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Running head: THE PARADOX AND THE PRICE

The Paradox and the Price: A Case study of Female Academic Managers in an Australian Regional University

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### Abstract

This case study presents empirical data regarding the experiences of female academic managers in an Australian regional university. In Australia regional universities are situated in rural towns or cities outside the seven state capital cities and the national capital. This study is intended as a basis for further research in relation to women working in universities and has informed the development of a survey of female middle managers in Australian universities, which will be reported in another paper. This case study focuses on female academics in front-line roles to more senior management roles in what still remains a male-dominated management context. The study is also set within the context of a number of pressures on Australian universities, including increased student numbers, decreased government funding, corporatisation and managerialism. The broader restructuring of tertiary education is often accompanied by organizational restructuring at institutional level and this is the case in this study. The management lives of a number of women academics, who are front-line and more senior managers, are examined in the context of sectoral and organizational restructuring, the competitive expectations of managing in new times, and in the context of working in a university in an Australian regional area. Discussion examines human resource development practices and other experiences that have prepared the women for their current roles. Issues surrounding leadership and management styles, workplace culture, work/life balance, and work identity are examined. Conclusions are drawn about the organizational value attributed to the management activities undertaken by these women, the paradoxes a number identify in their roles, and the price several believe they have paid in undertaking managerial leadership.

The Paradox and the Price: A Case study of Female Academic Managers in an Australian Regional University

For the past decade in Australia, women have been entering academic frontline, middle, and senior management in somewhat greater numbers. However, this is occurring in a climate of shrinking government funding and globalisation pressures that have resulted in corporate managerialism, economic restructuring, and competition (Blackmore & Sachs, 2001; Currie & Thiele, 2001; Ramsay, 2000). Managerialism may be defined as the promotion of efficiency through corporate style bureaucracies with an emphasis on quantitative standards and measures of performance, with a shift in emphasis away from administration and policy to a new emphasis on management. New Public Management (NPM) has had major impacts on the public sector, including universities in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and has heralded a shift in culture from the collegial to the competitive (Fitzsimmons, 2005).

Within the context of NPM in Australia it has been maintained that universities have been reconstructed as “knowledge

factories" where knowledge is commoditized as a source of value in the capitalist economy and the humanistic foundations of the traditional university have given way to the global knowledge economy, more technocratic management processes, new work environments, and the need to be entrepreneurial in earning funds for the university as government funding decreases (Brooks, 2001, p. 15). How are women who commenced their careers as academics within this more humanistic framework now faring as academic managers in the new culture of corporate managerialism in universities, which have long been acknowledged as highly gendered organizations (Allport, 1996; Aitkin, 2001)? What is their experience of management and what do they perceive is expected of them by their organizations? How do they live their management lives (Knights & Willmott, 1999)? Are there any particular issues faced by female academic managers in the relatively more isolated context of a regional university?

This paper presents some results from a qualitative study of female academic managers in an Australian regional university (hereafter called University X). Discussion focuses on human resource development (HRD) practices and other experiences that have prepared the women for their current roles. Issues for the women surrounding leadership and management styles, workplace culture, work/life balance, and work identity are examined in the light of concepts of work identity and the enterprising subject (du Gay, 1996). Comparisons are drawn between these findings and other research on female academic managers and conclusions are drawn regarding the organizational value attributed to the work undertaken, the paradoxes that a number of women identify in their roles, and the price several believe they have paid in taking on managerial leadership.

## Context

There is a comprehensive literature regarding women academics in higher education in Australia. Everitt (1994) identified a number of factors that illustrate women's disadvantage in higher education employment. She found that gender differences in rank were not caused by differences in age, higher degree, publications, and time at one's university. Also, women gained much lower rank than their qualifications would provide if they were men and these effects were pronounced at senior lecturer level and higher. However, in a more recent and comprehensive analysis, Castleman et al (1995, p. 18) have argued that women who are successful in Australian academic life are those who have emulated the characteristics of a male career path, namely overseas degrees, publications in international journals (not Australian) and overseas sponsors, and speed of promotion and number, but not quality of publications.

More recent figures support the above observations that the academic population is vertically segregated. Currently, women make up approximately 37% of academics in Australian universities, yet 25% of these women are clustered at lecturer level and below (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2001). In the Australian tertiary education sector, achieving a professorship is comparatively rare, however, even within this framework women still lag behind men in more senior academic positions. Recent figures indicate that of those academics above senior lecturer level, 17% were women and 83% were men (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2001).

Nevertheless, women from senior lecturer level and above have been taking on management roles in greater numbers than would be expected given their underrepresentation. While women make up approximately 37% of the academic workforce in Australian universities (12,535 women and 20,913 men) (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2001), they are somewhat underrepresented in the most senior academic management roles. They make up 24% of managerial positions overall, 25% are Vice-Chancellors, and 22% Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2002). At the Executive Dean/Deanship level, women make up around 32% (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2002). Figures regarding women at department/school Headship and Directorship level could not be accessed but it could be surmised that they make up around 35%.

In relation to regionality, while there is a body of literature pertaining to the labour market situation and social position of women in regional and rural Australia (for example, Alston, 1996; Johnston, 1997), this issue has not been extended to women working in regional universities. It could be argued that these women form part of a national labour pool of academics; highly educated and mobile. However, as the regional literature indicates, many women working in regional Australia have their career progression circumscribed because they are not geographically mobile (Johnston, 1997). It may be extrapolated that some female academics in regional universities also have such constraints. Female academics working in metropolitan, capital city areas may have career mobility within their geographical area where there may be three or more universities, whereas more severe disruption may be caused to the lives of regional university women in taking up a post at another university. Relative isolation from networks due to cost of travel to conferences and development of initial contacts may also be a factor for women in regional universities. However, with the advent of electronic communication this may be a harder argument to sustain. The relatively tighter funding in regional universities and their more conservative host climates may also be factors to consider. While the literature discussed below does not take geography or its effects into consideration, it is worth remembering as it resonates in some of the empirical data reported in this study.

