

**Change, Resistance and Coping: a Study  
of First Tier Managers in Further  
Education**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of the University of Greenwich for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

January 2011

## DECLARATION

I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have provided support in many ways. Firstly, I would like to thank Andrea Young for giving me the first push. Second, I would like to thank my supervisors who complemented each other wonderfully: Ian McNay whose expertise helped me shape the research from the beginning and whose unique blend of theoretical rigour, pragmatism and perceptiveness contributed immeasurably; Jill Jameson whose boundless enthusiasm for supporting new researchers, theoretical insight and extensive experience of the sector gave a balance to my work. I cannot thank them both enough – my supervision sessions were an extraordinary education. Thirdly are the participants in the research themselves, dedicated, hardy individuals who made each meeting fascinating. My admiration for the work they do is immense. My penultimate thanks go to Natasha for her love and support through the final leg of the project. Finally I would like to thank my parents to whom this thesis is dedicated. It would not have been possible without them.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents findings from a study of first tier managers (FTMs) in Further Education colleges, a role that has been largely neglected by the extant literature. The study investigated the role in four general FE colleges and adopted a case study approach, employing semi-structured interviews as the main research method. The findings suggest that the FTM role is extremely diverse and heterogeneous, elastic and poorly understood. Yet FTMs themselves enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in how they performed their roles. Within colleges, FTMs worked within a trialectic of students, team and organisation and could be identified in one of four positions defined here in terms of metaphors of faith: for fundamentalists, students were the priority; priests put their teams first; converts prioritised the organisation; martyrs attempted to meet the demands of all three elements of the trialectic and suffered the highest degree of home invasion by work.

Within the resistant context of FE, FTMs found themselves the audience for a variety of forms of routine resistance by lecturers, from gossip and rumours to making out and withholding enthusiasm. However, as they were rarely the target of resistance, a number of FTMs colluded with their teams or turned a blind eye in the hope of continued cooperation; few were willing to challenge resistance. FTMs were also highly active in their own resistance, expressing principled dissent overtly to senior managers as well as manipulating data and even fiddling paperwork. Yet while change management within colleges appeared generally poor, resistance was not to change but to managerialism, surveillance and the culture of performativity.

Despite the challenges of the role – the stress, the immediate gratification needs of senior managers and the fire-fighting – FTMs were found to be highly committed and highly motivated. Where the stress became too much, the participants employed a range of coping strategies including non-compliant coping, strategies intended to resist stressors rather than manage them. Finally, a new approach to job design with FE is suggested, one that involves idiosyncratic deals, a process of negotiating roles that potentially meets the needs of both the organisation and the employee.

## CONTENTS

Change, Resistance and Coping: a Study of First Tier Managers in Further Education.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
CONTENTS .....	v
TABLES AND FIGURES .....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Research Aim and Objectives .....	1
Conceptual Framework and the Literature .....	4
The Structure of the Thesis .....	6
Research Outcomes and Contribution.....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	9
Context .....	9
First Tier Managers .....	14
Resistance.....	27
Everyday Resistance .....	31
Change and Resistance.....	39
Coping .....	47
Key Research Themes .....	51
Chapter 3: Research Methodology .....	52
Subjectivity and a Case Study Approach .....	52
Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study .....	58
Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness .....	60
Engagement and Persistent Observation of Emerging Issues .....	62
Respondent Validation .....	63
Triangulation .....	63
External Validity and Generalizability.....	64
Sample.....	65
Methods of Data Collection .....	69
Critical Incident Technique.....	69
Interviews .....	71
Observations.....	73
Documents.....	74
Data Analysis .....	76
Ethics .....	79
Summary of Chapter 3 .....	81
Chapter 4: Fieldwork Round 1 .....	82
Defining ‘First Tier Manager’ .....	82
Moving into Management .....	84
The FTM Role: Clarity, Contestation and Elasticity.....	87
A Typical Day .....	92
Home Invasion .....	94
Perception of Role .....	96
Student-focused.....	97
Team-focused.....	99
Organisation-focused .....	100
Omni-focused.....	102

A Manager by any other Name .....	103
Views from Above and Below .....	106
SMT.....	109
Change.....	112
Change Management.....	115
FTM Resistance.....	116
Relationships with Lecturers .....	123
Summary of Chapter 4 .....	125
Chapter 5: Fieldwork Round 2 .....	127
Introduction .....	127
Blackton College .....	127
Eastshire College.....	130
Woodside College .....	131
Parklands College.....	132
Change Management.....	133
FTM Involvement in Change .....	137
FTM Responses to Change .....	138
Lecturer Responses to Change .....	141
Resistance.....	143
Types of Resistance.....	144
Unionisation and Resistance .....	155
Targets and Audience.....	158
Turning a Blind Eye? .....	158
FTM Resistance.....	162
Professionalism .....	167
Commitment.....	174
Summary of Chapter 5 .....	175
Chapter 6: Fieldwork Round 3 .....	178
Introduction .....	178
Blackton College .....	178
Eastshire College.....	181
Woodside College .....	183
Parklands College.....	185
‘Terrors of Performativity’ .....	185
Progression and Regret.....	189
Motivation .....	193
Demotivation.....	196
Stress .....	198
Stress and Health.....	204
Coping .....	206
Hardiness.....	220
Institutional Management of Stress.....	222
The Real Management of Stress.....	224
Guilt.....	226
Summary of Chapter 6 .....	229
Chapter 7: Documentary Analysis, Observations and Respondent Validation.....	231

Introduction .....	231
The FTM Role on Paper.....	231
Observations.....	238
Respondent Validation .....	244
Summary of Chapter 7 .....	245
Chapter 8: Discussion.....	247
Introduction .....	247
Understanding the FTM Role.....	248
A Typology of First Tier Management .....	260
The Potential for Comparability.....	274
FTMs Resisting .....	275
Coping .....	282
Senior Management.....	286
Recommendations .....	291
Future Research.....	305
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	306
References .....	315
Appendix 1 .....	333

## **TABLES AND FIGURES**

### **Tables**

17	Table 1: Database search results
88	Table 2: Comparison of roles
144	Table 3: Categories of routine resistance
207	Table 4: Coping responses
232	Table 5: FTM Titles
236	Table 6: FTM duties
269	Table 7: FTM metaphorical faith positions

### **Figures**

96	Figure 1: Trialectic
105	Figure 2: Kouzes and Posner's Five Leadership Practices
264	Figure 4: FTM Model



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Research Aim and Objectives

I began teaching in Further Education in 2000 in a large inner city college as a lecturer in English language and literature. After 18 months, the position of Programme Leader arose, a first tier management position responsible for ‘alternative curriculum models’, those academic courses created for the large proportion of disaffected students that the college enrolled. With no management experience and no preparation, I was suddenly responsible for a team of eight lecturers and a cohort of around 300 students. What rapidly became apparent was that the first tier manager (FTM) role was poorly designed, poorly defined and poorly understood. Although it included line management responsibilities, the insistence was that the job was about managing a curriculum area, a reified conception that placed everything from photocopier breakdown to marketing within my remit. What was also clear was that the FTM role was at the forefront of change: while I began managing academic programmes, within two years I found myself managing construction provision for former NEETs (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training). Not only did I have no knowledge of the construction industry but the new team of ex-industry professionals had no experience of teaching disaffected young people. The inevitable conflict and lack of senior management support became an everyday occurrence and precipitated my decision to leave not only the job but the sector as well. I entered FE to make a ‘pro-social difference’ (Grant, 2007), to ‘create pedagogic contexts in which learners felt valued and... empowered to learning’ (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004, p7); in the end my role consisted of walking around construction workshops breaking up fights and sending daily emails to senior managers requesting increased support for the team.

With the benefit of reflection, the pivotal nature of the FTM role, its simultaneous centrality both to college strategic change and to student success, became even more apparent. But what remained was the fact that so little attention was paid to so important a role. I was aware of the FTM position only within one college at one

particular time and so this provided a potentially fruitful area for investigation when I first considered doctoral study. Upon an initial literature review it rapidly became apparent that not only had my previous college neglected the role, so had the academic literature, the majority of the FE research focusing on senior, and to a lesser extent, middle management positions. Despite calls over the last 20 years for greater attention to the FTM role (McNay, 1988; Lumby, 1997), this tier remained under researched and under theorised. Therefore, *the aim of this research was to investigate the role of first tier manager within further education colleges from the perspective of the FTMs themselves, to provide a narrative for their work that drew on a range of theoretical positions.* This aim was then articulated in terms of five research objectives:

1. *To investigate the extent of similarity and idiosyncrasy of the role design across colleges.* My professional experience as a FTM meant that I had very little knowledge of how the role was designed and enacted in other colleges. As such, while the main aim of the research was to investigate the emic perspective, I sought to examine the formal and official role in a wider sense, to consider the comparability (Goetz and LeCompte in Schofield, 1989) of the findings from the fieldwork;
2. *To analyse how the role is shaped both by formal job design and individual sense-making.* As an FTM, I did not see the role in the same way as my FTM colleagues. Some emphasised the needs of the students above all else, others saw the role as a way of avoiding teaching and spending more time in their office; still others saw it as a stepping-stone on the promotion ladder. What was clear was that each of us made sense of the role in different ways that dictated how we performed the role. Our individual sensemaking was a reaction to the same formal job design and, while the design was unclear and ambiguous, it was however a reflection of the structure and culture of the organisation. This research, therefore, sought to examine the interplay between individual sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and formal job design and the impact upon how the role is performed;

3. *To examine the involvement of FTMs in organisational change.* While the FTM is often at the forefront of change due to their position as the final implementer, the extent of their involvement within wider strategic change is unclear. Strategy is often seen as residing within the hands of senior leaders rather than employees at the frontline (Bailey et al., 2006). Yet, with a growing emphasis on distributed (Lumby, 2003) and collaborative (Jameson, 2007) leadership in the sector, FTMs are in an ideal organisational position to contribute to strategy. The extent to which this opportunity is embraced thus formed the third theme to be examined;
4. *To investigate the experience, management and enactment of resistance.* While an FTM, I experienced a range of resistance within the workplace from principled dissent (Graham, 1986) at whole college meetings to covert behaviours such as sabotage. Yet within the educational literature there are relatively few studies of resistance. In a liminal position (Mulcahy, 2004) that straddles teaching and management, lecturers and leaders, FTMs are the ideal focus to investigate the variety and extent of routine resistance within FE. However, as well as being managers, FTMs are also *managed* and, as such, equally liable to resist their own subordination while responding to the resistance of their teams;
5. *To examine the ways in which FTMs cope with the demands of their work.* The existence of stress within FE is well documented and, arguably, afflicts all levels of the hierarchy (see for example Edward et al., 2007). However, while lecturers may experience stress arising from curriculum changes, managerialism and performativity (Ball, 2003), FTMs experience all of these and managerial pressure in addition. As such, the final research theme concerned the ways in which FTMs coped with the stress they encountered within the workplace. In particular, rather than using established scales of coping (e.g. Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002), the intention was to devise a tentative grounded scale of coping that arose directly from the data.

## **Conceptual Framework and the Literature**

What became apparent early in this research project were the limitations of the educational literature in terms of FTMs, a role that was severely neglected. Where the role was discussed, for example in Horsfall (2001), it was within a research design that was problematic and tended to represent only the official, instrumental and observable aspects of the role rather than the emic perspective of the FTMs themselves. Elsewhere it was articulated by reference to middle management theoretical frameworks (Barker and Brewer, 2008) rather than providing a grounded theorisation. In other studies, FTMs were mentioned only as part of larger studies on management – usually middle management – where the delineation between middle and first tier was unclear (Cole, 2000; Prichard and Deem, 1999). It thus became evident that the educationally focused literature presented a limited articulation of the role and did not accurately represent the complexities and conflicts of the role that I had experienced as an FTM myself; personal experience, as Maxwell (2005) argues, is an essential element of the conceptual framework that moderates the orientation towards a specific paradigm within the literature. As such, it became clear that the literature element of the conceptual framework would need to be expanded beyond those studies which were educationally focused to draw on other sectors and other conceptual paradigms. For example, in terms of the role itself, while the role in FE has clearly been neglected, in other sectors, such as nursing, there has been more attention paid with a number of writers articulating alternative frameworks for understanding the role (Bondas, 2009; Johansson, Pom, Theorell and Gustafsson, 2007; Viitanen, Wiili-Peltola, Tampso-Jarvala and Lehto, 2007). In addition, studies of the FTM role within the private sector have also contributed to the framework for this research (Hales, 2005; Martins, 2007).

However, it was not just research into the role itself that was lacking – many aspects of the role that I had encountered from my own experience as an FTM were largely neglected. Here, then, was a further necessity for breadth of conceptual framework which accords with Westie (in Denzin, 2009, p304) who argues that

The strategy is to select from among the many contradictory propositions already held in the field, a particular proposition or set of propositions, which are relevant to the problem at hand and which appear to make sense in terms of what the investigator already knows about the aspect of society under investigation.

For example, from my experience as an FTM and as a lecturer, resistance was a constant. Whether as a result of change and the ‘extreme turbulence’ of the sector (Edward et al., 2007, p155) or the frequency of managerialism (Gleeson and Knights, 2008) and surveillance (Ball, 2003), resistance was a continual expression of dissent within the college. Yet, as with the role itself, there was a paucity of studies of resistance within FE. Where it is discussed, it is often articulated in terms of official union-instigated action (Mather and Worrall, 2007); union strength, however, is in decline in education with lecturers increasingly unwilling to strike (TES, 2010). Far more significant in my own experience were resistant actions that were unofficial, covert and individualised and it is these forms – routine or everyday resistance – that are rarely discussed in the educational literature. As a result, the conceptual framework for this research theme – one of the most central to this project – had to draw on literature outside the educational paradigm, especially the sociological field where resistance has been studied extensively. From Scott’s (1985) pivotal work on the routine resistance of peasant communities to those writers who transposed this framework to the field of organisational studies (see for example Collinson, 1988; Prasad and Prasad, 1998), the aim was to bring this wider and more theorised conception of routine resistance to the context of FE.

But it was not just resistance that was a neglected theme in the FE literature – few studies actively engaged with the way that college employees cope with the demands of their work. As such, again the conceptual framework for this study sought breadth within the academic literature and drew on the psychological paradigm. Here we find the theorisation of cognitive appraisal (Folkman, 1984), the means by which individuals make sense of transactions within their lives and select their responses based upon their perception of the impact upon their wellbeing. From the fundamental premise of cognitive appraisal arose a range of coping scales, continuums of

behavioural responses to those transactions which are appraised as stressful and harmful. While such approaches have been applied to managers in general (Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002), they have not been applied to managers in FE – as such, this psychological approach framed the coping section of this research project.

The literature element of the conceptual framework for this research project was therefore diverse and drew on a range of paradigms – educational, sociological, business and psychological – in an attempt to adequately ground the data and address the social, organisational and educational elements of FTMs' work context. FTMs after all are not just educators, they are employees engaged in the full range of organisational behaviours. But more than this, the conceptual framework was designed to intentionally bring new perspectives to bear upon the role – as Maxwell (2005) states, 'the most productive conceptual frameworks are often those that integrate different approaches, lines of investigation, or theories that no one had previously connected' (p35). However, there was a further reason for creating a diverse framework. As I had been an FTM within FE, there was the concern that my understanding of the role might lend an increased bias to the analysis of the data and theory generation. As such, breadth of framework was used as a means of theoretical triangulation (Patton, 2002). Here various theoretical frameworks are drawn upon and applied to the data providing not only a variety of interpretations but a means of balancing the a priori knowledge of the investigator.

## **The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters and one appendix. This introduction is Chapter One.

- Chapter Two contains the literature review and is divided into five sections: the FE context, first tier managers, resistance, change and resistance and coping. Finally, a number of research themes are identified from the review which informed the fieldwork;

- Chapter Three concerns the research methodology that was adopted, namely a case study approach. The chapter begins by discussing the case study method itself, its strengths and limitations, before outlining the issues of validity and reliability. Next, the actual methods of data collection are discussed; finally, the ethical issues of the research are examined;
- Chapter Four presents the data from the first round of fieldwork. Here the chapter focuses on the role itself and how it is interpreted by the FTMs; from this interpretation, an initial typology of the role is presented. The mechanisms of change are discussed and it begins the examination of how the participants enacted their own forms of resistance;
- In Chapter Five, based on the second round of fieldwork, the major changes identified in the previous chapter are followed up and the processes of change management discussed. This round also began to look at the types of resistance encountered by FTMs as well as further exploring their own resistance, especially in terms of their professional identities;
- Chapter Six presents data from the final round of fieldwork with the participants and highlights the reflection of the FTMs upon their transition into management. In particular this chapter focuses on the stress of their role and the methods of coping which they employ;
- Chapter Seven presents the data from the triangulation methods including the documentary analysis of FTM job descriptions nationally, four observations of team meetings and respondent validation;
- Chapter Eight is the discussion chapter and brings together the initial analyses that are found throughout the previous chapters. In particular, this chapter develops a typology of first tier management, examines managerial resistance and proposes a tentative coping scale;
- Chapter Nine is the conclusion;
- The appendix is a copy of the summary findings I sent to the research participants for respondent verification.

## **Research Outcomes and Contribution**

There are five main contributions of this thesis:

1. A typology of first tier managers that, while specific to FE, may well be applicable to other sectors where there is an element of care and emotional labour. The typology is articulated in terms of religious metaphors to highlight the strength of dedication and faith of the participants to their chosen field. The four initial types are: fundamentalist, priest, convert and martyr;
2. An addition to the under-researched field of managerial resistance. In much of the previous literature managers are seen in terms of their subjugation of subordinate staff; this research adopts a dialectical perspective of control and resistance that positions managers as both manager and managed, conformist and resister;
3. A new coping scale is proposed that is grounded within the data and defines coping according to three categories: compliant, affective and non-compliant. This new scale is thus highly contextualised within the experience of FTMs in FE rather than arising from measurement of coping in general;
4. This research contributes to the literature concerning perceptions of distance of senior managers within the sector. It posits a number of possible causes for the perceptions of distance between senior managers and other staff and suggests that lecturers and FTMs may be as guilty of perpetuating such distance as senior managers themselves;
5. Finally, this thesis proposes a new approach to the job design for the FTM role, one that sees job design as a process of negotiation in the creation of 'idiosyncratic deals', a negotiated and collaborative approach to job design.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Despite educating three million people each year, providing 39% of entrants to higher education, generating £6.8 billion in income (Association of Colleges, 2008 and 2009) and employing 263,257 people (LLUK, 2009), Further Education (FE) remains the educational ‘Other’ to schools and universities. Paradoxically important and insignificant (Jameson and McNay, 2008), colleges are central to the insatiable and interminable skills agenda while at the same time remaining unable to ‘achieve their rightful place in public esteem’ (DfES, 2006, p2) and ignored by the largely uninterested media.

This chapter will review the literature of FE in general, providing a context within which to examine the role of the first tier manager, change management, resistance and finally coping.

### Context

‘Evolutionary and incremental change will not be enough.  
We need fundamental reform in the role colleges and training  
providers play’.

Tony Blair, Forward to *Further Education:  
Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*, DfES, 2006, p2

In this speech from 2006, Blair’s comments are emblematic of Further Education since incorporation and the creation of a sector characterised, if not demonised, by unremitting change and ‘extreme turbulence’ (Edward, Coffield, Steer and Gregson, 2007, p155). Incorporation (see Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Shain and Gleeson 1999; Watson and Crossley, 2001; Williams, 2003), brought about by the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, gave financial independence to colleges, transferring responsibility from the Local Education Authorities which had previously controlled funding. With colleges becoming businesses and Principals becoming CEOs, colleges were thrust into a marketplace, a ‘climate of entrepreneurialism’ (Smith, 2007, p55)

which, it was assumed, would drive up educational standards as colleges found themselves forced to compete with other providers. However, as Smith argues, post-incorporation colleges, with a zeal that would come to define the sector's adoption of new ideas, tended to put business needs before the educational community and certainly before the needs of their staff who, as a result, declined in numbers, suffered increased workloads, greater casualisation, insufficient support, increased disciplinary action and, unsurprisingly, high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion (Gibbons, 1998; Burchill, 2001).

This re-creation of FE should be seen within the schemata of wider public sector reforms and the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) from the coupling of the post-war movements of administrative reform and the public sector's adoption of management theories and practices from the business world (Hood, 1991). NPM is, Hood argues, a set of organisational doctrines rather than a coherent discourse emphasising: 'professional' management; competition in the public sector; discipline in resource allocation; explicit standards and measurements of performance; greater emphasis on output controls; the disaggregation of units on the public sector. While he highlights the limits to NPM's monolithic universality, anyone who has worked in FE since incorporation will recognise the dogmatic pervasiveness of these principles. Indeed, FE may have been a victim of these reforms far more than any other area of the public sector, with change having been 'forced through in FE to a greater extent, and in a more compressed period of time, than in other parts of the public sector' (Burchill, 2001, p146).

While Hood's article remains a seminal work on NPM, it does not move beyond a discussion of its systemic organisational functionality. Rather than perceiving NPM as a set of doctrines, it has increasingly been seen in terms of a set of controls (Ackroyd, Kirkpatrick and Walker, 2007; Hoggett, 1996; Thomas and Davies, 2005) that, again, are ubiquitous within the learning and skills sector. In particular, the fabrication of performance management apparatus, 'a "solution" to the absence of trust' (Hoggett, 1996, p23) is all-encompassing within FE, the rise of the audit culture (Hodkinson, 2008; Scaife, 2004; Steer et al., 2007) and surveillance mechanisms symptoms of

simultaneous de-centralization and centralization from the tyranny of central government 'policy levers' (Steer et al., 2007).

The audit culture can be seen as the primary means of surveillance within FE, the Foucauldian rendering of the panopticon (Foucault, 1991), Bentham's penal architecture whereby 'inspection functions ceaselessly' and where power is 'continuous and anonymous' (Shore and Roberts, 1993, p5). The inmates are alone in individualised cells eliminating interaction and control is perpetuated via internalisation of the disciplinary mechanisms. In FE, panopticism can be identified in quality systems such as inspections of classroom practice (Ball, 2003) by both external agencies such as OFSTED and internal inspections and endless data collection on student attendance, punctuality, retention and achievement. However, panopticism, especially the internalisation of discipline, can also be found in the emphasis on vision, strategic plans and distributed leadership to create 'corporate clones' (Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian and Samuel, 1998, p300) whereby the employee comes to authentically identify his/her own values with those of the organisation. The panoptic is also evident in horizontal structures, especially through the increasing emphasis on team-work (Sewell, 1998; Avis, 1999; Barker, 1993; Casey, 1999; Eden, 2001; Ezzamel, Wilmott and Worthington, 2001; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Knights and McCabe, 2000b and 2003) whereby surveillance and the exercise of power is a function of peers rather than superordinates. While some argue that the panoptic metaphor has been over-used (Ball and Wilson, 2000; Taylor and Bain, 2003; Thompson, 2003; Wilson, 1999), that it overemphasises the totalitarianism of surveillance and ignores the experienced existence of resistance and microemancipation (Alvesson, 1992), it remains a useful paradigm for this research which will argue that surveillance in FE is significant in terms of control but also as a cause of everyday resistance.

Here, then, in the context of accountability, performativity and surveillance is the source of the 'blame culture' frequently mentioned in educational studies (Avis, 2003; Bailey, 2006; Edward et al., 2007; Gleeson Davies and Wheeler., 2005; Kelly, Izzatt White, Randall and Rouncefield, 2004; Mulcahy, 2004 ) and in other sectors (Bovey

and Hede, 2001; Collinson, 1999; Pearson, 2004; Soila-Wadman, 2008; Tourish and Robson, 2006; Vince, 2000; Vince and Saleem 2004) but often in a taken-for-granted and under-theorised way. Where it is discussed in detail, blame culture is seen as ‘a manifestation of the prevalence of defensive postures acted out by one part of the system against another, and which have become entrenched as an integral part of organizational culture’ (Vince and Broussine in Vince and Saleem, 2004, p135). It is important to note that defensive posturing may occur in different parts of the organisational system simultaneously – senior managers may blame front line staff while being blamed themselves. However, Vince and Saleem (2004) found that blame, at least as far as managers were concerned, was ephemeral to say the least: if it did exist, it was ‘not here’ but elsewhere, an ironic position given that blame itself is an allocation of responsibility to somewhere or someone else.

To help identify where blame actually resides, Pearson (2004) identifies a number of signifiers of blame within organisations:

- A culture emphasising only good news;
- Bullying bosses;
- Zero tolerance for mistakes;
- Scant positive feedback and swift negative feedback;
- A lack of courage for critical upward communication.

To varying extents, all of these elements can be located with the FE literature and, more generally, can be seen as symptoms of NPM in general. It is perhaps unsurprising then if employees in further education are ‘paranoid’ (Ainley and Bailey, 1997) though this is a barely mentioned aspect of the sector. Colby (in Kramer, 1998, p253) argues that paranoid cognition centres around feelings of being ‘harassed, threatened... subjugated, mistreated, wronged, tormented, disparaged, vilified... by malevolent others’. Less hyperbolically, Kramer (1998), discussing the milder, commonplace variety of paranoia, suggests that it comes from a heightened sense of self-consciousness when an individual feels they are under moderate or intense

‘evaluative social scrutiny’, which is arguably the default condition of the FE employee.

Accompanying the increase in accountability and surveillance in post-incorporation FE was the rise of managerialism, the wholesale adoption of management practices from the business sector with little consideration of the differences between the sectors (Harper 1997; Bailey et al, 2006), a rationalism disputed (Mulcahy, 2004; Ainley and Bailey, 1997) but under-researched. Emphasising management’s right to manage, managerialism in the sector includes:

- A concern for the systemic rather than the organic;
- Increased focus on the external environment;
- The control of work previously left to autonomous professionals;
- The introduction of private sector methodologies such as Total Quality Management and Human Resource Management;
- The creation of mission statements and strategic plans.

While managerialism has increased within higher education (HE) (Barry, Chandler and Clark, 2001; Allen, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Beck and Young, 2005) and schools (Simkins, 2000; Wright, 2001; Morley and Rassool, 2000) it can be argued that the impact upon staff in FE is more acute because the expression of public and overt resistance is less effective in FE and this is one of the central arguments of this research. FE lecturers enjoy neither the public profile nor political importance of HE academics or school teachers; if the epistemology of this claim is in doubt, one need only compare the media saturation of articles covering industrial action by school teachers or university lecturers and the minimal coverage of a strike in the FE sector.

It is further argued that managerialism in the sector is founded upon very masculine characteristics (Gleeson and Knights, 2008) – rational, task-oriented, non-emotional, combative and competitive – ‘embedded in relations of power and resistance’ (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998, p440). Within the context of ‘new’ managerialism,

argue Kerfoot and Whitehead (2000), men create masculine identities which emphasise power and control that conceal the vulnerability of their positions; managers are thus personifications of Further Education itself, replicating the sectoral competitiveness in interpersonal contexts and adopting a masculine subjectivity (Thomas and Davies, 2005; Gleeson and Knights, 2008), embracing aggression, heightened visibility and a culture of working long hours, an anxietal acculturation (Casey, 1999) of the macho-culture. While some feminisation of management has occurred within the sector, it is primarily at the lower levels of the managerial hierarchy. Furthermore, despite an increase in women at senior management level (Cole, 2000; Deem, Ozga and Prichard, 2000), it is argued that for women to succeed at senior levels, they must collude, conform and adopt masculine strategies (Ball and Reay, 2000; Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998).

