aspect to the support role envisaged in further education, and that is the support on the use of the technology provided by 'learning assistants' in resource based learning centres. In College A, some support staff jobs were already in the process of being redefined as learning assistants and there

was a clear commitment to employ more staff in these new roles at lower rates of pay than would be paid to lecturers. For some lecturers, threats to their jobs appeared to be part of the agenda:

I think they think that we have a knee jerk kind of Luddite reaction, that we'll campaign against anything that's to do with new technology and learning and you know there's a good reason for that, it's because they have got another agenda which is to get rid of us, but we're not being irrational in that.., in our response to that because like (a colleague) says, that's not teaching (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

One group of lecturers at this college discussed a training day which they felt was about employing technicians and instructors to manage classes, while they became tutors. One lecturer said:

Where does that put you in the end? I mean it de-skills you entirely doesn't it? It's a nonsense. What did you come in to be a teacher for, to sit and mark registers, count up things of hours and fill in forms? I mean it just takes away the whole thing about teaching and nurturing people through (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College A).

In another group discussion, a lecturer described a department meeting:

(The head of department) actually stood up and said 'it's known that students learn more with a computer than with a teacher', and so you know we actually said 'why don't you give up then, why don't you sack the lot of us then and be done with it, just get yourself a load of computers' (Woman Lecturer, College A).

In College B, there was some indication from upper middle managers that there had been discussion about employing staff on instructor or similar grades, but no agreement had been reached and there was clearly a reluctance to go down this route within the management team. A senior manager said:

When I talked about my little learning stations or whatever they are, yes I suppose that is what I would like to see, but, and it is a big but, I don't think that our students will have the kind of success that I want them to have if they haven't actually got people there to guide them certainly for some of their time, and yes, I think it is good for them to

have individual learning packages, individual learning plans, individual learning routes and to be able to access information for themselves as part of an overall series of course objectives, but I don't reckon you can whack a good teacher really (Senior Manager, College B).

In a discussion about plans to use cheaper staff, one lecturer said:

Well it's something that we've always resisted in this college, the union has always you know sort of implacably opposed that sort of casualisation, but we were having a conversation earlier where we felt that some sort of learning resources centre would be a good you know addition to the full time and part time courses (Man Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

Another lecturer in the same discussion group added 'Addition being the operative word' (Woman Lecturer, ESOL, College B). A senior lecturer also commented on the prospect of using unqualified staff who are not trained as teachers in learning centres:

You're saying that body of knowledge and skills can be translated by anybody and I think you know we know that there is something called pedagogy, you know those of us who have been trained as teachers have done it and we know how essential it is (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

There is clearly resistance to these developments in this college, although a head of department regarded them as inevitable in the future. She said:

I think increasingly we'll move, as other colleges have done, to trainers, to less skilled, less qualified staff. . . . You'll have two types, you know, have the academic for the A level, you know for the gold standard, and the trainers for the rest. I hope that doesn't happen, but if you look at the resource implication, if I were a crude manager that's what you would look at (Woman Head of Academic Department, College B).

In the library, moves to employ cheaper unqualified staff were already taking place. Here a librarian raises concerns about the quality of the provision and the problems of using unqualified staff to support students:

There is a definite pressure to reduce staffing, I think, in common with most other areas. Its input is being put into sort of lower grades, non professional staff sort of like as assistants, and I mean many of them are very capable but it's coming from a different viewpoint as well in terms of sort of confidence. And particularly within education, resisting the urge to just go and find the information for somebody, making them know how to find it next time for themselves you know rather than delivering: 'Here, this is what you want for your essay'... In other areas of librarianship that would be the standard way, is you're there to provide the information for somebody whereas in education it's a bit more subtle than that. You're not only there to provide the information but to show people how to find it for themselves and I think particularly with electronic resources it's becoming far more of an important skill (Woman Librarian, College B).

Although new learning centre posts, already being advertised in College A, will be relatively low-paid support roles and hence could become gendered as 'women's work', one cannot help but notice that technical expertise is usually seen as a male preserve, and a look at any college computing department is likely to reinforce that, particularly in relation to the higher grade jobs, 'hard' computing teaching and technical support. One woman I interviewed described how her team in a support area had shifted from all women several years ago to almost all men today. She did not feel that the technologising of the resources over the same time period was purely coincidental. She described an increasingly competitive working environment, one where knowledge gets shared amongst the men in the pub at lunchtime, where she feels she has to know everything perfectly in order not to '*appear ignorant and stupid, an incompetent woman*', and where a male colleague she works with '*doesn't like to be outdone by women . . . he is very obviously really quite put out if there's something that I can do that he can't*' (Woman Learning Centre Staff Member, College A). Computer culture retains its machismo, with particular consequences for women students and staff if it

remains unchallenged. It will be interesting to analyse the racial division of labour too as more of these support roles are developed.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have attempted to problematise the material and discursive climate which surrounds the introduction of communications and information technologies into colleges. The potential for reinforcing and re-constructing gendered, raced and classed power relations is all too apparent. The fashionable deconstruction of gender categories and the Cartesian transcendence of the body that unites elements of both post-modernist discourse and the uncritical embrace of technology and cyberspace, can also be seen as implicated in, rather than transcending, gendered power relations. The impact of cuts in funding and the technical rationality that can be seen to run through dominant managerial discourses of technology can be seen as a further reification of the 'discourse of masculinism' (Kerfoot and Knights 1993) at the expense of the 'caring, concern and connection' (Martin 1985) constructed as feminine. The implications for women staff and students are worrying.

Yet there are significant differences between the two colleges in this study. One interpretation could, of course, be that College B is just further back along the same road that College A is travelling, and that in time, the same developments will come to College B. A few members of staff in this college thought that this was a likely scenario. Another possibility is that different values are informing

these developments in these two colleges, with the ambivalence of College B managers, rooted more in learning enhancement values, constituting a form of resistance to the techno-managerial agenda and the dominance of technical rationality. The gender balance of the senior management teams does appear to be an issue here, with the men managers in College A much more wholeheartedly embracing the techno-managerial agenda. The staff are not, however, convinced. A lecturer from College A said '*we just need to believe in it, you just need to get the faith*' (Woman Lecturer, Arts and Media, College A), thereby challenging the discourse which presents the new technological developments as the inevitable and rational progress of science. Indeed resistance is widespread, although there was little evidence in College A that this was materially affecting the implementation of the strategic and operation plans of the college to expand resource based learning and cut back on course hours taught by lecturers.

Furthermore, these developments and their staffing implications appear to have a momentum in further education as a whole. Reeves has predicted a possible future for FE where curriculum developers write the materials, tutors guide students through it and advisers offer guidance and support. He says 'this new division of labour might, in biblical terms, be referred to respectively as the wise men, the shepherds, and the angels' (Reeves 1995, p. 56). Unfortunately no gender, class or race analysis was provided here, although the implications are obvious.

Chapter 8

What's happened to Equal Opportunities?

This chapter considers the impact that marketisation and new managerialism appear to have had on equality issues in the case study colleges. Cuts in funding and the drive for efficiency and accountability have brought about the 'rationalisation' not only of staffing, sites and concepts of learning, but also of what is considered to be the 'core business' of a further education college. Equality does not appear to be part of that core business.

When staff were asked how they saw equal opportunities in the college and how they felt recent changes in further education had impacted on equality issues, the overwhelming response was that 'equality' had not only moved down the agenda, a trend that Farish et al (1995) noted in relation to post-compulsory education between 1991-94, but had now dropped off the bottom. In this chapter, I explore these staff perceptions and the current 'state of play' in relation to equality in both colleges, then go on to examine some of contextual factors, both external to and within the colleges, that have contributed to the lack of attention to equality concerns.

Equality in Decline?

Most of the staff interviewed, women and men, black and white, felt that attention to equality issues had seriously declined over the last few years, although it was

predominantly women and black staff who expressed the strongest views about this. The comments of one administrative worker were echoed time and time again: '*it's got worse. I think equal opportunities will soon be a thing of the past*' (Woman Management PA, College A). A senior lecturer at the same college said:

I don't think the college is taking any kind of equal opps stuff seriously at all anymore, if it ever did, but you feel at one point there was some commitment, (now) it seems to have dropped off the kind of political agenda completely (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

Very similar sentiments were expressed in College B:

I think when colleges became incorporated and obviously a law unto themselves they were able to actually not even pay lip service anymore to what used to be some very very good policies around equal opps (Woman Senior lecturer, College B).

A manager reinforced this and said '*I feel that within the four years that I've been here, the organisation yea has lost its focus on equality issues*' (Woman Head of Service Department, College B), whilst another noted the absence of an explicit discourse of equality:

It's interesting because I just don't think it's in people's vocabulary like it was and it may not have been in their, you know in their techniques or pedagogical approaches or whatever other terminology you want to use, but they would pay, they would talk about equal opportunities. I mean it's not even used as a phrase or an expression or a sentence any more (Woman Head of Academic Department, College B).

There is of course always a danger that in reflecting back, the past can take on mythic status as some sort of 'golden era', but although many staff talked fondly about the past that they portrayed, this was not simply nostalgia for some 'golden age'. There was a clear recognition that achieving any kind of progress in terms of equality issues had always been a struggle, that achievements were partial and incomplete, and that the past had been far from rosy. The administrative worker

from College A quoted above went on to explain how in the past she had successfully challenged what she saw as unacceptable recruitment practices: it wasn't that anti-equality practices did not occur, but that she had felt able to challenge these because of the policies and ethos prevailing in the college at the time. She went on to describe similar examples of bad practice that had recently occurred, but explained that she no longer felt able to put herself on the line and speak out against these. She identified fear for her job as a major factor in this, demonstrating one of the impacts of the cuts in funding, 'hard' managerial style and organisational restructurings with threats of redundancy.

Unacceptable recruitment practices were one of the many examples given to demonstrate the lack of equality now. In both colleges the view was expressed that formal equal opportunities recruitment procedures were not always followed. The adoption of such procedures does not, of course, guarantee equality (McNeil 1987; Rubin 1997; Webb 1997), but staff who raised these concerns clearly felt that previous procedures had provided certain assurances against discriminatory practices. These views were strongly expressed by black and white women administrative staff in both colleges, with a group at College B arguing that you will get a job or promotion '*if your face fits*'. In College A, administrative staff also raised these issues saying that management want '*a nice young girl in a short skirt*'; '*they're looking for an image, I believe, it's not whether you can actually do the job anymore*', the conclusion being that you would be OK if the senior manager 'fancies' you. One woman went on to explain that in the past, equal opportunities representatives had been present on all interview panels, hence hindering any attempts to recruit on any other basis than the applicants' ability to

do the job. Such arrangements were no longer in place and so increased staff's perceptions that fairness would not necessarily prevail.

In both colleges, there was a sense that men were regaining ground in the staffing hierarchy. In College A, this was something that many of the women I interviewed commented on. One lecturer said '*people who have been here a long time like us know that the entire hierarchy of the college is practically all male*' (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A). This was contrasted with a time in the 1980s when most of the senior management team and a number of upper middle managers, had been women. A lecturer recalled an informal newsletter that he had produced:

The spoof I brought out last summer had a little thing on equal opportunities and pointed out how well they were working as long as you were white and male. We've got rid of all those women that were in positions of principals and deputy principals. When I first came to the college, certainly admittedly it wasn't part of the whole thing, but the management structure was predominantly female . . . and now that has been completely been turned over on its head (Man Lecturer, Science, College A).

A senior lecturer reinforced that as she counted the number of women in upper middle and senior management:

Heads (of Department), men are now in the majority. I am not sure how much by, little bit I think. They're not swamping that level but they are growing, they grow (laughter). At SMT they swamp, totally swamped by men. We've got one person, one woman on the SMT. It's not an educationalist's role either, it's personnel, an area women are often allowed into without a doubt (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

In this college, there had never been a significant number of black staff in the management. One social care lecturer explains:

I think there were two black senior lecturers and I think there is only one now, across the whole of the complex. I can't believe, If you look at the figures, the figures are chronic and they will get up and they will say, 'We don't understand why black people don't progress' and whatever, but you know they have done absolutely nothing to move anybody, to target anybody, to train anybody. You don't do it by accident, right? Especially if you are a part of an outside group (Woman Lecturer, Social Care, College A).

A head of department similarly argued:

We need to do more to recruit from other backgrounds and I don't think we do enough of that you know by having a much bigger representation of the community at large in the college. We're very very euro-centric. I mean we are all white (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

A senior manager here also acknowledged the problems, saying:

I think you can see a rolling back of recruitment of women managers and probably even more so of black managers in organisations, and that's of some serious concern (Senior Manager, College A).

The problem was not simply one of recruitment, but of promotion as well. An administrator said:

If you notice blacks are always lower down than anyone, anyone else if you like and how many black people can you see in this college as staff? If there is going to be early retirement, black staff will go for early retirement because of the treatment that they receive. They'll put in for say a lecturer, for example there's a post advertised for a bit higher than what they are, senior lecturer say, and a black person puts in for it among other people, that black person wouldn't get the job (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A).