As the new managerialism, corporatisation, and restructuring of work practice started to impact in the mid-1990s in Australia, Wyn et al. (1997) examined the experiences of senior women academics working in faculties of education in Australia and Canada. Themes of marginalisation both in the discipline area and within the masculinist culture were cited, from non-merit related failure to gain promotion to the need to power dress in order to feel that one could be taken seriously. However, marginality also gave some women the courage to be more outspoken as a way of asserting rights, creating change, and offering a voice of dissent. Speaking out was regarded by a number of the women as important and having a voice was seen as an act of bravery.

One of the interesting factors in this study was that once women had come through to higher levels a large number maintained a very real commitment to supporting collegial and democratic practices, recognizing staff members' emotional needs and life responsibilities, emphasizing open information networks, and placing a priority on issues of social justice and equity and advocating for students (Wyn et al., 1997). Wyn also perceived that the new managerialism provided a crack in the institutional practices, which may have advantaged women or through which women could effect change.

Wyn et al. (2000) found that their participants referred to leadership in terms of making a difference, using the concepts of equity, democracy, anti-sexism, anti-racism, mentoring, and participatory work and decision-making practices. Many of these factors confirm the finding of more broadly-based scholarship on women in management and leadership roles in the public and private sectors where collaboration rather than competition and contribution rather than self-advancement were seen to be part of a more transformative leadership/management style (Cox, 1996; Sinclair, 1998).

Wyn's empirical Australian work was conducted over ten years ago and related to women working in education faculties and occurred just at a time when the Australian higher education landscape began to change. More recent scholarship (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000) has argued that discursive practices relating to flexibility, productivity, and "performativity" reflect the values of contemporary higher education and now shape worker identity in the academy.

Blackmore and Sachs (2001) examined the situation for Australian women academics across a number of discipline areas, exploring how educational restructuring had changed the nature of the academic work and how leadership was viewed in that changing context. They argued that Australian universities had become

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1. efficiency and effectiveness become the criteria for judging the worth of knowledge (Bloland, 1995); being seen to perform rather than performing itself (Blackmore & Sachs, 2001).

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...less like public institutions imbued with a sense of service and a history of social trusteeship and more like a corporate international company of expert professionals who sell to the highest bidder in a global market. (Brint, 1994 quoted in Blackmore & Sachs, 2001, p. 48)

Furthermore, they suggested that management work and the identity formation of the academic manager was situated within practices of aggressive competition, measurability, marketability, and redefinitions of what was seen to be progressive, innovative, or meritorious. They also identified many of the practices that reconstitute individuals according to these values as highly gender inflected.

Blackmore and Sachs saw the practices of competition, entrepreneurship, client-focused, market-led course production, and self-promotion as evidence of the "managed-self at work" (Blackmore and Sachs, 2001, p. 55). Their views resonate with the work of several post-structuralist scholars who have explored work identity. Townley (1994) has observed that work identity formation occurs as

... the individual becomes tied, through the desire to secure the acknowledgment, recognition and confirmation of self, to practices confirmed by others as desirable. (p.142)

Similarly, du Gay (1996, p. 7) has argued that discursive practices at work "construct particular identities for employees" and has explored "how the latter negotiate these identities in everyday life." He has theorised the concept of the "enterprising" or "self-governing" subject, who, through a range of management practices, is reconstituted into the "strategic human resource" of an organisation. Blackmore and Sachs (2001) have discussed this reconstitution in terms of the adaptations success-oriented individuals make to fit in to new organizational cultures, for example, tailoring research to fit funding objectives, repackaging learning in online or other modes, or participating as a manager in organizational restructuring and downsizing operations.

While the Blackmore and Sachs study evidences some informants' appreciation of the paradoxes of their roles, the

interviews evidence a sense of powerlessness and defeat rather than resistance or pro-action. Is this the complete picture or is there more? The study reported below builds on some of the concepts explored by the scholars cited above in the intimate environment of one specific university. The close observation also opens the space for the female academic managers to explore the pleasure and satisfaction their roles afford them as well as the paradoxes and dissonances of their situations in a context that involves both sectoral and organisational restructuring.

White (2003) maintains that the continuing underrepresentation of women at the top of Australian universities is a result of the dominant Anglo-Celtic, middle-class, male executive profile and that male managers tend to promote men (and some few white, middle-class women) in their own image while ignoring or regarding as light-weight the majority of women. Furthermore, constructions of merit and informal networks that operate within senior management are part of a male hegemony boys club that marginalises women from the informal communication and decision-making channels. She identifies the corporatisation of higher education, where middle managers, such as heads of schools, are charged with managing budgets and changes set by senior management as a cause of stress. She suggests that such factors have made many women think twice about taking on management roles. White also maintains that diversity programs in higher education have not really worked and there is still an element of tokenism in relation to women; change to the masculinist cultures of universities are needed if the situation for women is to improve.

Most recently, Eveline (2004) has documented and analysed a gender equity change process at the University of Western Australia where an inclusive climate and culture was fashioned from a highly traditional, male-centric work environment. This culture made practical diverse changes such as modifying the promotion system to acknowledge teaching, and implementing a Leadership Development program for women that supported their promotion aspirations and making the physical environment safe for women. By giving permission for this cultural change and by having more women at or near the top of the organisational hierarchy, symbolic support was also offered to academic and administrative staff women, raising their expectations of themselves and of a fair and equitable workplace.

