

ONE

Risky Times for Women Leaders

WOMEN MOVING INTO institutional leadership during the 1990s were not only managers of the processes of restructuring the education workforce but also the transformation of educational work and professional identities. During the last decades of the twentieth century, social, economic, and political relations were disrupted by the speeding up and intensification of flows of capital, people, goods, and images (Appadurai 1996). For these managers it meant “we are in fact multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities . . . constructed by a variety of discourses, and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of these positions” (Massey 1994, 6–7). This increased interdependency also meant shared risk. The 1990s has been variously depicted as a period of high risk and low trust (Beck 1992; Warren 1999). The high risk is due to an increased susceptibility to more precarious and deregulated labor markets, as evidenced in the decline in a sense of the collective such as unionism, reduced protection for individuals by the postwelfarist state, more fraught social relations within new family formations, and changing gender relations. The low trust is due to a reduced faith in, and commitment to, public institutions, in particular the reduction of relations with the state to a limited economic model of contractualism rather than citizenship, increased social stratification, and “a lack of positive expressions of respect and recognition for others” (Sennett 2004, xiv). Working life is thus “saturated with uncertainty . . . which is a highly individualizing force. It divides instead of uniting, and since there is no telling who might wake up in what division, the idea of ‘common interests’ grows ever more nebulous . . . fears, anxieties and grievances . . . are to be suffered alone” (Bauman 2001, 24).

By the 1980s education policies informed by human capital theory in most Western democracies perceived and promoted education as central to

knowledge economies (Brint 2001). Governments therefore sought to bind education more closely to work, industry, and the state. But in so doing, they refocused on the private rather than public benefits of education, with less regard for its unequal social and material outcomes. Privileging the economic was at the expense of the social, although public policy discourses of self-management, local participation, and choice captured a nostalgic return to notions of local community at a time when the notion of one unitary community with a single idea of a common good was disintegrating (chapter 2). Professional identity was being reconstituted around expertise, technology, and technique to service the new economy (chapter 4). We question whether the new work order is merely an extension of old industrial forms in a different guise, or whether it is capable of producing new work-based subjects and organizations in a knowledge society that is democratized in terms of its social, economic, and political practice?

This study was undertaken in the context of the resurgence during the 1990s of the cult of leadership (and indeed celebrity) in popular culture, politics, and economic and cultural life. Strong leadership was seen as a source of security, an easy solution to uncertainty in high-risk times. In education, the rhetoric of leadership supplanted that of administration and management as the dominant discourse in educational reform. Yet we found the management paradigm mobilized during the 1990s was more modernist than postmodernist. It was about reengineering education in “hard-line” ways, promoting images of being tough, entrepreneurial, and decisive, sidelining the human costs, and utilizing demoralizing and dehumanizing strategies of downloading responsibility, downsizing organizations, and outsourcing or casualizing core work.

These corporate and governmental processes not only reconfigured organizations but also reconstituted gender, class, and “race” inequalities. Paradoxically, the need for workplace flexibility in more culturally diverse societies also produced seemingly progressive postmodern discourses about women’s styles of leadership as the way of the future in management. *The Karpin Report on Management Education in Australia* (Karpin 1995), for example, promised a paradigm shift in management. “Soft” management discourses were promoted, as was cultural and gender diversity in leadership, based on a prediction of “the feminization of management” and the shift to “relational rather than competitive values” (Barrett 1995, 1342). Thus, the “feminine” skills of people management were as critical to good leadership and management as the hard “masculine” skills of financial management. Increased interdependence was the key, so business opportunities had to be “nurtured through affiliation and cooperation rather than rationality, separation and manipulation” (Barrett 1995, 1342).

This view appropriated a now well-established feminist discourse of women being good change managers and drew on “new wave” management

theory arguing that managers needed to continuously refashion themselves in a way that “involves a redrawing of the traditional masculine/feminine hierarchy of logic/emotion. Managers were now called to be ‘passionate’ in the workplace and in the performance of managerial practice” (Hatcher 2003, 392). Missing from the discourse were substantive feminist norms around mutual respect and equality. Individualism was not replaced, just redrawn. The characteristics of the feminine were “inserted in an old moral order as new forms of ethical practice, . . . made accessible to everyone, but conceived of as ‘skills’” (Hatcher 2003, 399).

This decade also illuminated the paradoxes of “women’s success” as women moved into middle and executive management in education, politics, and business.³ The ongoing media interest in feminism highlighted the trials and tribulations of individual women’s advancement as evidence of the achievements of equal opportunity policies (Blackmore 1997). Yet attitudes to women leaders wavered constantly between public adulation and harsh critique (Wilkinson 2005). For their part, successful women in high-stakes leadership, aware of the dangers of naming the barriers to women’s progress, hesitated in doing so, despite significant evidence of the permanence and impermeability of organizational “glass ceilings” and the “boys’ clubs.” Mentioning any discriminatory structures, attitudes, or practices, covert or overt, was dangerous territory, casting them into the spotlight as troublemakers or encouraging labels of “token” women promoted on gender not merit.