The final aspect of managerialism of significance for this research is that, as proposed by Randle and Brady (1997), one of the main antecedents of resistance within FE is managerialism's erosion or colonising (Ackroyd et al., 2007) of professional autonomy. While there is contention as to whether FE lecturers are being: de-professionalised (Robson, 1998; Avis, 1999 and 2003, Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Leathwood, 2000; Mather, Worrall and Seifert, 2008); unprofessionalised (Colley and James, 2005); professionally reconstructed (Gleeson et al., 2005) or de-professionalised and re-professionalised at the same time (Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Spenceley, 2006; Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009), there is agreement that professionalism is, and is likely to remain, a contested terrain.

### **First Tier Managers**

If FE as a whole is both important and insignificant, then so too is the first tier manager (FTM) within the sector, the bulk of the extant literature preferring to focus on leadership and management at senior management strata rather than the final level of implementation and the first recipient of resistance, despite calls for an increased focus on the role (McNay, 1989; Lumby, 1997; Jameson and McNay, 2008, p103) and even a recruitment campaign ('Make a Difference', LLUK, 2010). Indeed, this

literature review found not one peer-reviewed article solely devoted to the first tier manager in FE (a paucity echoed in the HE context – see Mercer, 2009) and there may be several reasons for this dearth of literature: firstly, in line with the business-orientation of the sector, most authors prefer to focus on senior management levels (for example Izzatt-White, Kelly and Rouncefield, 2004; Kelly et al., 2004 a and b), especially in terms of leadership, as the abiding belief remains that organisational success and efficiency reside chiefly in the hands of the ‘strategists’ rather than the ‘implementers’. Secondly, while there is generally only one title for the most senior members of colleges – ‘Principal’ – first tier managers may be referred to by a variety of nomenclature (Rabey, 2008) such as Programme Area Leaders, Programme Managers and Curriculum Coordinators (see p232 for a list of titles collected during the documentary analysis). Thirdly, there is no consensus as to the extent of their management or HR duties or whether they are managers at all. These factors may account for the fact that, in her survey, Lumby (1997) discovered that anywhere between 1% and 20% of employees within colleges were first tier managers<sup>1</sup>. Nearly ten years earlier, the ill-defined nature of the role was also identified by McNay (1988), highlighting the paradoxical lack of change within the ever-changing sector when it comes to low-level managers.

To confirm the paucity of literature on FTMs in FE discovered at the beginning of this research project, a more detailed and systematic search was conducted at the end of the fieldwork. At this stage, the diversity of the role had been documented which provided a framework for the final search. The final search was conducted using the various job titles that had been collected during the fieldwork as well as the more generic terms such as ‘first tier manager’ and used four databases/search engines: Swetswise, ERIC, IngentaConnect and Google Scholar. Each of the education specific FTM job titles that were collected during the fieldwork (such as Curriculum Leader or Programme Area Manager) were searched for within the databases. Where the title was generic to any number of sectors – first tier manager, front line manager – the search terms were linked with the following additional terms:

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<sup>1</sup> No statistics for first tier managers were available from LLUK; instead, categories of staff were either Managerial (no levels distinguished) or Professional (teachers)

- Further education
- Post-compulsory education
- Vocational education and training
- Lifelong learning
- Adult education
- Learning and skills sector

The results of the search are presented in table 1 below.

Few of the articles found were focused exclusively on FTMs or equivalent roles in an English FE context; instead, FTMs were part of the sample of studies on FE (or vocational education and training (VET, Australian)), management in general (e.g. Lumby, 1997; Mulcahy, 2004; 2007) or, more often, middle management (e.g. Briggs, 2001; 2004; Gleeson and Shain, 1999). Indeed, only one peer reviewed article focused solely on the FTM. Paterson (1999), a course leader in an FE college, documented her activities by keeping a diary of her working experiences and suggests that the role is defined by competing pressures, unexpected events and a multiplying list of tasks. To add to the pressure, course leaders perform their myriad tasks in a context of accountability as the tensions between teaching, managing a team, meeting the students' needs and maximising retention and achievement compete. Course leaders, in this college at least, are for all intents and purposes managers rather than leaders – despite their job titles – and ‘the job calls less for “vision” ... and more for the completion of course related administrative tasks’ (p110). While the research is limited in terms of focusing auto-ethnographically upon the author, it does present a picture of the role as lived and identifies the pressures upon FTMs, especially the dialectic between teaching and managing. *What is also significant is the question raised by the author of how far the role is self-defined, a significant focus of this thesis.*



<b>Table 1: database search results</b>				
<b>Search Term</b>	<b>SWETSWISE: all fields, all years</b>	<b>ERIC: all fields, 1992 to present</b>	<b>Ingenta: title, keywords and abstract, all years</b>	<b>Google Scholar, all fields, since 1992, all subject areas</b>
<b>First tier manager</b>	0	0	0	0 relevant
<b>first line manager</b>	1, Lumby (1997), developing	Reid (2001)	0	Lumby (1997), Briggs (2004), Aves (2004), Foley (2007)
<b>Front line manager</b>	Mulcahy (2007)	Mulcahy (2001)	0	Foley (2004)
<b>Junior manager</b>	0	0	0	0 relevant
<b>Curriculum manager</b>	1, Briggs (2001)	0	0	6 relevant, all focused on middle managers
<b>Curriculum leader</b>	1, but leadership at senior levels	0 relevant	0	1 relevant but focused on middle leadership, Briggs (2007)
<b>Curriculum team leader</b>	0	0	0	0 relevant
<b>Programme manager</b>	0	0	0	Prichard and Deem (1999), Gleeson and Shain (1999), Shain (2000), Deem and Ozga (2000)
<b>Programme area manager</b>	0	0	0	0 relevant
<b>Programme leader</b>	0	0	0	Gleeson and Shain (1999) Prichard and Deem (1999)
<b>Programme area leader</b>	0	0	0	Harper (2000)
<b>Team leader</b>	0	0		Prichard and Deem (1999), Lumby (1997), Briggs (2001 and 2004)

However, while there may be few peer-reviewed articles devoted solely to the FTM in the English FE sector, publications by organisations such as the Learning and Skills Development Agency (now Learning and Skills Network) and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (now subsumed into the Learning and Skills Improvement Service) *have* examined the role. In a study for the Further Education Unit, McNay

(1988) found the FTM in FE experiencing conflict between the priorities of managing and teaching, facing difficulties of managing staff and students and negotiating conflicts between the two, dealing with crises and coping with a lack of time and resources. In addition, it is clear that FTMs were distant from the decision making process and senior management in general (see also Jameson, 2007 and Edward et al., 2007). For Horsfall (2001), in a Learning and Skills Development Agency publication (LSDA), the introduction of the Common Inspection Process created an increased focus on the first tier and especially ‘instructional leadership’: subject expertise, knowledge of syllabuses and regulations and expertise in teaching and learning. These three areas are argued to be the remit of Course Team Leaders (CTLs), although the role and title are not defined. However, the ‘framework’ for the role created by Horsfall is derived from an analysis of the ‘narrative style and the way in which strengths and/or weaknesses are highlighted’ (p5) in Ofsted inspection reports. The author then identifies activities that CTLs are involved in as detailed in the Ofsted reports to create a list of areas against which role incumbents can assess themselves. Horsfall is also keen to stress that ‘the presence of an activity per se is not enough. It is the outcome that is the litmus test of the activity’ (p7). Methodologically, such an approach is problematic: to create a framework for a role based on external inspection reports is likely to only represent the official, observable and limited version of the role, that which was investigated in the documentary analysis section of this research (see Chapter 7). What it categorically does not include is the emic, the perspective of those who actually experience and perform the role. In addition, it ignores those activities which do not provide a measurable outcome and, as will be highlighted in the findings chapters, much of the FTMs’ day consists primarily of non-measurable but essential activities.

However, Horsfall also draws on primary research consisting of five ‘key’ questions asked of CTLs in a number of colleges. The data suggest – echoing McNay (1988) – that the CTL role is poorly understood and is subject to a number of competing demands: management versus leadership; teaching and learning versus financial concerns; the maintenance and changing of organisations and systems. However, what is apparent in this account is that the role is presented as largely homogenous, an

assumption starkly at odds with Mulcahy's (2007) notion of FTM hybridity and the findings of this research. Secondly, the key questions do not include an examination of the *activities* of the CTL, only their perception of the role. As such, the Ofsted view of what CTLs actually do is unchallenged. Finally, while the author acknowledges that there is 'something of a mismatch' between the findings from the analysis of inspection reports and the primary research, there is little attempt to reconcile these differences or suggest the causes of the mismatch.

In a Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) publication, Barker and Brewer's (2008) study of team leaders was conducted within the context of succession planning for middle leaders and, while providing some examination of the team leader role itself, the issue of promotion is its main focus. As such there is no definition of 'team leader' as a role, only that they 'should not be classed (or paid) as managers yet they might aspire to become managers' (p34). The assumption then, is that, while leadership may be apparent at any level of the organisation, management begins only at middle levels; as such, this assumption contrasts starkly with this research project which will argue that management – as with leadership – should be seen as an activity rather than a hierarchical level.

Barker and Brewer highlight the diversity of the role to a limited extent, mainly in terms of the number of staff managed and the variety of hours spent teaching or preparing to teach but provide little evidence of the diversity of activities of team leaders, with only the five most common activities listed. Interestingly, none of the activities involves students, an unusual finding for a junior position. However, this may be accounted for by the fact that Barker and Brewer's list of activities presented to respondents was drawn from Barker's earlier research of middle management activities (Barker, 2006) rather than the first tier. As such, it can be argued that an a priori paradigm of activities based on middle management is inappropriate for an examination of the first tier. Of the five activities that are discussed, the tensions highlighted by McNay and Horsfall (see above) are again highlighted with pedagogical concerns vying with administration. In addition, team leaders identified a number of leadership activities that they felt were important to their role; what is

significant is that the data suggest that middle managers expect far greater levels of leadership from team leaders than team leaders themselves. However, there is little account paid to the tension between leadership and management at the first tier. While the authors point out that not all team leaders considered themselves as leaders, there is no discussion of how many considered themselves to be managers. Where the research is more useful is in its account of succession planning for middle management positions: team leaders were most attracted to a middle management position by the chance to represent their department, faculty or college and the opportunity to see ‘the bigger picture’; they were most put off promotion by the potential of losing touch with students.

A number of studies discuss the increase of women in the FTM role (Cole, 2000), the role that is ‘vulnerable to carrying the burden of transformation’ (Shain, 2000, p219). Prichard and Deem (1999) argue that it is at programme manager/coordinator level (first tier) that the ‘new disciplines’ of funding mostly affect and it is at this interface ‘between the managerial ‘centre’ of colleges, and the new ‘business’ units’, that women are being positioned. The effects, it is argued, are greatly increased working hours and a dilution of professional identity. Deem et al. (2000) also identify the pivotal position of the FTM as well as documenting conflict with lecturers and, conversely, present evidence of an unhealthy dependency of lecturing staff, with female FTMs adopting, sometimes as a deliberate strategy, a ‘mothering’ role, a phenomenon also supported by Ball (2000). Deem et al. view this parental positioning primarily as a management tool employed to placate difficult staff. What is less discussed is that mothering, while seemingly avoiding the criticisms of managerialism, can also be seen as a means of control. Leathwood (2000) also uses the parenting metaphor and does talk of control but in terms of the Victorian father of senior management rather than the ‘mother’, the feminist analysis of management observed in these studies seeming to disregard, even excuse, women’s control strategies. However, it can be argued that both parental roles attack the professional identities of lecturers and both ‘infantilise’. While there is no suggestion in Deem et al. that this mothering is an antecedent of resistance, Leathwood proposes that, faced

with infantilisation (by male managers), the only recourse lecturers have to resist is to adopt the role of 'naughty children'.

As well as dependency among lecturers - and to further obfuscate the FTM role - Mulcahy (2004) argues that learned helplessness may exist in frontline managers themselves as they are 'victims' of the hierarchy within the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector. Here the 'liminal' nature of the FTM role (Mulcahy uses the term 'front line' instead of 'first tier') is highlighted as they attempt to work at, or on, both sides, of the boundaries between teachers and more senior staff. However, while FTMs are presented as the implementers of strategy entrusted to 'connect strategy to staff' (p195), Mulcahy also discussed the mediation and appropriation evident in the process as role-holders make compromises and trade-offs. However, elsewhere (Mulcahy, 2007), the actual extent of FTM involvement in strategy is limited: they are expected to share institutional vision but not re-shape it. Foley (2007) also discusses the role FTM with the VET sector, but here the role is specifically to manage adult and community education (ACE) provision. The themes, however, are common to the rest of the extant literature: relentless change, increases in administrative work, funding changes and the centrality of 'quality' procedures all of which were seen as responses to the notion of competitiveness within the sector. However, Foley also argues that the responses of FTMs in the adult and community sector foregrounded notions of commitment and community rather than the business discourse of the VET respondents.

With a paucity of literature concerning FTMs in FE, the literature review was expanded to other sectors where the role of FTM has received more attention. As discussed in the first chapter, the aim of drawing on wider conceptual paradigms was to consider the FTM in its widest organisational context, to see FTMs as employees as well educators. In the wider literature, similar themes and issues were discovered. In his study of FTMs in the private sector, Hales (2005) argues that FTMs are essentially supervisors at least in terms of role, the core responsibility being 'performance-oriented supervision' (p472). As such, supervisors wield considerable influence over their subordinates (Smith and Canger, 2004; Tierney, 1999; Xin and Pelled, 2003;

Tepper et al., 2006) which can sometimes be abusive (Tepper, 2007). Similarly Malmqvist (2008) talks of functional and economic responsibility as the role has expanded (Learner and Statham, 2005) with an increasing acquisition of human resource management (HRM) processes as supported elsewhere (Cunningham and Hyman, 1995; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Martins, 2007 and 2008). However, the devolvement of HRM responsibility to FTMs, rather than a means of empowerment or organisational employee-centeredness, should arguably be seen in terms of control (Martins, 2007; Barry et al., 2001; Robson, 1998; May, 1999; Shain and Gleeson, 1999), giving managers the power of appraisal, target setting and absence and disciplinary procedures. This is in stark contrast to the purported duty of leaders and managers in the presumed post-bureaucratic era public service to win the commitment of staff and it is closer to the traditional industrial view of supervisors as 'agents of social control' (p1029) in Balser and Stern's (1999) terminology. Additionally, the devolvement of disciplinary power to lower managerial levels arguably allows senior managers to side-step unpopular and anti-collegial acts of discipline. Bullying supervision can then be perceived as a function of first tier managers rather than senior managers. *The extent to which FTMs in FE were responsible for performance management and whether it was embraced or resisted formed an important focus of this research.*

One sectoral context where the first/front line manager has received significant attention is nursing, a work role in a sector that shares many common concerns with FE. Duffield and Franks (2001) argue that while the FTM is considered pivotal 'to the delivery of effective, efficient, quality health care' (p87), there is also a lack of consensus internationally on what the role actually is; with a lack of consensus, the scope of the role is determined by the individual organisational structure and context. In their discussion we also find a number of parallels with the FTM in FE: the balance between management duties and 'subject' (student/patient) focus; the juggling of various activities at a rapid pace; providing a link between teams (lecturers/nurses) and more senior managers; the absence of formal role preparation for transition and development of FTMs. However, this lack of definition and role expansion, while causing difficulty, is seen as a primary determinant of job satisfaction in Lee and

Cummings (2008). With greater elasticity of role (a primary argument of this research, see p79) the front line managers reported greater levels of decision making, more responsibility and greater challenge.

Bondas (2009) found that nurse FTMs often obtained their positions by chance rather than a conscious career choice and that, once in post, they struggled to maintain their attention to the 'human values of ethical nursing care' as a result of administrative burden. In addition, the opportunities for nurse FTMs to *lead* nursing care were found to be diminishing. Bondas also suggests a typology of nursing managers which, although significantly underdeveloped, provides an additional lens through which to view the role: the Active Developer balances a concern for *nursing care* with the *creation* of nursing care (a more strategic, quality improvement activity); the Passive Thinker, while possessed of 'good ideas' about nursing care rarely translates those ideas into reality; the Impulsive Creator focuses on ad hoc development even though concern for nursing care may be absent; finally, the Routine Manager focuses mainly on administrative tasks all the while lacking concern for the 'content and direction of nursing care' (p359). Underpinning Bondas's typology is the work of Johansson, Pom, Theorell and Gustafsson (2007) whose research examined the 'goal-profile' of first line nursing managers. Here, it is argued, nursing FTMs agentively position themselves according to three goal profiles: the nurse goal, the administrator goal and the leadership goal. Similarly, Viitanen, Wiili-Peltola, Tampso-Jarvala and Lehto (2007) argue that identifying a 'single and consistent sub-culture related to leadership and managerial work' (p117) among first-line nursing managers was impossible; instead they offer four frameworks which underpin both the work and subjectivity of nurse managers: the 'nurturing mother' focused on staff welfare (and, as such, links with the 'mothering' of FTMs in FE (Deem et al., 2000)); the 'administrative nurse' whose focus was administrative tasks; the 'rational producer' who adopted the discourses of managerial productivity and efficiency; lastly they identified the 'expert and developer' who prioritised staff development. While there remain some contradictions between the three models of nurse FTMs, what is clear is the dialectic between agency and organisation context within which nurse managers operate. As

such, it informs one of the key research foci of this research project: *do FTMs define their own role identity or do organisational structures dominate?*

FTMs in FE and nursing both operate within the contested terrain of public sector professionalism, a paradigm that informs Kitchener, Kirkpatrick and Whipp's (2000) study of the supervision of professional work in social services departments. They argue that post-NPM, the role migrated from being a custodial and collegial model to one of increased bureaucracy, increasingly directive and functioning as part of the surveillance mechanisms of institutions. However, they did find some evidence of the pre-NPM model in existence, often camouflaged in the garb of managerialism and, importantly for this study, hiding the malpractice of staff. The collusion of management with staff malpractice or misbehaviour is another under-researched area, warranting only the briefest mention in a handful of texts (Noon and Blyton, 1997; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Collinson, 2002; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Larson and Tompkins, 2005; Knights and McCabe, 2000a), none of which focus on FE. *This research will attempt to address this gap.*

With such a paucity of literature on the FTM role, it is useful to include, additionally, studies of middle managers in FE for four reasons: firstly, the FTM role may not exist or is not identified as management in smaller providers with flatter structures; secondly, the distinction between first tier and middle management can be arbitrary in some cases – Shain (2000, p218), for example, includes Curriculum/Programme Leaders within a multiple middle management definition as part of a wider pattern of more junior staff being drawn into middle management positions (Scotson, 2008); thirdly, many of the salient issues present in the literature are of common concern between the two roles; finally, the interaction between the FTM and their line manager will be an important area of this research.

Many studies of middle managers in FE have as their organisational context flat structures consisting of senior managers, middle managers then lecturers (for example Harper, 2000) with no additional hierarchical levels, a construct that will be unfamiliar to those working in large colleges with multiple levels of management.



Indeed, trying to find information about management levels within the sector is virtually impossible. Official statistics (LLUK 2006 and 2008) give data for numbers of managers but no indication of levels. As a result, we must be cautious when approaching the literature on middle managers and just how 'middle' they are.

The predominant categorisation of the middle manager, in FE and in general, is that of a 'buffer' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) caught between the 'two different worlds' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997, p 57) of senior management and staff and the two different paradigms of organisational strategy and everyday pragmatics (Leader, 2004). They are implementers of policy, all the while living with vulnerability (Shain, 2000), mocked by their subordinates (Sims, 2003) and engaged in self-defence from those above and below (Van der Weide and Wilderom, 2004). Within the 'normalized intensity' (McCann, Morris and Hassard, 2008. p434) of increased working pressure and reduced job security, Briggs (2003, 2005), while highlighting the existence of role ambiguity, defines five aspects of the role that are, to a varying extent, applicable to FTMs: corporate agent concerns the extent of whole-college understanding and the efficacy of cross-organisation work at the structural and systemic level; implementer – the most visible aspect of the role – is about the implementation of college policy; staff manager rests on the 'organic' attention to the differentiated needs of the team and HRM functions; liaison primarily concerns lateral and vertical communication between sections, departments, levels of hierarchy and individuals; finally is leader, the most contentious of the role aspects Briggs argues, and concerns role-modelling, vision, motivation and entrepreneurship. Middle managers were found to fully understand the professional values that underpin their work, yet that understanding sometimes dissuades them from seeking promotion to senior management (Gleeson and Knights, 2008) which, from their perspective, appeared to necessitate the abandonment of those values. Middle managers also understand the role itself while the role remains unclear for others (Briggs, 2007). Whether the position is understood thoroughly or not, only a minority of teachers wish to be promoted into middle management positions (Barker, 2006) which poses a serious problem for the sector.

*It will be hypothesised during this research that, as a result of the vulnerability and precariousness of the role (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Sims, 2003), middle managers in FE act as gatekeepers in the upward communication process, especially if the communication is negative.* Wolfe Morrison and Milliken (2000) argue that middle managers' fear of negative feedback and a belief in the inherent self-interest and untrustworthiness of staff lead them to engage in behaviours designed to create and perpetuate organizational silence (Brown and Coupland, 2005; Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003; Wolfe Morrison and Milliken, 2000). This is a condition endemic in 'highly competitive environments characterised by a diminishing resource base' (Wolfe Morrison and Milliken, 2000, p711) such as FE where upward communication is discouraged by 'demonizing' critical opinions (Tourish and Robson, 2006). Speaking up is thus seen as dangerous or not worth the effort (Brown and Coupland, 2005; Anderson, 2008; Louis, 2006; Pearson, 2004). It is feasible that these gatekeeping behaviours are to be found among FTMs as well, but, without the visibility of profile and heightened vulnerability, it is more likely that middle management is the key stratum for this phenomenon. It is possible that the gatekeeping of middle managers provides a significant impediment to the work of FTMs as the implementers of change, especially when FTMs perceive the changes to be unrealistic or misguided – such critical judgements, once received by middle managers, appear unlikely to be passed upwards.

The dyadic horizontal interactions within which FTMs find themselves will be a significant aspect of this research and will be grounded in the framework of leader-member exchange (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Purcell and Hutchingson, 2007; Tepper, 2007; Tierney, 1999; Trader-Leigh, 2001; van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008) which focuses on the relational aspects of leadership and followership. The project will necessarily examine FTMs as recipient and agent of impression management strategies (Bolino, 1999; Bolino and Turnley, 1999; Singh, 2001; Collinson, 1999; Burke and Rau, 2007; Newton, 2002) and influence tactics (Aguinus, Nesler, Hosoda and Tedeschi, 1993; Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Fo and Yukl, 2000).

There are several key questions arising from the literature on FTMs that informed this research:

- How diverse is the role of FTM within FE?
- In what ways do FTMs understand the role themselves? Given the typologies suggested in the nursing literature, what types of FTMs are there in FE?
- What is the impact of the tension between organisational job design and individual sensemaking?
- To what extent are FTMs responsible for performance management in FE and is it embraced or resisted?
- How do FTMs respond to the perpetual and multiple demands documented in the literature? When do they comply, when do they cope and when do they resist?
- How do FTMs react to the resistance and ‘malpractice’ (Kitchener et al., 2000) of subordinate staff?

## **Resistance**

As implementers of change and the first tier of management, resistance from staff is likely to be an everyday occurrence for FTMs; equally as likely, as junior employees they will also resist more senior staff; as such, resistance is a key concern for this research. Yet resistance as a concept is a highly disputed term. For some it is the actions of the oppressed in feudal societies (Scott, 2008); for some it is the core of the labour struggle, it is strikes and walkouts; for others, certain hairstyles (Weitz, 2001) and even ‘pornographic’ clothing (Langman, 2008) can be seen as resistance. It is sometimes specific to the workplace – Prasad and Prasad (1998) suggest that ‘all workplace resistance (whether routine or organized) is triggered by different forms of organizational control, namely, direct personal control, technical control, bureaucratic control, and worker or concertive control’ (p231). It is sometimes general: for Cohen and Taylor (1978) all individuals are engaged with resistance, against the reality and drudgery of their lives, an action rooted in morality (Turiel 2003). It can be visible or invisible, recognised or unrecognisable, yet two central themes are common to the

literature (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004): resistance involves *action* and *opposition*. Whether the action is official and coordinated, such as a strike, or covert and individual such as eking out a subjective space by distancing oneself from corporatism, it is action that is opposed to something. The something, of course, is as conceptually plural as the action – managers, men, government, hegemony – but ‘it’ is always in a position of power, exercising control. For Foucault, ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ (in Russo, 2003, p4) and thus resistance and control should be seen dialectically (Mumby, 2005) rather than being considered in isolation.

However, a significant caveat should be highlighted in any discussion of resistance. Given the diversity of its forms in the literature – from pornography to walkouts – a number of writers such as Brown (1996) caution that the academic conception of resistance may, potentially, go too far. Others (Rubin, 1996; Hoffman, 1999; Fleming and Spicer, 2008) suggest that by finding resistance everywhere and in every action – Fleming and Spicer give the example of ‘farting’ as resistance – we risk reducing its significance and rendering it banal. Increasingly resistance is seen as pragmatic, according to Fleming and Spicer (ibid), as people just try to get by.

It is from this perspective that this research will investigate resistance within Further Education. Against a context of managerialism, surveillance, de-professionalisation and individualisation, first tier managers must attempt to implement change; the result, even of the smallest change, is likely to be resistance from a body of lecturers separated, demoralised and stressed. However, it must be remembered that, while managers, FTMs are also *managed*, their level of hierarchy not necessitating the abandonment of teaching and total identification with and as ‘management’, *and so their own resistance – their dual status as both manager and managed, implementer and resister – will also be examined.*

Before dealing with the specificity of resistance to change, we need to examine what I will call the *resistant context* of FE or what Routledge (1996) terms, in reference to social movements, ‘terrains of resistance’:

The sites of contestation and the multiplicity of relations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic powers and discourses, between forces and relations of domination, subjection, exploitation and resistance (p516).

In the opening section of this chapter I identified the primary features of the resistant context in the sector: managerialism, surveillance, performativity, individualisation and de-professionalisation, each with its own particular discourse and each with its own counter-discourse which all employees in FE will be acquainted with. *I will argue that it is these factors, the resistant context, that provide the background and the framework within which all change is performed, measured, categorised and interpreted. Furthermore, I will argue that the resistant context provides a proclivity to resist all exercises of power enacted by those who are identified as 'management'*. Here, then, resistance can be understood in relation to labour process theory (Jermier, Knights and Nord, 1994; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Thompson, 2003; May, 1999; Taylor and Bain, 2003) where power is hegemonic (Ollin, 2005) and 'resistance is understood to be the inevitable result of the objective exploitation of labour by capital' (Spicer and Bohm, 2007, p1669), the concomitant antagonism between worker and management inevitably creating resistance within the capitalist workplace where workers and management struggle over economic resources. Resistance is here seen as 're-appropriation' (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999): as the organisation takes work, time and identity from the worker, so then workers attempt to re-appropriate them via resistant practices. Viewed through the lens of labour process theory, colleges, pseudo-capitalist workplaces since incorporation, have appropriated time in terms of increased teaching hours, job security via casualisation, wages by ending national pay negotiations and, lastly, the identity of lecturers by the processes of proletarianisation (Eden, 2001; Humphreys and Hoque, 2007) and managerialism. In this geography of loss, it can be argued that the proclivity to resist becomes inevitable.