Somewhat in contrast to this, Probert (2005) has argued that national data does not fully support women's underrepresentation at higher levels in Australian universities. She maintains that women are not clustered in the ranks of casuals any more than men, are not less successful than men at applying for promotion (although fewer women put themselves forward and are less likely to have multiple tries at promotion than men) and do not have higher teaching loads. However, they do have lower qualifications and entry levels than men (12.2% with PhDs on entry compared to 38.3% of men; 50% of women enter at Level A compared to 34.4% of men), are less likely than men to apply for promotion, have a lower research output, and spend more time on administration and student issues.

At the University of New South Wales where Probert conducted her case study, it was apparent that fewer female academic staff lived with a partner than is the national higher education average and that a number of women divorced during or just after their Ph.D. studies leaving them with greater family responsibilities (Probert, 2005). Furthermore, the impact of caring fell more heavily on all female academic staff, not just for young children, but for teenage children (more complex life issues, which could not be dealt with by anyone other than a parent) and aged relatives. Probert concluded that the gendered pattern of Ph.D. completions, which was a human capital factor in promotion, was related to women often being too exhausted to take up or complete Ph.D. studies. Their full time work in the academic job that never ends and through which they cannot exert the power of absence (ability to work from home is a double edged sword meaning more juggling over most waking hours), and the gendered nature of their family responsibilities (gender politics of the home, absent or no partner) leave little time for research.

### Background

This study focuses on an Australian, regional university. Since the mid-1990s this university has participated in all of the sectoral restructuring that has been effected in university education: increase in student numbers with little increase in academic staff, constraints in government funding, pressure to perform in research and money making activities, and development of management structures and processes that are more corporate. In addition, its very regionality may pose a number of challenges surrounding career development and mobility, isolation, and funding.

In the past seven years this university has undergone two major organizational restructures. The first changed the structure from faculties to a larger number of smaller academic units while the more recent restructure has clustered these units into three mega-faculties. The first restructure afforded a greater number of opportunities than previously for academic women to enter front-line and middle management. The paradoxical effects of this engagement and the effects of the second restructure form part of the contextual frame of the women's management lives are reported here.

At the time of the study in this university there were 36 men above senior lecturer level (80%) and 9 women (20%) (University X - EEO Profile, 2001). There were 45 men at senior lecturer level and 17 women. In all, the ratio of males to females in senior academic positions was 81:26. However, at this first restructure of the 19 academic line managers (not including the Vice-Chancellor) drawn from these people, 9 were women and 10 were men, indicating a higher number

than could be expected of women academics in management roles. This represents almost 50%, which appears to be higher than the national average of women in academic management roles.

This situation was partly due to a previous senior manager's perspective in the restructure; recruitment of some senior women managers and existing female academic staff putting themselves forward in a less-chilly-than-usual climate. However, it must also be acknowledged that from 1994 to 2002 the number of women above senior lecturer level had only risen from 6 to 9, whereas the number of men above senior lecturer level had risen from 27 to 40 (University X - Quality Audit Portfolio, 2003).

In this restructure a number of early to mid-career women at Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor levels were offered the opportunity of headships. In relation to higher education in the UK, Pritchard and Deem (1999) have noted a feminisation of lower levels of management in higher education tied to an intensification of work and high expectations of performance. In this case study, heads of academic units were expected to carry a 40%-60% teaching load, undertake research, and manage their schools/colleges. For those in higher level roles the leadership/management element of their roles was fore-grounded and teaching was not expected.

This study took place just as the second restructure commenced. Seven of nine female academic line managers participated in the study. One of these women was an Indigenous Australian; the other six were white, middle class Australians with a predominantly Anglo-Irish heritage. Two of the seven women were Professors at senior academic management level (Dean and above). Of the five Heads of School/College director, one was a Professor, one an Associate Professor, and three were Senior Lecturers. Four of the women had been in management/leadership roles for ten or more years, while some had been in their roles for between two and five years.

Four of the women had PhDs or equivalent and two were undertaking Ph.D.s. None of the women had children of primary school age, while two had children under 15 years of age. The other women did not have children or their children were living more independently. All of the women were aged between their late forties and mid-fifties and several did not have partners. Particularly, at Head level, these women were somewhat older than their male counterparts in similar positions reflecting their more circumloquitous career paths.

## Methodology

This study may be said to be post-positivist (the researcher accepted the real reality of the context albeit imperfectly apprehendable) employing qualitative methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) of document analysis (such the organisation's EEO report and policies), interviews, and observation, and may be said to conform to a one-case, case study methodology (Stake, 1995). While not employing forms of discourse analysis, concepts of subjectivity and identity formation that may be said to have a poststructuralist perspective were drawn on. This work may thus be sited within theoretical perspectives that inform both critical management studies (Alvesson, 2000) and feminist scholarship (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Oleson, 1994) with a standpoint perspective. Standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1991, 1993, 1997) locates and foregrounds the accounts of women on the margins, in this case some women, who, while engaging in management roles, see themselves positioned less centrally in the power relations in comparison to their male colleagues. Feminist standpoint theory thus produces the reference point for gathering women's accounts of their experiences of management in academe in rich detail rather than attempting to generalize.

Within standpoint theory, these women have a double vision of what goes on: they see their own situation as a marginalized group and can also have specific critical insights into the dominant mind-sets, which govern their lives (Smith, 1987a, 1990). This perspective is not available to those in the dominant group because of their super-ordinate position in relation to power and resources.

Feminist standpoint epistemology as theorized by Harding and others (Harding, 1986a; Harstock, 1987; Smith, 1987b, 1990) also challenges the notion that so called value free or objectivist knowledge can be produced. Those that support this perspective argue that all methods of enquiry, including so called scientific methods, are supported by values and presuppositions about who can legitimately generate knowledge and what knowledge can be about. It is argued that those who produce such knowledge are generally the dominant, male members of society and it is their interests or others' interests seen from a male perspective that are regarded as legitimate forms of knowledge.