Yet workplace restructuring during the 1990s also mobilized systemic and institutional dispositions inherent in organizational processes (e.g., promotion and transfer procedures, job descriptions, redeployment policies based on tenure and experience). Women were often the first redeployed, in acting positions, or retrenched—a form of “structural backlash” (Lingard and Douglas 1999, Blackmore 1999b). Educational organizations and education labor markets reflected the wider patterns of work, with the resilience of horizontal occupational segregation (women concentrated in traditional service occupations of teaching) and vertical segmentation (women concentrated in lower levels). The number of women entering tenured, full-time educational management plateaued by the late 1990s, replicating patterns in the wider workforce. In 1998, at the end of this study, women constituted 43.8 percent of workers and only 3.5 percent of them managers, compared to 9 percent of male workers being managers (Office of the Status of Women 1998). Family friendly cultural shifts in work practices remained arbitrary, usually mandated by executive fiat rather than the result of a bottom-up sea change in attitudes in the private sector. Even in the public sector, the major employer historically for women, policies often did not translate into action on the ground. Yet women’s access to senior management is often paraded, “both as a symbol and a measure of organizational change” (Wacjman 1998, 1–2). This is because it

is in the “top job” that women are perceived as the greatest threat to male power, a challenge to the gender regime that has naturalized and institutionalized the power relations in organizations. For gender is a “property of organizations as well as individuals,” constituting how organizations work both in terms of the “symbolic order and in discursive and material organizational practices” (Wacjman 1998, 3).

SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM HERE?

Studying women’s experiences in middle and senior management in the context of the changing nature of educational work is important because the underrepresentation of women in authority, especially at high levels of management, is “not simply an instance of gender inequality but it is probably a significant cause of ‘inequality’ more generally” (Wacjman 1998, 32). We explore this connection between women’s experiences of inequality and wider educational debates around education and social justice. To some extent, the discourses informing policies generated to support women’s advancement in institutions has inadvertently contributed to making social change difficult to achieve. As Bacchi (2000b) comments, “this is due, in their view, not simply because opponents of change quash attempts at reform, but because issues get represented in ways that subvert progressive intent . . . and the ways in which ‘social problems’ or ‘policy problems’ get ‘created’ in discourse . . . problems are ‘created’ or ‘given shape’ in the very policy proposals that are offered as responses” (47–48). Bacchi’s notion of policy-as-discourse allows us explore gender equity reform in the context of organizational and political change. Discourse is

never disembodied or context free; it is always constitutive of the dynamic and ongoing process of making meaning. Gendered organizations thus do not “exist” as such; rather they are performed moment by moment through the communicative practices of their members. While such performances usually do not unfold capriciously, but rather, follow well-established scripts, it is still only in the doing—the performing—that such scripts are produced, reproduced, resisted, and transformed. . . . Discourse is not merely text or symbolism but it is something in which social actors engage with as real. (Aschraft and Mumby 2004, 116)

While we draw primarily on the voices of women in management or aspiring to be, we refute the view implicit in much equity policy that women are the problem. The “problem” of the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is not about women’s lack, whether of ambition or capacities, but rather, it is the consequence of the limited opportunities cre-

ated by the systemically gendered cultural, social, and structural arrangements that inform women educators' choices and possibilities *relative* to their male colleagues.

Furthermore, while feminism has been seen by many men to be too successful, to the detriment of both men with their loss of privilege and women due to overwork, the women leaders in our study often felt more weary and worn out than successful. Sinclair (1994) also found a dissonance between women's understandings of their success and their male colleagues' understandings of gender equality. This was because masculinity is "less about power and more about a feeling of entitlement to it"; about perceptions of who is powerful rather than how power works (Lingard 2003, 36). Australian studies in universities (Currie and Thiele 2001), schools (Blackmore 199b) and private industry (Sinclair 1994) confirm that many males believed women were treated equally, most women did not agree and felt organizations ignored or marginalized women's interests.

Spivak (1988) makes a useful distinction between how women are represented by others (representation that is subject to interpretation), and how they see themselves or how they wish to be re-presented (self-presentation according to their experience and perceptions of how others perceived them). 'Representations are more than mere symbols. They are the means by which we come to know, embody and perform reality' (Moreton-Robinson 2000, xxii). This is a critical point when it comes to understanding media, policy and other representations of women that shape organizational discourses and gendered leadership identities (Blackmore 1997; Wilkinson 2005). Sinclair and Wilson (2002) suggest that leadership is "constructed in the minds of audiences" (176) as much as in the minds of the actors, producing a considerable dissonance between how women see themselves, and how they are seen by others.

Women leaders are positioned within popular discourses about "women's styles of leadership" and women leaders being caring and sharing, powerful discursive products of second wave feminism and feminist research (Blackmore 1999b, Wilkinson 2005). These limited gender scripts subtly continue to draw upon the "symbolic power invested in the most powerful female role," motherhood, interestingly at a time when many women in leadership are either without dependent children or are childless (Reay and Ball 2000). But the dominance of this caring and sharing discourse during the 1990s meant that regardless of whether men and women adopted authoritarian or democratic practices in management, how these practices were perceived and judged was highly gendered. Furthermore, the actual capacity to undertake democratic practice was shaped by political, institutional and cultural contexts that were more conducive to more authoritarian leadership practices. The problem is both one of perception and structure as these strata work together in unpromising ways for women.