However, Spicer and Bohm (2007) draw our attention to two limitations in the labour process theory perspective of resistance: firstly it is accused of giving little account of the subjectivity of workers and how they 'engage and understand their workplace contexts'; secondly, it focuses on structural and systemic antecedents of resistance

that preclude analysis of the ‘spaces of agency and minor degrees of freedom which are enjoyed by employees’ (Spicer and Bohm, 2007, p1670). The alternative is the view of resistance as micro-politics. Drawing heavily on Foucault, (e.g. Anderson, 2008; Covalleski et al., 1998; Thomas and Davies, 2005) this perspective emphasises workers’ subjectivity, the ‘product of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies’ (Knights and Wilmott in Knights and McCabe, 2000a, p423). From this perspective, constantly surveilled and with managerialism attempting to colonise professional autonomy, lecturers (and ‘resistant’ managers) will ‘make-out’ (Goffman, 1971), find the loopholes (Noon and Blyton, 1997) and negotiate their own space (Fleming and Sewell, 2002). To maximise the conceptualisation of resistance in FE, this research will draw on both views of resistance, labour process theory and the micropolitical.

The archetypal expression of resistance according to labour process theory is orchestrated by unions, whether via strikes, working to rule or other actions, and ‘action’ here is the key word. However, Britain in general has seen a decline in unionisation since the late 1970s (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 1999; Machin, 2000; Waddington and Kerr, 1999) and, while there is little extant literature on the subject, unions in FE appear also to have declined in power – The University and College Union’s own survey (Times Education Supplement, 2008) indicates that only 35% of FE and HE teachers are members of a union. Despite the fact that lecturers – subjected to job insecurity, increased casualisation, low morale and proletarianization – were increasingly looking to NATFHE (now UCU) for protection (Mather and Worrall, 2007), Ball (2003) suggests that the three ‘policy technologies’ (p215) of marketisation, managerialism and performativity have placed so much emphasis on individualisation that it has eroded any sense of professional solidarity in the educational workplace, rendering trade union affiliation an anachronism.

Managerialism is also a prime cause of de-unionisation in Burchill (2001) where the FE unions, NATFHE being the largest, were subject to ‘unrestrained forcing’ (p147) post-incorporation, subjected to indirect attack via the lack of national negotiations of pay and terms and conditions and the increase of part-time and agency staff. In a developing theme, Burchill also highlights individualisation, this time of contracts, as

a key factor in union decline. In more recent studies, Humphreys and Hoque (2007) and Beale (2004) highlight the lack of effective resistance from the union in response to changes within the sector and the waning of its influence, especially after NATFHE lost the dispute over conditions of service – the ‘Silver Book disputes’ – in the 1990s. It was found that the union was now ‘informed rather than consulted’ by college managers and further that there were ‘now no effective outlets for lecturer discontent’ (Humphreys and Hoque, 2007, p1211). With the power of unions evaporating and lecturers increasingly unwilling to strike (TES, 2010), labour process theory argues that workers are forced to find other, less official and less public strategies of resistance.

### **Everyday Resistance**

Despite over a decade of campaigning for improved pay and conditions, college lecturers are still, according to the literature, underpaid, under-valued, insecure and demoralised. Despite dozens of strikes, both local and official, unions have still not achieved pay-parity with school teachers, the holy grail of unionised activity in the sector. Increasingly the union is being seen as powerless to resist the juggernaut of rationalism, managerialism and financial imperatives.

Post-Taylor, post-Ford, post-bureaucratic management’s utilisation of high-commitment strategies such as team-work, ever more invasive surveillance technologies and discursive incursions emphasising the internalisation of corporate values have, for some (see Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995), ended the possibility of resistance in the contemporary workplace. This view claims that ‘workers can no longer resist management because ideological enculturation is now so pervasive and widespread in the world of work that even the desire to oppose capital has been subtly erased’ (Fleming and Sewell, 2002, p858). But, as Fleming and Sewell elaborate, the proclamation of the death of resistance is premature and founded on a foregrounding of overt and organised resistance such as union action. Indeed, they argue, such is the ‘normalization’ of post-bureaucratic management practices such as team-work and TQM, any form of dissent is seen as irrational which, rather than remaining within the

contested political arena of the workplace, questions ‘the very psychiatric stability of workers’ (p861), a practice further supported by the creation of narratives that demonise critical opinions (Tourish and Robson, 2006) (a role attributed to middle managers in this research – see above). In the academic context, dissent can also be framed as contravening the principles of academic citizenship (MacFarlane, 2007), as going against the driving principles of education, the responsibility of lecturers to the community of students. In the face of dissent, senior managers can always play the student needs card to diminish the force of critical voices. Thus, resistance must be sought elsewhere, in the ‘cracks and crevices of inter-subjective relations and other quiet subterranean realms of organizational life’ (Fleming and Sewell, 2002, p863).

Routine or everyday resistance is seen as the ‘weapon of the weak’ (Scott, 1985), less visible and indirect, spontaneous rather than organised, ephemerally located in the dialectic of compliance and opposition and difficult to locate or define with any precision. While it is a contentious concept eluding many classification attempts, Prasad and Prasad (1998) suggest a four part typology of routine resistance:

- Firstly, there are ‘open confrontations’, a declining expression of resistance in recent years, mainly experienced in blue-collar workplaces and union supported if not instigated. Here we find traditional strategies such as walk-outs but also more contemporary resistance such as taking out grievance procedures against managers.
- Secondly are ‘subtle subversions’ which are not directly confrontational but are ‘capable of subverting authority relations at the workplace’ (p234/5). While this category includes clandestine actions such as theft and sabotage, it also includes ‘acts of carelessness’ such as ‘accidentally’ knocking a drink onto a computer and misfiling documents. Here we also find the ‘incessant everyday interpretations and reinterpretations of managerial discourses by workers’ (p236), especially where the demands of management are seen to be contradictory (Knights and McCabe, 2000a), workers being unreasonably



reasonable and using management rhetoric against managers (Ezzamel et al., 2001).

- Thirdly is disengagement, ‘when workers withdraw themselves from their work, the organization, and events around them’ by which they hope to ‘distance themselves from managerial ideologies and initiatives’ (Prasad and Prasad, 1998, p237), and it is this third area that has arguably attracted most attention in the literature. Disengagement, far more than the first two categories, can be seen within the micropolitical paradigm of resistance where employees seek to carve out subjective space against the onslaught of enculturation mechanisms, and it can take a number of forms. Firstly there is what Scott (1985, p2) describes as ‘the hidden transcript’, the ‘critique of power’ spoken behind the back of the dominant. Here we see resistance as both a discursive context for other acts of resistance, but also, by maintaining and engaging in an alternative to the predominant hegemonic discourse, workers become discursively disengaged in an attempt to prevent their identities from being colonised. Here too we encounter workplace gossip (Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Michelson and Mouly, 2000) and ‘bitching’ (Sotirin and Gottfried, 1999). While these forms of resistance are seen as subtle subversions by Prasad and Prasad, they can also be seen as forms of resistant discourse, ‘political deviance’ (Robinson and Bennett, 1995, p565) that challenges the official discourse of the organisation. Alternatively, disengagement can be seen as a refusal to accept responsibility or refusal to implement managers’ wishes (Agoc, 1997), dissociation (Bovey and Hede, 2001a) and withholding enthusiasm (Prasad and Prasad, 2000).

Disengagement can also be accomplished through humour, a method of relief from the boredom of everyday routine (Collinson, 2002; Taylor and Bain, 2003; Fleming and Sewell, 2002) but also an adaptive defence mechanism (Bovey and Hede, 2001b) by which individuals cope with stress and anxiety in the workplace and even in times of peril (Bryant in Weaver, 2010). In extreme forms of humorous disengagement such as clowning (Ackroyd and Thompson,

1997), humour can even be seen as ‘an explicit rejection of disciplined and even ordered behaviour’ (p106). But humour in the workplace is perhaps too multi-faceted to be placed in just one category as this. Many writers also direct our attention to the confrontational and subversive nature of humour. Griffiths (1998), for example, states that humour ‘allows subordinates to signal dissent... without exposing the dissenters to the consequences that would follow from a direct challenge to authority’ (p875). Taylor and Bain (2003) have also documented confrontational humour, the ‘piss-taking’ primarily directed at team leaders who had once been ‘one of the gang’ and who, largely, were obliged to tolerate the mocking. Indeed, Taylor and Bain argue that management may be impotent in the face of humour as it does not constitute a formal – and therefore punishable – challenge to their authority but is understood to be precisely that by everyone involved; furthermore, attempts by managers to suppress humour are almost certain to fail (Collinson, 2002)

- The final category in Prasad and Prasad’s typology is ‘ambiguous accommodation’, ‘instances of worker cooperation with managerial objectives’ (p240) which can conceal resistance, or can become methods of re-appropriating control over their work. The least defined of the categories, here we find the territory of impression management, the dramaturgical self (Collinson, 2003), where employees seek to manipulate the way they are perceived (Singh, 2001), usually to render alignment with organisational norms, but also to render areas of their work oblique to investigation and surveillance by managers and even peers. Impression management is almost inevitable in surveillance-based organisations and can involve, as well as dramaturgical strategies, withholding information, overstating or understating. Furthermore, impression management at work is effective because it can appear identical to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Bolino, 1999), distinguishable only by the difference in motive – while OCB denotes workplace altruism and the internalisation of organisational values, impression management is, in essence, deceptive and manipulative, especially when

individuals feel threatened, defensive and insecure (Collinson, 1999), arguably the supreme climatic triumvirate in further education.

A further type of ambiguous accommodation is cynicism, the 'disbelief of another's stated or implied motives for a decision or action' (Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky, 2005, p436) which 'involves a real loss of faith' in leaders (Reichers et al., 1997) but, more importantly for this research, involves a defence of selfhood from subjective colonization (Casey, 1995 and 1999) and a distancing of selfhood (Fleming, 2005). As a defence mechanism, cynicism 'will usually involve an internal monologue that sardonically debunks management initiatives while externally complying with them' (Fleming, *ibid* p49), thus resisting internal identification with corporate culture without outward defiance and the punitive measures it will attract.

Distancing of self on the other hand, involves a 'kind of tactical detachment, aloofness and normative isolation' (p50), creating a 'resistance through distance' (Collinson, 1994) whereby workers will emphasise different knowledge from management and seek to 'deny any involvement in or responsibility for the running of the organization' (p37), a variety of organisational dis-identification (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). Collinson (2003) also sees this distancing as a form of alternative conformity where workers 'escape into a private world outside work' (p537) or more physically via absenteeism or even, in the most extreme form of distancing, by resigning or exiting (Gabriel, 2008)

However, there is a schism in the literature when it comes to disengagement and ambiguous accommodation strategies of resistance and whether they are really resistance at all. Cynicism, for instance, while seen as resistance through distance or separating external corporate behaviours from internal essentialism, can be seen not as resistance at all, but as supporting the power structures that exist in the workplace. Fleming and Spicer (2003) argue that cynicism reproduces relations of power because cynical employees give themselves the impression that they are autonomous, they

experience a ‘specious sense of freedom’ (p162), and dis-identify with corporatism while still practising corporate rituals, still performing their work-role – workers who may not believe in the cultural values of the organisation still *act* as if they do and therefore support management (Noon and Blyton, 1997). Humour can be seen in the same way: while it may be seen as an act of confrontation or challenging authority, humour can also function as a mechanism of concertive control and conformity (Collinson, 2002). Both cynicism and humour can also be seen as a safety valve (Robinson and Bennett, 1995) that may prevent more overt forms of resistance – if workers believe their cynicism is resistance (without sanction), other, riskier forms may be precluded. These forms of transgression – cynicism, humour, bitching etc. – are seen by Contu (2008) as ‘decaf resistance’ that does not ‘constitute a threat to dominant order in the workplace’ (p368) and thus supports the power relations within the workplace.

However, Contu’s contention of the harmlessness and risk-aversive nature of everyday resistance is haunted by a nostalgic desire for industrial heroism which ‘suspends and changes the constellation of power relations’ (p364) and bears a significant cost to the actor; in the insecure contemporary workplace, employees have no choice but to adopt covert rather than overt strategies of resistance just to keep their job. In addition, by focusing on the act itself, there is the risk that the *effect* is ignored and it is here that the efficacy of resistance is perhaps best assessed. For while ‘piss-taking’ aimed at a manager may not bring down capitalism, there is likely to be a definite effect on the individual that may determine how they conduct their managerial duties in the future. I would also contend that the continuing effectiveness of resistance is evident in the high failure rate of change programmes.

Resistance thus conceived is not necessarily an action that disrupts the machinations of the organisation but a defence against indoctrination whereby staff are compliant without internalising corporate values (Brown and Coupland, 2005). If, as is argued, the modern workplace seeks to colonise the subjectivity of individuals, that workers will ‘act in the best interests of the organisation not because they are coerced, threatened or rewarded, but rather because they are motivated by a strong

identification with company goals and values' (Whittle, 2005, p1302), then any strategy that negates this drive *is* effective resistance. It may not fracture The System but it is still significant resistance, if only to the individual. In FE, overt acts of resistance such as strike action are not only temporary and largely ineffective but harm the student population far more than the organisation or the government, an effect that goes against the values of an educator (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004), the drivers behind becoming a teacher. Thus, even if vehemently opposing college management, lecturers have no option but to perform the tasks expected of them – they will enter the classroom and teach or be dismissed. Everyday resistance, therefore, becomes the only viable recourse. If cynicism, humour and bitching have no punitive costs, they are then the rational resistant strategies to adopt. If even they are to be avoided, lecturers may position themselves in discursive opposition to management (Harrison, Clarke, Edwards and Reeve, 2003; Whitehead, 1998).

It is this argument that exposes the vital differences between a further education college and a business, at least in terms of resistance. A worker in a 'capitalist' organisation, a manufacturing company for instance, may oppose every value of the organisation yet work there because of the pragmatic need for income. Their resistance will then be targeted against and contextualised within the capitalist values and goals of the company. Lecturers on the other hand, actually share the core value of the college – to educate learners – and this they will, presumably, not resist. What lecturers resist then are the strategies adopted by the organisation – the *practices* of managerialism, surveillance, performativity – to achieve the shared goals. However, while routine resistance is usually an individual act, it does not occur in isolation. Often it is performed with managers as audience; sometimes it is performed in collusion with managers.

From a labour process theory perspective, everyday resistance is the calculated and intentional opposition to exercises of power adopted by workers in a form less likely to be detected and, where it is noticed, less likely to be punished – organisations are unlikely to make public these forms of 'insubordination as this would be admitting that a policy is unpopular and exposes the tenuousness of their authority' (Scott, 1985,

p26) and this is the great irony of routine resistance: while public opposition must be dealt with by Management at the risk of seeming weak, everyday resistance often relies on the complicity of managers at middle or first tier level who turn a blind eye to such misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Larson and Tompkins, 2005; Noon and Blyton, 1997; Knights and McCabe, 2000a) or even encourage resistance through their own ambivalence (Larson and Tompkins, 2005; Whittle, 2005). When deciding whether to tackle misbehaviour or routine resistance, these managers must address their need for worker cooperation and the level of their previous collusion before taking action. From this perspective, while overt public resistance is too often frustrated by the intractability of senior managers who are often afraid to admit errors for fear of losing face, routine resistance is an issue for lower levels of management who are, being in greater proximity to the staff on whom they rely and must interact with, in a general sense, easy targets. Thus, while strike action has failed to secure worker autonomy for lecturers in FE, resistance and even misbehaviour may be the more efficacious strategy. The collusion of managers must also be addressed even if we view routine resistance as ‘decaf’. If cynicism, humour, parody and bitching actually reproduce and support power relations, then managers – middle and first line – still face the decision of whether to tolerate and collude with these behaviours if it means that employees perform their tasks. So, it is likely that the first tier manager in FE must endure humorous challenges, piss-taking, bitching and cynicism just to get things done. To compound matters further, as first tier managers generally lack any punitive authority, they have little alternative but to put up with misbehaviour. The results of collusion are likely to be further boundary testing by staff and the possibility of disciplinary action against FTMs should their complicity ever become public. In extreme examples, it may result in their subordinates accumulating ammunition against their line manager which may be used as organisational blackmail.

From the largely sociological and organisational literature, a number of questions arose that informed the fieldwork:

- What is resisted by staff and what types of resistance do FTMs encounter?

- How do FTMs manage resistance? Is it challenged or do FTMs collude with it or turn a blind eye?
- What is the nature of FTMs own resistance?

## **Change and Resistance**

The demands of an ever competitive and changing environment are increasing the need for knowledge about how to lead and manage organisational change rapidly, efficiently and effectively. The management mantra... is 'lead change'. (Beer and Nohria in Sturdy and Grey, 2003, p656).

To anyone who has managed in further education since incorporation, the sentiment of Beer and Nohria has almost become a truism. As we have seen above, change in the sector is perceived as constant, inevitable and stressful, a spectre that needs to be tamed or harnessed through the rationalised application of change management strategies. But FE is not alone: Burnes (in Todnem, 2005) argues that 'change is an ever-present feature of organisational life, both at an operational and strategic level' (p369) and thus, as the final implementers, the organisational existence of first tier managers is embroiled in change.

More than just an activity, change management has become an industry, a marketplace teeming with gurus, text-books<sup>2</sup>, endless training programmes<sup>3</sup> and academic journals devoted entirely to change<sup>4</sup>. As concepts go, change should, then, be thoroughly understood. However, while both academic and popular understanding of change appears to be at saturation point, the application of change management tells a different story: studies suggest that 65% of major change programmes in the public sector fail (Palmer, 2007; Ferguson, 2010) while in business Deloitte UK (2007) claim this figure is 70%. Such a disparity does not, however, appear to perturb the enthusiast, who, in a pattern familiar to researchers and recipients of change

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<sup>2</sup> A search on Amazon UK for 'change management' books found 46,803 results

<sup>3</sup> A Google search for "change management training" produced 55,800 results

<sup>4</sup> A search on SwetsWise database found 9 journals focused on organisational change in their title

management training, will argue that, while two thirds of change programmes fail, they have the *real* answer/tool/model/strategy. Todnem (2005) supports this view, arguing in his review of the literature that ‘theories and approaches to change management currently available to academics and practitioners are often contradictory, mostly lacking empirical evidence and supported by unchallenged hypotheses concerning the nature of contemporary organisational change management’ (p369).

As a result of the research focus, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full literature review of change management as an isolated and distinctive theoretical concept (such as attempted by Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Instead, I will differentiate between two broad strands of change in general. Firstly there is the mechanistic and systemic school which sees change as rational and tameable by courageous managers (Furnham, 2002) and is the perspective favoured by most training programmes and ‘how-to’ books. Here for example we have the often diluted versions of Kanter, Stein and Jick’s (1992) Ten Commandment’s and Kotter’s (1996) Eight-Stage Process, both emphasising the importance of strategies such as communicating the vision and creating a sense of urgency, and Sirkin, Keenan and Jackson’s (2005) ‘hard side’ of change management which eschews ‘soft’ issues such as culture and leadership in favour of measurables such as time, staffing levels and finance. As the preferred perspective of text books and training programmes, it is this hard side of change management that will be most familiar to FTMs in FE and, this research will argue, has become almost a ‘cargo cult’, ‘the endless rebirth, in spite of repeated failures, of the idea that substantive success ('cargo') can be gained by the practice of particular kinds of (managerial) ritual’ (Hood, 1991, p7).

The second school of change management is more contingent, emphasising the ‘soft’ side of change that Sirkin et al (2005) implicitly blame for failure. Here the perspective is less effusive concerning the possibility of controlling change; Reigeluth (2004), for example, contends that alternative approaches to the study of management ‘tell us that we cannot hope to control the transformation process’; all managers can do is ‘hope to influence the process’ (p15). Here change is contingent and contested



(Sturdy and Grey, 2003) and the employee is central to the process, an individual existing within cultural patterns of discourse (Bovey, 2001; McCabe, 2002; Whittle, 2005; Brown and Coupland, 2005). Here attention is paid to the affective element of change (Smollen, 2006; Oreg, 2006; Cunningham, 2006; James and Jones, 2008), to conversations that engage and sustain change (Ford, Ford and McNamara, 2001; Marshak, 1993; O'Neill and Jabri, 2007) and climates conducive to, or infertile for, change (Allen, 2003; Tierney, 1999; Trader-Leigh, 2001; van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008). It is this latter theoretical approach to change that will inform this research, which does not focus on the effectiveness of one strategy over another but examines change as an environment or climate within which participants work, as an agentic role, a series of management actions and a significant antecedent of resistance.

Change is perhaps the most omnipresent expression of power and domination within FE, whether symbolic, cultural or material (May, 1999). Indeed, change is one of the few public displays of power within the organisation; the majority – disciplinary action, appraisal, recording of individual performance – are conducted in private, limiting the possibility of collective, public resistance. Change programmes are mostly heralded in public (often during Principals' addresses at the beginning of the academic year), published in strategic plans and disseminated in departmental meetings. *However, while senior managers may couch the change within a context of financial necessity or governmental policy levers, it will, I argue, inevitably be received in the resistant context by staff.*

According to the literature, resistance to change is a highly diverse and contested concept. It is viewed variously as inevitable or able to be avoided, a phenomenon to be attacked or embraced, as destructive or beneficial, as individual or collective, as overt or covert. In addition, there are a multitude of factors deemed responsible for resistance to change: loss of status (Ashcraft, 2005), fear of the unknown (Bovey and Hede, 2001a and b), unfairness (Folger and Skarlicki 1999; Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), poor management (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008), self-interest and lack of participation (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005), loss of identity (Goldstein, 1988; Van Dijk and van Dick, 2009), personalities (Oreg, 2006), the threat to personal

values (Pardo and Fuentes, 2003), ill-defined ‘personal compacts’ (Strebel, 1996), unfulfilled psychological contracts (van den Heuvel, 2009), failure to tackle ‘automated and dysfunctional’ cognition (Clark, 2009) and low quality leader-member exchange (van Dam et al., 2008). In addition there are a number of authors who, rather than pinpoint a single cause of resistance to change, give a variety of causes such as loss of control, loss of face, loss of competency, need for security, poor timing, force of habit, lack of support, lack of confidence and lingering resentment (see Agoc, 1997; Mabin, Forgeson and Green, 2001; Macri, Tagliaventi and Bertolotti, 2001; Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 2003; Trader-Leigh, 2001). All of the studies cited here, a vast catalogue of antecedents which sometimes state the obvious and are sometimes atomized to the point of triviality, locate the cause of resistance within change itself, the ‘change agent’ or the effect of changes (Dent and Goldberg, 1999); *this research hypothesises that change is merely a catalyst for resistance against the hegemony of control rather than the change itself*. Resistance from this perspective can be seen as being, as well as a defence mechanism (Trader-Leigh, 2001; Young, 2000; Bovey and Hede, 2001a and b), as an attack mechanism. As public expressions of power, change programmes also offer an opportunity to resist publicly as well, although how common public resistance is will be investigated.

Given the perpetual and complex nature of change within FE (Simkins and Lumby, 2002) there are relatively few academic studies discussing change management explicitly and, where they do exist, they mostly adopt the rationalism of business outlined above. Preeminent in the contemporary FE change business are studies from CEL, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership who were – until being subsumed into the Learning and Skills Improvement Service – at the forefront of strategic leadership research in the sector. Bailey, Smith and Vickers (2006 a and b) present a prime model for rational change in the sector and argue that ‘the primary means of accomplishing change is through the reconfiguration of internal activities and systems’ (p2). This follows Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) who, studying the business sector, argued that due to the difficulty – even impossibility – of changing cultures and behaviours, change should focus on changing systems and work contexts; this would, they argue, force the changes in behaviour. With connotations of

behavioural conditioning, of Pavlov and Skinner, change here is systemic and resides in the hands of senior managers rather than any other level of the organisational hierarchy, a perhaps unsurprising view as Bailey et al.'s sample consisted only of senior managers. Yet Bailey et al. are not alone: Levacic and Glatter (1997), Smith, Gidney, Barclay and Rosenfeld (2002), Kelly et al. (2004), Louis (2006) and Hannigan, Lawton and Mallory (2007) all presume that the critical success factor for change is the leadership of senior managers rather than the implementation of change at the ground floor. These studies, and indeed this approach, belong to one half of Mumby's (2005) dichotomy of extant literature, the side that privileges 'organizational control processes' the 'dominant pole' intended to 'frame and marginalize its opposite', in this case, resistance. Here then we see the perpetuation of the 'fallacy of rationalism... the assumption that the social world can be altered by seemingly logical argument' (Fullan, 2001, p187), a refusal to engage with the 'multiple realities of others' so essential to successful change.

Watson and Crossley (2001) engage with this perspective and, drawing on labour process theory, identify three dimensions of power within the strategic change agenda of FE: *coercive power* where staff do the bidding of senior managers who use their control of resources as a weapon; *political power* where senior managers set a limited agenda for discussion and change to prevent the intrusion of alternative or resistant perspectives; and *control of meaning*, a totalitarian colonisation of subjectivity exploiting institutional amnesia (Pollitt, 2000), so prevalent in FE, and bombarding staff with the new discourse until the point is reached where an alternative cannot be imagined. It should be noted here though that the official amnesia regarding the 'cargo' of failed previous initiatives conflicts directly with the memory of staff, their 'heritage' (Ashcraft, 2005), their unofficial variety of organisational memory (Walsh and Ungson, 1997) and their counter-discourse which can be found in the 'background conversations' of change (Ford et al., 2001), a conversational context that is 'a result of our experience within a tradition that is both direct and inherited that will direct the way we listen to what is said and what is unsaid' (p108).

In their discussion of reforms in FE, Mather, Worrall and Seifert, (2007) discuss resistance to change in the sector in the period following incorporation. Focusing on lecturer perceptions of NATFHE, their findings suggest that there is a significant need for union protection while also arguing that it is only moderately effective in actually protecting them. Accordingly they suggest that ‘collective resistance is seen here to form an important part of the dialectical nature of control’ (p120) in colleges while acknowledging that, at best, all the unions can do is to slow the pace of change. Thus, following the hypotheses of this research, evidence was found of more everyday resistant practices such as taking short cuts in lesson planning in response to work intensification rather than officially challenging it. Paradoxically, absenteeism – which obviously does affect students – was perceived as an alternative method of resistance. While their discussion is limited, Mather and Worrall do suggest that lecturers employ various making-out strategies as alternatives to official and collective resistance and rely on coping strategies, specifically drawing on support networks.

Elliott and Crossley (1997) recognise the importance of senior managers in change but are critical of their neglect of the counter-culture of resistance that has been created from the resentment of staff, a critical aspect of the resistant context, a culture that is removed from that of senior managers themselves, a factor ignored by the majority of rationalist studies. As a further counterpoint, Edward et al. (2007) document the effects of change in FE where they discovered a catalogue of demotivation, insecurity, high staff turnover, shortage of qualified staff, excessive paperwork and a culture of fear and blame. Identifying the causes of change was seen as problematic; identifying the results of change was not. However, the authors did find evidence of the agentive search for subjective space. Although Edward et al. conceptualise this phenomenon as a coping strategy, it can also be seen in terms of microemancipation (Alvesson, 1992) whereby lecturers are attempting to free themselves from the mechanisms of control expressed through change and exercise their professional autonomy, a reaction also found in Trowler’s (1998) study of academics in HE discussed below.

Given the relative paucity of studies of change and resistance in FE, the inclusion of literature concerning HE is warranted as the literature on resistance in HE tends to focus on academics rather than senior managers in discussions of change. Trowler, in the context of the introduction of the credit framework, identified four behavioural responses to change from academics:

1. *swimming* where the change was readily adopted and seen as an environment where lecturers could thrive;
2. *sinking* where change was accepted fatalistically (similar to the cynical background conversations of Ford et al., above);
3. *using coping strategies* where the health of the individual was prioritised, often to the detriment of students and colleagues;
4. *policy reconstruction* where, although Trowler never uses the word, resistant behaviours can be located and staff are either 'rebellious or innovating or both' (Trowler, 1998, p126).