In College B, although the senior management team had more women on it at the time of this research, there was still a view expressed that at upper middle management in particular, men were regaining ground:

Although there have been efforts ok, it seems the pendulum has swung back in their favour again, (laughter) you know, the males continue to dominate (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

She explained that out of six heads of department, only two were currently women, and they were both leaving. A construction lecturer also felt that things were getting worse and said '*there's one woman teacher in this building, one woman teacher out of 40, 50. It's a construction college but that's not, not very good*' (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

This college had previously employed more black staff in senior and middle management positions, but this had also, it seems, been undermined, with one manager saying: '*When I first came here I think I was one of about eight black managers and it's down to me and (one other) now*'. A senior lecturer said

On paper we would have a lot of black staff but if you go and broke that down and see where those people were placed . . . they're not the lecturing staff, they're not the SLs, they're not the senior managers, they're the support staff and I think that's replicated across FE, you know, a lot of colleges (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

Again this racial division of labour was acknowledged by most of the senior managers of this college, although the perception that men were regaining ground was not voiced by them. One senior manager explained:

In terms of the staffing of the organisation we, as I say, we do better than some in terms of the profile of our workforce, but there is a fundamental divide, not a divide, that's too strong a word for it. If you look at our workforce the majority of our administrative staff are black and female, black females you know . . . and we don't do badly you know. Women are well represented within the organisation at all tiers of management but black staff aren't and where they are represented it's in support areas and not in teaching areas. And I think that divide is a challenging one not least because it falls along the same area as the divide between teaching and support services which is always the challenging thing to bridge in any institution (Senior Manager, College B).

The implications for this continued and, indeed, re-constructed sexual and racial division of labour in the colleges are serious, not only for equal opportunities

practice per se, but for staff morale, the quality and inclusivity of decision-making, and the ethos and culture of the college which students enter.

In College A, there was a strong sense from many of the women staff I interviewed that the culture of the college had changed for the worse. One women senior lecturer spoke of the bawdy and sexist jokes that regularly featured now in her departmental meetings. She described one occasion where the meeting began with a lecturer describing giving '*little tests*' to his students, with the words '*I always call them "testicles"*'. She went on to describe the atmosphere in the meeting, with laughter from many of the men, and silent embarrassment from some staff, predominantly women and one black man. She went on to add '*And then there are other people who don't know whether they should join in with that to be sort of one of the boys, or to try and separate themselves*'. The head of department, however, apparently made his allegiance clear. She describes how he:

..made a joke, a follow on joke and said 'Yes, well I've been giving my students proper tests and I call them "testes"'. . . . Over the last 2 years I suppose those sort of jokes would happen but (the Head of Department) wouldn't really join in with them or he'd say 'Now, don't be naughty' or some kind of comment, but now it's just a kind of free for all basically. So there has been a change, a real a sort of change, and I don't really, I just don't feel confident enough or able enough to sort of challenge it (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

In highlighting the changed ethos, she describes one man who, after making a joke, will say '*sorry*' in a '*I know I shouldn't have done that*' tone, which she likened to '*an echo of a past life when we all had to, you know when we were all much more aware of these things*'. At this college, I also heard some accounts of harassment of women staff and/or students and pornographic pictures on the wall of a staff work room occupied by several men lecturers. Another senior lecturer

said: '*a lot of women feel this is a very very heavy place to be. Very very male, macho, scary – a lot of male students have said it as well actually, not just women* (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

A lecturer in College B similarly recounted stories of everyday life in a predominantly hostile and very male dominated department, where she was the only woman with six or seven men. She explained that several of the men were very sexist, and that she continually has to deal with racist and sexist comments.

She described one lecturer:

He actually one day turned back to me and said to me 'why are you even here, why are you working? You should be at home'. Do you see what I mean? 'This is a man's job, you shouldn't be doing this, (it) is a man's job, you taking jobs out of our hands'. . . . I am getting a lot of hassle and I'm being harassed more or less every day, you know, because of the fact that I am a woman and it is because of that, it is solely because of that because I am a woman. I get harassed, I am being bullied by my male lecturers (Woman Lecturer, College B).

Some of the staff I interviewed also talked about the impact of the college culture and environment on students, with the above lecturer also explaining that (the few) women students in her department also came to her with similar complaints. It may be that this environment, and the lack of women staff in the department, is one reason why numbers of female students in some non-traditional areas appear to be decreasing. One construction lecturer in this college explained that in his department:

..in say the 80s there was a great deal more optimism and for instance an awful lot of women, you know courses in our area were 50-50, 50% female and 50% male and as this whole FE problem has snowballed . . . I notice we're down to about a quarter female that we were formally getting . . . You know if you're talking about a group, talking about 16, 8 of one and 8 of the other, you might have two now females to the 14 males . . . It's only in the last three years that's happened (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

Equal Opportunities: Policies in Context

Despite the above, both of the colleges in this research have clearly stated equal opportunities policies. As Farish et al noted 'a polished, newly revised equal opportunities policy and mission statement seems to be a compulsory accessory for any modern education institution' (Farish et al. 1995, p. 1) and further education is no exception. All FE colleges are now required by the FEFC to have a policy on equality of opportunity, and the inspection and self-assessment guidelines include a criterion that 'Equality of opportunity is promoted and effectively managed' (FEFC 1997a). A '*Manager's Manual*' on equality, based on the inspection framework and produced by the CRE and EOC, provided guidelines for FE senior managers, and advised that equality of opportunity should be built into strategic plans, mission statements and charters, monitored thoroughly, led by senior managers and given a high profile, with positive action to be taken where necessary (CRE and EOC 1995). An updated edition of this guide was produced in 1998 (Dadzie 1998). At the time of this research, there was also growing concern about those sections of the population who did not participate in any further education or training after compulsory schooling, and in 1997 Helena Kennedy produced the report of the Government's 'Widening Participation' committee, recommending action that needed to be taken to promote access and achievement for those who have been educationally disadvantaged (Kennedy 1997). Indeed, within further education 'equality' generally appears to have the status of 'a good thing', although most of the emphasis of these initiatives was on equality issues for students rather than staff.

The staff and student handbooks in these two colleges contained information about the equal opportunities policies and the procedures to deal with harassment.

The policy statement for College A stressed that the college '*welcomes the richness and diversity of its community and believes in the equal value of all its students and staff*'. There is a commitment to work to remove barriers to access and achievement to enable all students and staff to develop to their full potential.

The college '*recognises that inequalities exist*', and acknowledges the '*disadvantages*' that people may experience on the basis of race, gender, disability or learning difficulty, because they are gay or lesbian, or because of their social class, age, language or nationality. The policy stresses that it will take action '*against racist or sexist behaviour or any form of discrimination*', and that the college is taking positive action in a number of areas, including recruitment, the curriculum and the environment, with a view to embedding equality in all aspects of college life. It stresses that it is the responsibility of all staff and students to implement the policy.

College B's policy states that the college is committed to '*best practice*' in equality of opportunity, making full use of the resources and abilities of staff and creating an environment conducive to effective working and learning. The policy emphasises the importance of ensuring the participation of all sections of the community and providing education and training that will '*redress inequalities in society*'. The importance of valuing diversity and raising aspirations and achievements for all students and staff is also stressed. The policy refers to the relevant legislation, but stresses that it goes further by including equal

opportunities for lesbians and gay men, people with learning difficulties or disabilities, asylum seekers, people leaving care or penal institutions, people affected by HIV and Aids, and discrimination on the basis of age. In terms of scope, the policy covers information and advice services, recruitment, staff development, access, the curriculum, external partnerships and the strategic planning process. It stresses that the '*ethos of equality*' will be reflected in the buildings, publicity, staff and student interactions and in curriculum materials. Overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy rests with the governing body and senior management team, but all staff have a responsibility to implement it in their areas of work.

A number of members of staff in both colleges felt that there was a problem with the implementation of the policies. In College B, there was little dispute with the policy itself. A librarian here said that the policy was fairly well thought out, but added:

I very often feel there's quite a gap between theory and practice, so much just sort of seems to fall through the gaps just through sort of muddles really (Woman Librarian, College B).

In College A, it was not only that there was felt to be a gap between policy and practice, but also that the policy itself was inadequate. One lecturer explained:

We've got an equal opportunities policy that was written, it was a rewrite of much stronger I think equal opportunities policies that we used to have in the 1980s and under (the LEA) and so on and when we became a corporation we had to have a new one. It had to be a lot simpler I suppose and I think it's been watered down in lots of ways (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

This 'watering down' can be seen in terms of the depoliticisation of the current equality discourse which is evident in many policy statements. As Neal notes in

relation to the University EO policies that she examined, ‘power, social justice, oppression and domination were very rarely, and certainly never overtly, discussed in the equal opportunities policy texts’ (Neal 1998, p. 65). This was also the case in relation to these colleges’ policies. There is a recognition that inequalities exist in both policy statements, and discrimination and harassment are also acknowledged, but much of the emphasis is on access, participation and recognising diversity, all of which can be seen as part of a liberal equal opportunities agenda focusing on the individual. Whilst there are clear penalties for individuals who breach the policy with links to the disciplinary procedures, the implicit assumption here is that the main problem lies with ‘bad’ individual behaviour, without any overt recognition of the ways in which power relations are institutionalised within the colleges. So, for example, the need for equality of opportunity in recruitment is recognised and ‘positive action’ is mentioned, but there is little evidence in either college of targets, specific staff and career development, or serious attempts to understand why more women and black staff are not being appointed to more senior posts.

The list of ‘disadvantaged’ groups in the college policies is extensive, and probably more inclusive than would be found in many organisational policy statements. Neal, however, suggests that there remains a hierarchy of equal opportunities issues. Her research on university equality policies led her to suggest a four stage hierarchy in relation to how comfortable these issues were for people. In Neal’s construction, gender is at the top of the list, i.e. the issue most people feel comfortable with, followed by disability, sexuality and race in descending order. Interestingly, class does not figure in this hierarchy at all.

In relation to my research, identifying such a hierarchy of categories was in one sense difficult as it appeared that to some extent none of the issues were being dealt with. Indeed, a number of staff suggested that gender, rather than being comfortable for people and so at the top of the list, tended also to be dismissed, as either not an issue anymore (we've done that one), or an 'out of fashion' concern. Several women members of staff from both colleges commented on being seen to be '*mad*' or outdated if they raised such issues. Neal suggested that gender issues were at the top of the hierarchy when they were perceived to be non-threatening, i.e. 'related to traditional areas of women's lives, that women's needs were seen as homogenous and that gender was defined as the experience of white women' (ibid. p. 86). Some women in my study raised issues of concern about creche facilities or time-tabling that facilitated transporting children to school, i.e. 'safe' areas that would fit with Neal's definition of non-threatening, but even here there was a sense that previous good practice in these areas was being eroded, and that the concerns of women with childcare responsibilities were disregarded. Where time-tabling was concerned, the over-riding priority was the most 'efficient' use of all the space, resulting in courses that attract adult women which would previously have been time-tabled between 10 and 3pm, now having 9 o'clock starts and late finishing. Similarly, several members of staff with caring responsibilities commented on the difficulties that they were now having retaining a timetable that reflects the external demands made on them. The expectation appears to be that it is individual women's responsibility to organise their child care so that they can work or study without 'hindrance', i.e. to adapt to the model of the independent (male) individual free of domestic concerns. The

intensification of work also has implications for those with caring responsibilities.

A head of department in College B who has children noted:

What's fascinating is most of my senior lecturers don't have children, most of SMT and the managers don't have children. If they do they're adults, but very few of them do which I think is really interesting in terms of equal opportunities, you know the whole notion that to be a manager or to be a good worker you work long hours (Woman Head of Academic Department, College B).

References to disability and learning difficulties appeared in both college policies, but attempts to meet the needs of students with disabilities were often not successful, despite the extra funding available to support such students. Staff with disabilities were not mentioned, and indeed staff (or students) using a wheelchair would have faced considerable access barriers at several sites in College A. A head of department in College A described an attempt to make it possible for a student with muscular dystrophy to do his chosen course:

But what the manager of the course is saying to me is they just, they won't. They just don't care. . . . We've got the course, we've got the teachers, we've got the equipment, we've got the potential. The FEFC will fund it, he is a very worthy person, his case is something that should be met, he is a FEFC priority! They can't effing (laughter) get it together to make the two bits fit because its difficult, because you have to stretch yourself a bit and you have to be a bit imaginative and a bit sensitive and maybe go out of your way slightly to actually make it work for him. . . . I mean disability is one of those areas where like everybody is inclined to be sympathetic no matter how racist or sexist they are, they will sort of find it in their heart to be kind to people with disabilities. If that extreme example is not working to the extent that that person so far I think still hasn't being given a course even though we've been trying for a year, you know, what is the environment really seriously like? (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

This explicit reference to assumptions of a hierarchy of equality issues suggests that disability is one of the more 'acceptable', and even here, putting policy into practice proves difficult.