GENDER, RESTRUCTURING,
AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Our project here is to consider how existing and emergent discourses circulating in and through educational organizations framed possibilities for women “leaders” as the principles of the market and new managerialism in the “post welfare,” “managerial,” or “market” state increasingly informed organizational practices in universities, schools and TAFE institutes. Specifically we are interested in identifying discourses around the changing nature of education professionalism and client based student/teacher relations; institutional discourses about entrepreneurship; management discourses about efficiency and effectiveness; and accountability discourses about quality and outcomes. Our analysis identifies trends towards the re-privatization of care and the privatization of the public, producing a blurring of public/private life, as well as changing priorities and practices in, and the intensification of, educational work. In this context women leaders, now moving into middle management in education as principals, department leaders and deans, are simultaneously positioned both as ‘leaders’ and agents of change and also as managers of organizational ‘housework.’

In what follows, we identify seven areas where our analysis differs from other attempts to analyze women’s experience of educational leadership. First, we link macrostructural shifts to micropolitical activities in organizations and to individual agency. The context described by these women in leadership is one in which government and management policies and practices signal tensions between the desire to gain control, on the one hand, and to encourage the creativity of “educated labor” as the source of productivity in knowledge-based economies, on the other. This is a tension echoed in the contradictory tendencies of centralization and decentralization, between innovation and maintenance work, and between care and compliance in organizations. As Rhoades (1996) observes: “Governance is not about centralization or decentralization—it is about regulating relationships in complex systems” (151). Whereas the 1980s saw academics and teachers as “co-participants in the exciting work of educational innovation and change” (Brown et al. 1996, 311), now they were repositioned as the recipients of decisions based on a decisional not dialogic process of reform. Limerick, Cunnington, and Crowther (1998, 21–22) argue that, in Australia, the public sector has been “plagued by problems of accountability and governments are reluctant to let go of the apparent certainty of hierarchical control. So they have developed an uneasy hybrid form of organization in which hierarchy is retained but which also attempts to implement some of the precepts of post corporate organizations [such as flexibility, localized autonomy etc].”

The product is the corporate neobureaucracy, a hybrid of entrepreneurial, masculinist corporate managerialism and paternalistic bureaucracy. While our

study of leadership as a catalyst for personal and organizational change illuminated how women identify as leaders and change agents, our cohort inevitably contextualized any discussion of leadership within the changing context of educational reform. They saw the cumulative effect of hybrid managerialism and quasimarkets, together with new communication and information technologies, as fundamentally changing personal, pedagogical, and professional relations and, in turn, how they as women were represented.

Second, in attempting to better understand and theorize these transformations, we recognize that the processes of systemic, organizational, and personal change are gendered, as are their effects, a feature largely neglected in the literature on educational restructuring (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004). Educational restructuring, as organizational life generally, is gender inflected, in that the objectives, priorities, and processes of reform, despite the gender-neutral discourses, are highly gendered in their assumptions, values, practices, and therefore, effects (Alvesson and Due Billing 1996). In turn, the technologies of the market and management have produced new work identities that are gendered, “raced,” and classed (Gee, Hull, and Lankshear 1996). Most of the women we interviewed saw women leaders as being dynamically repositioned between changing economic, political, and social contexts, the “reciprocal dialectical and mutually defining character of symbolic/discursive and material conditions of organizing” as both “macro political arrangements and the micro practices work on identity, body and sexuality” (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004, 123). They recognized that the shifts in values produced through policy texts, funding mechanisms, labor market relations, organizational cultures, and the lived experiences of people working within educational institutions all affected their orientation to work (see Brooking 2005). But we found women positioned themselves variably within this changing discursive space. Some saw this as being about increased control through self-management—becoming “designer employees”—as the corporate ethos discouraged voicing disagreement with corporate aims (e.g., Casey 1995). Other women were more comfortable with entrepreneurial discourses than others. Some women rejected feminism and did not see their role as one of advocacy for other women or disadvantaged students, thus problematizing popular discourses about women’s styles of leadership that imply all women have similar value positions, and care for the disadvantaged. Regardless, our focus on restructuring as the context for leadership work moves beyond the current fixation of leadership research on personal attributes, skill development, and career paths, on the one hand, and generic “management guru” recipes for successful organizational reform, on the other hand.

Third, this study is informed by recent sociologies of gender that focus on the social construction of multiple masculinities and femininities and the different ways of acting out being male and female (Connell 1995). Femininities, like masculinities, “are defined collectively in culture and sustained

in institutions” such as schools, universities, workplaces, unions, bureaucracies, and professional and voluntarist organizations (Connell 1995, 11). These different social spaces produce different communities of practice, ways of speaking, behaving, and doing that are not readily transferable to other locations and sites of practice (Wenger 1998). Hegemonic femininities and masculinities in workplaces and nation states also change over time, although the close association of masculinity with authority and power (masculinism) endures. But we do not suggest that educational restructuring benefited all men and disadvantaged all women. Feminist understandings see gender as not being “fixed,” emphasizing change and fluidity (for example shifting and performative notions of gender) over gender continuities and stability (Dillabough and Arnot 2001, 32), as our study indicates. Changing organizational practices threatened the taken-for-grantedness of particular forms of masculine dominance in educational organizations, but it also reinforced others. While many individual women benefited from restructuring in some ways, gendered power/knowledge relations did not significantly alter. Indeed, the very processes of marketization and new managerialism arguably led to the emergence of refigured modes of masculinity. For example, masculinist images of leadership and success arising out of the new entrepreneurialism and internationalization in education revitalized in new forms old constructions of valued knowledge or desirable outcomes (Reay and Ball 2000; Reed 1995).