Within this final category, lecturers were engaged in reinterpreting or manipulating policy in much the same way as Noon and Blyton (1997) describe – employees are agentive and perpetually engaged in finding the angles and loopholes and getting around the diktats of management and policy makers. However, in both Trowler (with the exception of rebelling) and Noon and Blyton, employees are still effectively reinforcing management because they are doing what is required rather than challenging the exercise of power, an issue discussed above.

Allen (2003) argues that change creates a climate of insecurity within the HE environment depending on its frequency, predictability, the openness of management, the degree of participation, the nature of change and the type of power involved, whether persuasive or coercive. In a similar vein to Ford et al. (2001), security was 'seen as linked to the legacies of past change initiatives' (p71), reflecting significant differences of perception between senior and junior managers, an issue rarely attended to by the FE change literature discussed above. However, what Allen describes as insecurity, Newton (2002) discusses, somewhat hyperbolically in comparison to FE,

the ‘grotesque turbulence’ (p40) of change within HE, especially in terms of the rise of the ‘quality burden’, an echo of the de-professionalising mechanisms that have colonised FE. Drawing on Goffman’s (1974) work on the self as performer and the use of impression management, Newton argues that academics employed a variety of game-playing strategies to resist the inherent conformity of the quality insurgence. Anderson (2008) draws on Foucault and Scott to further document, more explicitly than Newton, forms of everyday resistance within universities. In particular she focuses on Scott’s hidden transcript, the ‘description, evaluation and refutation of managerial discourses’ (p256) founded on the critical nature of academic culture. When the oppositional transcript became overt, the public engagement it created ‘illustrated the role of the academic as public intellectual’ (p258), a role not enjoyed by FE lecturers, a major reason why resistance in further education, it is hypothesised, has gone underground. However, Anderson also points out that public protests were often ‘fruitless’ and unsupported collectively which has in turn led to a rise in other methods of resistance such as refusal, feigned ignorance, foot-dragging, forgetting, avoidance and qualified compliance. These latter forms of resistance are not found in extant studies in FE, focusing as they do mostly on senior management. *I hypothesize that first tier managers experience such routine resistance on a daily basis and that it is these behaviours that are colluded with to maintain interpersonal collaboration.*

With studies of FE repeatedly discussing the perpetual nature of change within the sector, the following questions arose and informed this research:

- How is change received by FTMs and their teams? What is the effect and the affect?
- Do staff resist change per se or is change resisted as just another act of senior management?
- How do FTMs manage change?
- How involved are FTMs in strategic change?

## **Coping**

Confronted with multiple causes of stress, employees in FE are given a stark choice: cope or exit. While still teachers, first tier managers are subject to all the antecedents of stress that lecturers experience. However, as arguably the final implementers of change and the first recipients of resistance, with additional responsibility and accountability and simultaneously subject to and part of the mechanisms of control, FTMs are likely to experience even more stress than the staff they manage. *Thus, this study will, almost inevitably, examine the coping responses of FTMs.*

Folkman et al., (1986), provide one of the best definitions of coping: ‘coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction’ (p848). Coping here is ‘defined independently of its outcome’ (p848) which avoids analysis of the effectiveness of the coping approach – coping is an attempt, regardless of the success of its outcome. Importantly, Folkman et al. adopt a relational orientation, seeing stress not as a stimulus or a property of the environment but as a relationship *between* the person and the environment, a dynamic relationship that is constantly changing. As events occur in the context (the resistant context for the purposes of this study), individuals will assess the extent of their personal control in the given situation. This cognitive appraisal will occur in two stages: in the primary appraisal, individuals will assess whether an event or transaction is ‘irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful’ and during this phase the ‘controllability’ of the event will be judged to determine whether the locus of control (Rotter, 1975) is internal or external. Secondary appraisal consists of an assessment of coping resources and options which could potentially be applied to the situation. As detailed by Carver and Scheier (1989), once this situational appraisal has taken place, individuals will then adopt one of two approaches. Firstly is problem-focused coping, a proactive approach which is ‘aimed at problem solving or doing something to alter the source of the stress’ (p276). The second approach, emotion-focused coping, is ‘aimed at reducing or managing the emotional distress that is associated with (or cued by) the situation’ (p277). Carver and Scheier argue that problem-focused coping strategies are adopted when it is perceived that something

can be done, that the locus of control is within the individual. Without this perception, the 'stressor' is seen as something that must be endured and emotion-focused strategies are employed.

From this basis, Carver and Scheier (1989) developed a scale of coping strategies from 'active coping' to 'alcohol-drug disengagement' and argue that, where situations are perceived as controllable, active coping strategies are adopted; where situations seem less controllable, alternative, generally more 'dysfunctional', strategies are evident. However, some of the strategies, rather than being seen as coping, could alternatively be seen as resistance. For example, 'behavioural disengagement' can be seen as disengagement in Prasad and Prasad's (1998) typology, while 'mental disengagement' is a form of resistance by distance and the avoidance of the colonisation of subjectivity. While Carver and Scheier see these coping strategies as allied to helplessness, through a resistance lens, these behaviours are more agentic and oppositional. While individuals may perceive that they have no control over the situation, they do, however, sometimes have control over their reactions to the event. *Whether these reactions are seen as coping or resistance depends on the observers' perspective and will be further discussed below.*

Drawing on the work of Lazarus and Folkman and Carver and Scheier, Frydenberg and Lewis (2002) devised their Coping Scales for Adults which was created in Australia to develop the coping strategies of individuals within organisations. As such, it is more applicable to this research project as it focuses on coping within a work context whereas Carver's scale focuses on coping in general, which may, as Frydenberg and Lewis argue, generate different coping strategies for different stressors. To test this hypothesis, they conducted a study to compare the coping responses of 137 middle managers with 236 non-managers. The results suggest that managers do indeed cope differently from non-managers, adopting 'working hard' and utilising 'social action' as methods of coping more frequently; non-managers more often adopted less productive strategies such as 'ignore the problem' and engage in 'self-blame'. The authors suggest that the greater adoption of 'productive' coping strategies among managers may be a key factor in them being selected (or self-



selected) for management roles; the alternative proposed is that individuals who find themselves in managerial positions are forced or trained to adopt productive coping strategies.

Given the turbulence of the education sector, there are surprisingly few studies that engage with coping. Where coping is discussed, there is a notable difference of emphasis between educational and sociological research contexts. In many of the studies of educational workplaces, those behavioural responses defined as resistance within the sociological literature are often defined as *coping* instead; a number of examples can be highlighted: Edward et al. (2007) in their study of FE, identify three coping responses of lecturers: eager adoption, pragmatic adoption and responses that rely on social support systems. The first two types can be seen as problem-focused coping, whereas the latter falls within the category of emotion-focused coping. While referring to it as ‘not coping’ – and thus reflecting the problematic association of coping with outcomes discussed by Folkman (1984) – they implicitly identify a fourth type, namely ‘exit’, which can also be seen as a resistant strategy in sources within the sociological field (see Gabriel, 2008 for example). Troman and Woods (2000), in their study of school teachers, also suggest exit as a coping strategy, viewing it in somewhat pejorative terms as ‘retreatism’. Further overlap between resistance and coping in educational contexts can be found in Ogbonna and Harris (2004) in a study of UK university lecturers. In their paper they suggest that impression management behaviours and ‘professional detachment’ are adopted as form of coping ‘designed to counter intensification to their labour process and to delineate between ‘real’ and ‘working’ identities’ (p1197). In the sociological literature, impression management and distancing are discussed in terms of resistance rather than coping (see Collinson, 1998 for example). Here then, in this divergence between the educational and sociological literature, we may find another example of the efficacy of constructing a conceptual framework from varied paradigms. By bringing the more sociological perspective to the FE context, it is hoped that new understandings may emerge.

As we can see from the studies above, a number of strategies adopted by individuals to cope with stress appear similar to those behaviours described as resistance by other

theorists. Given these similarities, there are surprisingly few authors who attempt to discuss the relationship between the two behavioural paradigms. Mullings (1999) describes how resistance and coping are usually seen in binary opposition, with resistance as active and agentive and coping as passive and compliant. Scott (in Mullings, *ibid*) even goes as far as to view coping strategies as trivial because ‘they embody no conscious political action or intent to subvert’. For Mullings as well as Parish, Magana and Cassiman (2008), coping is far from trivial and is the other side of the same coin as resistance, an attempt to ‘recover the value of... coping strategies’ (p293). Her study details a range of resistant strategies employed by women at work and coping strategies at home which make resistance at work possible. Parish et al. (2008) adopt a similar perspective and view coping *as* resistance. In their study of low-income mothers with disabilities, they suggest that coping strategies such as self-sacrifice, advocacy and accessing safety-net services are simultaneously coping and resistance, as does Shorter-Gooden (2004).

However, these studies do little to reduce the binary nature of the coping-resistance dichotomy. Viewing both as two sides of the same coin even reinforces the dichotomy, as resistance and coping are still seen as distinct responses to contextual influences. Furthermore, there is little discussion of how the two interact; in Parish et al., for example, coping strategies are presented as resistance without explanation of the conceptual and real interaction between the two behaviours. *Here then is a further focus for this study, to investigate the distinction between resistance and coping and attempt to provide a means of differentiating between the two.*

From the review of the coping literature, the following questions arose and informed the fieldwork:

- What coping strategies do FTMs adopt to manage the demands of their work?
- When do FTM resist and when do they cope? How can coping be differentiated from resistance?

## **Key Research Themes**

As a result of the literature review and the question that arose from each strand of the conceptual framework, the following key themes formed the basis for the fieldwork:

1. **The FTM role:** given the paucity of the literature concerning first tier management in FE, the fieldwork examined the intended and official nature of the role via documentary analysis of job descriptions and the experienced reality of the role via the interview stream of the research. It investigated the range of duties and breadth of responsibilities in each of the colleges as well as the interactions with lecturers, students and more senior managers.
2. **The nature and management of change:** the extant literature provides evidence of the incessant nature of change within the sector; as the final implementers of organisational change, FTMs are key to the management of change. From this perspective I examined the types of change experienced in colleges, the personal responses of FTMs to change and their participation in and management of the change process.
3. **Resistance:** resistance is one of the major themes of this research and as such was viewed from a number of perspectives: positioned one level up from lecturers hierarchically, FTMs are ideally placed to experience or observe resistance from teaching staff; as well as investigating the types of resistance exhibited by lecturers, the extent of FTM collusion with those behaviours was a prime concern; lastly, as recipients of the mechanisms of control, the nature of FTM resistance was examined.
4. **Coping:** the final stream identified the main stressors of the role and the coping strategies of FTMs. Furthermore, it investigated the interaction between coping and resistance, an issue unresolved in the literature.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **Subjectivity and a Case Study Approach**

There are two conceptions of social reality that underpin approaches to social science and thus research methodology: the objectivist and the subjectivist. Ontologically, objectivism views social reality as external to and separate from the individual, a reality that has an independent existence and where knowledge is 'hard' and objective, a 'tangible' commodity capable of being acquired and transmitted. From this perspective, human beings respond in a 'mechanistic or even deterministic fashion' (Burrell and Morgan in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006, p6) to the external realities they face, conditioned by the stimuli they encounter. For the subjectivist perspective however, reality is a construction, a 'product of individual consciousness' (ibid, p5) created and sustained by thought and language. In terms of epistemology, knowledge is subjective, experiential and idiosyncratic, a phenomenon to be participated in rather than acquired. Here the concerns are with 'situatedness, contextuality, cultural embeddedness and social mediation' (Sfard, 1998, p6). Human beings are agentive from this perspective, interacting creatively with the constructed reality which they exist with rather than being products of their environment. Both approaches can be located in the literature discussed in the previous chapter: we can find objectivism in those writings that reify power and control, that see resistance as futile and employees as victims of the dominating mechanisms of their organisations; alternatively we find the subjective with the employee as agentive, as perpetually resistant to the surveillance, colonisation and subjugation of the contemporary workplace as presented in much of the literature.

With its concern with the individual as agentive within the dialectic of control and resistance, this research is situated within the subjectivist tradition and proceeds from a perspective that:

- Humans actively construct their own meanings of situations;

- Meaning arises out of social situations and is handled through interpretive processes;
- Behaviour and therefore data are socially situated, context-related and context dependent (Cohen et al., 2006);
- Organisations emerge through the ‘sensemaking’ of individuals (Weick, 1995).

At the inception of this research project I had intended to adopt an ethnographic approach, often the preferred approach in organisational research (Brannon, Pearson and Worthington, 2007). The intention of ethnography is to attempt to capture a rich and detailed picture of the social world of individuals from the perspective of those individuals, recognising that meaning is created from social interaction and that reality is multiple and contingent rather than objective. In this, ethnography can be understood as ‘a particular orientation to reality... rather than the mastery of a set of techniques and the absorption of a specific body of theory’ (Yates, 1987, p62). It was this concern for the emic perspective, the ‘insider’s view of a particular group or community’ (Savage, 2006, p384/5), that was the aim of this research. However, practical concerns came to dominate and prevent the adoption of ‘pure’ ethnography: my own work, while maintaining a certain degree of flexibility, did not allow for extended periods of time to be spent in colleges conducting observations and spontaneous data collection so essential to ethnography. In addition, it rapidly became apparent that an ethnographic approach did not suit the research participants whose own work was far more demanding than my own. Lastly, there was rarely an opportunity to observe the spontaneous interactions between FTMs and their teams – staffrooms were transient places where the team was rarely together with the FTM. As such, retaining the intention to explore subjectivist dimensions, a case study approach was adopted.

As with many methodological types, a case study approach can be defined in a number of ways. For Adelman et al. (in Cohen et al., 2006, p181), a case study is ‘the study of an instance in action’, an instance being a ‘bounded system’ that seeks to

gain an emic perspective within the real context within which individuals exist. For Gerring (2009), a case study is ‘the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in parts – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)’ (p20). Yin (2003) provides perhaps the best definition by suggesting that a case study, either a single case or multiple cases, is an inquiry that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (p13). However, while the case study may be a ‘definitional morass’ (Gerring, 2004, p342), what is shared is that it cannot be defined through its research methods (Hartley, 2004) – case study research may use a variety of methods including a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (see Harrison, 2002, for example).

### **Defining the Case**

Central to the understanding of case studies is the issue of boundaries which envelop and define the particular case. This research draws on three of Hitchcock’s and Hughes’ (1995, p319) suggestions that case studies:

1. Are bounded in various ways such as temporally, geographically, organizationally, and institutionally.
2. Can be defined by the characteristics of the individuals and groups involved.
3. Can also be defined by the roles or function of the individuals within the case.

Drawing on these three characteristics, *this research adopted a multiple-case study approach in which the ‘cases’ for analysis were individuals in the role of first tier manager bounded by individual institutions*. Defining the case in this manner allowed me to study the interplay between the individual and the system within which they work and it also allowed me to focus on the role from two perspectives: the sense-making of the individual FTM and the influence of the organisation that ‘bounded’ the role. In any consideration of organisational roles, and the approach taken to job design in Chapter 8, this dual lens is essential and facilitated ‘within-case analysis’ (Eisenhardt, 1989, p539). This initial focus on individual cases then allowed for cross-

case analysis and comparison of the role within each sample college and then, at the final level of analysis, across the four sample colleges. Here, then, was the beginning of the ‘search for patterns’ (ibid, p540) which is presented in the findings chapters.

Stake (2005, p4) suggests that in multi-case studies, ‘the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases’. In this research, each individual case belongs to the larger collection of cases that are connected by their common, but not homogenous, role. As such, once the individual cases had been analysed, they informed the discussion of the FTM role in general. This secondary analysis, as presented in the discussion chapter, considered the FTM role itself as the ‘collective target’ or ‘quintain’ in Stake’s (2005, p6) terms. Stake argues that it is this quintain, this target, which is the start of the research process, as it was in this research – the target (and aim) was to study the role of first tier manager within FE. The data collected from the individual cases in the sample colleges thus informed this target. As such, according to Stake, the quintain holds ‘dominion over the cases’ (p6). At this secondary level of analysis, as the quintain of the multi-case study approach, the FTM role is discussed as an overriding construct to identify common themes and significant differences between the individual cases. While there is heterogeneity across the case studies, the role of FTM at this secondary level of analysis is bounded by the sectoral context of further education, by its position within the organisational hierarchy and its shared function as teacher/manager among other features. What maintains consistency is the shared – if not common – role itself, Hitchcock and Hughes’ (1995) third characteristic of case studies above.

### **The Nature of the Case Study**

While there may be a general understanding of what a case study is, several forms have been identified and positioning this research project within any one of the typologies is problematic. Yin (2003) identifies three types of case studies: the exploratory case study which is used as pilot for larger studies; the descriptive case study which focuses on narrative accounts of individuals within the research; explanatory case studies which are concerned with the testing of theories. This research project can best be understood as a hybrid of the descriptive and explanatory

case study. While few studies of FTMs in FE have been conducted, my own personal knowledge of the role and the sector preclude the descriptor of ‘exploratory’. However, while my professional experience engendered an understanding of the terrain of first tier management within FE, it must be stressed that colleges are highly idiosyncratic workplaces as well as being subject to continual change, which became even more evident during the fieldwork. Since leaving the position of first tier manager, my roles have involved collaborative work with dozens of FE colleges and so, when approaching this research, I was aware that the generalizability of my experience as an FTM was extremely limited. While some of the issues may have been similar, the organisational idiosyncrasies meant that the context became ‘new’. As this research progressed, it became clear that my knowledge of what it was like to be a first tier manager in FE was situated within a specific period of time and within a particular college. Since leaving FE four years ago, I have worked only in the HE sector which allowed me to approach the lived experiences of each of the participants from a relatively fresh perspective.

The case study approach adopted here intended to provide a narrative of the participants’ subjectivity, describing the sense-making (Weick, 1995) that each of the FTMs was engaged in as well as the idiosyncrasies of the role and context. It is in the descriptive element of case studies where we find common ground with ethnographic approaches. For Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p317), the case study attempts to present stories within specific contexts, ‘rich and vivid descriptions’ of events relating to the case within a chronological narrative. The case study seeks the emic, the subjectivist perception of the actors within the case. As such, in the writing of case studies, the intention is to provide thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) that provide a detailed picture of the case, presenting perspectives, behaviours and events within their immediate context.

However, while creating a narrative was of prime import, a strict delineation between description and analysis was not. As such, rather than presenting the data in the fieldwork chapters, then providing analysis in the discussion chapter, this thesis adopts Hitchcock and Hughes’ (1995) suggestion that a significant characteristic of



the case study is that it entertains ‘an internal debate between the description of events and the analysis of events’ (p317). Here, then, in the search for patterns arising from the comparison of the role between the cases, is where the theory generation begins. Whereas strictly ethnographic accounts may seek to separate description from analysis, case studies are founded upon the blending of the two. Evidence of this characteristic is clear within this thesis – each of the fieldwork chapters is extended not in an attempt to present all elements of the data but because the events and narratives of the participants are analysed in situ within each of the chapters: just as the emic perspectives of the participants are presented in context and chronologically, so is the analysis of the data. The discussion chapter therefore draws together the preliminary analysis of the cases that had taken place as the fieldwork progressed.

Given the theoretical basis established in the previous chapter – that the dialectic of control and resistance provide the context of FE – this research will also adopt some aspects of a critical perspective. Carspecken (1996), discussing critical ethnography, sees power relations as central both to the focus of research and the research process itself. Critical studies should be seen within contexts of control, contexts which have to be ‘exposed, their legitimacy interrogated, and the value base of the research itself exposed’ (Cohen et al., 2006, p153); this is the moral imperative of critical ethnography and, to an extent, the shared methodological basis of this case study approach. However, the more extreme version of the critical tradition which holds the ‘emancipation’ of participants as its final goal, is a theoretical step too far for this project for three reasons. Firstly this perspective can reify control at the expense of resistance, seeing the ‘oppressed’ as passive and colonised; secondly it denies the agentivity of individuals and their capacity for informed and creative acts of resistance; thirdly it places the researcher in the role of the heroic emancipator which is both overly romantic and pragmatically naïve. In terms of this research, while power relations are key, it must be remembered that Further Education is not a genuine capitalist workplace and, however mediated by financial or policy considerations, senior managers are likely to hold similar values to the staff they lead (see Lumby, 2000).

## **Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study**

As with any research methodology, a case study approach has strengths and limitations which need to be examined in any research endeavour. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001, p3) highlight a number of strengths of case study methodology:

1. ‘They can help us understand complex inter-relationships’: as case studies operate with a restricted focus, they offer the researcher an opportunity to study the case in depth, providing a rich understanding of actors in their immediate contexts. My professional experience had highlighted the multiple interrelationships and network complexity of the FTM role and so the case study approach facilitated this understanding in multiple cases.
2. ‘Case studies are grounded in “lived reality”’: here Hodkinson and Hodkinson highlight the ‘noise’ of everyday life that case study researchers attempt to include in their studies. Here then, this project aimed to present the complexity of the lived experience of the FTM, detailing the significant trivia such as photocopier breakdowns to the higher order aspects of the role such as performance management. Case study methodology is founded upon an understanding that attempts to encompass all of the noise of the actors’ reality.
3. ‘Case studies facilitate the exploration of the unexpected and the unusual’: although I have argued that my professional experience precluded the exploratory aspects of the role, this did not preclude the unexpected and, indeed, the research design made space for emergent themes by keeping the interviews semi-structured and by including spontaneous data collection such as conversations before and after the interviews. As a result, the focus of the research changed – for example, organisational change was initially thought to be the dominant context of the FTMs but this proved not to be the case as it became a background influence rather than a presiding concern. In addition, unanticipated themes such as guilt emerged which were found to be an important influence upon the participants.
4. ‘Multiple case studies can enable research to focus on the significance of the idiosyncratic’: when multiple cases within the same study are researched, the differences between them can be highlighted which can provide understanding

of the differential influences of contextual and organisational factors. For example, if I had only studied the FTM role within a single college, the extent to which the role was seen as heterogeneous would have been limited. Secondly, the influence of top-down job design would have been less clear. Instead, a multiple case study approach lets us identify those areas of commonality which highlight the distinct idiosyncrasies of the role and the colleges.

5. 'Case studies can show the processes involved in causal relationships': this strength highlights the alternative to statistical correlation that case studies present. The depth of understanding that case studies facilitate allows us to view the range of impacts upon the FTMs' working reality and, perhaps more importantly, can offer an understanding of how each individual agentively – and differentially – reacts to each one. In addition, it allowed me to identify the connection between functional top-down job design and the positioning of FTMs in terms of their focus.
6. 'Case studies can facilitate rich conceptual/theoretical development': the authors argue that the 'very richness of the data can help generate new thinking and new ideas' and allow previous theoretical conceptions to be 'brought up against complex realities' (p8). In this research project, three theoretical developments emerged from the data: firstly, a typology of FTMs; secondly, a contribution to the managerial resistance literature; finally, a proposed scale of professional coping. All of these arose from descriptions that attempted to present a thick, vivid and rich understanding of the FTM role.

However, while the case study approach possesses significant strengths, the limitations must be acknowledged and addressed in the research design. Nisbet and Watts (in Cohen et al., 2006) identify three such weakness of the methodology. Firstly is the issue of generalizability – when the aim of a case study methodology is to provide a thick description, generalizing to a wider population presents difficulties, especially as each case is considered to be unique. Secondly are the inherent issues of participant selectivity, subjectivity and bias which are issues throughout the

qualitative paradigm of research methodologies. Thirdly there is the issue of researcher bias, even when reflexivity is addressed. To counter these perceived weaknesses, Yin (2003) suggests that case study researchers address the common issues of validity and reliability and these will be examined next.

### **Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research will inevitably attract criticisms on the grounds of validity and reliability. This research, in particular, with its ‘double curse’ investigation of subjectivity in the workplace via a subjectivist methodology, must address these criticisms in this chapter.

Many argue that the positivist conception of reliability is not suitable for qualitative studies and a range of alternative stances have been taken.

- Reliability as a measure of quality should be replaced by ‘dependability’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985);
- Seale (1999) argues for the use of ‘trustworthiness’ as an alternative criterion to reliability;
- Stenbacka (2001) suggests that there is no place for reliability in qualitative studies.

Reliability is concerned with the idea of replicability, that the same methods used with the same sample should provide the same findings. This notion is founded upon objectivist notions of stability and externality that do not sit easily within the subjectivist paradigm. If humans are seen as creative and makers of meaning, then the possibility of replicability is extremely limited; indeed, it can be argued that replicability should not even be the goal of qualitative studies, thus rendering reliability an incongruous criterion of quality. This research is concerned with the unique, the individual and the emic, none of which are likely to prove reliable in quantitative terms. In this research, a question about the resistance of staff is likely to receive a very different answer if the FTM has just had an argument with a member of

staff than if everything is going smoothly. Social environments are transient, chaotic (both the complexity theory conception of chaos and its everyday definition) places that are unable to be controlled and rendered perpetually stable by participants in them, let alone by a researcher. And it is this overriding characteristic of social contexts that make them so fascinating and enduring a field of study and so irreducible to replicability measures. From this perspective, qualitative research may approach rather than attain reliability (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). From another perspective, rather than disregard reliability entirely, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that reliability is a consequence of validity: 'since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]' (p316). Attention in qualitative studies should thus be focused on maximising the validity of research.

Validity in positivist terms concerns the ability of a research instrument to measure accurately what it was intended to measure. However, differing interpretations of the term have been developed to take account of the qualitative paradigm such as honesty, depth, richness and scope (Cohen et al., 2006). Maxwell (1992) defines five types of validity in qualitative methods: descriptive validity refers to the 'truthfulness' of the data, that it is accurate and not fabricated; interpretive validity concerns the ability of the research tools to capture the meanings intended by the participants, the subjective interpretation; theoretical validity refers to the theoretical frameworks with which a researcher begins his/her research as well as the theoretical frameworks of the participants; generalizability refers to the extent that the generated theory can be applied to other cases within the fieldwork site (in this case the same college) and externally to similar sites (other colleges in this research); lastly, evaluative validity moves beyond the merely descriptive account towards a more evaluative and critical stance.

However, while writers such as Yin (2003) argue that case study researchers should adopt the 'classic' measures of validity, others suggest that such positivist conceptions are inappropriate for the case study. Bassey (1999) suggests that attention is instead paid to Lincoln and Guba's concept of 'trustworthiness' which he adapts and suggests

can be measured against a number of key concerns; it is this approach to validity that is adopted in this research. The features here are to do with the research design and data collection:

- prolonged engagement in the field;
- persistent observation of emerging issues;
- the checking of data with their sources;
- triangulation.

Drawing on these concerns, the trustworthiness of data collection was attended to in the following ways.

### **Engagement and Persistent Observation of Emerging Issues**

The fieldwork for this research lasted for a year and was conducted in three different stages. As FE is such a transient and perpetually changing environment, a year provided the opportunity to investigate both incremental changes to the contextual realities of the participants but also to follow the path of more significant changes such as restructures. With the three rounds spread at equal intervals, this meant that the engagement was fairly constant and allowed the examination of subjectivities at different periods of the academic year. It also meant that it addressed the issue of 'persistent observation of emerging issues', the research act of 'searching for salient features of the case and then focusing attention on them' (Bassegy, 1999, p 76). This process was begun with the use of critical incident questioning which established the main themes for investigation throughout the semi-structured interviews. For example, with change being established as a major context, each round of interviews began with establishing any new changes that had occurred since our last meeting and gaining an update on more longitudinal changes. In addition, this persistent observation particularly focused on the theme of resistance in the workplace and facilitated a shift in my understanding that prompted me to examine the nuances of FTM behaviours and attempt to differentiate between coping and resistance.