In arguing that so-called objectivist knowledge actually serves subjective male interests, Harding (1992) advocates that the pretence of neutrality be dropped from research. She suggests that objectivity can be strengthened by articulating the purpose of the research through examining the social position of the researcher and through making transparent researcher values and biases. I have attended to this in this paper.

In supporting what Harding (1992) calls strong objectivity, the perspective or bias of the researcher can also be seen as a resource rather than a threat to reliability, as Oleson (1994) emphasises:

If the researcher is sufficiently reflexive about her project, she can evoke these (biases) as resources to guide data gathering or creating and for understanding her own interpretations in the research... What is required is sufficient reflexivity to uncover what may be deep seated but poorly recognised views on issues central to the research and a full account of the researcher's views, thinking and conduct. (p. 165)

Harding (1993) maintains that feminist standpoint epistemology must especially take into account and make clear the social location of the researcher and her role in interpreting the experiences of women. In studying my own backyard I have used member checks, reflexivity, and a time lag in order to interrogate my perceptions of the data. I acknowledge any perceived biases to be my own.

The seven women were interviewed for a minimum of one hour each and supplied with an audiotape of the conversation for member checking. One interrupted interview was continued some time later after analysis of other's interviews and several women were re-interviewed again after initial analysis for more in-depth discussion on certain issues.

These semi-structured interviews explored issues around the women's preparedness for their management role, their perceptions of their change management/leadership style, their embodiment as a female academic manager and issues of satisfaction and stress in their role, sectoral issues, and their perceptions of how the organisation valued their contribution. Unsurprisingly, the interviews became more like conversations (deVault, 1990; Oakley, 1981). Although precise transcription of every word did not occur, the audiotapes were intensively and repeatedly listened to and extensive verbatim passages were transcribed once the key themes had been identified and confirmed.

This research has a feminist intent. Research was once said to be feminist if it was about, for, and by women. Fonow and Cook (1991) and Brooks (1997) suggest that this is no longer strictly applicable as research about men can also shed light on the lives of women and research by women may not necessarily be feminist. The guiding principle in this research is that it illuminates the situation of women and through doing this opens the space for dialogue and change.

In undertaking research, which claims to be feminist and especially where women are research participants, there emerge a range of ethical issues. In addition to the ethical considerations inherent in all research, such as gaining informed permission, confidentiality, and the purposes for which the research is used, feminist research also pays great attention to relationships within the research process, to issues of control over the process, and control and use of the outcomes (Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Ethics clearance was obtained from the organization's ethics committee and individuals' informed consent obtained. However, there were feminist research ethics issues that needed to be considered. The first surrounded my dual relationship to the participants as both colleague and researcher in a shared workplace and involved issues of trust and confidentiality (Oakley, 1991) and the bifurcated consciousness (Smith, 1990, 1991) of my insider/outsider role. For this reason I have been at pains to obscure the identities of the women with aliases assigned to larger quotes and have not identified opinions with level of appointment. This has also necessitated not identifying the Indigenous woman's voice, although the reader may still recognize some resonances. This has led to a letting go of a large amount of analysis pertaining to women of colour/Australian Indigenous women in the academy and this is a regret.

The second and related issue involved my participant observer role. My own insider viewpoint and understanding of the context as well as the reciprocal nature of the discussions offer the rich bifurcated consciousness (Smith, 1999) of a standpoint perspective. However, I have utilized only documentation that is on the public record.

In relation to analysis of research material, Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) advocate that the researcher explain the grounds on which selective interpretations have been made while making explicit the process of decision-making and the logic of the method on which decisions are made. Thus the processes, which produce the interpretation, can be made explicit to the reader, acknowledging the complexity and contradictions in interpretation and recognising the possibility of the silences and absences that Maynard and Purvis (1994) highlight. This is linked to the feminist standpoint issues of the researcher's strong objectivity and reflexivity (Harding, 1993) and also to a feminist poststructuralist perspective that acknowledges that the interpretation presented here is one of many possible readings of the interview data.

The limitations of this study are acknowledged. It explores the experiences of a small number of women in one organization and thus generalization is inappropriate. However, some of the issues raised are supported by those identified in other studies. This case study illuminates the way for a broader investigation and indeed has informed the development of a survey of female middle managers in Australian universities.

It has probably been because of my personal involvement with the workplace that I have found this research challenging to write up and have paused for just over a year between undertaking the research and presenting it. This has enabled me to engage in strong objectivity, gain perspective, engage in some critical self-examination, talk again with some of the women, and observe another cycle of organizational restructuring. I acknowledge that the themes and issues presented

here are my interpretations of the material that emerged from the interview material, some as the result of my direct questions and some suggested by the participants. I acknowledge any misinterpretations as my own and thank the participants for their generous participation and for feedback on this paper.

## Findings

The main themes entailed human resource development practices and experiences that had prepared the women for their current roles, behaviors that indicated the women's leadership/ management styles, work/life balance, and those elements that can be interpreted as pertaining to the paradoxes surrounding work identity in the context of restructuring and the new managerialism.

### *Straight in the Deep End*

It has been identified that "little attention has been given to the leadership attitudes, performance, and development needs of women holding leadership positions in universities" (Joyner & Preston, 1998, p. 35). In this study few of the women had experienced any structured development for their current or previous management roles but went "straight in the deep end." Only one woman had participated in a three-day development exercise at the commencement of her role. This had mainly been about university processes and procedures and did not involve management or leadership development. For those with less management experience their preparation had been on-the-job as course co-coordinators, project managers, directors, and non-line-manager centre heads.