A senior lecturer from College B also felt '*it's incredibly hard for students with a disability to get into the college and get the appropriate support*' (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B). As French notes, where help is offered, it is usually a response to an individual problem and seen as something special, rather than there being any attempt to change the institution to accommodate disabled people (French 1998). In discussing higher education, French observes that as institutions have got larger and become more impersonal, something that is discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to changes in sites and spatial relations, the situation for disabled people has worsened - despite EO policies. Another consideration is the eulogising of the 'independent learner' discussed in Chapter 7, the ways in which 'ability' is conceptualised (see Gillborn and Corbett 2001), and the youthful, positive and 'thrusting' image of the manager raised in Chapter 5, all of which have implications for staff and students with disabilities.

Sexuality had a 'minimalist presence' (Neal 1998) in the articulation of equality issues in both colleges. The few 'out'⁷ lesbian or gay staff that I interviewed did not regard it as a major issue, and tended to express far greater concerns about sexism or racism. This senior lecturer from College B recognised the constraints, however, on lesbian or gay staff:

I mean even if you do police yourself a bit, probably, I mean I wouldn't, I mean I'm not out. I say I'm not out to my students but haven't got any problem, I'd be, they probably don't, they don't think about it, I don't know. I mean I will say things about my partner and if in the course of the conversation it's obvious it's a woman it's not an

⁷ By using the term 'out' here I am referring to staff who made their sexuality known to me, or where our common sexualities, as lesbian or gay, were tacitly or overtly recognised during the interview. These staff were also out to many of their colleagues, and in some cases to students as well.

issue where I suppose you might police yourself more if you worked in Hull or somewhere like that, I don't know, yea. But I have never had any, I mean I personally haven't been aware of any discrimination towards myself (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

The hesitancy in her account points to the continual processes of decision-making and negotiation that lesbian teachers have to make in their presentations of self in the workplace.

One 'out' gay man I interviewed in College A also felt that his sexuality was not an issue in the college and as such equal opportunities here were relatively good.

This college's website also had a link to lesbian and gay resources and sites, reaffirming this liberal approach. It is interesting to speculate, however, whether an active and campaigning staff group of lesbians and/or gay men would have been accepted in either college to the same extent as an 'out' individual. In the latter case, an individualised notion of equality can operate, but when issues are deemed to be political, they are more likely to be perceived as threatening to the status quo.

It is here that race comes in. Like Neal, it became apparent that issues of race were fraught in both colleges, although much of this remained 'beneath the surface'. Black staff in both colleges felt that racism was endemic. One member of staff from College B said:

You know this is probably one of the most racist places I've ever worked in my whole life and I hate to have to say that on tape recording and it's surprising because . . . when I say to people I'm in (this area) and they say to me 'are you mad, the most racist place you've ever worked in your whole life?'. But I think there's so much diversity in (this area) in terms of gender, in terms of race, in terms of sexuality, in terms of everything, that people are less tolerant. Am I making sense? If I work somewhere and I'm one of two black people

then I tend not to feel racism as much and I don't know if it's because I'm not perceived as a threat as much (Woman Member of Staff, College B).

She adds that she feels her colleagues perceive her as a threat:

They consistently think you're on a black agenda even if you're not on a black agenda, do you know what I mean? It's kind of like this thing where you can't even open your mouth.

Several white members of staff in College B expressed the view that during the late 80s or early nineties, a number of staff were appointed because they were black. One senior manager said:

I think we have, there is a fundamental problem of legacy of some of the unfortunate features of equality work in the 70s and 80s . . . There was a period of time, and I don't think it was a particularly long period of time, but if you had a senior management appointment that came up then you had to make sure the person who got the job was a black person rather than necessarily the best person for the job, or rather I suppose probably at the time there was a belief that because of the nature of (this area), the best person for the job had to be black. And I think that's created an unfortunate legacy that still hangs on and that has its impact both on black staff and on white staff. If you've seen you know a number of people, black people, in senior positions doing disastrously because they weren't up to the job, now I think that was a very very unfair ill advised thing to do (Senior Manager, College B).

The possibility that these staff were not allowed to succeed by those around them, and in some cases were effectively set up to fail, was not acknowledged. Although one social care lecturer felt that staff were not employed on the basis of race anymore, a group of white lecturers suggested that disciplinary issues in relation to staff were not pursued for fears of accusations of racism, highlighting the continued sensitivity with regard to race in this college. The notion of 'fear', of course, invokes racist discourse (Neal 1998), and the assertions that were made by several staff in this college that the main problem with racism stemmed from inter-ethnic conflict can be seen to draw on new racist discourse (Barker 1981).

The local authority policies identified above as ‘responsible’ for the heightened tensions around race are examples of the kinds of municipal antiracist approaches critiqued by Gilroy (Gilroy 1987; Gilroy 1990) and the ‘moral’ racism highlighted by the MacDonald Report (Macdonald et al. 1989). Clearly such positive action policies threatened the (white) status quo and may be seen to have created their own problems: they also, in the case of this college, resulted in a far greater representation of black staff at higher levels in the college hierarchy. Although some of these gains have since been undermined, there are still notably more black staff at senior lecturer level or above in College B than has ever been achieved in College A.

In College A, race did not appear quite as sensitive and fraught an issue – perhaps because little had ever been achieved in relation to the appointment and promotion of black staff. There were, however, clearly tensions around race, with black staff alert to racism and to the denial of the existence of racism by some white staff. One senior lecturer spoke about a staff meeting:

When I mentioned the problem of race everybody got very upset, ‘it’s nothing to do with racism’. Well it is a race issue. There are a lot of students who are non-white who are in trouble, there are a lot of males, a lot of them are black (Man Senior Lecturer, College A).

Another senior lecturer expressed the same sentiments:

It’s like all the kind of issues here that they are claiming are nothing to do with racism . . . Well I think if they spoke to some students they would find out there is one hell of a lot of racism in this building and that a lot of the suspensions, a lot of the fights, are of a racial nature (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

Several members of staff, both white and black felt that issues of racism were frequently 'pushed under the carpet' so as not to generate any adverse publicity.

This denial of racism can be seen in part as a response to the educational market and the importance of 'image', but is also linked to the changing discursive presentation of equality concerns. With the 'widening participation' agenda and broad concerns about 'disadvantaged' groups, race becomes invisible. Gillborn has drawn attention to the ways in which policy has been deracialized:

Notions of 'disadvantage' and 'inner city problems' come to deny any special importance for 'race' and ethnicity. This, of course, does away with the need specifically to address racial inequalities. Simultaneously, individuals and groups who use racialised discourse in an attempt to highlight such issues are represented as dangerous political extremists and/or self serving bureaucrats (Gillborn 1995, p. 177).

He goes on to note how this deracialized policy discourse defines racism as an individual concern, i.e. the problem is a few racist individuals rather than the structures and systems themselves, and he concludes that this 'colour-blind' policy discourse 'threatens to create ideal conditions for the further development of racial inequalities' (ibid. p. 177).

Both the processes of individualisation and depoliticisation can be seen in this research. Neal argues:

In the 'equiphobic', politically correct climate of the 1990s, the case study universities' willingness to address an equal opportunities agenda depended on their ability to depoliticize the issues involved (Neal 1998, p. 91).

It is also worth looking at the wider policy context for further education. Kennedy (Kennedy 1997) recognises some of the complexities of educational

underachievement and so avoids the worst excesses of this neutralising ‘colour-blind’ discourse. She criticises the educational market noting ‘there is concern that initiatives to include more working class people, more disaffected young people, more women, more people from ethnic minority groups are being discontinued’ (ibid. p. 3) and she recognises the multiplicity and inter-relationship of factors which are likely to result in non-participation. Those which she identifies as primary relate to previous educational achievement, and she argues that ‘there are strong links between economic disadvantage and low income on the one hand, and poor retention rates and low levels of achievement on the other’ (ibid. p. 22). Class is, therefore, firmly on the agenda, and it is something that Kennedy herself identifies with when she says ‘children from my own class background are still not participating’ (ibid. p. 9).

Despite the positive and often passionate arguments presented in the Kennedy Report, however, the individualised model continues to shine through. The emphasis here is on enabling individual students from disadvantaged groups to access further education, and there are sound arguments for the necessary financial support to be provided. Although there is recognition of the importance of providing courses for specific groups of students, there is no reference to the need for an inclusive curriculum and pedagogy, anti-discriminatory practice and ethos, or, indeed, the impact addressing inequalities in staffing could have on widening participation. In the end, the easy use of shorthand terms such as ‘educationally disadvantaged’ and ‘non-participants’, can still serve to support ‘colour-blind’ deracialised, desexualised and depoliticised policy and practice. Barwuah, from the Further Education Development Agency, suggested that the

Kennedy 'widening participation' project had taken some of the political heat out of equal opportunities, so people could sign up to widening participation and ignore other EO concerns (Barwuah 1998). Indeed, some of the staff I interviewed suggested that because all the students are disadvantaged in some way, the college need do nothing more about it – just by providing courses, equal opportunities requirements were inevitably being met. One manager in College B said:

I think there is some notion of benignness because we were all equal opps . . . race, class and gender, we're all right on, we know it, but when push comes to shove in times like this when it's cuts, it's always the more vulnerable as you know that are picked on . . . and I think that's what's happening in FE (Man Head of Academic Department, College B).

In trying to understand the lack of priority given to equality issues in the college, a manager in College A said:

I wonder if sometimes there is a sense that, you know, well all our students are, you know, come from backgrounds which aren't sort of, they aren't privileged and therefore just by teaching them, you know, we are meeting an equal opportunity . . . our equal opportunities commitment is being discharged (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

Despite the emphasis in the Kennedy Report, concern was expressed by a few staff that class as an issue continued to be overlooked. One senior lecturer in College B argued:

There's far too many middle class, and the black or ethnic people who are here are far too middle class . . . The community around here is overwhelmingly working class no matter what colour they are (Man Senior Lecturer, College B).

Unsurprisingly, this senior lecturer is white, and there were racist undertones to his comments. Class, however, was not specifically mentioned by the majority of respondents in this research. This may be because they, too, were thinking

‘working class’ whilst using the discourse of ‘disadvantaged’, or that for some black staff, experiences of racism were in the foreground (Reynolds 1997). It may also be that the de-politicisation of the equity discourse was such that ‘class’ was deemed ‘unsayable’, although it was also traditionally ignored in many of the equality initiatives in the 1980s. I suspect, however, that lecturers’ expressed concerns about their students’ needs, financial considerations and issues of access were actually to do with class (as well as race and gender), especially as the majority of students in FE are from working class backgrounds. From my own experience of working in the sector, I also suspect that a high percentage of the staff working in FE are from working class backgrounds, and this may go some way towards explaining the strong emotional commitment to the sector and its students, the levels of distress expressed at cuts in funding and perceived injustices, and the anger about levels of resourcing.

So Why is EO Off the Agenda?

The wider social, cultural, political and economic context in Britain in the 1990s is not one that has been most conducive to reducing inequalities. Almost two decades of Conservative government, the prominence of the ‘New Right’ and the valorisation of the market have contributed to an increasing ‘individualisation’ of society and renewed threats to equality (Hutton 1996). The Conservative government’s attacks on the public sector, including education, ensured that colleges had little choice but to spend most of their energies on financial survival and meeting the increasingly bureaucratic demands for the Funding Council,

something that has changed little with the ‘new’ Labour government. Little time or energy was left for thinking creatively and actively promoting equality. Indeed the direct attacks on ‘progressive’ local authorities were extensive and any attempts by them to support equality initiatives were vilified by the tabloid press (Epstein 1993). Over the same timeframe, a backlash against feminism has been very evident (Faludi 1992), whilst increased challenges from within feminist and equality movements related to the equality/differences debates and post-structuralist rejections of grand narratives have increased uncertainties about political campaigning and action. The cultural and political shift that has taken place has, therefore, seriously undermined many of the positive attempts that were being made to challenge inequalities in these colleges in the early 1980s.

Incorporation

A number of staff in both colleges identified incorporation as the turning point in the ways in which equality issues were perceived and dealt with. A senior manager from College A said: *‘I think we went through a trough post-incorporation, very much so’*, and a lecturer from College B, discussing equal opportunities, also felt *‘it’s just sort of dropped from, dropped off the agenda really I think with incorporation’* (Woman Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

Incorporation is seen as significant for a number of reasons: it removed colleges from local authority control and the positive support for equality issues provided by the LEAs for these colleges, it was a significant element of the marketisation

of further education, and it prepared the ground for the rapid introduction of managerial approaches from the business world.

Perhaps more importantly, however, was the feeling expressed by one senior lecturer that incorporation allowed colleges to become '*a law unto themselves*' and the cuts in funding pushed equality concerns to the periphery of strategic management thinking. Incorporation had placed far greater responsibilities on college managements, and the increasingly competitive educational market created new and pressing priorities for management teams. One manager in College A said:

You're worried about your provision. The fact that you've got to meet these targets, the outcomes, bla bla but then the lack of will is literally, well I prioritise my energies and maybe in the list of priorities, equal opps is down there in the middle somewhere. And in some cases towards the bottom. And therefore, there's a lack of will to promote it further up the scale of priorities (Man Head of Academic Department, College A).