## **Respondent Validation**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that, as the aim of qualitative research is to accurately represent the perspectives and subjectivity of participants, the most effective way to check the validity and credibility of findings is via the participants themselves. The findings of this research were thus presented to participants for validation, to assess the accord between researcher and participant perspective. It should be made clear, however, that respondent validation does not seek agreement on theory generated from data; rather, it should ensure that participants' accounts have not been misinterpreted. However, Hammersley (2006) highlights the limitations of respondent validation: intentions may not always be clear even to actors – social action often operates at a subconscious level. In addition, self-interest may determine that accounts are deliberately misrepresented in impression management attempts. Thus, while respondent validation is an important check of internal validity, it is remembered that people are 'well placed informants on their own actions, they are no more than that' (ibid, p229). To this end I collated the key findings from the fieldwork (Appendix 1) and sent them to each of the participants inviting comments, a selection of which will be included in Chapter 7.

## **Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to the practice of collecting data from a variety of sources with multiple methods. By examining a case through multiple lenses, it is anticipated that error can be reduced and authenticity maximised. Triangulation is thus one of the major strategies for increasing trustworthiness. In this research project triangulation is achieved in the following ways (drawing on Denzin, in Cohen et al. (2006):

1. The use of two primary sources of data – FTMs and documents.
2. The study stretched over 12 months providing time triangulation.
3. Although each college can be seen within the larger culture of FE, colleges are idiosyncratic places and retain an individualised culture. Therefore this

research addressed elements of ‘space triangulation’ whereby different cultures (or perhaps more appropriately different sub-cultures) were studied with the same methods at the four individual sample colleges.

4. As is clear from the introduction and the literature chapter, the conceptual framework for this study was informed by a range of theoretical perspectives drawing on studies from the wider sociological and organisational paradigms and well as the educational literature. Theoretical triangulation specifically enhances the construct validity of studies.

### **External Validity and Generalizability**

External validity concerns the extent to which the findings from research can be generalized to the wider population – in the case of this research, the extent to which the results from the four colleges can be applied to first tier managers and FE in general. Like the notion of reliability, external validity can be seen as of minor concern for the case study researcher who sees each case as essentially different, as unique and incapable of being applied to other cases. External validity can also be seen as a refutation of individuality and is potentially reductionist; it can even be argued that the aim of the researcher is to provide so much thick description, to create so vivid an account, as to render external validity an impossibility. However, the fact that this research draws on critical studies with their concerns about power and control necessitates that matters of external validity should be attended to – the aim is not only to analyse the dialectic of control and resistance in individual colleges but to view each case as an example of how power is enacted within the sector as a whole. Within the positivist conception of generalizability, this is a naïve aim. However, if, rather than use the term generalizability, we instead refer to ‘comparability’ (Goetz and LeCompte in Schofield, 1989), we may approach this ideal if

the components of a study – including the units of analysis, concepts generated, population characteristics, and settings – are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results of the study as a basis for comparison (ibid, p97).



As the aim of the case study approach is to provide rich and detailed descriptions, comparability is thus a realistic aim.

In addition to striving for such thick descriptions, this research, following Schofield's (1989) recommendations, has adopted a multi-site approach consisting of 'typical' colleges. As Schofield argues, typicality taken to the extreme is an impossibility and should instead be a 'guiding principle'. Typicality in terms of further education colleges was in this research taken as:

- 'general' colleges offering both academic and vocational courses
- those with both adult and 14-19 provision
- those that had achieved an Ofsted grade of satisfactory and above

### **Sample: Colleges**

A purposive sampling approach to this study was used and four large general further education colleges were selected because larger colleges typically have a greater number of hierarchical levels which are more likely to include FTMs and they provide a wider range of courses, both vocational, academic and, to a rapidly diminishing extent, 'leisure'. Below are vignettes of each of the sample colleges:

*Woodside College*: a suburban college in an area of major economic development, Woodside is a large general FE college that is based across three campuses and has around 14,000 students enrolled. The college maintains a diverse curriculum offer spanning the full range of 'hard' vocational areas such as construction, to a school specialising in academic courses such as Access and A levels, although these latter areas were in decline in terms of student numbers. Situated within a catchment area including over 10 school sixth forms, the college prides itself on tailoring its provision to meet the needs of the local community. In its most recent Ofsted inspection, the college was awarded a 'satisfactory' grade for the effectiveness of its provision. Its leadership and management grade was also satisfactory. The college has a flat

management structure consisting of a principal, deputy principals then heads of school (middle managers) line managing the teaching team.

Despite being on the outskirts of a major city, Woodside's main campus has an almost rural feel, situated next to a small village in a significant green area. Despite the massive building works that were taking place during the fieldwork, the college was sprawled across its considerable site with buildings that ranged from the almost dilapidated to the state of the art.

*Eastshire College:* Eastshire operates across five main sites as well as over 30 community venues, providing a full range of academic and vocational courses. In addition, with a focus clearly on, and in, the community, the college provides a range of short 'leisure' courses such as jewellery making. With around 15,000 learners, the college operates in areas of economic deprivation and so prioritises provision that links directly to the workplace, especially with initiatives such as Train to Gain. In particular the college emphasises its widening participation focus and increasingly attracts learners at entry level and level 1 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Despite the college judging itself as 'good', Ofsted issued a 'satisfactory' grade for overall effectiveness but its leadership and management were judged as 'good'. Eastshire operates a relatively tall management structure of five tiers: Principal, vice principals, directors, heads of school, curriculum team leaders, teaching staff.

*Blackton College:* Blackton has six sites including a number of community based centres and has around 20,000 learners, many from disadvantaged areas. However, the college is within an area of massive regeneration with investment planned for the next 20 years. In response, the college, like many of its contemporaries, is focusing on engaging employers and actively pursues non-governmental income. While providing a wide range of vocational courses, the college had recently deleted its A level provision. In its most recent inspection, Blackton gained a 'good' grade for all elements of its provision, including leadership and management. The college was

undergoing massive changes at the time of the fieldwork - the previous principal had been in place for the working memory of the participants and the new principal had ushered in a programme of transformational change. Upon taking up her post, the college had seven hierarchical tiers: principal, vice principals, directors, assistant directors, heads of sector, first tier managers then teaching staff.

*Parklands College:* Parklands was located on the outskirts of a medium sized town and had one large main site with another satellite centre a few miles away. The college is in a highly competitive region with high school staying-on rates in school sixth forms; despite this, the college has around 12,000 students and offers a wide range of courses, both vocational and, to a lesser extent, academic. There are few large employers in the area but a large number of SMEs which the college is keen to create links with.

At the time of the fieldwork there were massive building works at the main campus which were proving disruptive, although the staff were supportive of the final aims - the plans were to transform the college into a state of the art institution. Parklands was graded as 'good' in all but one of the areas in its most recent Ofsted inspection; leadership and management were also good. The college had restructured its management organisation just prior to the fieldwork and consisted of six tiers: principal, vice principals, directors, deputy directors, curriculum team leaders, programme leaders. However, as will be seen from the data, all curriculum leaders also maintained programme leadership in their subject specialist area.

### **Sample: FTMs**

Once access had been gained to the four sample colleges, purposive sampling was also used in the selection of the participants for the first stage of data collection, critical incident technique, but in a different way and for different reasons. The selection was based on the researcher identifying FTMs who had responsibility for cognate subject areas, roughly reflecting the curricular divisions within the sector. The subjects were chosen after consulting the course offers of each college and ensuring

that each cognate area was delivered in all of the colleges. As a result of this search, traditional academic courses such as A levels and GCSEs were not included, as these are rapidly declining in the sector and not all of the sample colleges still delivered these courses. The subjects selected were:

1. Access to Humanities/social sciences (adults)
2. Numeracy (adults)
3. Carpentry (14-19)
4. Hospitality and Catering (14-19)
5. ESOL (adults)
6. Business (14-19)
7. Access to Health and Social Care or Nursing (adults)
8. Beauty Therapy (14-19)
9. Early Years or childcare (14-19)
10. ICT (14-19)

This strategy was intended to reduce the risk of senior management contacts putting forward their 'ideal type' of first tier manager or those most likely to tread the organisational line, which would severely restrict the potential for useful data collection, especially on resistance. This method also ensured that participants were from a range of subject areas within both the 14-19 and 19+ age groups. Where a specific subject was no longer provided (and the curriculum offer of colleges is often very fluid depending on governmental funding), a subject from a related area was selected. Having received the details for each FTM, I then contacted them outlining the research and inviting them to take part; inevitably I did not receive responses from all those contacted – 27 responded and participated in the critical incident technique. Following this, judgement sampling was used to select the managers who would be involved in the interviewing phase of the project. Here the 'most productive sample' (Marshall, 1996, p523) was selected to address the research foci based on 'the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area'.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

As discussed above, case studies are defined by their intention to capture the lived realities of participants within their immediate context; they are not defined by the actual methods of data collection which can draw on both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this case study, four methods were adopted: firstly was the use of the critical incident technique; secondly was the primary method of semi-structured interviews; third was the documentary analysis of job descriptions and, finally, observations.

## **Critical Incident Technique**

The first research tool to be used was the critical incident technique (CIT). Developed by Flanagan (1954) over 50 years ago, CIT has since been used in a variety of fields such as health (Bradley, 1992), hospitality (Chell and Pittaway, 1998) and organisations (Stitt-Gohdes, Lambrecht and Redman, 2000). Flanagan's initial concern was to investigate effective and ineffective operational behaviours by observing 'critical incidents', any 'observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act' (Flanagan, 1954, p327). The collection of data was initially conducted via the observations of 'experts' before a shift away from observation as the primary vehicle for data collection towards the retrospective report or narrative of participants whether written or oral (Butterfield, Trevino and Ball, 2005). Here we see one of the major strengths of CIT in that the data collected are from the perspective of the interviewee rather than the researcher and will foreground what is important to the participant. While for some this can also be seen as a weakness of the technique in terms of recall bias (Gremier, 2004), from a subjectivist perspective, the bias of participants can be revealing. Emic perspectives, the primary aim of qualitative researchers, are by their very nature biased which is what, in essence, makes them of interest and revealing of the lived experience of participants. Furthermore, while the recounting of past events may be accused of inaccuracy due to the lapse of time, it is likely that participants will have reflected on critical incidents and may be more

evaluative of their behaviours. However, in an attempt to maximise validity, the questions asked are relatively neutral and concerned with processes and tasks rather than being evaluative of the efficacy of the individual's performance.

Another significant strength of CIT is its inductive nature which makes it ideal for areas of research that have been under-researched such as first tier managers in FE. While not entirely inductive, the research foci were established from the extant literature and professional biography; the use of CIT as the first data collection tool allowed me to revise and refine the research topics and provided a significant contextual basis for the rest of the project. Furthermore, as CIT relies on the recall of actual experiences, the data collected are immediately contextualised within the field of research, in this case the colleges themselves.

In this research, CIT is used for the following purposes:

- to detail the role of FTM from the perspective of an FTM;
- to provide evidence against which the theoretical hypotheses of the extant literature can be tested;
- to identify those participants who are able to provide the 'thickest' accounts.

Critical incidents were collected from 27 FTMs across the four colleges in an interview format. The stimuli questions themselves were designed to be as neutral as possible to minimise imposing my own theoretical or contextual knowledge upon the responses. Neutrality was also key as this represented the first meeting with the participants and, in order to begin building trust, sensitive or personal issues were to be avoided. The CIT consisted of two questions:

1. Can you talk me through a typical day as a first tier manager in this college?
2. Can you tell me about a recent organisational change that affected your area of responsibility and how you managed that change?

The first question was very clearly a ‘grand tour’ question (Fetterman, 1989) that was designed to focus on the role itself rather than the participant. The aim here was to establish the variety of duties and activities that FTMs are engaged in. The second question was more focused and implicitly encapsulates many of the foci of the research. The data was then analysed to establish the commonalities between the CIT participants and determined the themes to be pursued during the rest of the study.

## **Interviews**

Interviews are a staple method of qualitative approaches where meaning emerges from interaction between participant and researcher, the interaction a product of both individual and collective sensemaking. While the survey questionnaire may elicit textual responses, interviews are arguably the most productive method for collecting contextualised discursive accounts of the perceived reality of participants. This perspective on interviewing positions the interview subject as active and the focus is on ‘how meaning is constructed [and] the circumstances of construction’ while the validity of answers derives from ‘their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p9).

Interviews are perhaps the most efficient and most effective means of gaining an emic perspective. When questions are understood properly and allow participants the linguistic and conceptual space to respond fully, the researcher can gather a huge amount of data in a short amount of time, all from the perspective of the respondents.

Interviews offer a number of advantages for the researcher:

- Avoiding the predetermined categories of questionnaires, participants are able to employ their own lexis when responding, thus providing greater authenticity in the data and minimising the a priori conceptualisations of the researcher;
- The researcher is available to provide clarification to ensure that participants are interpreting questions correctly;
- Responses are able to be probed to:
  - Generate further data

- Seek clarification;
- Unexpected or unanticipated strands are able to be pursued.

However, interviews are not without limitations. The major disadvantage is the interactional nature of the interview. Anonymous participants responding to a questionnaire are likely to give different responses from those faced with a researcher. This issue is even more acute when the focus of the interview concerns issues that are personal or threaten the face needs of participants. Secondly there is the perpetual problem of bias and impression management that is unavoidable in qualitative work, though this was minimised by the triangulation methods described above.

As is clear from the previous chapter, this research is partly deductive and offers a number of themes which were explored during the interview phase of the research. While the critical incident technique was used to establish roles and functions – the processual reality of work as a first tier manager – interviews were used to investigate the subjective elements of the role such as:

- the relationships with middle managers and with lecturers;
- the experience of power, as purveyor and recipient;
- the nature of resistance;
- motivation;
- stress and coping.

However, it would be unduly restrictive to ignore the generative nature of interviews as a means of data collection and therefore interview structure should be flexible enough to pursue alternative themes as they develop. Therefore a semi-structured interview method was adopted to reflect both the deductive and inductive nature of the research that initially focused on the contentions developed from the literature while being flexible enough to explore new directions. In addition, relevant data from informal chats before and after the recorded interviews were written down



immediately after the meetings; participants were made aware that these could be used.

## **Observations**

Observations are the ideal method to complement the data collected by interviews (Ribbins, 2007). While interviews seek the perspective of participants, observational data relies on the interpretation of participant behaviour within the workplace setting thus maximising context-sensitivity and ‘ecological validity’ (Moyles, 2007). The observations were intended to address the themes established in the literature review and validate the findings of the interview data while remaining open to unanticipated occurrences. The research role here was observer-as-participant (Cohen et al., 2006) – my role was known to the observed group, especially the FTM, but the extent of contact with the other participants was minimal. The findings of the observations were recorded as field notes which were expanded upon as soon as possible after the observations themselves.

Prasad and Prasad (2000) found that there were three particularly productive times for the observation of resistance:

1. During team/department meetings.
2. During staff development or training sessions.
3. During work-breaks.

My observation schedule initially followed these suggestions. Professional experience again dictated that the first two events engender the most obvious overt (and covert) resistance while the informality of scheduled breaks in work potentially yield the greatest evidence of covert resistance. However, practical concerns came to dominate the actual performance of the observations. Because of the nature of my job, it was not possible to spend extended periods of time engaged in observing work breaks; in addition, during the time I did spend in staffrooms there was rarely a time when all of

the team – FTMs and lecturers – were together. As a result, I decided to focus observations on team meetings. To attend to the ultimate aim of validation of the interview findings, I decided to identify meetings that reflected the range of contexts within which the participants worked:

1. Team meeting of a programme leader and lecturers at Woodside where FTMs are the least managerial in terms of formal role, salary and hierarchy.
2. Team meeting at Parkside of one of the participants who occupied both middle and first tier management status with a large teaching team.
3. Observation of a meeting of FTMs across one department at Blackton with the Head of Sector.
4. A meeting of literacy team led by an FTM at Eastshire.

## **Documents**

Finlay (2001) outlines a variety of reasons why documents are used as research data:

- Documents are available at a low cost, indeed only at the cost of researcher time;
- They are stable sources of data;
- They can be a rich source of information;
- They are legally unassailable (hence the popularity of the paper trail in FE);
- They are non-reactive.

In the context of this research, all documents are technically at the formal end of the continuum noted by Hammersley (2006), such as minutes of meetings, job descriptions and strategic plans. However, these documents represent one end of another continuum, the public. As such they are theoretically accessible to interested external parties, especially organisations such as Ofsted and the LSC.

Regardless of the private-public nature of the documents, all are considered as constructions rather than possessing any objective qualities and the documents

analysed in this research project – job descriptions and person specifications – are no different. However, job application packs were chosen as they represent the official and authorised depiction of a role and, as such, present a useful counterpoint to the interview data on the realities of being a first tier manager. The aim was to use this data analysis to validate the findings of the interview data and to identify the points of divergence between the official and formal and the experienced constructions of the role.

There is a paucity of literature available concerning the analysis of job descriptions – in fact only three were found during the methodological literature review. Middlehurst (2004), in an analysis of the changing internal structures of higher education, analysed a number of job descriptions for senior leadership positions in an attempt to map changes in discourse to changes in the managerial environment. The other studies, Cragin, Palmer, Varvel, Collie and Dolan (2009) and Park, Lu and Marion (2009) analysed job descriptions for data curators in the US. Drawing on these studies, the data collection in this study identified a number of key categories for analysis:

- Job title
- Salary
- Teaching hours
- Qualification requirements
- Management experience requirements
- Duties

Job application packs were collected from 46 colleges nationwide; all of the jobs were advertised on the Times Education Supplement ([www.tes.co.uk/jobs](http://www.tes.co.uk/jobs)) website across a two month period and all were available to download either from the TES website itself or from the individual college websites.

## **Data Analysis**

As should be clear, this research project, not unusually, does not fit neatly into a methodological category but rests – and indeed moves – in the continuum between deductive and inductive approaches; it is in the consideration of data analysis that this issue really comes to the fore. It can be argued that the deductive element – the research contentions – arises from an inductive source, from my previous employment as a first tier manager which could then be seen as pre-conscious participant observation. From this point of view the research is grounded (in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) conception of the term) in autobiographical data which provided the generative foundations for the theoretical contentions that were concretised by a review of the extant literature. Therefore the deductive element of this research should not be seen as positivist in nature but merely the result of the experiential construction of a frame of reference. Data analysis is thus 'determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive)' (Thomas, 2003, p3).

The first stage of analysis within grounded theory is *open coding* which involves the 'naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data' (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, p62). Here units of meaning are identified that in turn create categories which, although influenced by the framework of the researcher, emerge from the data: the codes and categories of the theory fit the data, the data are not fitted into existing codes and categories (Kendall, 1999). To take an example from this research, 'accountability' could be a category and any units of meaning relating to the attribution of responsibility would be placed within that category while recognising that units may be placed in several categories at the same time. At this stage, the researcher must interrogate the data, asking questions of it arising from the established frame of reference i.e. the corpus of literature and the research contentions. The aim here is to either classify concepts into the pre-existing categories or, particularly when unanticipated data occur, to create new categories (the theme of guilt in the third round of field work is a good example of an unanticipated category).

Allied to interrogation is the making of comparisons between current and previous instances within a given category. Here is the crux of grounded theory according to Kendall (1999) in that theory is generated from this constant comparison of data; in this thesis, the constant comparison is between the case studies. Where there is dissonance, the previous category may need to be redefined or, again, a new category may be created. Furthermore, each ‘major’ category will have a number of sub-categories. Using the previous example, where ‘accountability’ would be a major category, ‘blame culture’ may be a sub-category.

The second stage of analysis suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) (but not Glaser) is *axial coding* whereby the researcher seeks to make connections between categories. Connections are defined via a ‘coding paradigm’ that involves specifying:

- the category/phenomenon itself;
- the causes of the phenomenon;
- the context within which it occurred;
- the actions and interactions connected with the phenomenon;
- its consequences.

Axial coding, as well as being an analytical approach, also systematises the generation of thick description by adherence to this paradigm.

However, from Glaser’s perspective (in Kendall, 1999), axial coding according to a set paradigm is too limiting. The imposition of a predetermined paradigm upon data, according to Glaser, defies the intentions of grounded theory and its insistence upon *emergence* as a guiding principle. Instead he argues that the researcher should let the data guide the creation of connections, that ‘conceptualisation [should] lead the analysis’ (ibid). However, axial coding provides a consistency to data analysis that suits the purpose of this research project which, as previously stated, contains elements of the deductive approach – potential categories, the research contentions, formed the basis of the research design; axial coding is, to an extent, the analytical

equivalent of this approach, bringing a suggested analytic paradigm to the data just as the research contentions bring a suggested conceptual paradigm. This symmetry justifies the inclusion of axial coding, especially as the caveat will remain that if it is found to be too restrictive, additional notions of connectivity will be utilised.

The final stage of analysis is *selective coding*: ‘the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development’ (Strauss and Corbin in Moghaddam, 2006). Core categories are selected using a range of criteria:

- centrality: all major categories are related to it;
- a high frequency of appearances within the data;
- a logical and consistent explanation of the relationships between major categories and core categories;
- abstraction: its nomenclature must be ‘sufficiently abstract’ to be used in other research arenas;
- the concept can explain variation as well as adherence of other concepts (ibid).

As was argued above, a significant feature of case studies is that they blend description with analysis and this was indeed the case with this case study approach. Coding and analysis were conducted after fieldwork within each college was completed; then, after fieldwork in all four of the colleges within that round, coding and analysis were conducted at a multiple case level and were written up in draft form before the next round took place. This allowed the constant comparison between current and previous instances of phenomena and categorisations, the basis of grounded theory according to Kendall (1999). In addition, coding, analysis and writing after each round allowed to me to create a narrative of the research as it proceeded. This meant that primary analysis was contemporary and rooted within that specific period of time and the particular perspective of the participants at that time. Such an approach allowed the charting of changing attitudes as the participants continued reflecting and gaining an increased understanding of their role.

## **Ethics**

All research must be conducted within an ethical framework; research such as this project which concerns questions of power, resistance, job performance and misbehaviour must be especially attuned to ethical considerations right from the planning stage. This study therefore followed the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) revised ethical guidelines for educational research (2004). The project plan was also submitted to the University's Research Ethics Committee for consideration and was approved.

However, while the BERA guidelines were followed, there are tensions within some of the ethics of this research, as with much qualitative research. In particular is the issue of anonymity. Given that this research concerns resistance, there was the possibility that data would be collected that referred to incidents and behaviours contravening institutional disciplinary codes. These breaches may be attributable to the first tier managers themselves, the staff they manage or more senior managers. Secondly, data would also likely reveal incidents that could compromise the professional image and reputation of the participants from the perspective of either senior management or lecturing staff.

Anonymity was maximised as much as it could be: individuals and colleges were given pseudonyms; the geographical locations of colleges were not identified and were described instead as 'medium to large further education colleges'; the unique characteristics of colleges which may allow for identification were not discussed; personal details of the participants are not mentioned. However, even these measures do not ensure anonymity. Cohen et al. (2006) suggest that, while the researcher may attempt to preserve the anonymity of participants by using pseudonyms and avoiding personal details, 'a subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview... can in no way expect anonymity. At most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality' (p61). As this research concerned behaviours such as resistance and even misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999), anonymity was thus a prime concern. While anonymity was

maximised, there was the potential that the principals who had agreed to host the fieldwork, if they were so motivated, could potentially identify the participants, even with the use of pseudonyms; as Punch (in Baez, 2002, p44) suggests ‘some individuals and institutions are impossible to disguise and, in many contexts, insiders are able to locate a respondent’.

With anonymity limited, confidentiality, argue Cohen et al. (ibid) becomes even more important. This concerns the agreement of the researcher not to make known the sources of the data so that ‘the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected’ (p62). Kimmel (1988) highlights the importance of confidentiality when researching areas of sensitivity and suggests that only when the researcher’s assurances of confidentiality are strong and well understood do research participants agree to take part. As such, the discussion of the limitations of anonymity and the strength of confidentiality formed an integral part in the initial contact and first meetings with the participants. Such discussions were felt to be an essential element of the need for researchers to inflict no harm upon participants and this discussion also formed the basis of the informed consent which, in this research particularly, had to be full and frank.

While Baez (2002) argues against deliberately omitting data to protect participants and suggests that such actions keep ‘oppressive power arrangements hidden’ (p41), it is essential that the researcher does not make decisions about what data is included for participants. Sources are far more able to make decisions about likely repercussions within their workplace than the researcher and, as such, must decide whether identification would negatively affect them. By discussing these issues during the briefing period, the participants were then able to self-monitor their reports, fully aware of the limits of anonymity and confidentiality. The data collected was then a result of what they wanted to tell me rather than the researcher making the decisions of what to include.

As a result of these discussions, each FTM understood the limitations of anonymity and was happy to continue to participate in the research; from Kimmel’s (1988)



perspective, this was perhaps a confirmation that the assurances of confidentiality I gave were considered robust. In addition, when the data was sent to the participants for respondent verification, some asked if they could forward it to their principals themselves – they were keen that senior managers within their colleges gained a greater understanding of just what being an FTM involved and the challenges they faced on a daily basis. In these responses we see affinity with Miller and Glassner's (1997, p104) assertion that confidentiality is not always the most important matter for research participants; instead, interviewees 'want to know that they have to say matters'.

### **Summary of Chapter 3**

This chapter has presented the rationale for the selection of a case study approach as the methodology for studying FTMs. With an intention to capture the emic perspective of the participants, case studies offer the potential to capture rich data that places informants within the immediate contexts of interrelationships and complex networks. The case study approach, with its dialogue between description and analysis, will frame the structure of this thesis with each chapter presenting analysis in situ, accompanying the narrative of the year of fieldwork. The strengths and limitations of the case study have been detailed as well as discussion of each particular method within the research design. In addition, the issues of reliability and validity have been discussed. Finally, as the research focuses on sensitive issues such as resistance, ethical considerations and the strategies to address the limitations of anonymity and confidentiality have been presented.

The next chapter presents the data and analysis from the first round fieldwork and draws on the responses from the critical incident technique and the semi-structured interviews to begin discussion of the FTM role.

## **Chapter 4: Fieldwork Round 1**

The first round of fieldwork involved a sample of 27 first tier managers from the four colleges and employed both critical incident technique and semi-structured interviews which lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The primary aim of the first round was to investigate:

- The parameters of the first tier manager position in terms of responsibilities;
- The typical daily duties of participants;
- How first tier managers perceived their role;
- How they felt their role was perceived by lecturers and senior managers;
- First tier manager involvement in organisational change.

### **Defining ‘First Tier Manager’**

To begin, it is essential that the nomenclature of the research participants is discussed. At the embryonic stages of this project, the focus was on first line managers rather than first tier managers. The sample was to consist of those teaching staff who have a formal position above lecturers and below middle managers (usually seen as heads of department). What became apparent very quickly was that participants in that intermediary position, while formally managers or leaders even if only by title, did not always perform line management duties such as appraisal and absence management. Such a distinction challenges the assertion by Martins (2008, p98), who defines the position of First Tier Manager as ‘those first level of managers directly responsible and involved in the core HRM management of their shopfloor staff’; what is neglected here is the distinction between managing in terms of guiding and instructing staff and line managing which includes the enactment of human resource management functions. To reflect this distinction, ‘line’ was thus replaced by ‘tier’.