The more senior women came from a background of Pro Vice-Chancellors, deans, registrars, and project managers. Again, their experience involved little formal development in their previous organizations. For all of the women it had been learning on the job, and as Stephanie said,

...taking myself off to conferences and workshops and other staff development opportunities. The majority of these were one off. Nothing more than a couple of days. I matched these to my areas of lesser strength.

For another woman, previous roles in other institutions, particularly in the area of financial management and skills she had developed as a political animal, were useful. Several women also mentioned observing the management behavior of others, including what not to do as well as effective behaviors. Concern was expressed that an individual and organizational opportunity had been lost at the case study university in not getting all managers together for strategic planning activities. Clearly, in this and other universities, human resource development practices, which may be quite comprehensive for administrative staff, are not strategically implemented for those academics undertaking management roles.

Several of the women discussed those who had been influential or mentors in their working lives. For a few, it has been those who initially taught them, encouraging them into higher degrees, or to apply for jobs. For another, it was a Director or Vice-Chancellor at a previous institution who was a source of encouragement, advice, and most importantly, information. A number of women spoke of the developmental advice offered by an immediate previous supervisor. In these cases there were more male informal mentors than female, unsurprisingly as more senior academic personnel are male. Although several did report some mentoring from their more senior female or male supervisor in the case study organization, a number felt that they had not been supported in their roles and they had not been mentored. It was seen that a greater amount of informal mentoring went on with male senior and more junior staff whereas the women felt that they needed to go out of their way and explicitly ask for mentoring from a male or female supervisor. Ramsay (2000) offers evidence that women in universities are less likely to be mentored than their male colleagues and that

Exclusion from informal networks, career sponsoring relationships and other avenues, which provide the basis for career advancement and advantage to their male colleagues has been identified as critical for women in all forms of organizations, including universities. (p. 6)

For one woman, it was the experience of higher education that was liberatory. The very nature of her research had thrust her into a leadership role as a spokesperson on contentious issues. She perceived that a great deal of her life and educational experiences prepared her for her current role: "I was always coming to this." For another woman, members of the business community and retired politicians also offered a different perspective that was generative to the managerial role.

Development also came from the school of hard knocks, as Lorraine stated,

...at this particular time, one of the men had been very abusive verbally to me and I had to go into my old office (where he was) and get a file and I was terrified to go in there because I knew I'd get some more abuse.

I remember standing outside the door and thinking "I have to do this; I can't just walk away because that'd be like..."

cowardice. What'll I do? What I have to do is hold my head up, walk in and look them in the face and say 'Good morning, good morning' and go over and get the file." And I walked in there and said "Good morning, good morning," and one of the men looked at me and said, "You are so resilient. We knock you down and you just get up again, don't you?" And as soon as he said that...that was the first time I truly understood that this was deliberate. This was not just because they were uninformed or behaving out of their own pathology. This was deliberate and that gave me a lot of strength. I have learned that when I put my feet on the ground I can stand up and I can speak with quiet dignity but I will stand my ground and nobody will knock me down again. That situation gave me the strength to walk into this place (*current organization*) and function as I do now. It was a valuable tool.

Experience, and often a bitter experience as that above, some judiciously and pro-actively targeted skills-based learning, and mentoring had given these women some preparation for their roles. One woman noted the lack of formal or senior management supported development activities for academic women managers in the case study institution commenting, "Our Equal Opportunity figures are good, so it seems we don't need further development." Another noted, "What happens when these older experienced women retire? Are we supporting our younger ones' development?" The more formal and effective programs that exist in Australia, such as the Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Australian Higher Education or the Australian Technology Network's WEXDEV (see Ramsay, 2000), were not mentioned by any of the women.

While at face value human resource development interventions may be seen as benign, it should also be acknowledged that specific women in management programs can also be seen as an appropriation by the new corporate culture of women's strengths (Brooks, 2001), and that mentoring can be viewed as a practice that clones or reconstitutes the academic identity to organizational ends (Townley, 1994). Notwithstanding this, most of the women identified areas of unmet development needs including industrial relations, financial management, strategic management, and further understanding of sectoral issues. While laudable from one perspective, it must also be acknowledged that all of these skills also better fit the individual for the demands of the more corporatized and managerialist university sector, making them better managers. This paradox of the incorporation of women "into the new masculinist managerialism" (Leonard, 1998, p. 79) was not lost on some of the participants and will be discussed later.

#### *It's about Building Shared Leadership*

As may be expected, their own leadership styles were seen by the women to be consultative with an emphasis on communication. Four of the women were now managers with staff they had worked with as peers in the past – "mature work groups" as one woman put it – therefore, a more collegial style was seen as the most appropriate. Shared leadership was mentioned several times, Sara stated,

Each individual is part of a collective or whole...None of us is perfect, we bring real skills to the job but also make mistakes and there should not be judgment on that, but we should both be responsible for who we are in the workplace and prepared to work together as a team. It's about building that shared leadership process up.

A commitment to success and the active facilitation of planning were seen as part of moving their unit through change processes. Taking a longer-term view, engaging in strategic planning, and adopting some more innovative business planning and accountability practices was also seen to be part of their change management focus. A number of the women took advice from formal or informal management advisory groups made up of academic staff and professionals in their unit. Some also had the practice of delegating tasks, forming advisory committees and working parties, and using facilitators and process skills to enable shared visioning and decision-making.

The development and support of staff and accountability to their peers was seen by all as an important part of their role: "The people issues are 90% of the job - it's the responsibility you have to other staff." One woman saw her role specifically as a motherly one, nurturing each staff member for the overall good of the work group. Another felt particular responsibility for the career development of the large number of professional staff in her unit. Similarly, valuing people was also seen as important: "You need to recognize people for what they do." This ranged from giving public praise and recognition to staff for achievements to offering practical support to staff undertaking higher degrees. As Liz stated,

You need to allow them to grow...You need to create in people a sense of their own self worth and ability to do the job they have to do – that inside them is what they need. Create in people a process of reflection about who they are and what they do in their job and be able to share that with others and look at their process of moving together.