Fourth, we focus on the conditions of possibility for social change and leadership as well as conditions of constraint. Policy-as-discourse analysts have emphasized constraints, largely because they have emphasized the use and not the effects of discourse (Bacchi 2000b). We seek not to be “skeptical” postmodernists but “affirmative” postmodernists, critical of modernity but open to new ways of change. From our position as critical intellectuals and activist professionals, we support “affirming an ethic, making normative choices and striving to build issue specific policy coalitions” (Rosenau 1992, 15–16). This requires us to “identify sources of power and propose projects to challenge them” (Bacchi 2000b, 47) and to consider their symbolic and material effects. Restructuring altered the symbolic and material conditions of educational and therefore leadership work. We use the term *educational worker* intentionally, interchangeably with *teacher*, *educator*, *trainer*, and *manager/leader*, to highlight what we see is a radical transformation of the educational labor process underway in all education sectors. This transformation promised some possibilities with the shift toward knowledge-based economies, as educational institutions increasingly focused on managing the processes of knowledge production, dissemination, and legitimation. We consider whether educational workers (and managers) will belong to the new class of “symbolic analysts” or “knowledge workers,” the designers and producers of knowledge, or merely become technicians or service workers in the transmis-

sion of knowledge (Aronowitz and de Fazio 1997; Brint 2001). A labor-process perspective links the numerical feminization of lower level management to a new managerialism incorporating women leaders and their skills, while seeking to drive down costs and intensify the return of labor in capital accumulation. “Knowledge practices capture particular subjectivities” and are “materially engaged in the production of reward differentials and segregation and subordination of work by women” (Prichard and Deem 1999, 324). Managerial work itself was in the process of being “deskilled in the sense that management is reconstructed as a set of highly codified technologies (budgeting, strategic planning and audit) and distributed to subordinate post-holders.” So there is a tension between identities constructed through codified managerial practices and discourses that emphasize women’s suitability for intensive people work that would appear to challenge “traditional paternalistic professionally-oriented knowledge practices” (Prichard and Deem 1999, 324).

Fifth, we see organizations as an array of fluid social practices and interactions, cultural representations, and meaning making that are gendered (see also Czarniaswka and Hopfl 2002; Ashcraft and Mumby 2004; Aailto and Mills 2002). “Gender is constitutive of organization; it is an omnipresent, defining feature of collective human activity, regardless of whether the activity appears to be about gender . . . the gendering of organization involves a struggle over meaning, identity and difference . . . [and] such struggles reproduce social realities that privilege certain interests” (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004, xv). While multiple narratives of masculinity and femininity offering different versions of the self and others circulate, indicating their instability and lack of uniformity, “in practice they yield differential and consequential access to power and resistance” (xvi). Most often leadership is suffused with masculine images as the norm. In turn, it informs how women come to perceive themselves and be perceived by others as leaders and managers.

But if our lives as agents is recognized as a set of practices rather than structure or unreflective cognition that is determined elsewhere, then structures can be understood as hierarchical relationships of power and processes that reinforce or subvert social relations. Organizations, for example, have a low tolerance for difference. There is a strong emphasis on similarity in understandings and language and style, an expected commitment to corporate goals and to particular strategies and approaches. These practices of conformity are evident in the rituals of meetings (who sits where, how people dress, the language and level of formality and informality), in the symbolic use of space (who has the largest desk, location and size of office) and the cultural artefacts of dress. Resistance or signals of rebellion to organizational norms of masculinity and femininity are also symbolic—length of hair, color of clothing, size and design of shirts, skirts, and ties. The performative aspects of gender, therefore, are rendered evident in the repeated and subconscious gender performances in terms of codes for dress and behavior. They are

expressed in the design of the organization and of work, in the artefacts and services that the organization produces, in the architecture of its premises, in the technologies that it employs, in its ceremonials of encounter and meeting, in the temporal structuring of organizational courses of action, in the quality and the conditions of its working life, in the ideologies of work, in the corporate philosophy, in the jargon, lifestyle and physical appearance of the organization's members. (Gherardi 1995, 13)

Organizations therefore “express a number of work cultures and comprise of social constructs of workplace gender relations” because they are porous and open to societal influence (Gherardi 1995, 3). Labor law and affirmative action policies produce particular relations within and between social institutions, which assimilate and normalize demands for equality. Thus social movements such as feminism in the professions or the media can impact on institutional practices with regard to ethics and equal opportunity through their extrainstitutional discursive power. In turn, wider political shifts in discursive fields toward neoconservative notions of gender can be mobilized to delegitimize institutional equity discourses (Blackmore 1999b). Organizational cultures differ in terms of their gender regimes but are also shaped by the wider “grammar of the social structures.” “How gender is ‘done’ differently is a crucial cultural phenomenon, and how it can be done differently is a challenge to all those who work in organizations and of the civilizing process itself” (Gherardi 1995, 4).