The conception of management assumed throughout this research is that managers can be defined by their involvement in four core functions: planning, organising resources, leading and controlling or coordinating (McNamara, 2009). Examining the role within this conceptualisation allows us to reflect the differential levels of involvement within each of the functions while not excluding those FTMs who do not have line management responsibility. Woodside College provides a good illustration of these issues: the organisational structure is flat, with only three hierarchical tiers: senior managers, middle managers and lecturers, with FTMs at a mezzanine level between lecturers and middle managers. Had I defined the focus of the research in terms of first *line* managers, the sample would have consisted of heads of department (middle managers) who are the first tier responsible for HRM functions. This would have excluded Programme Leaders, lecturers in terms of salary but hierarchically elevated in terms of title and responsibility for the four core managerial functions as they relate to the curriculum. Thus while lecturing staff are line managed by the heads of department, they are coordinated and led in terms of the curriculum by Programme Leaders.

In sharp contrast is Parklands College. Here, a number of the participants in the sample were in effect undertaking both a first tier and middle manager role. In a recent restructure, existing middle managers were upgraded to assistant director positions and two new roles were created: at first tier were Programme Leaders and then a new middle management role of Curriculum Leader which in effect filled the middle management vacuum. To complicate matters further, where Curriculum Leaders were also the subject specialist in their area, they were required to fulfil the role of Programme Leader as well. For example, Vicky was Programme Leader for administration and secretarial. She applied for the new Curriculum Leader position which meant that, as a middle manager, she was now also responsible for business studies, leisure and tourism and, as of this year, sport. However, while there were Programme Leaders for the three latter areas, as an administration and secretarial subject specialist, senior managers decided that she did not need a separate Programme Leader for that area:

- Vicky: The reasoning given was that it was not a cost cutting exercise, it was to streamline and develop good practice and to streamline the management tier.
- Interviewer: And is that how you see it?
- Vicky: I think it's a bit of both.

## **Moving into Management**

In three colleges, Blackton, Parklands and Eastshire, FTMs had to go through a formal application process to gain their positions due to the fact that there was a salary supplement with the role and HR processes had to be seen to be followed. However, in a number of cases the positions were 'ring-fenced'. It was clear that there was some cynicism around the process; while the participants had benefited, most were aware that the process of appointment had not been as open as it might have been. It was clear that HRM protocols had been adhered to but by limiting the number of people who could actually apply, the process was far from equitable.

Of the 27 participants interviewed in the first round, 23 had been internal appointees. Many had found the transition from being 'one of the team' to managing the team difficult.

- Steph (Blackton): At first it was quite difficult because you're working with colleagues that you've been kind of part of a team with... Now I think I'm getting into the role a lot better than I did right at the very beginning. I found it quite difficult moving from being one of the guys into a more management post.

The difficulties were often compounded when fulfilling the quality monitoring function of the FTM role, especially conducting teaching observations that formed part of the appraisal process:

- Linda (Eastshire): It was more difficult because I've come from being one of their colleagues and then suddenly I'm in the position where I'm observing them and I don't know how they feel about that... I think coming from being alongside them to suddenly having to – not being above them but having to do things where I suppose you are in a way, you are managing them so it is, yeah, that's probably a hard thing.

As in Linda's case, many FTMs tried to play down their elevated position and insist that they were still part of the lecturing team. It appeared that there was a real attempt to avoid being classified as a manager; 'management' was seen as non-teaching and therefore, at times, positioned in binary opposition to FTMs. The issue was not alleviated by the use of the term 'leader' either, which some found to be an even more inflated title for what they actually did – 'leader' was associated with senior positions rather than being an activity.

Reactions from lecturers to their newly appointed colleagues avoided the overt expressions of resentment or mistrust detailed by Ezzamel et al. (2001) and there was no evidence of the 'piss-taking' of team leaders documented by Taylor and Bain (2003). Few FTMs reported significant changes in the attitudes of their new colleagues; where changes did occur they were often subtle:

Pat (Blackton): A couple of them immediately started acting really weird and I'd think 'what's going on with them?'... Afterwards I thought it's just because I have this CTL role and they were just acting peculiar. It took me a while to realise – they weren't being horrible or anything, they were just being very nervous and it meant coming back and bringing people to introduce to me. And I thought 'I've known you for years, what's the matter?'

For others, the transition was far smoother and was seen as a natural progression by their peers; here the FTMs were established and experienced members of the team who had grown into an informal leadership role in terms of expert knowledge of their subject area and exhibited skill in negotiating the political and bureaucratic landscape of their institution (corporate agency in Briggs' (2005) terms). Promotion was therefore deemed to be inevitable and, as the interviewees perceived it, deserved.

Lynette (Eastshire): I found it quite easy simply because I'd been doing a lot of the jobs that go along with the management role beforehand and this really was just in some ways an affirmation and actually getting paid to do the jobs I had been doing so the transition for me was fairly easy

In Woodside College, where Programme Leaders received no salary increase, there were no issues and, from their point of view, no real transition to speak of. Lecturers were allocated Programme Leadership responsibility by their Head of Department and it was perceived as a set of management duties rather than a management role. However, Keith, Programme Leader for carpentry, viewed the role as clearly managerial and saw himself as official team leader, in sharp contrast to the other FTMs at Woodside: 'I feel this is my domain and when somebody walks in they have to see me if you see what I mean, even if it's the head of faculty'. How much of this was self-aggrandisement was unclear but Keith was the only FTM in Woodside who saw his position in this way. Coming from a construction background, Keith perhaps equated the role with that of 'supervisor' in his previous industrial context which echoes Hales' (2005) account of first tier managers as primarily responsible for performance-oriented supervision.

Almost all of the participants reported being unprepared for a management role and none had received management training prior to their appointment; Frearson (2002) found a paucity of management training in FE in 2002 and it appears little has changed at the lower tiers. At one extreme, FTMs found themselves given responsibility without a hand-over and without guidance on what was expected and how they were to fulfil their role.

Interviewer: How did you find the transition?  
John (Blackton): Difficult, difficult at first. No training given so just kind of plonked into the role. A very very busy period. My previous manager had empire-built if you like and so I was left holding the baby. So yeah, lots of problems in the first year. So yeah, difficult, really difficult first few months.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the absence of organisational preparation, Middle Managers were seen as vital in managing the induction process. However, this was dependent upon the mentoring and coaching skills of the Head of Department, as we can see from Helen's (Parklands) account.

Helen: The transition has been very slow. My boss is incredibly good considering she is so so busy for just gently passing things over...

She's still very good at sort of saying 'I can do that with my eyes closed, do you want to sit in with me while I do it and you can do it next time' rather than just saying 'there you go, deal with that' so she's really supportive.

### **The FTM Role: Clarity, Contestation and Elasticity**

As is evident in table 2 below, there was significant variation in terms of functional management across the four colleges, yet this is not to assume that there was internal consistency. It was found that there was variation within each college, especially concerning the amount of remission from teaching and, where line management was an integral part of the role, in the number of staff managed. In part, remission and staff variations can be explained in terms of the size of the provision in each area but evidence was also found that individual FTMs were able to negotiate decreases in teaching hours with their line managers, if only on a temporary basis; it is evident, however, that such transactions occur only when the pressure becomes unbearable:

Keith (Woodside): I say I'm at breaking point, you've got to help me out and they will, they'll put sessional staff in to cover so that I can have more time to sort it out.  
Interviewer: So it's only when you get right to the end of your tether basically.  
Keith (Woodside): Yeah just before breaking point I'll go to them [laughs]

Similar to the extant literature (e.g. McNay, 1988, Rabey, 2008) on first tier managers, the role in FE lacks clarity, especially when it had been newly created:

Georgia (Parklands): I've had to feel my way really as to what I think needs to be done and you discover by – well so far it hasn't been too much by omission but if you're not careful you discover by omission what you needed to do so it's been a bit of a nightmare really

Pat (Blackton): I did say to [the sector head] 'I'd better get my job description out because I'm not really sure'. Because there has never been CTLs [curriculum team leaders] here before or that sort of management, we didn't really know what it was about, the job description is like, I read and I thought no wonder I didn't take

a lot of notice of it at the time because it's ridiculous trying to understand that.

Even where the role had been established for a number of years, it had been subject to constant contestation and shifts echoing the manufacture of industrial supervisory identity in Musson and Duberley's (2007) study. In two of the colleges the FTM role

**Table 2: Comparison of roles**

	<b>Woodside College</b>	<b>Eastshire College</b>	<b>Blackton College</b>	<b>Parklands College</b>
<b>Participant's Job Title</b>	Programme Leader	Curriculum Leader	Curriculum Team Leader	Programme Leader/Curriculum Leader
<b>Reporting to</b>	Head of School	Head of School	Head of Section	Curriculum Leader/Deputy Director of Faculty
<b>Formal Application</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Remission</b>	2 hours	10-12 hours	5-6 hours	10-18
<b>Role related pay increase</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Number of staff line managed</b>	0	8-12	5-10	8-30
<b>Managing Budgets</b>	No	No	No	No/yes
<b>Conducting appraisal</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Teaching observations</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Managing absence</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Involvement in student disciplinary action</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Involvement in staff disciplinary action</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Timetabling of staff</b>	In some cases	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Overseeing course quality procedures</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



had begun life as ‘Advanced Practitioner’, a role funded from the Teacher’s Pay Initiative of 2001 (see Robson, 2006, p85) and bid for by colleges. However, as soon as the TPI ended and the funds were consolidated into college budgets, the role became less about leading teaching excellence and more about overt monitoring, managing of quality processes and performance management. From another point of view, staff found themselves moving from a leadership position to a management position. However, this same phenomenon of moving from a position of pedagogical leadership to management proper also occurred much earlier, after incorporation (Prichard and Deem, 1999)

The role of FTM is thus perceived to be elastic. Regardless of the initial parameters of the role, organisational imperatives and the increase of workloads of more senior managers contest the derivation of first tier management. Key to this malleability were middle managers who, in spite of the job description, shaped the role according to their own needs:

Helen (Parklands): I don’t think [senior managers] know what it is, I don’t think they have much concept of what [an FTM] does or what that’s about. I’m sure they could look at the job specification and go ‘oh yeah, you do this’ and I’m sure they quite like it that on away days they have more people to talk at ... I just think they think that takes the pressure off them having to pay curriculum leaders[middle managers] more because they’ve got someone to help [laughs].

Lynette (Eastshire): I think they see it as a catch all, you know, if it’s something that they [senior managers] don’t want to do ‘we’ll give it to the [FTMs], they can deal with that one’.

Jan (Eastshire) What [FTMs] do depends quite a lot on the area that they’re working in and what their manager has asked them to do.

Role elasticity is seen cynically by the majority of FTMs (especially in Eastshire College) who see themselves as ‘dogsbodies’, there to absorb the increasing workload of middle managers. However, the antecedent of the downward motion of additional tasks was rarely attributed to heads of department. Instead, HoDs were often seen as

victims of senior manager delegation who had no other choice but to attribute more responsibility to the FTMs in their department. FTMs thus routinely accepted an increased workload without resistance not for the sake of organisational imperatives, but to be supportive of their line managers, with whom the leader-member exchange (see for example van Dam et al., 2008) was almost always high quality:

- Interviewer: Do you think your immediate line manager's aware of the pressures you're under?  
Tracey (Parklands): Yeah yeah.  
Interviewer: Have they discussed any ways to help you out?  
Tracey (Parklands): Well my immediate line manager's exactly the same as me [laughs] so she's probably drowning as well.

However, acting supportively while fulfilling a poorly defined and elastic role may provide the explanation for one of the most motivating aspects of being an FTM: autonomy. The extant literature (see for example Randle and Brady, 1997, Ackroyd et al., 2007, Taylor, 2007) almost uniformly argues that professional autonomy is being eroded within FE as the mechanisms of performance management, accountability and surveillance become more enveloping. FTMs, however, unanimously reported that they enjoyed considerable autonomy in how they fulfil their role:

- Interviewer: Are you quite autonomous, does [HoD] give you autonomy?  
Jan (Eastshire): Yeah, with taking up new ideas and things like that. Yeah yeah, she's fairly hands off which I like but I also know she's there if I want advice.  
Grace (Woodside): Once they've employed us and they think we're good enough, they probably think 'well we're going to let them run; we're going to give them the rope to run'.  
David (Blackton): You're given in this role quite a lot of latitude to do things your own way as long as things go well and your success rates look good. And you bring in – in terms of your enrolments – bring in money.

This high degree of autonomy may be explained by a number of factors:

1. As the role lacks clarity and is poorly understood by middle managers (Heads of Department), FTMs can negotiate the processes and boundaries according to their own judgement and discretion:
  - Georgia (Parklands): ‘I don’t know whether I’m doing what people would expect me to be doing or things that they wouldn’t have expected me to be doing... I’ve decided what I’m doing and got on and done it and if I’ve seen it needs to be done, I’ve done it’.
2. As the workload of middle managers increases, there is likely to be gratitude that supportive FTMs are in place to absorb delegated duties. In the interests of self-preservation, heads of department may be obliged to allow FTMs to operate autonomously:
  - Pat (Blackton): ‘the idea was to make some time for Keith [middle manager] because Keith had so many other things he needed to do. Even from that position he has loads of meetings and things so I just try and make sure I can help as much as possible’.
3. Middle managers respect the professionalism of their team and therefore trust their judgement:
  - Grace (Woodside): ‘I think she respects the fact that we are professionals. She’s given us a job to do and she trusts us to do it’.
4. Lastly, middle managers may have too much work of their own – McCann et al.’s (2008) notion of ‘normalised intensity’ – to be concerned with how FTMs operate as long as they get results:
  - David (Blackton): ‘In a lot of ways we’re left alone to get on with it as long as we produce the goods and people are satisfied with that’.

This last factor is crucial in understanding the FTM role. While the participants articulated autonomy as a key motivational factor, they were all acutely aware that it was accompanied by accountability, measured mostly by student success rates. There was a clear understanding of the results-driven context of the sector and, importantly, the implications for the department within which they worked if results were poor. However, other forms of accountability in terms of quality monitoring, especially providing paper-based evidence of the process, were considered as of secondary importance and, in some cases, as meaningless paperwork.

Cheryl (Woodside): I've never known a single other person ever look at the programme file ever which is why they lie empty all year round then at the last minute you think 'oh better do it, better fill in all these wretched forms in and make it look as though we've been doing it properly all year round'.

The question of why this finding is so clearly in opposition to much of the literature that focuses on the eroding of professional autonomy (for example Randle and Brady, 1997; Eden, 2001) needs to be addressed. The first primary difference is that previous studies of professionalism and autonomy have focused on lecturers rather than managers. As such, reductions in autonomy in these studies were largely considered in terms of restricted curriculums and pedagogical control rather than management activities which, the data suggest, are less governed. It may also be that previous studies have focused on the mechanisms that reduce professional autonomy and presumed a passive and de-professionalising result on teaching staff. The findings in round one instead focus on the agentive reactions of staff rooted in professional autonomy. It is even possible that autonomy can be viewed as a form of resistance to the imposition of increasingly invasive target-driven cultures. Viewed through a lens of resistance, autonomy, once, it is argued, the reserve of the professional, may now be a form of 'making-out', finding loopholes and ways around the rules. As such, it provided a key area for the rounds to come and summative theoretical discussion in Chapter 8.

### **A Typical Day**

There was one universal response to the critical incident technique question 'can you talk me through a typical day?': there was no such thing as a 'typical' day. Atypicality was more acute in those colleges where FTMs had fewer teaching hours; in Woodside where remission was only two hours, there was more consistency of daily experiences as a result of teaching hours precluding other duties. Where teaching hours were lower, the unexpected was experienced more frequently.

There was some evidence that FTMs attempted to be proactive within their role, planning their workload in advance and carefully prioritising. However, the context within which they work militated against this and they were forced to become reactive:

Pat (Blackton): From day to day I never know. I intend to come in every day with something to do but I don't think in the two years I've ever been able to do that. Every now and again I think 'that's a good day, I've actually managed to sort of knock some things off this list' but most of the time it's completely different from how I expect it. Which is interesting as long as I can keep my head above water.

Sue (Parklands) I had my list, you know, the ongoing list that goes from week to week to week of stuff I had to do and when I walked in I was confronted by one member of staff in one room hysterical: 'I'm never going to work with her again and I'm never going to speak with her again' and the other member of staff in the other room and then another member of staff arrived going 'I can't bear it, I can't bear it, I'm not walking in that room'. Now that is a typical kind of day ... it's mopping up all the time so a typical day is fire-fighting.

Throughout the first round of fieldwork, 'fire-fighting' (see Bryce, 2008, for example) was perhaps the most commonly used phrase. The workplace was perceived as volatile, a context of competing demands in a pressurised environment. Routinely this was expressed by problems such as room clashes, student disciplinary incidents and resource issues such as the photocopier breaking down. Less common but more time consuming and challenging were disputes between lecturers and between lecturers and students. To insulate themselves, FTMs attempted to create space within which they could work uninterrupted. For some, this meant maintaining an office separate from their team; for others it consisted of protected time dedicated to managerial or administrative tasks. Both tended to fail and there was a feeling that they could not escape from the volatility and were left with no option but to adopt a reactive management position.

However, it was not just interpersonal and administrative factors that led to reactive management. Participants reported that colleges are systemically characterised by immediate gratification needs:

Amanda (Blackton): There is an expectation that I will be able to give them [senior managers] anything they want, whenever they want it.

Abbie (Parklands): This is the main thing, that everything's wanted the day before, when it strikes me that you would know you wanted that information ages ago but everything seems terribly terribly knee jerk and last minute which I'm sure is common in most colleges.

Tracey (Parklands): It's very difficult to prioritise what is a priority because somebody wants this, somebody wants this, somebody wants that but actually everybody wants it at the same time.

While middle managers (HoDs) in FE may be caught between senior managers and lecturers (Briggs, 2003, 2005), FTMs are subject to the needs of three groups: lecturers, middle managers and students, all demands being made with a sense of urgency and an expectation of immediacy. Reactive management was thus seen, from the perspective of FTMs, as inevitable.

### **Home Invasion**

The result of the immediate gratification needs of their workplace and in an attempt to instigate proactivity, FTMs sought to lengthen their work time. Many arrived well before their teams so that they could attempt to 'clear' their emails and complete administrative tasks while it was quiet. In the most extreme cases, Vicky at Parklands would begin responding to emails from home at 4am while Pat at Blackton would routinely send emails at midnight. Similarly Abbie at Parklands would open her emails from home on Sunday evening to prepare for the week. In Sara's (Eastshire) department, there was even a mobile phone that was taken home by FTMs at the weekends on a rota basis so that if lecturers were going to be absent on Monday, cover could be arranged on Sunday. More routinely, all the participants took marking or teaching preparation home.

Yet this blurring of work and home life was seen as part of the job and the only way that they could get everything done. Resentment at the invasion of home-life was rare; it was generally seen as a by-product of doing a job they felt passionately about:

Helen (Parklands): Hours are long, family life suffers, weekends suffer. I actually haven't put my five year old to bed one night this week... but I love it and it's mad [laughs]. Yeah, so I wake up in the night thinking 'argh I coulda done that' or 'maybe I should take the students here, let's go to Rome next year'.

The female FTMs were especially likely to discuss the impact of their jobs on their family yet still tried to fulfil their home responsibilities as well, an acute expression of the 'daily dissonance' of the role (Davison and Burge, 2009) and a potential barrier to promotion (McTavish and Miller, 2009). In many cases female FTMs would finish work between 5 and 6pm, go home to domestic chores, cook dinner for their families and then resume wading through the deluge of emails that had arrived since they left work.

What was unclear in phase one was whether this behaviour was purely driven by dedication or whether there was an element of impression management involved. The masculine culture of FE tends to foreground long working hours (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998, 2000) especially the 'competitive-masculine subjectivity' evidenced by the visibility of working long hours (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p689). In the data there was no suggestion that impression management was adopted as a deliberate strategy to foster similar patterns of work among their teams, or to impress their senior colleagues; neither did the data suggest that submission to 'home invasion' was a product of the 'psychic discomfort and anxiety' of organisational inculturation (Casey, 1999, p166) of employees within colleges. Instead, the willingness of FTMs to work far above their expected hours seemed to be determined by the way that they perceived their role and how they defined the role priorities.

## Perception of Role

To investigate the FTMs' own perception of their role, three lenses were used corresponding to three hierarchical levels. Firstly, they were asked how they saw the role; secondly (with other questions in between) they were asked how they thought lecturers and senior managers saw the role. The main aim, integral to the research intention, was to gain an emic perspective, to understand how participants personally understood their role. However, in asking how they thought they were viewed by others, it was anticipated that the imagining of the 'self-as-others-see-us' would offer additional depth to the emic view and additionally provide data about the intra-organisational relations of FTMs.

When asked about their perception of the role, most participants responded by talking about what they did, the duties, responsibility and the foci of their role. The data suggested that the role should be seen from a trialectic perspective in that pressure is exerted from the triumvirate of student, team and organisation (see Figure 1). FTMs reported that rather than operating with a unified focus, they had to move between foci in a reactive manner. However, it was clear from the responses to the question of how they viewed their role that each FTM had a primary focus that determined both how they perceived the role and also how they executed their duties.

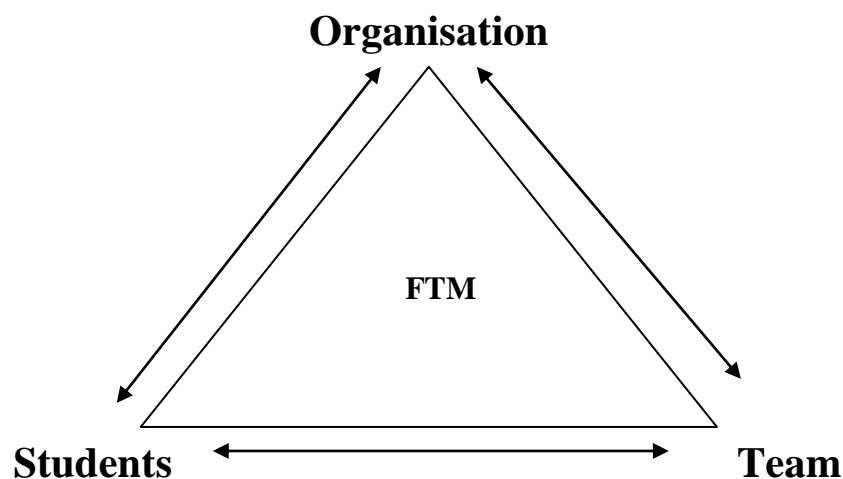


Figure 1: Trialectic



Thus FTMs maintained a student-focus (eight FTMs), a team focus (three FTMs), an organization focus (seven FTMs) or an omni focus (nine FTMs) in which they attempted to focus on all three.

### **Student-focused**

From the responses to the question of how they perceived their role, eight of the participants saw students as their priority and, as a result, saw themselves as teachers first and foremost.

Elaine (Blackton): To me, teaching comes first and if I've got to teach then I can't do whatever report they want. If I'm teaching for five hours in that day then that's got to wait until teaching's finished and I can't do that unless they're going to give me the time. So I think they [senior managers] get frustrated with us.

Amanda (Blackton): The way I view my job is that first and foremost I am here to provide for the students... they're my number one priority and then thereafter the teaching staff would be number two and my line manager would unfortunately only get to be number three [laughs] on my list on a good day.

Sara (Eastshire): All the pressure that I get is from myself because I want – it sounds a bit corny I suppose but I really do want what's best for the students and try and give them the best that we can and that means working hard.

This emphasis on the primacy of teaching and student welfare is underpinned by a belief in the fundamental moral purpose of education as a whole but FE in particular in terms of FE being the 'second-chance sector', a view shared by most lecturers in the sector (Mather et al., 2008). Accountability is evident in these responses but it is of moral and social accountability to the students rather than the 'hard' quality so omniscient within colleges. This intensive student-focus means that other tasks, whether it is administration, data collection demanded by senior managers, or the needs of the teaching team, are addressed only when the needs of the students are met.

While the accounts may fit with the mission statements of the sample colleges, it is clear that student-focused FTMs perceived a clash of values and perspectives between

themselves and senior managers (a perception that is disputed by Lumby and Tomlinson (2000) among others) and that moving up the management ladder is synonymous with going over to the ‘dark side’ (congruent with Winter’s (2009) notion of the ‘managed academic’ in HE):

Carol (Parklands): I think that [focus on students] sometimes gets lost in management, that we’re talking about teaching and learning here and I find myself constantly banging on about it because I don’t think we should lose sight of that and I think a lot of people do and I think this level that I’m at now is probably the place where they start to lose sight of that because you’re constantly bombarded by requests for information and about statistics and because you don’t really do very much teaching yourself.

Grace (Woodside): I never want to be a tutor where I’m going along the corridor and a student comes up to me clearly needing some help or advice [and] say ‘I’m sorry I haven’t got time’. I never want to be that way because the students, to be honest with you, their welfare, how they feel, their experience with us is a hundred times more important than any amount, any document I’m really going to write.

However, being a student-focused FTM was not always a moral or value-laden decision – two of the primary determinants of focus appeared to be salary and formal position which, as is clear above, vary enormously between colleges.

Interviewer: Do you identify more with being a teacher or being a manager?  
John (Blackton): Teacher. Really, although I’m kind of a manager, I don’t get management wages. If I was to get the rewards for it then I might identify myself as being a manager but I don’t get them, so I don’t. I’m still a teacher.

With John, the focus and identity of the role is a result of insufficient financial reward – he is a teacher not by moral conviction but because he is not paid enough to focus on management duties. The extent to which financial and status factors affect the focus was unclear. However, evidence of the link between student focus and financial rewards may be provided by Woodside College where FTMs receive no salary increment and five out of six FTMs’ primary focus was students and teaching. Conversely, at Parklands College where some FTMs were also middle managers and

therefore had the greatest differential in terms of salary and status, none of the participants were solely student-focused.

### **Team-focused**

Jan (Eastshire): Personally I find that side of it the most rewarding where you're working with somebody – particularly if they're new to teaching – and you can give them some time and a sounding board and point them in the direction of things and see if they respond well, appreciatively. I find that really rewarding.

Pat (Blackton): I'd like to think initially it was support. I always thought it was support when I came into it. I just wanted to make sure that if there were problems that I would be seen to be there to help in whatever way I could... my personal opinion is it's [the role] there to support. And of course if you're there to help and you get the support, the other things fall into place, I've found.

Linda (Eastshire): I think the happier the whole team is, the better it's gonna work... At the same time it does mean it takes a little bit longer to obviously implement changes and things like that but that's the way I decided to do it and, you know, everyone seems quite happy.

Team-focused FTMs, three of the sample, while still concerned with the welfare and success of the students, proceeded from a perspective that the best way to ensure a quality student experience was to manage and motivate their team rather than focus their attention on the students firsthand. Here particular attention was paid to supporting new colleagues, conducting teaching observations and attending to any problems experienced by lecturers. Team-focused FTMs also saw their role in terms of intercession between lecturers and more senior managers and as advocates for their teams. Two of the team-focused FTMs were highly experienced within their colleges; the third was relatively new to the college, having been teaching only two years prior to her appointment as Curriculum Leader. What united all three, however, was their sense that they had already been engaged in many of the duties of an FTM prior to taking the role and were seen by their peers as the natural appointees to the position. In the case of Linda at Eastshire, this natural progression was confirmed by her head

of department who was one of the middle managers interviewed; the naturalness of the progression of the other two FTMs was unverified.

Two of the sample colleges contained no team-focused FTMs. In the case of Woodside this absence seems inevitable as the role of Programme Leader there carried no official line management responsibilities and the emphasis was on being *part* of a team rather than *managing* one. The case of Parklands College is more interesting in that, as well as containing no team-focused FTMs, there are no student-focused FTMs either – all of the sample were either organisation-focused or omni-focused (see below). Unlike Woodside, all of the Parkside FTMs had line management responsibility; some, six of the nine who were also middle managers, line managed up to 30 lecturers and so seemed more likely to reveal a team-focused perspective yet this was absent from the accounts of how they saw their role. This may be explained by the fact that they were the most hierarchically elevated of the participants and thus found there were even more demands upon their time; of necessity they granted greater autonomy to their staff and so spent less time on the development of their teams.