Several leaders discussed bringing together factionalized and often-hostile groups among academics or between academics and professional (administrative or technical) staff or of bringing back into the fold individually disaffected staff. It was perceived by a number of the women that an understanding of different group cultures and grievances was needed. Individual approaches, communication with staff as well as facilitated group meetings that sought common



ground, and a shared vision and commitment to the future success of the unit were seen as proactive ways to move groups forward.

Honesty to staff was also perceived as very important. This included the sharing of information, lack of dissembling or favoritism, transparent policies and decision-making, and honesty to

...tell it like it is. I say, "There are going to be changes in work practices – I can't tell you otherwise, I can't sit here and pretend – you are going to be part of the changes." This is a style of management that has never come back to bite me. (Stephanie)

A high level of personal integrity and accountability was highly valued among the women. Several women attributed their success as a manager to personal attributes such as

My upbringing, principles for treating people, engendering trust, treating people fairly, values and morals. (Marcia)

I don't ask the staff to do anything that I wouldn't do myself, I don't see myself as above them but I do have more of a big picture view just because of the meetings I go to and people I talk with. I try to give this view to the staff so they can see the reasons for decisions and can contribute in an informed way. (Liz)

In summary, each of the women discussed behaviors and attitudes that are consistent with those leadership styles identified in the literature as transformative, exhibiting a range of behaviors such as,

1. An orientation towards people
2. A collaborative, co-operative style with peers, supervisors, and subordinates
3. An orientation toward empowerment and teams
4. A concern with implementation
5. Fairness
6. An external perspective
7. An orientation toward systems
8. A contextual approach
9. Pragmatism, flexibility, and an ability to deal with ambiguity
10. An orientation toward the future (Cox, 1996; Ramsay, 2000; Sinclair, 1998)

However, Sara also commented that these may have been the very qualities that made her a compliant and effective manager in the organization. These issues will be discussed later in the paper.

#### *It's the Challenge to be Recognized Appropriately*

Recognition from their superiors and peers as leaders and skilled managers was important to a number of the women. For some women, there was an issue in being taken seriously as a manager. As Stephanie said, "we need to rise to the challenge to be recognized appropriately."

In relation to being taken seriously by their peers or staff, behaviors such as displaying fairness, an open door policy, a commitment to success, maintaining confidentiality, and not holding grudges were identified by the women as important factors. However, being taken seriously also involved actively confronting certain practices or individuals rather than letting things go on as before. One woman recounted confronting a range of work allocation practices that unfairly privileged certain staff members. Another recounted how she had gone out of her way to consult those who had been most resistant to her in the past.

Consultation, sharing rather than withholding of knowledge, and being open and fair were ways of being recognized by peers and staff. However, it was also acknowledged that to be taken seriously as a manager one had to "call on reserves, do lots of homework for funding and grants, provide skills to others, not take any bullshit, watch my back and stand up for my discipline area" (Hayley). Their credibility as an academic as well as a manager was important for some but not all of the women. However, Sara, who had a wealth of background in management, said, "but I'm a woman and therefore do I really know?" Ramsay (2000) has identified this continual imperative for women in leadership positions to reestablish credibility with superiors, peers, and subordinates as a factor that drains morale and threatens productivity.

Other factors were also seen to be important in achieving recognition from more senior managers. Earning extra funds for the organization was seen as a behaviour that was rewarded in managers in terms of organizational kudos and respect from senior management as Sara stated, "those who advance the university in dollar terms advance their own career." Initiating entrepreneurial activities and winning large dollar research grants or consultancies were perceived as among the behaviors most valued in the organizational culture. It was also observed that money generation through entrepreneurship or obtaining grants was publicly praised in the organization. Lorraine noted, "I think what we're doing well is the people stuff and that's not recognized." At the same time there was concern that "they say they value the person but what they say they value and what they promote (promotion to a higher level) are two different things" (Gwenda).

While all acknowledged the need for the university sector to earn income through entrepreneurial activities, some saw the need to make money as less well-fitting their discipline area and the associated temperaments. Others relished the ability to be entrepreneurial within the parameters of offering access to quality education to a broader group of people, indicating a clear preference to ally the humanistic values of the traditional university culture with the newer corporatist imperatives.

There was recognition among the women below professorial level that concentrating on the people issues that formed the social glue of the organization was giving them a pause in their careers rather than furthering them. Obtaining a Ph.D., research and publications, and a high profile in their discipline area were seen to be the most expedient way to promotion, not "doing the invisible work really" (Gwenda).

The several women below professorial level particularly discussed stalling their careers because of their management roles within the juggling act of teaching and research. These women saw themselves spread too thinly over each area and recognized that possessing higher degrees and having a robust research profile as well as making money were needed if they wished to further their careers. These women saw getting time for research and completion of higher degrees as problematic. Sara stated that in her fifth year as a manager she was just starting to take a weekly research day. Another three women had postponed taking study leave because of institutional needs and now regretted that they had not been able to advance their higher degree studies.

In attending to the people issues, all of these women seem to be undertaking a great deal of emotional labor for the organization (Hochschild, 1983). Several mentioned organizational expectations of them as managers related to "keeping the lid" on issues, "controlling the troops when the flack hits," "being responsible managers of the budget," and compliance and conservatism. However, the qualities that some of the women identified in themselves and other women managers as selflessness, humor, and a high ethical stance were noted as the very qualities that worked against them in terms of playing the politics of *managing up* for recognition and patronage and gaining time to research or publish.