Organizations and governments also practice symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1998). That is, they disguise inequality in the ways in which economic and political power is represented and taken for granted through their logics of practice. Symbolic power is a subtle form of control and domination that prevents this domination being recognized. It works through the structures and habitus inscribed in women's bodies (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002). “Material and symbolic orders are internalized as a set of presence, categorizations and classifications that reflect existing gender inequalities” and thus naturalized (Christie and Lingard 2001, 3). These symbolic systems exercise power by making the self-complicit in the taken-for-granted,” the dispositions inculcated into the agent by insignificant aspects of everyday life” (Bohman 1999, 132). Thus the academic world is premised upon individualism and competitiveness and knowledge hierarchies where some disciplines claim objectivity and privilege makes women complicit in devaluing their own experiences when they do not “fit.” Likewise, when a woman's experiences of leadership do not fit that of the educational organization, they are positioned as not being ready or not appropriate, rather than considering that perhaps existing leadership representations and practices are not inclusive. This constant reminder of one's assigned social destiny works through the symbolic and the material,

the structural and the cultural, and is a key aspect of the symbolic violence in education systems. Through all this women receive contradictory messages: “[B]e equal but be different” (Gherardi 1995, 97).

Sixth, we identify and explore a hidden dimension of organizational life only recently addressed in organizational and educational theory—that of the emotions (Blackmore 1996; Fullan 1997; Sachs and Blackmore 1998; Hargreaves 1998; Boler 1999; Fineman 2000). Understanding the processes of organizational change means exploring individual emotional and intellectual investments in maintaining the existing circumstances or changing them. The focus therefore shifts to the relational aspects of leadership, as well as the matter of personal and professional identity. Emotions and motivation are connected. Many educators view education as a site of social action and change, as a political act. They feel a responsibility beyond their particular organization toward a wider public or profession. They gain rewards through productive collegial relations, recognition, and commitment (Nias 1999), yet career paths are premised upon reward systems based on authority. Emotional display can be the “surface tension” of educational politics. “[W]ithin Western patriarchal culture, emotions are a primary site of social control, emotions are also a site of political resistance and can mobilize social movements of liberation” (Boler 1999, xiii). Through the notion of a sociopsychic economy, we link emotional and political work to the collective organizational life and professional relations.

Our behavior is also governed by emotion rules. Boler (1999) also argues that “men and women across diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds recognize similar patterns of gendered rules of emotion” (xiii). Women leaders, already seen to be the managers of “the personal” and “the private” in traditional gender relations, are now expected to also do the emotional management work of organizations—a “natural extension” of their domestic work of caring and sharing associated with popular notions of women being good at teaching young children and women’s ways of leading and managing. Management is thus “capitalizing on emotions”. Yet success continues to be in the language of male-type behaviors and emotional expression, men and women abiding by the emotional rules of masculinist organizations.

Seventh, the reprivatization of care and work has produced new contradictions for women, given their usual responsibilities as primary caregivers of the old, young, and sick (Hancock 1999). The continual balancing act confronting women in leadership—between home, community, and work—highlights the contradictions between management discourses about flexibility (flexible workers, flexible learning, and flexible work arrangements), which are “family friendly” as opposed to the inflexibility of “greedy organizations” that demand more for less and actively undermine women’s work as they intensify labor, casualize work, practice increased surveillance, and demand compliance (Summers 2003; Smulyan 2000; Franzway 2001). Even as an elite group of

women, women educational leaders are positioned differently from their male colleagues in terms of the gender division of emotional management work.

In Western postindustrial societies, processes of detraditionalization, in which the traditional gender order is being transformed due to women's increased participation in work and leadership; and retraditionalization, as the neoliberal postwelfare state shifts responsibility back onto women for the maintenance of traditional family values and solidarity, are occurring simultaneously (Giddens 1994). Detraditionalizing forces, therefore, "may change the division of labor. But men and women have investments in particular traditional images of masculinity and femininity that cannot be totally transformed" (McNay 2000, 41). Indeed, the destabilization of gender at one level leads to greater intractability of the other. Thus while most women are more economically independent, many men's notions of masculinity and femininity fit neither new jobs nor the changing relations of gender. The effect of this is to lead to even more extreme versions of macho masculinities (Lingard and Douglas 1999; Whitehead 1999; Hearn 1998).

Finally, we take seriously McNay's (2000, 1–2) comment:

One of the most pronounced effects of these macrostructural tendencies towards detraditionalization is the transformation of the social status of women in the last forty years and the restructuring of gender relations that it has arguably initiated. The effects of gender restructuring upon the lives of men and women are ambiguous in that they do not straightforwardly reinforce old forms of gender inequality; nor, however, can their detraditionalizing impact be regarded as wholly emancipatory. New forms of autonomy and constraint can be seen to be emerging which can no longer be understood through dichotomies of male domination and female subordination. Instead, inequalities are emerging in generational, class and racial lines where structural decisions amongst women are as significant as divisions between men and women.

We recognize that the white, middle-class women in this study (including ourselves) are advantaged relative to the majority of women. Indeed, we found a significant absence of ethnic and indigenous voices in the institutions we studied, a silence resulting from the Anglocentrism and heterosexism of mainstream management and leadership theory and the white, male hegemonic order in schools, universities, and colleges (Connell 1995; Sinclair 1998). Certainly the "embodied" presence of women disrupts senior management's culturally (masculine) homogenized environment (Sinclair 1998), foregrounding gender. Sadly, few male or female management practitioners undertake the painful analysis of their inherent whiteness and middle classness, despite a growing mass of critical and feminist organizational theory and research (e.g., Alvesson and Due Billing 1996; Hearn 2002. Moreton-Robinson 2000).