### **Organisation-focused**

Organisation-focused FTMs were those who prioritised administrative and reporting tasks over teaching and team management and comprised seven members of the sample. They all shared three characteristics: firstly, they found their greatest fulfilment in managerial tasks governed by senior managers; secondly, they were acutely aware of how their context was related to organisational strategy (and in this we see a correlation with Winters' (2009) notion of the 'academic manager' in HE); thirdly, they were explicit about their desire for promotion.

Abbie (Parklands): I like the job – managing – I like it a lot. I feel I'm using my skills much more... I think the teaching I do is fine, it's good to keep in touch with the students, it's good to keep in touch with that and not lose it completely but I think the interest for me is

more in management and the bigger picture I suppose, what we're going to do with the department.

Jim (Parklands): It's great getting that student interaction and things, but to progress and move on you need to get away from that, so, as a personal development thing, I obviously want to go up to a more senior position, so, you know, you've got to get away from the teaching, but it does take you a little bit away from what's going on down there on the shop floor so to speak.

This is not to claim that organisation-focused FTMs were the only participants that spent a great deal of time on administrative-managerial tasks; what marks them apart is the understanding that such work must be endured in order to be promoted. Such was the importance of data collection, data checking and 'systems', that competence and speed in the execution of senior management requests were seen as key to being recognised as a skilled manager and being marked for career advancement.

Organisation-focused FTMs founded their perspective upon an understanding of the college as a business, especially from those FTMs who had experience of the commercial sector. Jim (Parklands) for example, was an experienced manager in the hospitality and catering industry and so transposed his understanding of customer focus to education:

You know at the end of the day you've got to get the customers in, you've got to produce the money so there is a little bit of understanding of finance and the importance of doing what the customers want.

While this emphasis on customer focus is similar to student focus, the difference is discursive: 'customer focus' is business driven, not quite to the extent of seeing students as funding units, a familiar accusation against senior management teams, but still equates customers with funding and resources. Learning from this perspective is connected to the survival of the institution; student focus, on the other hand, is underpinned by the value of learning as benefit to the individual.

Organisation-focused FTMs also saw themselves primarily as managers, regardless of job title or hours they spent teaching. It was clear that they had established boundaries between themselves and the teams they managed that were, according to the data,

respected by lecturers. There was, however, no consistency of managerial style. At one extreme was David, Curriculum Leader for ESOL at Blackton College who would invoke the threat of disciplinary action for non-compliance: ‘there’s some things staff have said to me ‘if I don’t do this will it be a disciplinary procedure?’ and I’ve just said ‘yes, it will’. At the other end of the spectrum was Abbie at Parklands who employed a collegial style of managing her team. What was more common in this respect was how organisation-focused FTMs saw their teams. While team-focused participants saw their role as empowering and enabling their teams, organisation-focused FTMs saw their teams as existing to support *them*:

Abbie (Parklands): I think the way I’m going to manage it is with the support and help of all these other tutors, of the lecturers, cos I certainly couldn’t do it on my own you know. They do the work, they’re the cogs in the machine. I’m very aware that if they are supporting me it will be fine

### **Omni-focused**

Omni-focused FTMs are the category that feels the impact of the trialectic most keenly and attempt to meet the needs of student, team and organisation equally. Where the single-focus FTMs appear to exert some agency in aligning their focus, omni-focused managers – nine FTMs – spoke as though being dragged from one focus to another in response to the current imperative. There was also a discernible impression of regret and even guilt (an issue discussed in Chapter 7) at being forced into an omni-focused role. Many expressed their wish to be student-focused and identified strongly with the teaching role; at the same time some felt that they didn’t offer adequate levels of support to their team.

As a result of their desire to satisfy the trialectic, omni-focused FTMs were the category most likely to work in the early morning, evenings and weekends and reported high levels of stress.

Sue (Parklands): You feel a bit like a carthorse or a mule [laughs] – everybody kind of thinks that they can just keep beating you til one day

you roll over with all your legs in the air and [they] think ‘oh hang on, maybe she wasn’t coping that well’.

The level of altruism of omni-focused FTMs was clear; they were acutely aware of the impact upon their well-being but persevered in their attempts to meet the needs of the workplace nonetheless:

Kirsty (Blackton):                   Every now and again maybe make sure I’m OK as well.  
  But I would be way down the priority list

The extent to which FTMs would sacrifice their own wellbeing for their work presented a key area of this research and was to be further investigated in the third round of fieldwork that had coping as its focus.

### **A Manager by any other Name**

While all participants in the sample had the term ‘leader’ in their job title, few considered themselves as leaders:

Kevin (Blackton):           We’re not classified as managers we’re classified as leaders, we’re not managers. That’s our title, we’re ‘Curriculum Team Leaders’ so we’re not really managers. But we do manage the section, so we are like managers really but we’re not named like that for whatever reason it is.

Indeed, leadership was rarely mentioned in the first round of research. Where it was discussed, it was seen as an activity pushed aside by management imperatives. There was a sense that FTMs wanted to engage more with leading the team in terms of teaching excellence but the immediate gratification needs of the system precluded this focus. Leadership here was seen by the FTMs not in terms of the mundane tasks described by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) but as ‘real’ leadership, those activities concerned with the motivation, development and empowerment of teams. Here, perhaps, the participants were adopting the ‘overly heroic and exaggerated views of what leaders do’ adopted by much of the leadership literature (Collinson and

Collinson, 2005, p6). In addition, management and leadership were seen dichotomously (echoing Fitzgerald's (2009) research of middle leaders in schools):

Georgia (Parklands): I should be more of a leader than I have been. I don't think I've been leading people particularly well cos I've had too many other faffing about things to sort out.

Where the focus was on teaching development it was seen in managerial and administrative terms: teaching observation was a box-ticking task rather than an opportunity to develop a colleague's practice; appraisal was a form filling exercise to satisfy the HR department rather than a dialogue to marry personal and organisational development needs. If we take a leader as one who 'shapes and shares a vision which gives point to the work of others' (Handy, 1989, p134), then there appeared to be few overt leadership practices in terms of formal vision shaping and sharing. Certainly there was a paucity of what senior managers might call leadership in terms of aligning personal and organisational objectives. However, the data suggested that FTMs found the sharing of vision with their teams to be redundant because a shared vision already seemed to exist. Kouzes and Posner (in Chaffee and Arthur, 2002, p1) define leadership as 'the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations'; the aspiration of lecturers and FTMs alike was for the success of their students and certainly both groups struggled to achieve their aim in terms of extra hours worked. Similarly leadership involves committing followers to the core values of the organisation but, as FTMs and lecturers appear to share the same values, again leadership from this perspective appeared redundant at the first tier. Leadership then, rather than being absent, is implicit rather than explicit.

If we look at Kouzes and Posner's (1996, Figure 2 below) five leadership practices we can clearly identify leadership practices within the FTMs' accounts, although it remained largely unrecognised by the participants themselves. It was clear from the data that FTMs willingly challenge processes within their institutions although this generally occurred unofficially as will be discussed below in the section dealing with FTM resistance. While a shared vision of student success already exists, it was clear that FTMs held a definitive vision for their programme, team or department and how they wished to progress that vision, yet were often restricted by a lack of time. In



terms of enabling others to act, FTMs exhibited high levels of trust in their teams and, just as they were given high levels of autonomy, so did they extend this to the lecturers who they managed or who worked on their programmes. Similarly, modelling behaviour was evident; it was self-reported to be sure but consistent throughout the sample. The last practice, ‘encouraging the heart’ was also common, with examples of supportive behaviour and positive feedback in abundance.

**Figure 2: Kouzes and Posner’s Five Leadership Practices**

1. Challenging the process. Leaders are pioneers. They are willing to take risks, to innovate and experiment to find new and better ways of doing things. Leaders know experimentation, innovation, and change all involve risk and the potential for failure, but they proceed anyway.
2. Inspiring a shared vision. Leaders have a clear image of the future that pulls them forward, forges a unity of purpose, and ignites passion in others.
3. Enabling others to act. Exemplary leaders enlist the support of all those who must make a project work. Teamwork, trust, and empowerment are seen as essential elements in making team members feel strong, capable, and committed. Leaders make it possible for others to do good work.
4. Modeling the way. Through personal example and dedicated execution, leaders model the way.
5. Encouraging the heart. It's part of a leader's job to show people they can win. People become frustrated and disenchanted on arduous journeys, and become tempted to give up. It is the leader's role to encourage people to carry on, to uplift their spirits and draw them forward.

The fact that FTMs did not feel themselves to be leaders may be because ‘leadership’ in colleges is too often associated with formal and overt practices – not to mention heroic – rather than routine behaviours. FTM leadership was implicit within their day to day activities:

Steph (Blackton):

If they’ve got departmental duties and I’m free at the time, they might come to me with a problem and we’ll sit and try and work out solutions so I’m a support mechanism for the staff.

- Lynette (Eastshire): I work with staff who have been in teaching a lot longer than I have, some who have been teaching for twenty, thirty years and I wouldn't presume to teach them how to do their job. What I try to do is work with them so that they can see new ways which may improve what they're doing.
- Sue (Parklands): This time of year the fire has gone and people are almost working by rote... I mean they're in the classroom, they're doing what they're meant to do but the bells and the whistles are beginning to disappear and what we need to do is to try and motivate them to keep that level of delivery up, to keep these kids on side and engaged.

### **Views from Above and Below**

When asked how they thought lecturers perceived their role, there was a great deal of accord amongst respondents. The most significant perception that was imagined was that lecturers did not want to become FTMs:

- David (Blackton): They see my role as something they wouldn't want to do because of the extent to which you have to work with senior management and senior management they distrust a lot. They think it's all based on government targets, very politicised, not something that really concerns them and their sort of direct work with students. So something of an unsavoury role.
- Keith (Woodside): They [lecturers] wouldn't want to do what I do, they say that all the time.
- Helen (Parklands): I think a lot of lecturers think thank goodness it isn't me.

There were a number of reasons suggested for the perception that the FTM was an unwanted role:

- Lecturers were only interested in teaching and an increase of managerial tasks would negatively affect their performance in the classroom;

- The lack of financial rewards and insufficient remuneration were seen as barriers to hierarchical advancement;
- FTMs were sometimes seen as part of ‘management’, there to do the bidding of the senior management team who were generally distrusted by lecturers;
- FTMs were viewed as ‘paper-pushers’ who had nothing better to do than administration.

While the FTM role was seen as an unwanted job, the sample of FTM respondents imagined that lecturers saw the role of FTM as being primarily supportive although the extent to which they were seen as managers varied. Some FTMs imagined they were seen as the ‘one in charge’ while others were seen as just a colleague with management tasks to fulfil. The level of perception of the role as official management was in line with the extent to which the sample perceived themselves as managers.

Organisation-focused FTMs tended to imagine that lecturers saw them as distinct from the team. David, for example, thought that lecturers saw him as a ‘paper-pusher’ who was preoccupied with administration and thus separate from the teaching team; he himself felt ‘divorced’ from them. Jim at Parklands imagined that lecturers felt that he was neglectful of them and devoted his time to other duties rather than their wellbeing. What is interesting here is that the distance described by David and Jim between them and their teams echoes the descriptions of the distance between senior managers and staff. Yet while the distance is not proximal, it is paradigmatic according to Randle and Brady’s (1997) professional-managerial dichotomy.

Team-focused FTMs thought that lecturers saw their role as one of support:

Linda (Eastshire): I think they see me as a support person and someone they can go to if they’re not quite sure of a procedure or something teaching related like exactly the way we want the schemes of work done or things like that. And I mean since I’ve got a lot more experience now, they’ve started to come to me about student disciplinary issues and stuff like that as well.

Student-focused FTMs, especially in Woodside where the FTM role was not a 'formal' management position, imagined that they were seen in terms of performing management duties while still being a teacher:

Grace (Woodside): My immediate colleagues, I think they see it as a role I'm assigned to do.

Even in Blackton where the FTM role was a formal, hierarchically elevated position, it was imagined that lecturers saw it in terms of duties. For Elaine, the demands of the position meant that lecturers were sympathetic and felt sorry for her:

Basically I think they feel sorry for me [laughs]. I can get a lot on the old 'Oooh'[makes pitiful sound], you know, and they say 'oh, we'll help you' [laughs]. 'OK thank you then' [childish voice]. So yeah, they do see it as a role they would never have [laughs].

The omni-focused FTMs said that lecturers saw them in a variety of ways. As well as being a source of support for teams, some of the omni-focused FTMs thought that some lecturers considered them a 'dumping ground' upon which problems could be heaped:

Vicky (Parklands): Some people see me there to dump any problems they come across [laughs] which is not actually my role.

Similarly Steph at Blackton imagined that she was seen variously as a supporter, a 'nag' and someone to deal with the more burdensome aspects of college life:

Some of the staff said 'it's like we don't have to worry about that bit because we know that bits going to be done [by you] so we concentrate on our bit of the job which is delivering to the students' ... I think that's how they see it. I hope it is anyway [laughs].

Perhaps unsurprisingly there was little suggestion of negativity in lecturers' perceptions. Despite performing a number of performance management functions such as teaching observations and appraisals, FTMs did not imagine that they were in anyway distrusted or seen as a tool of senior managers. For example, where FTMs had their desks in lecturers' staffrooms, some by deliberate choice and some by virtue of restrictions on space, there was no sense that this was seen as surveillance in these

open plan spaces (see Joinson and Whitty, 2008); rather the assumption was that lecturers found this somehow convenient and even comforting.

Steph (Blackton): I can see as well - [whispers] bit of a body watcher – I can see perhaps when staff are having a little bit of a bad day or a bit of a struggle and I can hear them sort of chatting to each other and I can kind of discretely come and say to them, you know, ‘do you want anything, can I help?’ or generally interfere [laughs] but you know, I think they find that quite helpful as well.

Mike (Eastshire): You’re involved, all the information comes to you very quickly. You also hear the typical staffroom moans, gripes, it gives you a start point to start doing things. You’re the conduit for information flow up and down the scale so first point of call for a moan.

Tracey (Parklands): I also chose to work in the staffroom because then I can hear what’s going on, I know what’s going on so if a problem occurs I can support the team with that rather than [being] shut away in my own little office where nobody comes because I don’t see that as effective.

Similarly the other monitoring responsibilities of FTMs such as inspecting the course or programme files were also not seen as surveillance.

## **SMT**

FTMs were also asked how they thought senior managers perceived their role and there was far less agreement among respondents with this imagining than with the lecturer-lens. Many FTMs stated that they had little or no contact with senior managers and so were unable to suggest how FTMs might be viewed. There was no suggestion that FTMs ever interacted with senior managers, a situation found in other studies of FE (see Jameson, 2007).

John (Blackton): Don’t talk to them enough to be able to answer that really – I don’t know. I never get to speak to them that much so I wouldn’t really know.

This separation led participants to suggest that senior managers had little notion of what the role was about and what FTMs actually did, let alone have any understanding of the pressures that they faced. There was a suspicion, however, that senior managers wanted FTMs to be more managerial and identify less with their teaching role:

David (Blackton): Most of the time senior management see you as being a manager, treat you as a manager, ask you for things with very short or unrealistic deadlines [laughs] and you say 'I'm teaching most of the time'. You often get called into meetings when you're teaching and you have to find someone else to cover.

Amanda (Blackton): Unlike me they would probably see it as a management role first and foremost and a lecturing role second but I think possibly as a [FTM] I have a right to think 'well, if they do perceive the role that way, why is it that they don't have meetings with this body [of managers]?'.

However, Woodside College presented a paradox in response to the question of how senior managers viewed the role. Despite being the least formally managerial of the sample, FTMs in Woodside uniformly felt that senior managers not only understood the role but actively valued it.

Rob (Woodside): They have to have us. I think things would be quite a mess if we weren't there... I think obviously we're quite valued even though we don't get paid... I do think we are appreciated but not in monetary terms [laughs].

Grace (Woodside): I do think they see us as very very important people in respect where we're worth investing in.

While participants in Woodside reported the same minimal levels of contact and interaction with the SMT there was far less cynicism in their responses. More specifically, FTMs here thought that senior managers were approachable and listened to the concerns of their staff.

In the other colleges, senior managers were discussed in largely pejorative terms. In Parklands College, a number of senior managers had never taught or even been involved in education until they joined the college.

Sue (Parklands): I find it a strange thing that you'd think that people who were running an education establishment would have an understanding of education but when you look at the make-up of [our] senior management team... you've got an accountant, you've got someone who's come from business and you've got this, that and the other and MIS person. So they're looking at systems and they're looking at figures and they're looking at tracking, they're looking at delivering evidence all the way through and what they're not seeing is the teaching side and recognising that the teaching side needs time thrown at it.

Helen (Parklands): The majority of the senior management team have never been teachers irrespective of what age or background. You know, we have a used car salesman [in the SMT].

Here in particular was the feeling that as well as the communicative distance between FTMs and senior managers, there was an insurmountable distance in terms of values. Senior managers were seen as obsessed by data at the expense of teaching and FTMs shared a sense of resentment and even betrayal at the divide. This fundamental barrier between FTMs (and lecturers) and senior managers was exacerbated by the fact that there was little consultation with staff in the sample colleges concerning strategy and change. Ironically, this was juxtaposed with an increase in principals engaging the 'student voice' through Q&A sessions with learners:

Interviewer: Do you find it strange that senior managers will listen to students... but then not to your level of management?

Abbie (Parklands): Ah ah yeah, it is, yeah it is, but they're the customer aren't they. Yeah I think you're right, I think they probably would listen to the students rather than us [laughs].

Lack of consultation and communication from senior managers was a key source of frustration for FTMs; the sample of FTMs foregrounded both consultation and communication within their own managerial practices, so when they were found lacking in the SMT, resentment (and resistance) was inevitable as suggested by

Collinson (2005) who argued that distance was a prime cause of resistance. In Parklands, for example, senior managers decided that there would be no more paper distributed throughout the college for a two month period. The reasons behind this strategy were never given, there was little warning and no suggestion as to how staff should suddenly cope without paper. While the drive to reduce costs, environmental and financial, was supported by FTMs, it was they who had to face students who were unable to print out assignments and they who had to field complaints from their teams who were unable to produce handouts. In addition, parents who had paid £25 at the beginning of the year to cover costs such as printing were naturally indignant and complained to the FTMs rather than senior managers. There was a clear feeling that if FTMs had behaved in this manner and made changes without consultation or clear communication they would have been severely reprimanded.

## **Change**

Critical incident technique was used to gain FTMs' perspective on change. All participants were asked: 'Can you tell me about a recent change in the college that has affected your area and how you managed that change?' The responses fell into three categories: structural, curriculum, and student cohort.

All of the colleges except Woodside were experiencing structural changes in one form or another. Blackton College had appointed a new principal and all of the FTMs there cited this in their responses. The previous principal had been in post for over 15 years and was seen as very traditional in his leadership of the college. The new principal, however, was seen as dynamic, a reformer and very business-like. Her vision of modernisation was grounded in notions of 'excellence', financial stricture and greater regulation. One of her first actions, which could be seen symbolically, was to remove several senior managers by making them reapply for their jobs; they were all unsuccessful. While some FTMs saw this as organisational justice and retribution against incompetent senior managers, others saw this as a portent of things to come and reported uneasiness and insecurity among their teams as a result. There was a



clear feeling that such measures would cascade down to lower management levels, a fear that was confirmed in the second and third rounds of fieldwork.

Parklands College had also recently experienced a structural change that had created a new role of Programme Leader, and elevated some previous FTMs to middle management Curriculum Leaders, while retaining programme leadership for their subject specialism. Structural change at Parklands, however, was seen as perpetual and attracted cynicism (indeed cynical background conversations in Ford et al.'s (2001) typology) rather than insecurity:

Vicky (Parklands): We restructured fully twice in three years but also I was restructured again in the areas I [managed] three times in three years so each time you do that I think it takes a while for people to settle. There's always gaps in 'who's doing this?' 'Well we don't know anymore' and you find out that actually nobody's doing it so you then have to keep pushing until somebody says 'right we've allocated that to someone now'.

The restructure meant that FTMs were now managing teams with an entirely different culture: the former Programme Leader for Catering now managed the hair and beauty team as well; the former Programme Leader for Health and Social Care now also managed Uniformed Services, two teams that, culturally, were diametrically opposed according to Sue whose task was to bring them together in one cohesive team.

While Eastshire College had also experienced structural change (albeit minor), Woodside College was seen as stable and had not experienced any structural changes in many years. The entire sample here struggled to think of any changes when asked and all emphasised the stability of the college. FTMs here experienced no job insecurity and seemed to have faith in their senior managers and, especially, the principal, who had been in post for the working memory of all the participants. Where change had occurred it was incremental and concerned the culture of the sector rather than the college itself:

Keith (Woodside): I've been thinking about it and I can't really think of anything that's come in. Over the years I can see a complete change. When I started we were very relaxed. We used to pop to the pub most lunch times. I haven't

been to the pub for months and months and months. Not since before Christmas and that was just once so I mean there's a lot more pressure now... I think we all feel that. It's not just cos of my role, I think it's the way it's all changed.

The second most common change discussed across the sample was curriculum based. Curriculum change was also perpetual and accepted mostly without significant concern. The introduction of the specialised diplomas had caused some uncertainty, not with their teams' ability to deliver the specifications, but with the design of the courses themselves and the 'pitch' of the standards in terms of their designated learning outcomes, a finding supported by research from the Association of Colleges (Guardian, 2009). The introduction of the diplomas had also brought younger students into the colleges as part of a general increase in 14 year olds who, while still at school, attended college one or two days a week. Several FTMs stated that their teams had experienced difficulties with these younger students, having spent most of their careers teaching post-16 learners. This change to the cohort was accompanied by an increase in the number of lower ability students and NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education or Training) who often presented extremely challenging behaviour. John, painting and decorating FTM at Blackton, detailed the extent of the challenge that such behaviour posed when one of his team was charged with attempted murder after being provoked by a student. At the more routine end of the spectrum, Linda at Eastshire reported that she was routinely called into classes to 'eject' challenging students from classes where the lecturers could not tolerate the behaviour any longer.

FTMs were generally stoical about the cohort change. They were fully aware that providing courses for NEETs and 14 years olds attracted major funding and was, thus, provision that was destined to increase. It was seen as part of the larger 'bums on seats' strategy of college SMTs who, it was suggested, were determined to recruit every individual who walked through the door, regardless of resource and space limitations. This strategy was seen to be changing, however, as the funding system was due to change; the emphasis was soon to be on retention rather than enrolment and so staff were asked to be more stringent in their vetting and enrolment procedures.

## Change Management

It is perhaps an indication of the scarcity of FTM training that none of the participants used the change management discourse that resounds in rationalist management training programmes. There was an overwhelming impression that for FTMs change was not something to be managed but something to be *coped* with, especially when the changes were structural. Few of the major changes that were mentioned in the critical incident technique responses concerned self-initiated change but were about changes that had been imposed either by senior managers or by government policy.

Where change was procedural, systemic or structural, the main role FTMs had was to pass on information and instructions from more senior managers concerning changes. What was evident was the range of perspectives on communicating changes. Some FTMs such as Kirsty at Blackton felt they had to sell the changes to their teams and even ‘dress it up’; others would shield their teams from potential changes in a bid to prevent panic. Some such as Kevin at Blackton would pass information on to their teams verbatim. However, in most cases the changes cascaded downwards were highly prescriptive and allowed little room for interpretation or autonomy in how the changes were implemented. It was clear in most cases that middle managers decided upon implementation strategies while the role of FTMs was to monitor the process. There was little evidence of participants being consulted before implementation was decided, despite the high levels of interaction between middle and first tier managers.

Here then is potentially one of the major causes of the failure of organisational change within colleges. Fullan (2001, p187) suggests that innovators:

need to be open to the realities of others: sometimes because the ideas of others will lead to alterations for the better in the direction of change, and sometimes because the other’s realities will expose the problems of implementation.

The data suggest that senior managers, almost without fail, neglected the realities of FTMs when introducing change.

The introduction of the specialised diploma in September 2009 provides a good example of curriculum change that had to be universally coped with or managed. It was clear that some FTMs knew little about the new courses in terms of content, structure and partnership organisation and were waiting for senior managers to give them information. In the case of Eastleigh College, a week after the interviews in March 2009, the vice principal was due to lead a session introducing the diplomas. In other cases, FTMs were far more proactive in seeking out information and had arranged for members of their team to attend external events so that they could feedback to the rest of the team. Where this occurred, there was a significant sense of taking control of the change rather than adopting a passive response.

There was little mention of lecturers resisting change and there may be a number of possible explanations: firstly, lecturers do not resist change; secondly, this was the first interview and so participants were unlikely to detail wholesale resistance even if it did exist; thirdly, according to my initial contention, resistance in colleges is not primarily a response to change but to the methods by which change is enacted by senior managers. Furthermore, resistance is rarely likely to be overt and so is unlikely to be detected or identified as resistance. It was this last point that informed the second round of fieldwork presented in the next chapter. It was likely that certain types of everyday resistance such as cynicism may not be seen as resistance at all and so I would need to adopt a method of identifying routine forms.

However, while there may have been a lack of lecturer resistance evident in the first round of fieldwork, what was detailed was the extent of FTM resistance that was reported.

### **FTM Resistance**

A wide range of FTM resistance emerged from the data, ranging from the overt to the covert, from formal resistance to more routine forms. However, what was clear was

that in most cases the resistance was not to change but to senior management and functional departments such as MIS and HR.

### *Refusal*

The most common form of overt resistance was refusal in various forms. Many FTMs reported that they were confident in refusing to follow instructions or, more commonly, to provide information, when requested by senior managers. Some members of the sample also refused on behalf of their teams when they considered the request to be ill-judged, duplication or onerous.

- Interviewer: So if they ask you to do something that you really don't agree with, what would you do?
- Elaine (Blackton): I'm very naughty, I don't do it. But I will give my reason why... So, yeah, I'm not popular in that. If it's something absolutely unreasonable that I think is not worthy of being done just because someone's asked you to do it, then I do make a stand and say 'sorry, I'm not doing it'.
- Interviewer: And how does that go down?
- Elaine: Not very well [laughs]. That's when I get shouted at and bullied.

In one post-interview chat, Liz at Woodside discussed how she was asked by the Head of School, albeit implicitly, to mark her students' work more leniently to improve the success rates on the course she managed. In a form of 'functional disobedience' (Warren, 2003, p622), she and her colleagues refused on the grounds that this would tarnish their reputation as a department and send students into a workplace without the requisite level of skills. As she taught beauty therapy, this could, in her opinion, also mean that students' customers could be harmed.

Refusal was also enacted in the form of threats where FTMs become so frustrated at situations not being dealt with that they feel they have no alternative but to refuse to cooperate and threaten to leave:

- Vicky (Parklands): [At] the end of April I just went into one of the director's offices and said 'right, this is my staff request and they've been with you for weeks and either you approve them and let me recruit' I said 'or you find someone to replace me' and so the

next day the vice principal said ‘I’ve approved your staff request’.

### ***Principled Dissent***

Principled dissent (Graham, 1986) was also evident in a variety of cases. In one case a principal had made a joke in poor taste in the college newsletter about the likelihood of the college minibus’ wheels being stolen on a trip to Liverpool. One FTM emailed the principal immediately to complain about such discriminatory accusations and received an emailed apology (although no public withdrawal of the comments was made). In another case an FTM objected to a scene containing ‘adult content’ in a play being put on by the college drama students and requested (and received) a meeting with the vice principal to outline his objections. In both cases the dissent sprang from real moral conviction and from the values of their status as educators. In the first case the point was made that such discrimination would not be tolerated in a classroom and senior managers should uphold the same values. In the second case, the FTM argued that, as the college contained many young people, drama performances should not contain scenes of a sexual nature.