In addition, while a number of the more senior women had been geographically mobile in their careers, for others, mobility was an issue. At least three of the women discussed ties to the geographical area (mostly due to partners' jobs and responsibilities for older relatives) that made career progression through movement difficult: "There was an opportunity but I couldn't persuade the family." Several of the women also commented on the tremendous benefits of attending conferences or meetings within their discipline but lamented the relative cost. Isolation within their discipline, "I'm the only one of me here!", and mentoring and development opportunities were identified by some as an issue.

The majority of the women commented on having to find their way in a male environment: "Our workplace is still very male-centric" (Marcia), "this university is a model of a bureaucratic hierarchy. The plum positions are given to men – women are called in to clean things up" (Hayley) echoing Burton's (1999) observations of women's "care-taking" roles. Several women critiqued the practices of certain male staff at the same level for being aloof from their staff, less inclusive and consultative, keeping power and information to themselves, and being less supportive of the people beneath them. These colleagues were viewed as more overtly ambitious for themselves and not team players, findings that concur with those reported by Ramsay (2000).

Although it was recognized that there was not an overt boys club in the organization, especially when women were present, it was perceived that such behaviors were latent among some staff:

There is a bravado and point scoring – never when we are all together although it's there and wouldn't take much to get a hold.

In a male dominated situation even though individual males have the capacity not to function as "one of the boys," when you have a number of them together it's hard for them not to slip into "one of the boys" behaviour. There are a lot of men who have the capability to operate in a feminist mode but it's a question of what's happening around them and whether they have the permission. In other territory they slip back into the behaviours – a withholding of information and it's a "see how clever I am" set of games that are constructed and played through. (Stephanie)

On the other hand, being a female manager was also seen as an advantage at times as more subtle ways of managing the power politics could be engineered. One woman stated that she did not take contentious or sensitive issues through the main management forum but rather chose to speak with individuals first. Similarly,

A woman is not seen as the same level of competition particularly where and how you get the decision made. I think it's easier for a woman to get the end she wants. You get a lot more confidences (as a woman) and (have the communication skills) to get your own way. They also condescend to you. You have to think of what you want as an outcome. (Liz)

It was also recognized that a number of women were more outspoken than male counterparts in similar roles. Wyn (1997, p. 121) discusses marginality as giving some women the courage to "speak your mind in terms of dissent and critique." In this case women who had talked back were discussed by at least two of the women: "Those who have spoken out, it has not been well accepted." Clearly, there are ways to effect decisions and the more overt ways in public forums, which some women often use in playing by the rules, are not those that influence.

It was noted that there appeared to be some embarrassment on the part of some managers that gender equity issues still needed to be discussed. As Liz stated, "after all, there are other issues like race and disability. It's like...we've had EEO. Everything's fine here. Look at all the women in management roles."

### *You're Always Juggling*

Each woman displayed a deep understanding of the pressures on the higher education sector: massification in a climate of Quality Audit, packaging of knowledge as a product, client service, and research for quick results rather than longitudinal studies. They displayed in-depth appreciation of the financial constraints on the sector and on regional universities in particular and the need to source funds through entrepreneurial activities. However, these increasing pressures were seen to impact on management roles.

Six of the seven women commented on the high workload involved in their roles. While some relished this, "I enjoy it so much – I would work seven days a week, all day" (Gwenda), others found that they sometimes felt overwhelmed. A Marcia stated, "It's not having enough time, having too many things to do, always juggling priorities, the amount of work that builds up when you have to go away...everything is in short grabs."

For all of the women there was a large amount of paperwork, e-mails, meetings, and people issues. The volume of work is more apparent "only when you get away from it" and "realize what you have done." As one woman mentioned, a huge amount of time is spent doing things for people that have no benefit for yourself personally. I made no progress on my Ph.D. because I was doing the work that doesn't show. (Gwenda)

The volume of written material was also commented on: "I'm always writing words – reports, submissions, reviews, curriculum documents, handover reports. Does anyone read it?" (Hayley).

All women had techniques for dealing with high volume and complexity:

I get up at 5 a.m. and do an hour and a half's worth of e-mails. I make lists, stuff rarely falls off the bottom. I do things once when they come across the desk. I stay behind or work at home a few hours every night to get all the e-mails done. I've got my own phone line at home, computer, and fax. I can work 24 hours a day. It gets you on a treadmill and unfortunately, the more you do, the more comes your way. (Marcia)

Harvey (1990) identified the compression of time and space in contemporary corporate behaviours. Examples such as getting to work before the boss or staying at work late into the evening, always being contactable by fax, e-mail, or mobile phone even while on holidays are commonplace. Kerfoot and Knights (1993) also have identified the gender inflected nature of long hours, visibility, and competition. Collinson and Collinson (1997) demonstrated how such practices highlight the difficult relationship between work and home and leads to a re-masculinization of management where women managers only survive where they emulate the behaviors of the male colleagues. As Sara stated, "I think our workplace is still very male-centric. Men can stay behind for a drink, are expected to travel at short notice. There is back up at home for men." Several women regretted lack of time to have a social life or look after their health and well being: "I spend too many hours in front of a computer, I sit in meetings, I puff upstairs." "I'm, concerned about my weight," and "I used to be a very fit person" were typical responses. Tretheway (1999), in examining women's professional, embodied identities, illuminated ways in which the female body is physically and emotionally disciplined; fit not fat, built for endurance, ready to perform in time and space.

Of more concern were the effects of stress on the female managerial body. During stressful times a number of women noted "I had a tight chest, heart palpitations," "I was not sleeping, waking up in the middle of the night," "I was using alcohol to relax." As Hayley and Lorraine said respectively,

I've been feeling less well in the last couple of years, not recovering as quickly as I used to. I'm getting tired, not taking leave breaks like I advise others to do.