A senior manager in College B acknowledged the pressures:

Continuing to work at equal opportunities might appear to be expendable if everybody's doing what they call, you know, getting back to the core business (Senior Manager).

This 'core business' can be seen as crucial to the survival of the college, and in a context of college mergers and rumoured government agendas to reduce the overall number of colleges in a ruthless 'survival of the fittest' market, senior managers appear to have felt they had little option but to concentrate on making the college financially viable before any other priorities could be considered.

Financial constraints and government funding policies were clearly seen as a major factor in the lack of attention to equality issues. A group of lecturers in College A discussed college provision for students with disabilities, with one woman saying '*No it's not a priority. The only time that disabled people became a priority was when there was extra funding*' (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A). Webb argues that the rhetoric about 'welcoming diversity' is only sustained to the extent that it increases profits; anything that costs, such as childcare or flexible hours isn't supported (Webb 1997). Duke also suggests that:

Unless EO can be presented, perceived and ultimately experienced as in the institution's self interest – and this means for competitive survival rather than for the quality of working life and a benevolent working environment *per se* – its prospects in the late nineties look poor indeed (Duke 1997, p. 54-55).

The EOC/CRE equality manuals for FE (CRE and EOC 1995; Dadzie 1998), discussed below, have attempted to make the business case for equality for precisely this reason.

In the market context, colleges were encouraged to spend scarce resources on marketing and competition rather than on ensuring high quality and equitable educational provision for all students or paying attention to inequalities in staffing. This emphasis on operating within an educational market was seen by some staff as detrimental to equality because of the concern with 'image'. A senior lecturer said:

They're cutting ESOL classes. They're saying 'Oh no we can't just have all ESOL' . . . They're so conscious of the image of the college, that it's not just seen as an ESOL college or you know a basic education college, that I think they're making the wrong decision in some cases (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

ESOL lecturers in both colleges expressed the view that their students and courses were not highly valued, and in College A the strategic plan notes the modest but variable improvement in full-time retention rates, '*with the growth in ESOL students reducing the overall improvements achieved*'. When colleges are judged by specific performance indicators in a marketised context, ESOL provision can be seen as a threat rather than an asset. Several lecturers in this college suggested that racism was denied or swept under the carpet to protect the college's image. Yet both of these colleges use multi-cultural images prominently in their prospectuses, highlighting the contradiction noted by Jewson et al. (1991) between the use of marketing images and commitment to EO policy and practice.

Restructuring

In terms of the impact on staff, restructuring and the associated programme of redundancies discussed in Chapter 6 were perceived to be particularly problematic for equality in College B. The most frequent and serious complaint was that women and black members of staff were more likely to have been made redundant than white men. In part this was thought to be because the brunt of the redundancies had affected support rather than teaching staff. A senior manager said:

A lot of the support staff are from black and ethnic minority groups, far more so than the teaching staff overall, and I think that one of the consequences of current, you know the kind of incessant down sizing has been to have an inverse proportion on the . . . equalities profile of the college's staff because it always does with minority groups (Senior Manager, College B).

Here there is a sense of inevitability: that 'down sizing' was necessary and that was bound to impact negatively on some groups of staff more than others. It was not just support staff who were affected though. A Head of Department said:

I think even if we look at the recent redundancies of lecturing staff we'll find that, given the population whereby the majority of the lecturing staff are white yea, that the majority of the people that were selected for redundancy were black (Woman Head of Service Department, College B).

A group of ESOL lecturers shared this perception. One went on to discuss redundancies that had occurred in the craft and building trades area and said:

There have been massive efforts I suppose some years ago, sort of (LEA) days, to recruit women, black and ethnic minority lecturers into those areas and they were very, they were quite balanced as a result. Now it looks as if all those staff have largely been dispensed with so the clock has been turned back, and you've got very much you know traditional type of staffing which is really regrettable and obviously has, you know, big implications in terms of recruitment of students in the future (Man Lecturer, ESOL, College B).

A black woman member of staff did not accept that such effects were an inevitable aspect of the redundancies and described the targeting of a single women (along with a few male colleagues) working in a traditionally male-dominated department for redundancy as '*ridiculous, bloody outrageous, it was absolutely outrageous. It was just so outrageous that it didn't bear thinking about*' (Woman Staff Member, College B).

Management staff have also been affected. A Head of Department said '*I think there's been a significant turn over of black staff within the organisation at management level*' (Woman Head of Service Department, College B) and another manager added '*a lot of black managers have been made redundant . . . I think I'm one of the few that's left*'. A senior lecturer also noted that:

We've lost our senior manager, we had a senior manager who was black, she's gone. I mean you sort of start ticking people off and thinking well.. Although there are senior managers who are black, the most senior managers who are black have gone (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

No-one in College B suggested that black staff and women had been deliberately targeted in the restructurings, with most seeing it as something that had 'just happened'. As a Head of Department said:

Some of the race, the gender and that has changed due to circumstances, people leaving or whatever and some of this is changed because of this, but that wasn't intended or was not aimed at, it's just the way things have happened (Man Head of Academic Department, College B).

Some members of staff, however, clearly felt EO should have been part of the criteria used for making decisions about redundancies and course deletions in the first place.

At College A, 'restructuring' as a process was not particularly identified as problematic in equal opportunities terms. This may be because there had not been a threat of large scale redundancies, and the majority of main grade lecturing staff were only minimally affected by these processes. At the time of the research, the main restructuring was affecting administrative support staff who were very angry about how they felt they were being treated and the down-grading of their work. Of course it was mainly working class women, a significant proportion of whom were black women, who were treated in this way. Some staff commented on the management restructurings that had occurred, but again, equal opportunities effects were not specifically raised, although there was some feeling that senior management managed to get rid of people who did not fit with the new values and

ethos. One group of women lecturers discussing this noted that the managers who had left were predominantly women.

There was an acknowledgement by senior managers that the reduction in recruitment of new staff and the restructuring was having some impact on the equality profile of the staff. One senior manager said:

The area I feel most concerned about for this college is equal opportunities in employment for staff. I think it's partly that we've been losing staff and getting rid of jobs and . . . we've been kind of ring fencing people and reducing the number of them in the various restructurings (Senior Manager, College A).

Another senior manager explained that ethnic monitoring of people whose posts had been deleted had not been possible due to lack of computerisation, but '*I wasn't so worried about whom we'd deleted, it was about the people coming in the door*' (Senior Manager, College A). Woodall et al, in a study of three large organisations, also noted the lack of monitoring of redundancies and commented on the lack of forethought given to the equal opportunities implications (Woodall et al. 1997).

Responsibility for equal opportunities was an issue in both colleges, although College A had retained a senior lecturer in that role with a few hours remission per week. Staff who commented on this role felt that the level of remission was derisory and amounted to a token commitment that was limited to monitoring. There was, however, a senior manager with responsibility for equal opportunities in this college. In College B, the manager with equal opportunities responsibility had left during an earlier restructuring exercise, and a number of respondents commented that nothing had happened since then. The Principal acknowledged

this gap and wanted to rectify it with the appointment of an additional member of the management team. Farish et al noted that 'where individuals and groups with designated responsibilities are missing, it is likely that policy development and evaluation will be haphazard' (Farish et al. 1995, p. 167).

Restructuring does, therefore, seem to have resulted in the further consolidation of a more traditional sexual and racial division of labour, something that has been found in research on restructuring outside the education sector (Woodall et al. 1997). Wally Brown, one of the two black principals of FE colleges in 1998, said 'there are fewer black people in senior positions in further education than there were before incorporation' (cited in Barwuah 1998, p. 13). Cunningham, in research on the civil service, noted that:

The persistence of a hostile managerial sub-culture to equal opportunities has been instrumental in pushing equality issues to the bottom of the agenda in the current climate of change because of 'more important' organizational pressures. (Cunningham 1999, p. 67).

New Managerialism, Decision-Making and the 'Quality' Discourse

For a number of staff in College A, the lack of attention to equal opportunities was clearly linked to changes in management – both in the gender of the management team and in the new managerial styles that were seen as linked to this. The growth of new managerialism and the exclusion of others from decision-making arenas, especially in a context where those managers are predominantly white men, is, as Neal notes, hardly conducive to the democratic and consultative spirit of an equality ethos. Neal argues that:

An over-emphasis on top-down models can serve both to silence other voices or points of activity/pressure and remove ownership of policies from the main body of the institution, resulting at best in a lack of interest, knowledge and involvement and at worst in feelings of alienation, resentment and hostility (Neal 1998, p. 77).

Farish et al, whilst recognising that senior management commitment to equal opportunities was crucial, also suggested that there was a contradiction between the use of managerial power and the notion that:

Equality of opportunity should mean a greater levelling of distinctions, active participation of staff in the decision-making process and the recognition that those who are disadvantaged for historical and social reasons are best placed to understand what constitutes inequality and how it can be countered (Farish et al. 1995, p. 173).

As was discussed in Chapter 6, there was a sense throughout this study, in interviews with main grade lecturers and administrative support staff, that they could no longer influence policy making or decision making. This was particularly pronounced in College A, where masculinist managerialism appeared to be pronounced, but the trend has been noted across the sector. One black woman in College B spoke about the number of black friends she has who have left another local FE college because, she felt, '*it's no longer I think the sort of environment that people feel they can actually make a difference in anymore*' (Woman Member of Staff, College B).

Farish et al argue that one consequence of new managerial discourses and practices was the 'silencing of dissent' (Farish et al. 1995, p. 178), something that was borne out in this research. Many members of staff told me that they would not raise equality issues now in the college where they worked for fear of being labelled and, possibly, losing their jobs. Even meeting together informally as a

women's and/or black staff group was thought to be risky in the current climate.

One manager in College B explained that several years ago:

There were kind of a range of different kinds of minority groups set up, but I think they were powerless to a large extent. And I think people felt that somehow they were either going to be targeted for management cuts or whatever if they were perceived to be part of these little factions and so, do you know what I mean, there isn't really a kind of a drive for it, it's difficult . . . It's like if you raise an issue you then turn into a trouble maker or you feel like you do. You know what I mean? People are labelling you as a trouble maker irrespective of how constructive the issue is that you've raised and the constructive way in which you may have raised it. . . . They all look at you like you're mad now (Woman Head of Department, College B).

The fear of being labelled was strongly felt by a number of the women I interviewed, both black and white, and indeed the word 'fear' was frequently used, with several administrative workers all agreeing that '*people don't complain because of fear*'. Another manager in College B said she was not prepared to risk being seen as an equal opportunities person, saying '*I'm too professionally aware*' (Woman Manager, College B).

Similar sentiment were expressed in College A. A business lecturer, discussing equal opportunities in the college, said:

I think you'd be almost afraid to raise it. Well I think it's gone so low in the priority list that you'd be thought rather eccentric to be raising some things . . . You'd be thought some sort of mad class of a you know what they would call feminist or something . . . I think you would be thought eccentric to be raising certain issues that people used to raise as a matter of course that were considered when decisions were taken (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

Similar views were repeatedly expressed in interviews with women in the college. An administrative worker, explaining why people don't fight for equal opportunities in the college anymore said '*you feel marked*' and '*people are afraid*

for their own jobs' (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A). There were examples of staff doing what they could in their own areas, but raising the issues more publicly was not something that most staff felt able to do. Perhaps this is one reason why so many staff talked fondly about the past – many acknowledged that it was far from perfect, but felt they could act, they could legitimately challenge, and they would not lose their job over it.

From 'Equality' to 'Quality'

One of the changes that has occurred is that equality issues have been subsumed and re-conceptualised as 'quality' issues. As one senior manager in College B said:

I have a very strong feeling that the equality agenda is a quality agenda, that they're not separate, that the two are absolutely inter-linked and therefore where we fail in the quality of our delivery in terms of retaining and helping students achieve and that's a quality issue, if you look at who drops out of the college and who fails to achieve it's an equality issue (Senior Manager, College B).

This is a fashionable and common assertion by managers in further education, and of course one with which it is difficult to argue.

The CRE and EOC manuals on managing equality (CRE and EOC 1995; Dadzie 1998) place equality within a 'quality' framework, arguing for equality performance indicators for example. Within this approach, monitoring can be seen as the main activity, although there are clear limitations to the impact it may have.

The extent to which these manuals had been used in these two colleges was also questionable. Although a senior manager in College A spoke of using the CRE

performance indicators, and an operation plan in College B referred to further developing equality assurance, with very few exceptions, equality concerns did not appear to be integrated into the college's provision as evidenced by documents such as the strategic plans, where, for example, quality, curriculum, teaching and learning, and accommodation sections largely omitted any reference to equality concerns, apart from the occasional mention of widening participation. It did not appear that the full range of the equality questions and performance indicators in the CRE/EOC manuals had permeated either college to any great extent, and equality was certainly not given the high profile that these manuals recommended.

The limitations of the monitoring approach were raised by some members of staff.