AMBIVALENCE, AMBIGUITY, AND CONTRADICTION

Central to this study was how most of the women leaders interviewed expressed a sense of contradiction and ambivalence toward educational change as it impacted on their own sense of professional self and agency. Women leaders often referred to a tension between the demands for corporate loyalty, particularly in management positions, and the capacity of educational leaders to exercise professional judgment and integrity at a time when there is no necessary consensus about the nature, method, or objectives of recent educational change. This, we have argued elsewhere (Sachs and Blackmore 1998), creates intellectual, emotional, and moral dilemmas for teachers and leaders as modernist notions of professionalism focusing on autonomy, judgment, activism, and advocacy are challenged (Sachs 2003). Professionalism was increasingly being viewed as a contractual arrangement, a technical capacity, part of emerging contractual relations arising from marketization and managerialism. It was premised upon competitive individualism rather than the collective aspirations of communities and groups, an individual rather than a shared sense of responsibility to a profession. This was even more intense for the espoused feminists whose professional identity and leadership habitus was tied to particular equity ideals. Such moral dilemmas led many women to exit educational leadership positions (Schmuck, Hollingsworth, and Lock 2002).

During this period of radical restructuring, we found that the women educators in this study expressed a sense of collective and individual alienation. This alienation arose from a dissonance between their commitment to particular educational values and the practices and values they were required to espouse in order for them to survive individually and as organizations. Policy shifts now focused on outcomes, on productivity through cost efficiencies, and indeed work for its own sake (productivism), rather than on relationships, quality, and effectiveness maintained through individual and collective work practices (Giddens 1994). Seemingly progressive discourses expected them to be consultative and collegial, yet new managerial and market regimes restricted them from being so (Sachs and Blackmore 1998; Blackmore 1999b).

Leadership in this context, we argue, is best understood as a set of social practices that arise out of particular relationships and conditions of work. In that sense it is undertaken by many at all levels of an organization and cannot be simplistically equated to formal position. Just as policy is the authoritative allocation of values, leadership has a normative dimension, as it is a moral and political as well as a social practice. The issue for educational leaders is not just how to “do leadership,” but to elaborate upon the values that underpin the social practices of leadership. This notion of leadership raises matters of trust, expertise, and loyalty in the context of an erosion of trust in social institutions generally (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs 2002) and the rise of audit cultures in response to that erosion (Strathern 2000a). Interestingly, the desire for control

and to reduce risk by executive management and government alike has led to increased surveillance of professionals in the name of accountability and a trend toward standardization at the same time we see a further trend toward numerical feminization of education.⁴

We explore women educators “crossing over” from the professional cultures of teaching and research into management, and how such experience can lead to a “cultural identification” as outsiders and reidentification as women (Wacjman 1998). As new immigrants they are inside, but as managers, remain on the outskirts of the culture, while bringing prior loyalties. As women, they are “strangers in a familiar world” dominated by men. Their gender leads to a range of cultural processes of assimilation, ghettoization, and positioning as the “other.”

SOME THEORETICAL DISPOSITIONS

Dillabough and Arnot (2001, 32) claim that “[t]he current research traditions within ‘feminist’ sociology of education are even harder to ‘capture,’ drawing as they do upon divergent, yet sometimes overlapping, theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of gender and feminism in education.” In general, feminists increasingly reject sociological binaries of structure/agency, objective/subjective, and individual/society and focus more on the dynamic and fluid relations in gender formation through structures and relationships. A central issue for feminist social theorists has been how to conceptualize gender identity in ways that understand how social (and therefore gender) change occurs in the context of wider structural and historical formations. How can feminists theorize the structure/agency dynamic in ways that address continuity and change in gender identities, institutional formations, and social movements?

McNay (2000, 5) suggests that “with regard to issues of gender, a more rounded conception of agency is crucial in explaining both how women have acted autonomously in the past despite constricting social sanctions and also how they may act now in the context of processes of gender restructuring.” Negative connotations of agency in feminist theory position women, even in leadership positions, as powerless. Yet leadership as a central concept in administrative theory is discursively associated with a sense of agency, an assumed capacity to change oneself, “to become a leader,” and to produce change in organizations. A theory of agency needs to explicate how leaders produce change within particular conditions of possibility and constraint that are not just treated as exogenous to gender identity formation ahistorically. Such a theory would recognize both the durability of gender identities and the potentialities for their reconstruction, as well as address issues of intentionality and reflexivity (McNay 2000). We draw from McNay’s three foci on agency and change: the relation between the material and the symbolic

dimensions of subjectification; the issue of identity and coherence of the self; and finally the relation between psyche and the social.

Symbolic and material practices are intertwined in the formation of the gendered subject. "While all social practices are linguistically mediated, they are not necessarily linguistic in nature; patterns of employment discrimination or economic exclusion are deeply sedimented, complex and reproduced in ways that a linguistic model does not adequately capture" (McNay 2000, 14). Women in formal authority are, in contrast to most women, seen to have both symbolic and material power—symbolic in terms of the embodiment of female sexuality as leaders in male dominated environments; and material power due to their capacity to allocate resources. Our data suggests that the women in our study struggle with, and negotiate, both the symbolic (representations) and material conditions (division of labor and resources) that shape possibilities for action (Walby 2000).