There have been a few big things and the emotional angst of not being able to sort it out. You wear some of the guilt and emotional stress for things like that. It does get you down but you try not to take it home.

Undertaking the emotional labor of the people issues; physical availability allied to time and space compression; and the sedentary work of meetings, computers, and travel appear to have taken their toll on the wellness of some of the women.

However, all of the women stressed that they were in their roles by choice: "Not everyone dances to the same drum as I do. The long hours – it's my choice, not everybody's" (Marcia).

All mentioned that they obtained great satisfaction from their roles. Liz's and Hayley's responses are fairly typical:

I feel great when I do something that enables good things to happen – curriculum innovation, helping students through the maze of bureaucracy, supporting someone through promotion. That's what makes it worthwhile. (Liz)

It's about moving things along, influencing senior management decisions. (Hayley)

These activities involved being able to achieve things, make a difference, and influence their institutions' direction as well as enabling others to develop. All women reported pleasure and satisfaction in being in the thick of it, and experiencing stimulating, challenging work. However, most saw these elements in terms of service rather than as part of developing their own careers.

Others were able to leave work behind at the end of the day: "If the budget's blown you're not going to die" (Sara). "I think, God I've got to do this. God, I've got to do that," and another part of me says, "so what, the world is not going to stop" (Lorraine). However, there are frustrations and doubts:

...I felt pretty diminished when I'm condescended to or my contribution to something is discounted. I don't mind being ignored...it's more when my work is ignored or marginalized, that's when it gets to me. And when they trot out my ideas as their own ...we'll I'm either the greatest change agent or totally used...it's hard to tell sometimes.

## Conclusion

A number of the women articulated the paradoxes in their roles in relation to the expectations of the New Public Management. The very skills and qualities that made them good people and conflict managers have recently been identified by Eveline (2004) as "glue work" and her research has indicated that women in universities engage in a disproportionate amount of it. The women in my case study also recognized the paradoxical nature of such work. On the one hand, it positions them as part of the managerialist culture, "doing the dirty work for management" when difficult matters needed to be dealt with. Several of the women appreciated that their consultative styles could be seen to be appropriated by the new managerialism to keep the workforce involved and compliant, particularly in relation to industrial relations issues such as intensification of work. On the other hand, these women also perceived that they brought a more humanistic orientation to often difficult staffing and budgetary matters and argued that because of their transparent management practice "it would be worse if we weren't in there working" (Stephanie). They keenly recognized that this work also was undervalued in the masculinist culture of the organization and took them away from other activities such as completing Ph.D.s, building a research profile, or well-regarded entrepreneurial activities.

Munford and Rumball (2001) identify that many women experience greater discomfort or tension if they are operating in situations that seem contrary to their own philosophy. A number of the women expressed an awareness of the considerable pressures on academic managers to reconstruct the self to performativity criteria and thus gain the goodies of recognition from senior management and promotion. However, alongside this was a very clear commitment to equitable and inclusive practices:

Much as we'd like it there's no going back – we have to bring the best values forward into the new context. The challenge is to operate with integrity in the new environment. (Liz)

It appears that the humanistic values of the old university context are being employed in the new and that the identity of academic and manager/enterprising subject sit, often not comfortably, side by side.

Blackmore and Sachs (2000, p. 2) have identified a number of paradoxes that shape the work of women in leadership and management in Australian universities, including, "...the notions of academic identity which are collegial while merit is rewarded on the basis of individual achievement."

At one level, the work identities of the women in this study have been reconstituted to performativity criteria as they

have taken on the contemporary values of the sector and the organization in governing the workforce. The paradox is that while there is also a level of resistance on the part of the women to certain practices or management roles that are not humanistic and empowering, their very women's way of managing is also co-opted to organizational ends.

Furthermore, in undertaking the often invisible emotional work of the organization a price is paid by those women in more front-line positions as they have little time or energy to "do the things that really count" in terms of organizational values. While these women recognized that they were being good people managers, the perception was also expressed that the real action was happening elsewhere and that they were putting inordinate time into maintaining organizational health. Chesterman, Peters, and Ross-Smith (2003), in their broad study of Australian senior female university managers, have observed a similar phenomenon.

Another paradox for some of the women surrounds the absorbing work of their discipline bases that they have put aside to undertake management roles. Discipline specific work offers another identity closer to that constituted by the more traditional, humanistic academic culture. A number saw this as a comfort zone and area of personal satisfaction as well as a pathway to promotion. Having experienced the management life, at least two women echoed Sara's views, "Management is not where we want to be."

At University X, an analysis of the organizational structure and climate a little over a year after the initial research reveals some interesting phenomena. Two further mini-organizational restructures have occurred with a number of amalgamations of academic units on the grounds of efficiency and cost savings rather than academic rationale. Front-line management roles at head of school level have been aggregated from 14 positions to 9. In at least 3 of the cases there has existed potential for competition between female front-line managers still trying to lead in a humanistic, collegial manner. Munford and Rumball (1999) note that with downsizing and restructuring the relatively few women in management roles often, and paradoxically, find themselves in competition with each other. In this case, it appears that female participation in management is declining through both restructure and a disinclination of some women to continue in their paradoxical roles. In this case, the competitive climate of New Public Management has pitted women against each other with some stepping back from management roles in the current climate.

Whether the factors analyzed above are prevalent in the wider university sector and have a particular regional overlay is the subject of further investigation. These factors also need to be considered in the light of another sectoral phenomena. Chesterman et al (2003) have identified that relatively large numbers of senior academic women, who were the trailblazers in tertiary education management, will be retiring in the next few years. It may be speculated as to the readiness and willingness of the next cohort of women to take on these roles given the identified sacrifices and paradoxes. It may also be speculated as to the willingness of some universities to support the development of this next wave of academic leaders.

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