One senior lecturer in College A said '*it's very much about counting things, statistics - very sort of weak on any policy or initiatives to drive things forward*' (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A). There are also limitations in the data itself.

Another senior lecturer explained:

Well, again ethnic minority groups as far as the data tells us seem to be pretty well there. Of course we don't know about their retention or achievements, so one of the big gaps has always been progression, retention, and achievement data which we don't really have (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

Neal notes that although a great deal of emphasis is often placed on monitoring, without qualitative data and feedback into policy: 'In many ways, monitoring appears to be almost a "red herring" in equal opportunities policy processes. It appears, or is made to appear, more valuable or important than it actually is' (Neal 1998, p. 83). Neal asserts that monitoring is passive, technicist and can be dangerous, for example leading to racist conclusions in the absence of qualitative data or further explanation of the statistics. There were attempts being made to use

more qualitative methods in College A, where the Equal Opportunities Officer was beginning to conduct focus groups with students on equality issues. There was an example in the same college, however, where monitoring data was used to challenge a women-only course (for an area where women are under-represented in the industry) on the basis that men were under-represented on the course! There were also allegations that monitoring was used in the college to present a rather more favourable picture of the staffing. One head of department said:

In senior management there is only one female you know, I mean that kind of hits you. Of course when you talk to (the Principal) about it he says 'oh yes we are addressing that'. And what they do is they massage the figures (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

She explained that in the gender equality statistics that are produced, 'management' includes all staff of senior lecturer grade and above which of course includes far more women. Similarly, the Further Education Funding Council which insists colleges collect staffing data could not identify level of management from the data they ask colleges for, so it has proved impossible to get a national picture of the gender and ethnic make-up of middle and senior management teams.

The quality initiative is also evident in the requirements that colleges produce self-assessment reports prior to inspection. As part of this, most colleges go through a course and departmental review process, and although equality was meant to be part of the reviews that teams conducted, the process proved less than satisfactory. As was seen in Chapter 4, a number of staff saw these as bureaucratic exercises that had little impact, and managers' and lecturers' views of 'quality'

tended to differ significantly. As Riley points out, what is missing is a view of quality 'from the perspective of disadvantaged groups' (Riley 1994, p. 8).

One senior manager in College A recognised the limitations of the bureaucratic approach to equality:

This particular college, it's got its policy. It really does review it every year. It is revised. It is reprinted. It is re-issued to all staff every year, and it's got its committee that has met consistently, does keep minutes. It's got a system. Each year it's got a system of identifying the key targets for the year, and it's got a system of college performance indicators against which equal opportunities, the implementation of the equal opportunities policy, is measured. And these are the CRE's own performance indicators we use. So, if you like, on the bureaucratic side, the system side, it's not bad at all. Where it's pretty awful is in the imaginative involvement of people around the college (Senior Manager, College A).

Yet not all was negative. There were some members of staff who said positive things about equal opportunities in their college, and the Principals of both colleges spoke thoughtfully about the range and complexity of equality issues within the colleges. A few white members of staff in College B talked about there being a general awareness of equal opportunities issues in the college, though it is notable that no black staff were saying this. In some sections that better represented gender and ethnic diversity, several members of staff spoke about that favourably, and a number of women lecturers and middle managers from both colleges gave examples of the ways in which they integrated equality issues into the curriculum.

For a few, new procedures and processes since incorporation had brought benefits. A head of department in College A felt that the EO ethos had changed positively:

With the forcing of looking at how the college works through the inspection . . . I feel it's much stronger than it was in the past and much more supportive (Woman Head of Service Department, College A).

A lecturer in College B said he was not aware of any bad practice, although acknowledged there were areas that are more '*male oriented*'. He went on: '*in terms of equal opportunities you know this place works well on most levels. I would say that nobody should have a complaint about the procedures*' (Man Lecturer, Science, College B). This lecturer felt that the procedures had been tightened up since the LEA days and suggested that although there might be an '*individual thing, you know usually those sorts of things can be dealt with easily*'.

This emphasis on the individual echoes the liberal discourse that is in many ways reinforced by the new managerial emphasis on outcomes and achievements. A senior lecturer from College A said:

We sent 1000 students to universities last year, now that is an equal opportunities dimension to me. Because most people, most of our students in college aren't the middle class you get in colleges out in the shires and so on, they are from working class backgrounds, often they are people of minorities, refugees. The college has given them opportunities to have a stamp in the market, to be mobile, to get qualifications to which people relate (Man Senior Lecturer, College A).

He felt that funding council pressure '*you'd better do it otherwise you lose money*' had pushed the college in this direction, and he acknowledged that there were still problems of racism in the college and in the labour market. He concluded:

The profile has dropped, equal opportunities has dropped, the word isn't used in the common vocabulary very often, but I think the opportunities we offer the students are getting better in some ways.

This same sentiment, though in perhaps more 'hard' managerialist discourse, was repeated by a senior manager in this college:

I think it is better than it was. I object to, there aren't so many bleeding hearts worn on sleeves, but objectively I tell you it is better than it was. We have got more students with disabilities, the most disadvantaged, the most discriminated students are students with disabilities and learning difficulties . . . We have got the opportunity under the freedom that incorporation provides for us to make modifications to buildings (Senior Manager, College A),

and it was explained that more sites have been made accessible. This manager also said they were confident enough with the quality of the provision to recruit overseas students and '*in terms of women, you see women around the college*'!

The emphasis here is very clearly on numbers rather than with the experience students have of the college, and this (e)quality discourse can be seen as a managerial one, imbued with the same technicism and rationalism. This is not to deny the importance of the gains that have been made in, for example, access to buildings and progression of working class students to higher education. Rather it is to point to the many other gains that have not been made and that are unlikely to be realised whilst liberal and managerial discourses remain dominant.

Conclusions

A rather depressing picture of the state of play of equal opportunities in these two colleges has emerged. Policy in both colleges is framed within a liberal discourse and, as has been seen, policy implementation, even within that liberal framework, does not appear to have been achieved very successfully. Weedon has argued that:

The principal of equality of opportunity for women and men in education and work, once established, has not proved any great threat to the balance of power in a society where patriarchal relations inform the very production and regulation of female and male subjects (Weedon 1987, p. 111).

Lynch provides a biting critique of liberalism when she argues:

Divisions between the successful, between the haves and the have nots are merely exaggerated in a system guided by the principal of equal opportunities as it is now assumed that those who get to the top 'deserve to'; they owe no debt to their inferiors. This is one of the most divisive features of the meritocratic systems and of equal opportunities policies premised on such principles (Lynch 1995 cited in Reay 1997, p. 19).

Senior managers in both colleges acknowledged that more needed to be done to place equality firmly back on the agenda, and there were initial signs that they were planning to take some action towards this, from reallocating senior management responsibility to encompass equality issues in College B, to having '*a whole morning brainstorming on equal opportunities in the curriculum, a fresh start*' in College A. Whilst these developments are to be welcomed, they hardly touch the surface of the major changes that need to occur. There is also the danger that the corporate ethos of managerialism, where conflict and dissent are denied and silenced, is not one which is conducive to any kind of progress on equal opportunities.

Bensimon argues that senior managers need:

..to be aware that in order to achieve equity, they must make a conscious effort to dismantle institutionalized forms of sexism, racism, heterosexism, and other inequities. For this to happen, administrative leaders have to relinquish the concept of the university as having a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices, and accept the fact that the university is composed of multiple communities with diverse attitudes, values, goals, and practices (Bensimon 1995, p. 607).

For Farish et al, achieving an equal opportunities ethos requires 'an openness to debate and to criticism – even negative criticism', and she concludes that 'the road to genuine equality, if it is ever attainable, is likely to be difficult and controversial' (Farish et al. 1995, p. 185). Cuts in funding, marketisation and new managerialism in these colleges do not appear to be providing an environment in which equality initiatives are likely to flourish.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Discussion: Power, Resistance and the Future

In this chapter, I will bring together the main themes and conclusions of the thesis. I begin with a discussion of resistance in the two case study colleges, move on to look at respondents' visions of the future for their colleges, and then identify more recent policy and practice developments that have taken place since the fieldwork for this study was completed.

This thesis has documented the impact of marketisation and new managerialism on two further education colleges in the context of the wider restructuring of the public sector in the UK. Major changes in dominant discourses and practices have taken place, and a new business ethos is evident, although there are significant differences in the ways in which national policy initiatives have been implemented in these two colleges. Both, however, have been subjected to new, and more restrictive, funding regimes, and increasing demands for efficiency and accountability. New managerialism, albeit in different forms, can be seen to both legitimise and implement these changes. The restructuring of staffing, spaces and spatial relations, and the associated changes in decision-making processes, have resulted in greater distance between senior managers and other staff. New technological developments have been seen as important in both colleges, but there was a greater emphasis in College A on using technology to change the methods of delivery and to re-conceptualise learning and the learner, and this reflected national government policy discourse. New manager and lecturer

professional identities are also being constructed, and in both colleges, not only has ‘equality’ disappeared from the public agenda, but the new discursive practices can be seen to be reconstituting gendered (raced and classed) identities and power relations.

I have argued that whilst elements of post-modernity are evident, the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy underpins the dominant discourses of the market, managerialism and new learning technologies, reifying ‘rationality’ and denigrating the body. These discourses, and the technical rationality which runs through them, are therefore gendered, and this thesis has attempted to explicate the processes by which gendered identities and power relations are sustained in this context.

Power and Resistance

Yet the changes that have taken place, whilst transforming the sector, have not simply involved a top-down exercise of power. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that there is no power without resistance, and oppositional discourses which assert professional educational values, an ethic of care, and a commitment to challenging inequalities have all been articulated. However, as Soper argues:

It is important not to be seduced by the dialectic of the ‘reverse discourse’ into forgetting that the fate of oppressed groups is not decided simply at the level of competing discourses. What is critical to their advancement is the specific economic and political climate in which they are expressing their resistance (Soper 1993, p. 34).

Whilst oppositional discourses are evident in both of these colleges, and have clearly made some impact, they have not, on the whole, been successful in significantly stemming the onslaught of the market and new managerialism, nor in seriously challenging the direction of trends in policy and practice. It is not coincidental that those who espoused the dominant discourses in their 'purest' forms were mostly white men senior managers whose material and discursive positioning as men/managers located them favourably within these dominant discourses, in contrast to those 'othered' in this discursive climate. Despite the contradictions, ambiguities and insecurities that were evident in the articulations of most of these men, and their expressed support for equality issues, they, like the managers in Kerfoot and Whitehead's study, 'have an investment of identity in the beliefs of their own ability to have control over others and events; and to notions of purposeful "action" and "making things happen"' (Kerfoot and Whitehead 2000, p. 198). Although some men/managers expressed reservations about aspects of the current FE practice, and engaged in forms of resistance to the excesses of the market, as Whitehead (1997) has suggested, it appears unlikely that we can look to them to challenge the masculinist culture underpinning the new FE. Cockburn's research on blocks to the implementation of equal opportunities in four large organisations has resonance here. She concluded:

There is active resistance by men. They generate *institutional* impediments to stall women's advance in organizations. At a *cultural* level they foster solidarity between men and sexualize, threaten, marginalize, control and divide women (Cockburn 1991, p. 215, stress in original).

Cockburn argues that men's privileges under patriarchy, changes in the economy, and the risks associated with finding new ways of being men, all contribute to men's resistance to sex equality in organisations. There were men in her study

who were pro-equality activists, but even their equality agendas tended to stop far short of those of the women with whom they worked.

Although there was resistance, most lecturers and support staff, and many middle managers, expressed a sense of powerlessness. As one lecturer said:

Yea and we don't seem to have any control or any power any more you know to bring about better conditions. We just languish in the conditions that we've got (Woman Business lecturer, College A).

Resistance is complex and takes many forms, with overt resistance, collusion, compliance and consent all evident in this research. In College B, resistance did not feature strongly in the discussions. Whilst there was a great deal of dissatisfaction, there was a sense that most staff 'kept their heads down', concentrating on getting their job done, and where necessary individually or in small groups arguing for their courses or area. Some staff left the college, there had been some union activity over the redundancy and new contract proposals, and some administrative staff spoke about trying not to take work home (although not very successfully) as a way of resisting the intensification of their workload.

As most staff here laid the blame for the current state of FE at the feet of the Government, however, resistance against managerial demands did not appear to be so much of an issue as in College A. It may be, of course, that the 'softer' managerial approaches in this college resulted in fewer of the types of new administrative and managerial demands that so incensed many staff in College A. As will be seen below, however, one factor that went some way towards explaining the lack of overt resistance in both colleges was 'fear'.