Yet gender identity, while "durable," is "not immutable" and is capable of reformation (McNay 2000, 2). Calling on Bourdieu, McNay (2000) argues: "Although subject formations receive their shape from prevailing social conditions, certain predispositions and tendencies may still continue to effect embodied practices long after the original conditions of emergence have been surpassed. This durability partly suggests that a coherent sense of self is not just an illusion but fundamental to the way in which the subject interprets itself over time (2)."⁵

Bourdieu's notion of habitus provides a way of explaining the "paradox" of the individual who can be directed or shaped toward particular ends but not totally driven or determined by them. Habitus recognizes the desires for both continuity and change critical to identity formation. It also distinguishes between a prereflexive "feel for the game" that cannot be reduced merely to socialization and the reflexive that indicates some intentionality and desire for action. Agents never know completely what they are doing because they often respond out of habit in "reasonable ways" (Bourdieu 1990, 109). For example, gender, as "practical belief," is more than the internalization of particular representations. Gender identity formation is not merely a "matter of consciousness but arises out of and creates naturalizing of agendas, strategies, goals and desires of habitus" (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002, 16). "Habitus permits thinking about the synchronous nature of constraint and freedom expressed in the hybrid forms that women's social experience has assumed" (McNay 2000, 61). The durability and embeddedness of particular subject formations is evident in the different ways in which these women positioned themselves with regard to feminism, work, and family and the difficulty some people had in terms of their investment in particular self-images. Thus, not being labeled as a feminist was important to some as it meant that they had achieved success through individual merit, not because affirmative action policies advantaged them. Concepts of 'investment' and 'negotiation,' as much as 'resistance,' are

perhaps more appropriate to understand the fragmented, discontinuous, unpredictable nature of gender identity and indeed change. We seek to explore how these investments and predispositions are negotiated in the context of specific educational environments of schools, TAFE, and universities.

PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSES, INSTITUTIONAL METANARRATIVES, AND WORK IDENTITY

Individuals' work identity is informed by the articulation between particular personal, political, and professional discourses circulating within and around educational organizations and professional communities of practice. These give rise to different understandings and readings of individual and collective corporate identities. Particular "professional" discourses are mobilized in each of the fields of practice of the three education sectors. The entrepreneurial field of TAFE, the disciplinary knowledge-based field of universities, and the pedagogical or caring field of school practice each produced different discourses of professionalism, but in the context of specific institutionalized "cultures" that shaped opportunities and inhibitors to women's advancement.

We suggest that organizations are "fragmented unities," although they can be discursively represented as a unified and uncontested "whole" by, for example, strategic plans seeking a "normative glue that can be applied and removed as the executive desires" (Parker 2000, 1). Organizations enact a set of changing relationships that at any one time appear to assume a dominant expression or narrative (often referred to as "culture"). Embedded in dominant institutional narratives are patterns of assumptions, not tangible or visible, that members of an organization develop to cope with its problems and daily lives, into which new members are partially inducted, adopting and adapting those discourses that make sense to them. These are usually not the expression of dominant philosophies or values made explicit in mission statements. What happens and how people relate and think in relation to each other is informed by hybrid arrangements and relationships arising from interactions of individual habitus, collective stories, and "management engineered programs of change" (Parker 2000, 2). Organizational narratives also assume the "more general features of the sector, state and society of which the organization is a part," such as the professional discourses of fields of practice, wider debates about leadership, and the wider gender order (Parker 2000, 1).

Following McNay (2000) we draw on Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to illuminate the relation between agency and structure. Bourdieu's notion of a field is useful in that it does suggest some reflexive dimension to agency. Thus, as a member of the field of education, or subfield of schooling, one is both produced by the field and is capable of producing effects on the field

(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 80). Women have undertaken autonomous action despite structural inequalities from marginal and seemingly powerless positions in achieving equity reform. But the notion of ‘self-conscious creativity’ or ‘reflexivity’ as a generalizable characteristic of agency in postconventional societies is complex. Reflexivity (self-conscious consideration of action) and autonomy imply some level of intentionality. For example, some women leaders may be more “caring” because they see this as promoting particular democratic values and ethics, while for others these dispositions arise from performative practices that have become naturalized and unconscious ways of being (Bourdieu 1990, 116). Considering organizations from a perspective of the social relations of gender allows us to explore cultural meanings carried through corporate strategies, language, practices, and symbols that are specific to men and women. But most often, dominant values and beliefs in organizations and images of leadership are defined by forms of masculinity:

Arguably it is the increasing movement of women into social fields which were previously confined to men that is crucial to an understanding of the decline of traditional gender norms. . . . [T]he concept of the field permits the conceptualization of differentiation within the construction of gender identity replacing dualism of public and private, workplace and domestic, the central and the marginal with a more complex logic that mirrors the expansion and uncertainty of women’s social experience. This in turn offers a way of thinking about possible transformations within gender identity as uneven and non-synchronous phenomena. (McNay 2000, 36)

To continue with Bourdieu’s argument, membership of a field of practice informs professional identity. The field is defined as “objective relations between positions, and the field’s configuration receives its form from the relations between each position and the distribution of a certain type of capital, economic, cultural, social and symbolic, that denotes the different goods, resources, and values around which the power relations of the field crystallize” (Bourdieu 1993, 72–77). While fields are relatively autonomous, and there is no single all-encompassing logic, there is a hierarchy between fields. Thus TAFE or universities or schools collectively constitute the field of education. Each education sector or subfield has particular logics of practice that overlap in some respects and diverge in others, logics in which professionals differentially invest according to their location. Academic, teacher, and trainer habitus constitute, and are constituted by, their fields. However, all individuals bring to the field the “power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their positions, and as a result their strategies” (Bourdieu 1998, 40–41).