It was mostly staff in College A who spoke about actively resisting management. A number of lecturers talked about putting teaching and students first, and ignoring management's administrative demands. As was noted in Chapter 5, one lecturer described her actions in terms of being '*naughty*' and bending the rules to benefit students, clearly illustrating the positioning of academic staff as recalcitrant children. Staff sometimes ridiculed the managers for example in terms of dress ('*the suits*') or by production of a spoof college newsletter, and vociferously challenged managerial discourse at meetings where managers had come to present the latest policy or initiative. A counsellor gave an example of her experience of resistance:

At its worst I felt like part of a bunch of sheep who were kind of objecting to being wacked, you know with sticks, kind of kicking out every now and then saying 'fuck off' (laughter) . . . This is just what we've got to do to keep our jobs, and then we'll do what we always did, which is we'll try to work the service around the prevailing conditions (Woman Counsellor, College A).

Here resistance is not successful to the extent that staff are able to refuse managerial demands, but they have not simply capitulated to them. Apparent compliance will not necessarily result in the behaviours and activities that the managers in this situation were hoping for.

The forms of resistance described bear some resemblance to Collinson's 'resistance through distance' (Collinson 1994), whereby men manual workers responded to their treatment as commodities and second-class citizens through distancing themselves from management. They drew on a culture of working class masculinity to sustain their resistance, whereas in these further education colleges, though most notably in College A, it was their identity as professionals committed

to education and to students, and/or their identity as women resisting macho management, that provided the support and base for such resistance. The other main strategy considered by Collinson was 'resistance through persistence', where women actively challenged sexual discrimination by persistently following up specific cases. This was a strategy that a number of staff spoke about following in the past, but although there were isolated examples given of current uses of such a strategy, on the whole fear, insecurity, demoralisation and a sense of hopelessness appeared to mitigate against this form of resistance now. The undermining of trade union effectiveness as a result of Tory legislation and the long running disputes with the lecturers' union, NATFHE, about contracts had also undermined many people's faith in overt forms of resistance.

As has already been shown, many women staff in College A, and some men, challenged and resisted macho managerial behaviour and discourse by identifying the gendered power relations in play, thereby labelling such behaviour as unacceptable and serving particular interests, rather than as neutral and rational. The assertion of an ethic of care as a challenge to what most staff saw as uncaring macho management was particularly strong here, although women also resisted being the organisation's care-takers. The ethic of care, however, was contradictory in its effects and is not without its problems (Blackmore 1999). It ensured, for example, that staff continued to get on with their jobs; when one man administrative worker in College A spoke of going off on long term sick leave as the way to resist changes being imposed by restructuring, women administrative workers in the same group argued against such a strategy in terms of caring for each other, and the demands that would place on the staff left behind.

Commitment to getting the job done to meet students' needs made it difficult for many staff to restrict their workload to one that felt manageable. In a discussion amongst two lecturers in this college about the amount of work they do at home and the number of times that they come in early or leave late, one added '*so we're all co-conspiring and so management can stay oblivious*' (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A). Collusion was not necessarily willingly and freely undertaken.

Reeves argues that:

The structure of further education is so immediate and enveloping that, far from seeing any absurdities or contradictions, most staff and students who work within it undertake without question what is expected of them. . . . In an output-related world, pay and promotion are available only to those who make the organisation work and refrain from damaging the corporate image (Reeves 1995, p. 93).

Evidence from this research does not support Reeves' assertion that staff do not question what is asked of them. Despite the apparent effectiveness with which ideological positions and statements have been presented as neutral truth, common sense and the only way forward, the majority of staff in both of these colleges questioned and argued against many of the new policies and practices which they felt were imposed on them. They were also aware, however, that too great a rebellion could threaten not only their pay and promotion prospects, but their job security as well. A group of lecturers in College B discussed how staff resistance to a new contract (which would cut their annual leave and reduce their entitlement to notice of redundancy from twelve months to six), had precipitated the issuing of redundancy notices to all staff:

That was really the sticking point of it and so they said 'all right if we can't have, if you're not going to take six months redundancy notice

then we'll give you your notice now' (Woman Lecturer, Access, College B).

Ferguson's assertion that 'one can resist and survive, but one seldom both resists and prospers' (Ferguson 1984, p. 191) may well have been applicable to many staff in these colleges, but many also questioned, not unreasonably, whether they would survive within the organisation.

Fear, then, provided a powerful break on resistance:

Trouble is you see people are so, and it annoys me so much, people are so frightened to open their mouths in case they get themselves into trouble (Man Administrator, College A).

And if you raise any points which are slightly critical, you're just made to feel like there is something utterly wrong with you and that you're just bolshy in arguing against it and it had been a fair point to make, so you just start to feel really like oh what the hell, I won't go to any meetings, I will just keep out of it, try and not get involved in the politics of it, just do my best in the classroom and keep my fingers crossed (Woman Lecturer, Business, College A).

A head of department in College B identified fear as one reason why staff were not willing to engage with new developments that she saw as beneficial:

It's very sad when we have such a wonderful building and such wonderful students and now a stable network and potential for a very well equipped work and learning environment that people are probably too frightened to appreciate where they're at and how they're going to move forward with it, particularly groups of staff who feel threatened about redundancy (Woman Head of Service Department, College B).

So the fear that has been generated, whilst it might mitigate against active resistance, is also likely to stifle any potential creative engagement with what could, perhaps, be positive new developments.

Tiredness and exhaustion also appeared to mitigate against active resistance, and high levels of sickness were also identified:

You get worn down by fighting . . . You shouldn't have to come in to fight, you come in to do your work (Woman Departmental Administrator, College A).

There seems to be no recognition that the reason more people are off sick is because they are being pushed to the limit (Woman Lecturer, Computing, College A).

In both colleges, some women managers resisted the worst excesses of a masculinist new managerialism and adopted feminist approaches to managing as far as they were able, thereby making a difference to staff within their college, department or section, whilst, as Deem et al (2000) found, also challenging aspects of dominant masculinities. Yet as has been seen, women managers may also 'smooth' the transition to new market and managerial objectives. One senior lecturer in College A explains the difficulties of her position:

Well I find it incredibly frustrating. You feel like you're kind of sandwiched in the middle, you're not making any decisions, you're kind of introducing things that other people have actually made the decisions about. Much of it I don't agree with, I don't like the way it's been done, I actually think it's educationally unsound, I don't think it meets the needs of the students and yet I have to get a team to move forward with it. And I find that difficult (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

The intensification of middle managers' workload, like that for lecturing staff, is also likely to reduce the time and space for resistance. The same senior lecturer, in an interview at 7 o'clock in the evening, describes her working day:

Yeah - I mean major sort of encroachment upon any kind of personal life. I mean what time is it now, apart from your interview, but I was here at quarter to eight this morning, had a meeting at nine and I then had to, I literally have been on the go. I've got half a sandwich still sitting there, I have had one cup of coffee since I arrived and I have just gone from one problem to the other arranging staff for tomorrow because I've got no staff to teach the students tomorrow, dealing with

the students who were giving the member of staff such a hard time, trying to see various people around the building about various problems that we are having about getting portfolios in cupboards because they've bust all the locks, we can't get any, all those kind of things. I haven't sat down all day. When I go home I have to prepare my lesson for tomorrow that I am teaching at 9.30 and I don't know what I am doing, but I don't have any marking this evening, but usually there is a pile of that as well. So I mean it's every day is non-stop and problem after problem after problem, running from one thing to the other, literally not stopping all day. I really feel like I can't keep it up much longer. I am desperate for the holidays now and it's been like that since the first week back.

She went on to explain that she tried to keep one weekend day and one evening a week free from work, and got angry with herself when she frequently did not manage to do that. As Hughes (2000) notes, women middle managers might articulate an ethic of care in relation to their students and staff, but find it particularly difficult to apply it to themselves. The re-construction of (gendered) manager identities, as those of lecturers and other staff in further education, and their positioning within the discourses of the market and managerialism, ensures that they are implicated in, and have some stake in, this new discursive and material climate. The difficulties that some staff then experience in managing their own identities, as managers, women, teachers, feminists and so on, are apparent. As Newman notes, 'women are, then, operating within contradictory sets of meanings: contribute fully, but remember your real place' (Newman 1994, p. 197). The personal costs can be very high, and may go some way to explaining the high levels of demoralisation and staff turnover. Shain argues that:

At first sight there appears 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 that masculine competitive values that underpin policy and practice in the FE sector (Shain 2000, p. 228).

Whether such masculinist discourses and practices continue to be consolidated, or are more effectively challenged, remains to be seen.

Visions of the Future

In order to get respondents' ideas about what the future was likely to hold for further education, I asked them what they thought their college would be like in five or ten years time.

Perhaps not surprisingly, staff described very different future scenarios. Senior managers in College A who had most enthusiastically embraced a 'hard' form of new managerialism held the most optimistic views of the likely future for the college and the sector:

I feel it is incredibly exciting, I really like what we are doing, I think it is still for me about change. I think we can effect change, I think that this Government, and I never thought I would say it, I think this Government has got a change agenda, and I think it involves us with people, that public-private partnership, and I would not want to exaggerate, it could be very interesting. There is certainly in my view no alternative. There is no alternative in engaging with this thing . . . and I think that young people and adults can be winners in that (Senior Manager, College A).

Here 'change' is a neutral, inevitable and rational process which appears to be consonant with 'progress'. To critique or oppose these changes is to be irrational, to have one's head in the sand, not able to face up to the 'realities' of today's world.

Another senior manager at the same college had this to say:

So let's suppose we did develop a credit, we had a credit framework for the college and the entire curriculum were unitised and we had learning bases and we had individualised programmes, we had tutors who had been trained to become expert at tracking individualised student programmes, student programmes made up of units shopped around, you know. You know you can imagine, the ship will be sailing forward I think magnificently and we would have got there. And I am sure that growth will come back to colleges in about 5 years time if not sooner (Senior Manager, College A).

The commodification of the curriculum, the emphasis on the individual independent learner, and the re-construction of lecturers' professional identities are all apparent here.

A senior manager in College B also presented a vision of the future which was broadly positive:

Five or 10 years time I think there will be a greater number of learners accessing the opportunities which this place, this environment provides, and I think the environment will be open for much much longer periods of time. I think some of these learners will be physically present, others won't be physically present, . . . So I think in a nutshell, you know the physical place will be here, the learners will be here but I, I don't know how many of us (the staff) will be necessary (Senior Manager, College B).

Here access is emphasised and viewed positively, but this manager had previously expressed reservations about too great a reliance on technology, and her concern about how many staff would be needed reflected an ambivalence about the future. She went on to predict a federation of local colleges, with provision strategically planned rather than left entirely to market mechanisms, and linked more closely to Europe, so presenting a rather less market driven and managerial model than was evident amongst the senior managers of College A.

For many other staff, the future held less promise. One senior lecturer in College A challenged the optimistic vision of a technologically facilitated unitised curriculum by saying:

I mean I think it will become more technologised, it has to because the world is becoming more technologised, but it's at what cost and how. I mean you know, it's your worst nightmare isn't it? Having the students coming on this credit system and these vouchers, and you know, you do become a sausage factory, churn out you know units of sausage at whatever level – yeah, brave new world stuff (laughter) (Woman Senior Lecturer, College A).

A head of department in this college identified dangers in the direction in which the college was headed and said:

Actually I think it's going to implode. I could be wrong but I think it is just collapsing. I think it's desecrating into ruin because the things that kept it alive are people sensitive you know, that's what I think, that's what keeps people alive is that you've got to make space for people. You know you've got to let them breathe and live and be and you know function and be creative and all that, and they are not making space for people. They don't care (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

In College B, some managers also expressed a great deal of concern for the future:

It seems to be going backwards and not forwards and I can't bear it really (Woman Head of Academic Department, College B).

People will get asked to do more for less all the time. That will kill people off one way or another (Man Head of Academic Department, College B).

Lecturers also shared these pessimistic visions, predicting that either they and/or the college would no longer exist, that it would be merged with other local college(s), that the curriculum would be narrowed still further reducing choice and access, and that working conditions would continue to deteriorate. One lecturer in College B expressed it as follows:

You clearly can't have you know the flexibility that was there before but it isn't, it's become rigid now . . . that rigidity is going to really chop things in a way that I find absolutely frightening (laughter) beyond, beyond our my comprehension sometimes. . . . It's going to be creating a society that some will have opportunities and some will have far less and less and less (Man Lecturer, Construction, College B).

When asked, some lecturers articulated what a positive vision of the future for the college might look like. In a discussion one lecturer said:

I'd just like a vision actually. If I had a vision actually I'd probably have something to work towards, but (laughter) I don't have any stake in where this college is going (Social care lecturer: No sense of ownership at all). No, and everyone's getting further depressed and everything's getting squeezed and squeezed and squeezed and you just want it to stop so you can just breathe a bit, and I think that I would like to see staff morale lifted again, see it a buzzing place, a lively place where you want to come, you've got lots of things going on, things happening, we can get support classes happening again. I used to have time-tabled support classes at one time, that's stopped, . . . admin staff who had time to support you in what you did as well, who took your UCAS off you for example at one point, and you had time-tabled meetings where you discussed what you were doing (Man Lecturer, Arts & Media, College A).

A senior lecturer in College B wanted:

Ten years time, somewhere people could go to, somewhere people feel comfortable, somewhere local people had a forum, and I'd like to, I mean I would like to see lots of little satellite centres around the place which were sort of learning centres for people (Woman Senior Lecturer, College B).

Space, to breathe, think and be creative, space for people and an end to the rigidity described above, all evoke a desire for a recognition of bodies, of people as embodied, rather than as units in the virtual reality of computerised information systems and funding methodologies. A Head of Department from College A, in an email thanking me for sending her a copy of the transcript of her interview, said she had been thinking more about how to articulate her feelings about the college. She came up with what she called a *spirit metaphor*: ‘*the “body” envisaged is a*

huge spirit that encapsulates the college', and she went on to contrast an image for another college that she knew as: '*female, healthy, muscular, but also rather soft: definitely flexible and very alive*' (although also rather conservative), with that she saw for College A:

The thing I envisage is not really human at all. It is metal, and dead. It doesn't encapsulate the views of people in the college but rather they are frightened of it. There is a hardness and coldness about it that alienates people (Woman Head of Academic Department, College A).

The senior managers in College A were also aware of some things being missing.

One said:

But what's missing from the equation, I don't think it's just missing from this college is it?, is a sense of excitement and innovation and creativity and confidence about the future and I don't really see how this list of priorities can be achieved without more of that innovation and freedom and confidence, and we've got to enable that to happen (Senior Manager, College A).

There was little evidence, however, at the time of this research, of senior managers taking action which might enable this to take place.

Developments in Policy and Practice

Some hopeful signs of a move away from the market appeared during the fieldwork. The Kennedy Report (Kennedy 1997) warned about the dangers of too great a reliance on the market, and the government began to emphasize collaboration and partnership rather than competition.

A House of Commons Select Committee on Further Education reported in 1998 and challenged the funding regime, problems of management and governance, and staffing policies (Education and Employment Committee 1998). The report notes that during the inquiry ‘the over-riding concern was the *total amount of money available for further education*’ (ibid. para. 22, stress in original), and that the financial health of the sector had declined significantly post-incorporation. The complexity of the funding methodology and the extra bureaucracy it had generated also came in for criticism.

Extra funding has been forthcoming for the sector, with more money for widening participation initiatives (FEFC 1999), and a headline in the Times Higher in May 2000 stated that ‘FE enters black’ (Tysome 2000a). The article reported that ‘the further education sector is in better financial shape than it has been since incorporation’ which the FEFC explained ‘reflected more resources, rationalisation and action taken by financially weak colleges’. Despite this, however, the figures showed that more than a third of colleges were still in the red.

There have continued to be criticisms of the funding methodology itself, with the Association for Colleges recommending that there should be less emphasis on output funding as this was pushing colleges to recruit only those likely to succeed (Baty 2000).

Malcolm Wicks, the Minister for Lifelong Learning, in a speech to the NATFHE National Conference in May 2000 said:

We have made it clear that we intend to deliver a properly funded and managed further education sector of which the country can be proud.... The days of macho management are over. There is absolutely no need for colleges to be denying pay increases to staff given the size of the investment we are now making (Wicks 2000).

Yet industrial disputes persist, with lecturers at Sheffield College voting for (though not ultimately taking) indefinite strike action in September 2000. Kingston argues that this resolve to end 'macho management' was challenged by Woolwich and Greenwich Community College which sent letters to 597 lecturers threatening them with redundancy if union management/negotiations over new terms and conditions broke down (Kingston 2000b). A NATFHE study showed that bullying was still a problem in the sector, and indeed appears to have got marginally worse, although there has now been a joint agreement between the union and the Association for Colleges to attempt to address the issue (Kingston 2000a). The bullying reported was often from managers, although one in five reported bullying from colleagues (NATFHE 2000). Gender, however, did not appear to have been considered.

The House of Commons Select Committee also commented on the casualisation of the labour force in relation to quality in the sector. It reported that :

The contribution made by both teaching and support staff in the FE sector has been the major factor in the many achievements made since incorporation (Education and Employment Committee 1998, para. 172).

The report also states that in evidence to the inquiry:

The Chief Inspector highlighted the improvements in quality since incorporation, but noted signs that colleges were now beginning to find it difficult to maintain quality, as a result of the reduction in teaching hours and the substitution of part-time staff for full-time staff (ibid. para. 176).

The Committee acknowledged that good experienced staff were leaving the sector and that there was a very high rate of temporary contracts compared to other sectors of employment (42% of all staff employed over 15 hours per week, compared to 9% for all sectors).

Concern about the abilities of managers to manage have prompted plans for the development of new FENTO (Further Education National Training Organisation) standards for managers (as well as for lecturers). Bottery, commenting on similar new qualifications for head teachers, notes that under new managerialism 'to properly control and direct from the centre, you will want to capture the minds of those who lead within these institutions' (Bottery 1999, p. 28). He suggests that the aim is to encourage the 'right' kind of thinking, i.e. the adoption of business values.

The predictions of some staff in this study that more amalgamations of colleges would take place in the future do appear to actually be happening. The Select Committee again noted:

The Government is keen to rationalise FE provision, and to this end the Secretary of State has taken a strong line on encouraging more mergers between colleges, in the interest of reducing duplication of courses and increasing cost-effectiveness (Education and Employment Committee 1998, para. 153).

Concerns expressed by some lecturers that this would further inhibit access for some students do not appear to have been recognised by the Government, with the Secretary of State saying that:

Rationalisation would also contribute to the improvement and extension of FE provision by helping to reduce duplication of the more popular offerings, which can occur at the expense of 'minority

interest' courses (Secretary of State's letter of guidance to FEFC, 12 November 1997, cited in the Education and Employment Committee 1998, para. 153).

Under a market system, however, 'minority interest' courses are always threatened unless they are able to attract sufficient numbers of students to make them financially viable, and at that point they would probably cease to be considered as 'minority interest'. Thirty-seven mergers took place between incorporation in 1993 and the end of 1999, and David Melville, Chief Executive of the FEFC stated:

For the future, a key role of the local learning and skills councils will be the rationalisation of provision as well as the establishment of new provision where it is needed (FEFC 2000b).

Mergers appear to be on-going, and there is now talk of university mergers too, in an attempt to deal with the funding crisis of many higher education institutions. This is despite research reported in the national educational press which asserts that college mergers, rather than enhancing efficiency, actually put up costs (Kingston 2001).

Apart from continued government calls to 'widen participation' and an increase in funding attached to this, there do not appear to have been any great attempts to put equality higher on the agenda, although in the last year there have been some positive initiatives. The report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson 1999) put the spotlight on institutional racism, and a Commission for Black Staff in FE has been set up. This is sponsored by the DfEE, the FEFC, the Association of Colleges, NATFHE, and the Network of Black Managers to investigate and report on issues of under-representation and barriers to progression for black staff. A number of witness days are being organised for black staff around the country

and race is now being put firmly back on to the agenda. In addition, FEDA is conducting research into 'recruitment processes and procedures in FE' (FEDA 2000), although the FEDA Equal Opportunities Network, for which newsletters and events were previously available on the FEDA website, does not appear to have a high profile on the newly constructed web pages of the Learning and Skills Development Agency. As further education now has more women than men students, an increasing number of women lecturers (albeit on more casualised contracts) and has seen a rapid increase in the number of women principals (from 5.5% in 1988 to 17% in 1997) (Cole 2000), gender does not appear to be widely recognised as an issue in the sector.

In contrast, a great deal of attention is being given to the introduction of new learning technologies. The Further Education Funding Council's website for information and learning technology (<http://www.fefc.ac.uk/nln.index.html>) states that:

Aided by additional government funding of £74 million over 3 years from 1999 to 2002, ILT is a central component in the development of the FE sector. Colleges throughout England are developing their ILT strategies, connecting to the National Learning Network, and increasingly making e-learning part of students' everyday experience.

The University for Industry (UfI), in which colleges are involved, is also continuing to be developed. It is based on private-public partnership principles and a national network of learning centres is being established. Many of these learning centres are further education colleges, offering on-line and face to face courses. The 'Learndirect' website (<http://www.learndirect.co.uk>) offers learning and careers advice as well as on-line courses.

Gender issues yet again do not appear to be addressed in any of these technological developments, nor do concerns about the knowledges incorporated in the learning materials or the inherent assumptions about learning and the learners. The choice of courses available through Learndirect provides evidence of a continuing narrow vocationalism: when I tried to search for a course in sociology anywhere in the country I was told that there were no courses available, yet basic skills, business studies and information technology options were plentiful. Not all has gone smoothly, however. A report in the national educational press (Tysome 2000b) highlighted colleges' concerns about the UfI, including the lack of software to keep track of students, the inclusion of learning materials that were rejected by colleges a year earlier, and the plan by the UfI to take 20% of the funding for some courses. Tensions are clearly evident between local college providers and the UfI, and there have been delays in the development of the provision.

In addition, a recent report of online learning in Canada (Bartolic-Zlomislic and Bates 2000) concludes that although there are some positive aspects, including new markets, economic gains, international partnerships and educational benefits, there are also a number of problems. Costs are far from straightforward, and students need to be independent learners, possess financial resources and have access to the technology, as costs are transferred from the university to the student. The report notes that there were cultural differences in students' willingness to participate online, and that 'young students without good independent study habits will find an online course particularly challenging'. The conclusion is that online learning is not necessarily a cheap option and it is not

always appropriate. This report received coverage in the national educational press in this country, though whether it will result in any pause for thought in further education in the UK is open to question. It also, yet again, did not mention gender.

There are still signs of resistance to the uncritical adoption of learning technologies where these will result in staff redundancies. A delegate moving a motion at the NATFHE Annual Conference in May 2000 stressed that 'teachers cannot be replaced by machines' (Prideaux 2000). There does not, however, appear to be any sustained questioning of the developments by the policy makers or those in positions to potentially influence change.

There are, though, significant changes being made to the ways in which colleges are funded and post-16 education planned. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 provided for the setting up of the Learning and Skills Council, with its 47 'local arms', which will be responsible for the planning, funding and quality assurance of post-16 education (with the exception of higher education). The national Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a government quango, has 14 members appointed by the Secretary of State, whilst the membership of the local LSCs are appointed by the national body with the approval of the Secretary of State. The hopes, therefore, of local democratic control of further education have not been met in these arrangements. Equal opportunities get a mention in the Act, to the extent that 'the Council must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity – (a) between persons of different racial groups, (b) between men and women, and (c) between persons who are disabled and persons who are not' (Part

1 section 14.1), but this list is notable for what it omits. Malcolm Wicks, Minister for Lifelong Learning, said that the CRE was being consulted on how to ensure representation from minority ethnic groups on the LSCs (Wicks 2000), but the national Council has only one minority ethnic member (out of 14), and only three of the 47 Chairs of the local LSCs are from minority ethnic groups (Whittaker 2000). It also appears that only about 15% of these Chairs are women.

The LSCs will replace both the Further Education Funding Council and the Technical Education Councils (TECs). The new leader of the LSC, John Harwood, has a TEC, rather than an FE college background, whilst the new Chair, Bryan Sanderson, is Chief Executive of BP Amoco Chemicals, thereby ensuring that the emphasis is on continuing to meet the needs of the business sector. Indeed, David Melville, Chief Executive of the FEFC, emphasised that a major aim was 'raising the skill levels of Britain's workforce' (Melville 2000). The bill which preceded the Act, 'Learning to Succeed' (DfEE 1999) refers to a 'fair and competitive market' of both public and private sector providers, and under the Act, the LSC will be responsible for funding not only colleges, but also private training providers, thereby reducing distinctions between the sectors and potentially driving down the costs of public sector provision. Blackwell, a college principal, argues that the new Learning and Skills Councils are likely to lead to greater competition between providers for funding as they are all still competing in the market, and he notes that college representatives are excluded from these bodies. He asks:

Does the government really want a new system of competing institutions clamouring to provide the most lucrative courses whilst others go to the wall? Do they want to narrow the range of options? (Blackwell 2000).

The quality assurance arrangements have also faced criticism. The Act provides for the setting up of an Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) responsible for inspecting further education provision for those aged 19+, and learn-direct courses and work-based training for those aged 16+. For the first time OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), the body responsible for school inspections, will inspect 16-19 provision in FE. OFSTED will take the lead in joint inspections with the ALI, and also carry out area inspections of 16-19 provision. The emphasis will be on quality, standards and value for money, and given the dominant managerial definitions of quality which were discussed in Chapter 4, these arrangements could be seen to benefit private sector providers which pay their staff less and are therefore able to be 'more efficient'. Of equal concern is the reputation of Chris Woodhead, until recently Chief Inspector of OFSTED, who actively promulgated a 'blame the teacher' discourse and 'named and shamed' 'failing' schools. It is not yet clear to what extent OFSTED will continue to operate in a similar manner, but there are risks that the positive aspects of the current FEFC inspection arrangements, including a collaborative arrangement with colleges and a strong emphasis on self assessment, may disappear under the new regime.