Each sector is part of a wider field of education that has a “central gravity” or “specific logic” that regulates the field in which there are “core” activi-

ties such as teaching, learning, and research. As a field, education is constituted by hierarchies of knowledge/power relations that permeate educational organizations, in terms of what knowledge is valued and how power is asserted, both materially in terms of the distribution of resources, and symbolically in terms of how particular knowledge is valued and represented. Significant groups with different interests compete for control of the field that is underpinned by capitalist imperatives for accumulation. Power rests in the complex set of relations within and between fields and does not rest in specific individuals or institutions, although these relations impart power to some individuals more than others. Social control is therefore insidious. The efficacy of symbolic domination is both strengthened and open for subversive misappropriation. Educators as teachers and researchers therefore have multiple investments in different fields—in their profession, unions, social movements, government authorities, and professional organizations. There are overlapping values across these fields, such as notions of education as a public service. This enhances how individual agency or acts of resistance “may transcend their immediate sphere in order to transform collective behavior and norms” (McNay 2000, 4). Thus the actions of educational players connect to larger social structures.

Education policy as a bounded field of practice works through the educational dispositions and moral valuations of the various players in the field. But increasingly it overlaps and is informed by other fields of economic and social policy. The more autonomous a field the more powerful and capable it is in imposing its logic on other fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 105). Professions, as organizations, are “communities of practice” within fields that have transcendence in terms of historical and cross-cultural understandings that characterize professionalism as a specific body of knowledge, levels of competence, public responsibilities, and ethics. These alter over time and in specific cultural and organizational contexts. Leadership or professionalism are practices that arise out of specific fields of practice that are bounded by disciplinary knowledge but have both particular and universal meanings, that is, how it is practiced within this school or university, but with wider cultural meanings. Identity and agency are not what individuals do but are part of a set of practices arising out of networks of relationships within particular communities of practice. Individual leaders learn to play the game and negotiate the logics of practice within their sub-field—universities, schools, and technical education. We map the intersections and convergences between the “education sub-fields” (schools, TAFE, and universities) at a time when the field of economics (economic rationalism, human capital) gained precedence nationally and internationally, when boundaries between the education subfields became more porous, thus weakening the autonomy of the field of education.

PERFORMATIVITY AND PASSION

There was, we found, for the women participants in our study, a tension between performativity—that is, performing well through managing oneself better according to a new set of regulatory disciplinary mechanisms—and the passion for “doing good” in educational work based on a desire to achieve through education fairness and social justice (see Chapter 5). “Education is modernity’s last stand” (Hartley 1997, 4). This tension emerged out of the competing discourses of new managerialism and old bureau professionalism that circulate within the field (see chapter 4). The promise of new management theory that postmodern organizations would invest in “feminine” leadership (good communication, consultative skills, negotiation and person management skills, recognition and understanding of diversity); develop teamwork and flexible work practices in an adaptive or learning organization; and utilize management practices of recruitment and reward that promoted performance and not position, contribution not status, we suggest were idealized and optimistic readings of post-Fordist organizational life. Instead, the hybridity of market and managerial practices interpellated in and through patriarchal bureaucracies produced neocorporate bureaucracies that were simultaneously modernist (hierarchical, individualistic, strong executive power) and post-modernist (teamwork, entrepreneurial, self-managing workers; see chapter 2).

The dilemma for educational managers that we explore in this text is that an intensified focus on the performative transforms the very practices, values, and processes from which educational workers derived their passion and pleasure, the motivating force for being in education. Being a compliant worker meant putting the organization’s goals ahead of personal aspirations or the public good. Thus the performative practices of the neobureaucratic corporate organization have produced counterintuitive impulses that undermine what many educators described as “the real work,” the “passionate work” of education, much of which was about promoting social progress and enhancing opportunity of all: that is, “doing good” (see chapter 8). We investigate how women leaders negotiated the tensions between passion and performativity in the context of shifting relations of power that created new possibilities and new constraints for individual and collective agency. The new work order provided both opportunities and costs for women in leadership (see chapter 3). We track the ways the discourses of management and the market mesh with older professional discourses within particular education sectors, based on the view that teachers, academics, and trainers identify themselves within a wider community of practice beyond their specific organizations and draw upon wider professional discourses to shape their practice (see chapter 5). Women leaders were expected to “manage the paradox” between promoting these accountability exercises or disciplinary technologies that have the tendency to

control, monitor, and standardize along a narrow range of educational indicators (see chapter 9). This is at a time when improved outcomes for all students rely increasingly on the knowledge worker's curiosity, initiative, and creativity together with professional advocacy, activism, and autonomy based on the recognition of a complex range of educational outcomes (Sachs 2003). Our women educators spoke of a crisis in trust arising out of the loss of a sense of commitment to and alienation from their work as a result of the lack of reciprocity and mutual accountability within organizations and the sense of personal guilt arising from their inability to meet their own desire for perfection and to provide a quality education for students and colleagues (Bishop 1999; see chapter 6). Our study suggests the need to reconceptualize education leadership in postmodern corporate times, our task in writing this book.