It appears, therefore, that the market, and the prioritising of the needs of the business sector, remain major features of the new arrangements. The emphasis is still on the individual student as consumer, with David Sherlock, the new Chief Inspector of the ALI, stating that:

What is best for each individual learner may be a course in a public sector college, a training programme with a private sector employer, or basic skills and e-learning in the community. Adult learners should

be able to make reliable comparisons between these different kinds of provision, so that they can find the best possible deal (DfEE 2000).

Colleges are clearly going to be competing in the market with private training providers.

A series of FEDA and IPPR seminars considered the concept of the market in the Learning to Succeed White Paper, and in an overview, Mager notes that the market was seen as central to meeting the objectives in the White Paper - to promote excellence and participation, involve employers, be learner-driven, prioritise equal access, ensure good guidance and other support, and accountability & efficiency (Mager et al. 2000). She concludes that:

An effective market responds to the needs of individuals and customers. Government's responsibility should be to intervene only where the market will not deliver its objectives (*ibid.* p. 12).

In other papers in the collection, Robinson regards the meeting of individual needs as synonymous with the market, whilst Fletcher insists that:

To talk about students as 'customers' or to describe college activities using the concepts of the market no longer arouses the passion and hostility from teachers that one frequently encountered in the late 70s and early 80s (*ibid.* p. 27).

He argues that there is now:

..an acceptance that marketing concepts can in themselves be neutral. One can argue for a free, unregulated market or a substantially managed and manipulated market (*ibid.* p. 28).

He opts for a 'third way'. Nowhere in this collection of papers is there any recognition that the market positions people differently, that the model of the individual making free rational choices is based on a masculinist ideal, that cultural (and other) capital result in class-based constraints on 'choice', or that the

market itself creates inequalities. Yet it is not only in relation to further education in this country that the market continues to be eulogised. As Rutherford argues, the on-going negotiations on GATS (The General Agreement on Trade in Services) to be concluded at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva in March 2001, appear to be enshrining market competition in the provision of services world-wide, and have particular implications for post-compulsory education (Rutherford 2001).

It has also become clear that 'further education' itself is under threat in this market. Not only will colleges have to compete with private training providers, but the whole sector appears to be being renamed the 'learning and skills sector', providing more evidence of the discursive shift from 'education' to 'learning', the fantasy of the independent individual learner/consumer, the increasing emphasis on human capital theory, and the dominance of technical-rationalist approaches.

Conclusions

The future, then, does not look wonderfully optimistic. Despite the original hopes that 'New Labour' would make a difference, the continued reliance on the market and new managerialism is evident, and a masculinist technical rationality continues to underpin the dominant discourses and practices in further education.

Regimes of truth do appear to have been constructed: that the market is the best, and indeed only, rational way in which to organise education, and that new

managerialism will ensure the necessary transformations within colleges to ensure that they are able to compete efficiently in this market. The future, progress, rationality and efficiency are intimately bound together in this discursive climate, and are embodied in the new technologies which will transform both administration and learning. Gender, of course, is not an issue: these processes are neutral and value-free. And all of this is, well, 'common sense'.

The 'rationality' of these dominant discourses and practices renders opposition as irrational. Resistance is subdued and minimised in a number of ways: the 'reality' of economic pressures and the need for survival; a 'blame the teacher' discourse and processes of infantilisation; fear, insecurity and threats to jobs; the 'naturalness' of the sexed, raced and classed division of labour; the removal of democratic and collegiate decision-making processes and a belief in managers' 'right to manage'; the intensification of work; discursive shifts from 'equality' to 'quality'; and the apparent synergy between some 'progressive' and managerial discourses, to name but some.

The processes by which dominant discourses are asserted, and gendered, raced and classed power relations reinforced and re-constituted, can be seen, therefore, as the result of a complex and continuing interplay of the material and the discursive, of global and national policy trends and local contexts, and of the construction of new and re-gendered professional and managerial identities. Rationality and common sense are used to justify partial and ideological positions, whilst dissent is minimised through a combination of material and discursive interventions which produce fear and (apparent) collusion.

Yet as has been seen, new regimes of truth have only been partially established, and not all that successfully. The majority of staff in both of these colleges questioned some or all of the above. As Alexiadou noted, managerialism:

..has not managed to resolve the tensions created between the old and the new in Further Education. Lack of consensus over goals, and existing professional identities shaped by different conceptions of quality, accountability and what is worth-while education, cannot be simply approached as 'technical' problems (Alexiadou 1999, p. 74).

From this perspective, the managerial project can never be totally successful, and despite the pessimism of many staff in this study, the 'corporate colonization of the self' discussed by Casey in her study of a multi-national corporation (Casey 1995), is, thankfully, far from complete.

There are a number of grounds for optimism. Critique and resistance does, despite all, remain alive and well. Many women in the study, drawing on feminist discourses and identities, were able to exert some influence and 'make a difference', and in College B, the senior management determination to hold on to educational values and resist the worst excesses of masculinist managerialism was, to some extent, successful. The new dominant discourses in FE marginalise many 'Others', including women, black people, anyone who is not sufficiently young, 'able' and 'thrusting', and those who insist on holding on to oppositional principles and values, and there is clearly a potential for broad alliances to challenge the white, masculinist dominant order. Yet these colleges cannot be removed from the wider social, political and economic context: resistance needs to be ongoing at a variety of levels to begin to construct new possibilities for the future.

It is hoped that this research has made a contribution to the critique and questioning of recent and current directions in policy and practice in further education, thereby contributing to the conditions under which active and effective resistance becomes more possible. This study has, I would suggest, demonstrated the value of a case study approach in illuminating the complex processes through which power relations and identities are re-constructed in rapidly changing organisational contexts. By undertaking in-depth studies of two colleges, it has been possible not only to engage in a concentrated inquiry of each case (Stake 1994), but also to enhance the richness of interpretation by examining the similarities and differences in the ways in which ostensibly common policies and nationally implemented procedures are enacted in different contexts. Whilst each college remains a unique case and extrapolating from single cases remains problematic, the theoretical inferences (Mitchell 1983) that can be drawn are greatly enhanced by the elements of comparison possible in this research design.

Despite the in-depth case study approach, some potential avenues of research and analysis necessarily remained unexplored within the confines of this study. The ways in which changes in curriculum impact on student and lecturer identities and power relations; the experiences and perceptions of staff in contracted out organisations and the implications of processes of commercialisation for equality; and the 'minimalist presence' (Neal 1998) of sexuality in this study; are all areas worthy of inclusion in a future research agenda. The debate about the de- or re-professionalisation of lecturers in the sector is likely to remain a live one in such a rapidly changing context, and future research which focuses specifically on lecturers' own (gendered, raced and classed) professional identities could make an

important contribution to the field. Whilst the body of critical and theoretical research into the further education sector is slowly beginning to build, it remains an under-researched area, and one that is deserving of a great deal more serious and critical academic attention.

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Appendix 1

College Documents

In each college I asked for copies of the following documents (or their equivalent):

- Mission statement
- Strategic Plan
- Operations Plans
- Organisation Chart or equivalent showing current organisational structure (this was problematic in both colleges due to on-going restructurings, so the current position and plans were ascertained in interviews with senior managers)
- List of staff (the internal telephone directory was supplied in each college)
- Equal opportunities policies
- Other key recent/current policy or procedural documents (eg Communications and IT policy/strategy documents in College A; Curriculum Review and latest restructuring plans in College B)
- Staff handbook
- Student handbook
- College/student charter
- Staff newsletters
- List of Governing Body members
- Agendas and minutes of Governing Body and management meetings I was observing
- Agendas and minutes of recent Academic Board meetings (supplied in College B only. This Board had ceased to meet in College A at the time of the fieldwork)
- Latest inspection reports
- Prospectus

Appendix 2

Table of Respondents

This table shows the number of staff interviewed at each college by type of post.

Post ⁸	College A	College B
Senior Manager	4	3
Head of Department or equivalent	5 (3 Heads of Academic Departments, 2 Heads of Service Departments)	5 (3 Heads of Academic Departments, 2 Heads of Service Departments)
Senior lecturer or equivalent	5	5
Lecturer	13	14
Administrative support staff	8	10
Other support staff	2 (1 Learning Centre staff member, 1 student counsellor/advisor)	1 (Librarian/Learning Centre staff member)
Total	36	38

These figures included:

- 4 black staff and 32 white staff in College A
- 10 black staff and 28 white staff in College B
- 28 women and 8 men in College A
- 27 women and 11 men in College B

Totals:

- 74 staff in all
- 14 black and 60 white staff
- 55 women and 19 men

Departmental descriptors used in the text:

Business (business, secretarial, leisure and tourism)
Science (sciences, maths and engineering)

⁸ These are broad descriptors rather than actual job titles.

Construction (construction trades, architecture, housing)
Computing (Information technology and computing subject areas)
Arts & Media (Art and design, performing arts, media subjects)
ESOL (Staff predominantly teaching on courses for speakers of English as a Second or Other Language)
Access (Staff predominantly teaching on access to higher education courses across subject areas).

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

This was used flexibly and adapted as necessary for different groups of staff.

1. Introductions, clarification of the research, issues of confidentiality, etc.
2. What do you see as the main priorities for the college now (in terms of the strategic direction)?
 - Priorities related to senior management, self. Preferred priorities, etc.
3. How are these priorities impacting on the College?
 - Examples
4. How do you see the role of management in these developments?
 - Middle and senior management
 - Management style
 - Decision making processes
 - Examples
5. Are the roles of managers, lecturers and/or support staff changing or expected to change?
 - How?
 - Examples
6. What place do you think new technology has in the future development of the college?
 - On students?
 - On your job, or the jobs of others in the college?
 - Examples
7. How do you see equal opportunities in the college now?
 - For staff
 - For students
 - Are the priorities you have identified having any impact on equality issues? If so, how?
 - Examples
8. How do you (and/or would like to) see the college in 5 or 10 years time
 - What factors are likely to further or hinder these visions?
9. Finally, how do you feel about your job on a more personal level?
 - For example related to job satisfaction, working relations, working conditions, decision-making, line management, impact on home life, prospects

10. Any other points you would like to add?

Thank you. Copy of transcript?

Appendix 4

Further Education 1985-2001: Key Events and Documents

1985 **Obtaining Better Value from Further Education.** Audit Commission report calling for greater efficiency in FE and 'tighter control over teaching costs'.

1987 **Managing Colleges Efficiently:** Report of a Study of Efficiency in Non-advanced Further Education for the Government and the Local Authority Associations. Recommended measures to improve efficiency including increasing class sizes and reducing course contact hours for students.

1988 **The Education Reform Act.** Introduced devolved budgets to colleges. Governing Body membership changed to increase number of business members and reduce local authority influence.

1989 **Towards and Educational Audit.** Report from the Further Education Unit (a government quango that preceded the Further Education Development Agency). Emphasises the importance of being 'business-like' and cost effective and provides guidelines for conducting an educational audit of FE college provision.

1991 **Education and Training for the 21st Century.** White Paper proposing the independence of colleges from local authorities.

1992 **The Further and Higher Education Act.** Provided for the incorporation of colleges and the setting up of the Further Education Funding Councils.

Funding Learning. FEFC consultation document on future funding methodology to apply from 1994-95. This awarded units for entry, on-programme and achievement, reductions of unit costs and demands for cost-efficient growth.

1993 **'Vesting Day'.** College corporations become independent institutions on April 1st.

Assessing Achievement. FEFC Circular 93/28 outlining the new framework for inspection.

1995 **Competitiveness: Forging Ahead.** White Paper from the Department of Trade and Industry which promises to maintain the government's 'drive for efficiency' in the public sector and 'continue where appropriate to *abolish, privatise, contract out and market test* activities' (stress in original).

1996 **The Higginson Report** of the Learning and Technology Committee: 'Our recommendations are intended to encourage cost-effective, sector-wide developments in the use of technology to promote learning'.

Learning Works: Report of the Widening Participation in Further Education Committee chaired by Helena Kennedy.

Living and Working in the Information Society. Government Green Paper.

1997 Connecting the Learning Society. Government Consultation Paper on the National Grid for Learning.

The Fryer Report: Learning for the Twenty-First Century. Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning

1998 Further Education for the New Millennium: Government response to the Kennedy report.

The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain. Government Green Paper on Lifelong Learning.

The Use of technology to Support Learning in Colleges. National Survey Report from the FEFC Inspectorate. Notes 'the general move towards students studying on their own' and 'A strong corporate drive and a shared vision are key elements in the effective development of these technologies'.

National Grid for Learning set up.

The Hodge Report. House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment. Sixth Report. Acknowledged that FE has been under-funded compared to other parts of the education service and recommended that efficiency savings be ameliorated if standards are not to fall. Also recommends better strategic planning and increasing the accountability of governing bodies, among other things.

1999 Learning to Succeed: A new framework for post-16 learning. Government White paper proposing to set up the Learning and Skills Councils.

2000 The Learning and Skills Act. Established the Learning and Skills Councils to replace the FEFC and Training and Enterprise Councils.

FEDA is renamed the **Learning and Skills Development Agency**.

2001 Learning and Skills Councils begin work.