### ***Ignoring***

Less overt yet still grounded in principled argument was the ignoring of requests or instructions. In some cases ignoring was justified according to role boundaries – where a task was thought to be the remit of another department (usually a service department) it was more likely to be ignored. John at Blackton, for example, had been asked to conduct a returning to work questionnaire with a lecturer who had been off sick:

John (Blackton): I’ve now got to interview him about [his illness] but I just don’t really think that’s my job you know, it’s either personnel or the [middle] manager’s job, you know. It’s still sitting on my desk at the moment... so I might just ignore it and it probably will go away.

Abbie at Parklands reacted in the same way to a student feedback questionnaire that she considered overly invasive as it asked students to directly grade their lecturers:

‘we just put it very quietly into the bin just didn’t do it. We didn’t ever say we’re not going to do this, we just didn’t do it’.

In all of the cases of ignoring, FTMs were seen to be exploiting the institutional forgetfulness that seemed endemic within all of the colleges. The literature on organisational amnesia or forgetting has focused on the loss of knowledge within organisations (see Fernandez and Sune, 2009, for example); here, forgetting was seen from its most literal definition: such was the frequency and repetition of requests for data that most, if ignored, were never followed up. Those making requests – usually senior managers or service departments such as MIS and HR – appeared to forget that the request had ever been made. When data or reports *were* provided, they appeared to disappear into a ‘black hole’ and were never mentioned again; logically, FTMs suspected that no one took any notice of the majority of reports that were delivered to senior managers and so exploited such amnesiac behaviour:

Interviewer: Do you ever say no to any of these requests?  
Carol (Parklands): Sometimes I don’t do them and see what happens [laughs] but that’s not necessarily a request from senior managers, that’s a request from a different [service] department which I just think ‘that is just going to use too much of my time and I don’t think it’s probably where my time is most valuably spent’.  
Interviewer: What does happen if you ignore some of these requests?  
Carol: Nothing usually [laughs], that’s my experiment. I would like to be able to identify more accurately what is really valuable.

### ***Favours***

At the next stage of the resistant continuum, and the first hidden behaviour, was resistance in the form of unofficial ‘favours’. A form of making-out (but also a type of reward-power (Truter, 2008)), this usually took the form of unofficial transactions between FTM and members of their team. Most FTMs knew that their teams worked hard and above and beyond their duties and so would routinely grant favours such as time off and late starts or early finishes. While this can be considered resistance in terms of getting around official procedures, it was not entirely altruistic. In many cases such favours were in return for agreeing to additional duties such as staffing open evenings. It is also likely that FTMs used favours to maintain the cooperation

and loyalty of their teams who they relied on to a great extent. It was not clear whether all such favours were initiated by FTMs or whether they were ‘turning a blind eye’ to lecturer resistance; this prompted another theme to investigate in the second round of fieldwork.

### *Cynicism*

Cynicism was seen to be a cause behind much of the resistant behaviour reported by FTMs as it is a staple in the resistant context of FE. It must be noted, however, that the sample were only cynical about senior managers, service departments and government policy, never about their teams and only rarely about their own line manager. It seemed likely that cynicism was reserved only for those removed from student contact who were presumed to be physically, morally, ethically and intellectually distant from the front line.

Where cynicism was at its most acute was in the accounts of senior management who were considered to be variously:

- a) driven only by money
- b) unskilled in leadership and management
- c) without strategic vision
- d) reactive and unorganised
- e) panicked by every complaint from external sources
- f) unsupportive of teaching staff
- g) directive rather than consultative
- h) unaware of what contemporary teaching is like
- i) opportunistic

Almost every action of senior managers was seen as inauthentic by the majority of FTMs, even those who wished to progress into the upper hierarchy themselves. Leadership was also seen as inauthentic in most cases. Virtually all contact with



senior management was seen cynically, whether it was their expounding of the strategic plan or their sudden willingness to be involved in success stories.

What was generally missing in these cynical accounts, however, was explicit knowledge of the impact of government 'policy steering' (Steer et al., 2007) upon senior managers. While it may be that SMT was reactive and opportunistic because of government policy, this had not been communicated to teaching staff and FTMs, perhaps in an attempt to retain the impression of authority and independence arguably so vital to senior leaders. As such, the cynicism of FTMs towards senior managers may have been misplaced; government policy levers may have been a more appropriate target.

Kim, Bateman, Gilbreath and Andersson (2009) argue that cynical employees 'tend to exhibit more negative behavioural work intentions' (p1437) though this was found not to be the case in this research. While the cynicism of FTMs may have been the cause of a lack of emotional attachment to their organisations, the other negative work intentions cited by Kim et al. – filing of grievances, de-motivation and refusing extra-role behaviours – were not present. Cynicism concerning senior managers and service departments did not affect the work of the FTMs who were found to be highly motivated and, as was discussed previously, performed a plethora of extra duties. Cynicism thus appeared primarily a means of organisational dis-identification (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) rather than dis-identifying with their work.

### ***Humour***

While humour was evident in much of the data, it was less evident in a resistant way. It was present in many of the cynical accounts of senior managers but also, occasionally, aimed at middle managers:

Cheryl (Woodside): When we were having Ofsted in, the boss wanted to see the lot [course quality files] so she was going [puts on a theatrical voice] 'programme files, why haven't you done them?' as if we always do them and of course we don't always do them until the last minute [laughs] but of course the year we were being

inspected, ooo they had to be wonderful that year, which is a little bit of a nonsense really.

However, more commonly, humour was directed at their working context to highlight their exasperation at the complexity and contradictions of their jobs. In this sense, humour was resisting (or at least attenuating) the pressures of their role; to this extent it was more akin to coping behaviours than to resistance. Identifying which behaviours were resistance and which were coping came to be a key focus of this research. The relationship between the two behaviours was investigated in greater depth in the second and third rounds of fieldwork and theorised in Chapter 8.

### *Distance*

The final type of resistance that was evident, at the hidden extreme of the resistant continuum, was 'distance' (see for example Collinson, 1994). This took two primary forms: firstly, some FTMs created distance by attempting to 'switch off' from their job and to leave work *at* work. However, this ability to remove their selves from their work was evident only in the minority of cases; interestingly, most of those who discussed their ability to separate work from their home lives were those who maintained an organisation-focus.

Abbie (Parklands): I find it quite easy to leave it. I take it home and do it but I don't take it home in my head. I can't quite explain... I don't know how, I just don't.

David (Blackton): Quite a few of them [lecturers] work more hours than I do cos I've got a young family and live quite far away so I try and set an example, more or less do a 9 to 5. Not quite work to rule but... [laughs].

More commonly, FTMs adopted a fundamentalist approach to education. Maintaining and prioritising a student focus at the expense of organisational imperatives can in itself be seen as resistance: resisting the managerial identity that was being impressed upon them and resisting the organisational tasks that seemed the most onerous aspects of their work.

The least resistant in terms of distance were the omni-focused FTMs whose work regularly occupied their home lives as well. However, these participants routinely employed overt resistant behaviour rather than resistance by distance. Such resistance was exemplified in the example of Vicky at Parklands (p117) who threatened to resign unless her request for extra staff was approved.

### **Relationships with Lecturers**

The entire sample spoke in praise of the lecturers in their departments. Without exception they extolled the professionalism (which goes against much of the extant literature and formed a theme to be pursued in round 2), dedication and hard work of teaching staff. Perhaps the most frequently used adjective to describe lecturers was 'supportive':

Amanda (Blackton): They're not difficult to manage and they're not difficult to keep happy... they are so supportive of me in so many ways in terms of the work that they do and the amount of respect and consideration that they give me.

Helen (Parklands): There's lots of really good support. I can walk into my staffroom and go rrrr and everyone is brilliant because they understand, because they're at the coal face like I am.

However, while there was a great deal of discussion of the positive relationship between FTM and lecturers there were negative consequences. Firstly there was evidence that the emphasis on teamwork exerted concertive control (Barker, 1993) in some cases:

Keith (Woodside): As I say, we really work together as a team. There's only one person, and he was just in here, who doesn't fit in with us and it's a real problem for me trying to get him involved. For instance we have our break times in here and we all sit and talk about everything and everybody has good input apart from one who isn't here, he has his tea breaks down the other end.

In other cases, as well, lecturers who were deemed to not fit in with the normalised behaviour of the team were seen as 'difficult' members of staff (see Eden, 2001).

Secondly, there was evidence of parenting and, more particularly, mothering (Deem et al., 2000) and familial discourses (Prichard and Deem, 1999).

Steph (Blackton): So at the moment we're just kind of working with staff in a positive way and saying 'you're doing the job, everything's fine at the moment' so there's a little bit of 'there-there-there' going on.

Lynette (Eastshire): There are times when I think I apply the same principles to the people I manage as to raising my children [laughs].

Sue (Parklands): I mean it's like managing children a lot of the time, I think it's like having – I sometimes feel it's like when my kids were still at home.

While the intention of parental behaviours was a recognition of the difficulty of lecturers' work and was intended to offer support, it had the consequence of creating dependency among the teaching staff, a phenomena previously identified by Leathwood (2000) as well as Deem et al. (2000).

However, parental management was not the sole cause of dependency and the data suggest a number of other possible antecedents:

- Some FTMs suggested that it was their own fault – when lecturers brought problems to them, they dealt with them themselves as it was usually quicker. Coaching approaches were seen as a luxury in a time-limited environment;
- Working in what was perceived as a blame culture, lecturers assumed that passing issues to FTMs would absolve them of responsibility;
- Lecturers experienced a lack of time in their work which forced them to pass on difficulties to FTMs;

- Due to a lack of training in leadership, FTMs resorted to strategies that have worked successfully in their personal lives.

Sue's (Parklands) discussion of dependency offers a fifth explanation:

The person I share a room with thinks they're too dependent on me yes, but then you get this thing – same thing with the mother thing isn't it: do I want them to stop being dependent on me? Am I doing all this because this has become psychological? Do I do all this because I have this need to be needed? I don't know, I couldn't answer that.

This last cause is the most problematic yet also perhaps the most interesting: FTMs may cultivate dependency to meet their esteem needs. Being psychologically based it is beyond the remit of this research project and certainly beyond the academic base of this researcher, but it remains an intriguing suggestion.

#### **Summary of Chapter 4**

The first round of fieldwork highlighted the contested nature of the role of FTM at both a theoretical and practical level with senior managers, middle managers and FTMs themselves interpreting the position in a variety of ways. As a result, the identities of the participants and the management styles they adopted were contingent upon the priorities that they focused on: students, teams, the organisation or all three constituents of the trialectic. In addition, while FTMs considered themselves as teachers or managers, a variety of leadership activities were found within their routine activities. Yet while values and morality were at the core of their behaviours, working within a resistant context, they were clearly agentic in the enactment of their role, engaging with a range of resistant strategies in an attempt to manage the massive workload which was reported. While their relationships with their teams and their own managers were presented as positive and productive, there appeared a significant distance between FTMs and senior managers that was founded upon the perception of different values and a lack of interaction.

In addition, the first round of interviews suggested a number of key themes to be pursued and developed in the second round:

1. Professionalism: much of the literature has suggested that teaching staff in FE have been de-professionalised and subjected to proletarianization. This view however was contradicted by the data from the first round.
2. Change: having explored a specific change via the use of CIT, the second round was an opportunity to investigate the affective element of change and the extent to which FTMs participated in strategic change.
3. Lecturer resistance: the data from the first round suggested that resistance was rare among lecturers; my suspicion was that participants did not view routine forms of resistance *as* resistance and so there was a need to design and use a tool to measure the extent to which everyday resistance was evident. Furthermore, there was a need to investigate the extent of overt forms of resistance such as dissent and union representation.
4. FTM resistance: data from the first round clearly identified the reliance of FTMs upon their teams but whether they turned a blind eye to resistance or misbehaviour was unclear. With a need to secure and maintain the cooperation and loyalty of their teams, it was likely that allowing minor infringements and transgressions was common. Secondly, ‘making-out’ behaviours, finding ways around the rules or cutting corners, was evident in accounts and provided another theme to be explored.
5. The last area for investigation in the second round concerned the commitment of FTMs to the college as an organisation. The extent of organisational commitment was likely to be a crucial determinant of attitudes to change as well as resistance.

## **Chapter 5: Fieldwork Round 2**

### **Introduction**

The second round of interviews took place in June and July 2009, three months after the first round of fieldwork and consisted of 23 FTMs: from the previous sample of 27, two had left their posts and could not be contacted and two had responded reluctantly in the first round, having been pressured by their managers to take part. As a result, I took the decision not to ask them to participate in this round, especially as the first round achieved a high level of data saturation. Semi-structured interviews were the main research method used and this second round pursued the themes that were identified in the first round:

- Professionalism
- Participation in strategic change
- Affective responses to change
- Lecturer resistance
- FTM collusion with resistance
- Commitment to the organisation.

In addition, the second round followed significant changes that had been discussed in the previous interviews. This chapter will begin with an update on each college to begin the tracking of changes in both organisation and personal circumstances.

### **Blackton College**

The first round of fieldwork occurred two months after the appointment of a new principal who, the data suggested, was received optimistically by the participants in Blackton. The previous principal, although spoken of affectionately by the FTMs, was considered very paternalistic in his leadership and was slow to accept the changes that the sector demanded and other colleges had adopted. The new principal was seen as





discomfort: while he was set to benefit personally from the changes, the way his colleagues had been treated lent ambivalence to his relationship with more senior managers:

You know if they're [colleagues] not being treated fairly, your own relationship to more senior management of the organisation changes, cos there's this trust as well that is involved.

In stark contrast, Elaine, previously Curriculum Team Leader for Access courses, had had her post deleted just days before my interviews at Blackton. The Access provision had been moved to another department and, while she had assumed that she would retain her position and 'follow' the courses, she had been informed that this was not to be. Instead she had been offered the new position of Functional Skills Course Leader, a position involving no line management and a salary decrease of £2000. Worse still, from Elaine's point of view, was how the situation was handled. She was called into a meeting with the new vice principal who had been in post only a matter of weeks and had never met Elaine before. On the desk in front of her, before Elaine was offered the revised post, was a pack containing the redundancy policy of the college:

- Interviewer    So the vice principal who took the meeting actually had a redundancy pack on the table?
- Elaine         Yes she gave me the redundancy pack with all the information which I've got.
- Interviewer    And she said 'it's either redundancy or you apply for a course leader position'?
- Elaine         Yeah, she said 'this is the job you've been ring fenced for' – we've all been ring fenced for certain jobs... up to that point I thought I was safe and going upstairs and still going up working... she said 'you obviously look shattered at this'. She said 'I think we should stop the meeting so you can go and have a think'. I said 'oh thank you' [half laughs] – just told me I haven't got a job any more.

The sense of betrayal and shock was clear in Elaine's account. She understood the rationale for the realignment – increasing business focus, increasing accountability – and had been supportive of the new principal in the previous round of fieldwork; however, the way it was being handled appalled her. In response, she had adopted a

range of strategies such as applying for other jobs, engaging the union and challenging the reasoning behind the changes.

The remainder of the FTMs were so far unaffected by the changes yet they were all concerned that they – or at least their department – would be next. Stories such as Elaine’s had spread around the college creating insecurity, even in departments considered to be successful. The result was renewed compliance with protocols and systems to strengthen the department and the FTMs’ professional reputations. As a result, dissent had been stifled:

Steph:                            I think people feel at the moment if they raise their head over the parapet it’s going to get shot off.

The other FTMs shared Elaine’s understanding of the rationale behind the changes but were also critical of the management of change as will be discussed below.

### **Eastshire College**

Eastshire College had also begun a restructure since the first round of fieldwork, though to a more limited extent. The changes were driven by LSC funding changes and were an effort to increase employer engagement in the search for alternative revenue streams. In addition, it was an attempt to ameliorate any potential budget deficit when the funding of the sector was transferred back to local authorities. Only two of the FTMs were affected by the restructure.

For Lynette, the changes presented the possibility of a promotion to a middle management position. While she was excited by the prospect of moving up, she was concerned that it might necessitate a moral compromise. She saw FE in traditional terms, that it provided a second chance for learners who had been unsuccessful in compulsory education; Lynette herself had previously been a beneficiary of FE, having returned to education as an adult. She was concerned that, moving up the

hierarchy, she would be expected to compromise her values and adopt a harder business perspective:

Lynette:        Maybe I'm a bit of a pragmatist that I can say 'ok, what you will', but if I don't agree with something I will compromise to a certain extent but I hope I wouldn't compromise my own principles. I hope I would continue to live by those.

Senior management at Eastshire was also seen to be male-dominated and this presented another concern; however, she was keenly aware of the qualities that women could bring to the SMT:

There aren't that many female managers I have to say in this organisation but those who are have managed to hold on to the feminine and the nurturing role if you will. But I think in some ways they almost begin to look on the organisation as a child which they need to nurture and they're not so hard-nosed and I think that works quite well when you are trying to attract new business because you encourage people rather than sort of becoming dogmatic.

For Jan, the restructure helped her to make the decision to leave not only the college but teaching as well. Following extended periods of sickness on the grounds of stress and enduring a number of departmental reorganisations, she had decided to hand in her notice. Jan was nearly 55 and had been at Eastshire for over 20 years but the increasing demands of the role had led her to a career change: she was to re-train as a hypnotherapist. She was, however, not alone in leaving. Sara had left just prior to the second round of fieldwork, relinquishing her managerial role in favour of teaching in a prison.

Linda and Mike had been unaffected by the restructure and were enjoying a period of relative stability. Where there were changes, it was to do with curriculum and student cohort issues and were perceived to be routine.

## **Woodside College**

FTMs at Woodside reported that things were as they always had been:

Interviewer: Have there been any significant changes since we last met?

Cheryl: No nothing's changed dramatically... we're just all trundling along as usual.

Change at Woodside remained incremental and, for the participants, manageable. Each FTM was managing curriculum changes, mainly as a result of the new diplomas being introduced, yet this created little anxiety. A new quality department had been created within the college that was beginning to have an impact although, at this time, its scope was limited to a handful of new reporting procedures and new forms to be completed. Among these was a revised student disciplinary procedure which was warmly received by the entire sample as a massive improvement on the cumbersome previous process.

### **Parklands College**

The second round of fieldwork marked a year since the previous restructure had created the Programme Leader (first tier management) and Curriculum Leader (middle management with first tier responsibilities included) positions that the participants found themselves in. Its effectiveness was doubtful:

Interviewer: In hindsight would you say it was a good restructure?

Carol: Er no [laughs] I still don't think so and I still have issues about the way that it has been structured and I think [senior] managers have probably realised that as well.

Jim had also experienced difficulties with his revised role as it brought together the hair, beauty and catering departments, three very idiosyncratic sections that did not always work well together.

Jim: There's quite a big cultural difference between the way they act and behave and accept so I'm trying to work in three different ways to get the same approach.

He was also engaged in inter-team development meetings where he hoped that the cooperativeness of his prior team – catering – would provide a behavioural model for the less cooperative departments.

Tracey, Curriculum Leader for Construction, had just returned to work after a period of ill health. She had returned to find that none of her work had been covered and she was thus five weeks behind. Her manager had instructed her team not to contact Tracey while she was on leave and had instigated a period of phased return but this proved to be ineffective and she was expected – ironically by the manager who had ‘designed’ the phased return – to resume her normal duties.

Tracey: But I think it’s also an establishment thing from the point of view that maybe on the phased return it needs to be more insistent rather than managers saying ‘well, actually I do need you to attend this meeting so instead of going on your half day can you stay?’ And then at 7 o’clock you’re still here, you know. Nobody actually physically says ‘go now’ or marches you off the premises because they don’t take away that workload that you’ve got to do.

The experience had changed Tracey’s perception of the college and also her loyalty:

At the end of the day, if I dropped down dead everybody will come to my grave and they’ll say ‘didn’t she do a good job’ and they’ll walk away and that will be it.

In addition, she was to be put in charge of additional provision with the plumbing and electrical departments not only coming back under her remit but moving physically onto the satellite site where she was based, a site that was already too cramped.

## **Change Management**

‘Change management is non-existent. The way change management has happened is that we have been told ‘this is what’s happening’ with no prior discussion, no real rationalisation... all the things you would associate with managing people through periods of change just doesn’t happen.’

Sue, Parklands College

Virtually the entire sample was critical of how change was managed within their colleges, the criticism being aimed squarely at senior managers. Despite the enormity of the change management industry, senior managers were seen to be limited in their ability even to implement the fundamentals of change management:

### ***1. Providing a rationale for change***

Virtually all of the change management literature suggests that as early as possible leaders should provide a rationale for change (e.g. Kotter, 1996), yet this was largely absent in the data. The FTMs were well aware of the need for changes in response to sectoral reforms and government policy drivers (see Hannigan, 2006); the need to ‘modernise’, to maximise competitive advantage, to become more business-like were seen as inevitable consequences of changes within the wider public sector. While they were opposed to the marketization of FE, the participants were pragmatic in their reactions and saw resistance to government imperatives as futile. However, when change was internally initiated, there was often no justification provided by senior managers of why it was necessary. Inevitably this led some FTMs to suspect – perhaps in an example of sinister attribution error (Kramer, 1998) – that there was in fact no clear rationale for changes at all.

### ***2. Consultation and Communication***

Poor communication during change is often cited as the primary cause of change-failure (see for example Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish and DiFonzo, 2004) and was foregrounded in the responses of FTMs. There was however evidence that senior managers were responding to criticisms regarding the poor communication of changes. In Blackton College the new principal had held a full staff meeting at which she outlined the 30 day period of realignment, separated staff into discussion groups and then held feedback sessions. In addition she also used a blog to update staff on a daily basis. Despite the principal’s efforts, some FTMs, notably Elaine and David who were most immediately affected by the changes, still felt that they were being manipulated and kept in the dark about what was really happening:

Elaine:           We’re told what we need to be told and no more.

The other three FTMs who, significantly, were all unaffected by the ‘realignment’, felt that were being kept fully informed about the changes and respected the new principal for her openness and bravery in publicly managing feedback on the

realignment. Here then is a prime example of the differing perceptions of senior management within colleges, an issue that will be further addressed in Chapter 8.

The principal in Eastshire had also adopted the practice of open meetings with staff to discuss changes. However, attendance at the meetings was not compulsory and few staff attended, much to the embarrassment of senior managers. As a result, the principal began to attend departmental meetings where attendance was mandatory for all staff. Even with the principal's meeting, communication was considered poor, to such an extent that there was a suspicion that it was deliberate:

Jan (Eastshire):           The poor communication, the way they send things out is often ad hoc and not clear who it's addressed to, there's information missing... the way it's handled always incurs a lot of grief and anger for certain individuals... someone else said to me these things always look a mess but he reckoned it's deliberate. It looks like they posted it so it would arrive over the bank holiday – that sort of thing, it happens every single time and I for years thought how could they get it wrong so often?... it made a lot of sense when he said that, how can these people be so dense? And I said to him 'well what's gained by doing that' and he said 'well, it just sort of pushes the pressure lower down'.

The extent of deliberateness is of course debatable. What is less questionable is that poor communication often caused cognitive distortions (Coghlan and Rashford, 1990) and paranoid cognition (Kramer, 1998), especially when the grapevine (Crampton, Hodge and Mishra, 1998) was seen as a more reliable form of information gathering.

At Woodside and Parklands, the principals never met with all of their staff to announce changes; instead, change was cascaded through the various management tiers. At Woodside this process seemed to be successful:

Rob:                        I think in this college they're good. I think the senior management in this college communicate fairly well.

However, while Woodside employs a relatively flat management hierarchy, the same cannot be said for Parklands, which may explain why the same strategy seemed to be less successful:

Interviewer: How well are changes communicated to you?

Carol: Not well, no. I think it's getting better... managers may think that they're communicating all messages but it gets lost somewhere in the kind of multi-tiered structure, so I think maybe a simple structure would help that communication of messages.

Even where communication seemed to be successful, changes were presented in their final versions without consultation. Where principals did meet with staff, it was to answer questions about the changes rather than use the feedback to refine the strategy.

Jim (Parklands): I mean things come down from senior management to us as a group of managers in the middle and there's not always that consultation, so we're sort of told 'do this'.

Rob (Woodside): If I was to say one criticism it would be that I don't get the feeling always that senior management take enough soundings when they introduce changes... sometimes they don't take on board the messages coming up from the staff when it comes to procedures.

Within the change management literature, lack of consultation is often cited as a primary cause of change failure (Hargreaves, 2004) yet none of the sample had been consulted about the changes that were occurring within their colleges, despite the fact that they were the ones charged with the implementation of change. This finding is congruent with the RCU's (2010) study of satisfaction and stress in the sector which found that 61% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were consulted about change.

### ***3. Evaluation of Changes***

Standard practice within a learning organisation is to evaluate changes that have been implemented yet there was little evidence of evaluation within round two.

Interviewer: Are there any plans to evaluate the restructure to see what can be learned from it?

Georgia (Parklands): Formal? Not as far as I know or not that I'm involved with. I think there probably are some evaluations going on ... I'm not



sure that the people who have been restructured have been consulted about how it's worked.

- Interviewer: Would you say that changes in the college are properly evaluated and reflected upon?
- Mike (Eastshire): At a college level possibly not. Communication from the top down and the bottom up is not great.
- John (Blackton): I don't know if any real evaluation comes out at the end of it, they just make this change whether it works or not. We just seem to go with it [laughs]... A lot of things we kind of make work, you know. Whether it's that particularly great idea, you kind of jigger it around and make that plan work, that's what they want... I don't know if they do evaluate it really.

In the case of the restructure at Parklands College, FTMs had had to request a formal evaluation so that they could present their experience of working within the revised structure. Senior managers, however, had ignored the request; instead, deputy directors chaired the meeting and sought feedback. Those concerned never heard anything after that.

One possible explanation for the lack of evaluation of changes was the fact that the emphasis on immediate gratification within colleges meant that the 'new' was always the priority – the old was forgotten about and rarely evaluated and so the opportunity for learning was lost. Here then may be an explanation for the frequency of re-structures within colleges.

### **FTM Involvement in Change**

In the first round of fieldwork the interview data suggested that there was little involvement of FTMs in the strategic change process and the second round of fieldwork confirmed this finding: FTMs were not involved in strategic analysis, strategic planning, communicating the strategic vision (although they did communicate *changes*), or evaluating strategic change. FTMs did, however, identify problems of implementation, though the extent to which these were reported to senior managers was questionable. Certainly FTMs' line managers (heads of department or

faculty) were made aware of issues but whether the information was then passed to more elevated levels of the hierarchy was unknown. Many participants felt that their line managers acted as 'gate-keepers' who blocked or reframed feedback that could be considered negative or, even worse, that could suggest that the change was ill-thought out.

### **FTM Responses to Change**

Given the poor quality of organisational change management experienced by the sample, it would be a reasonable hypothesis that responses to change on a personal level, especially the affective element, would be pessimistic. However, virtually all of the FTMs interviewed reported that they generally reacted optimistically to changes. Indeed, many of them suggested that they actively welcomed and even thrived on change:

Jim (Parklands): Oh optimistic, I love it, I just love change. I just love everything being busy and everything going on... I love the change, I love the buzz... if I sit at my desk and nothing new has come in I think ooo [laughs.] I'm more likely to get disappointed if nothing has come in than having something to get your teeth into.

David (Blackton): I like change, I like being involved in things that are new so as long as there's an expectation of some sort of success and positive outcome... I don't like a steady state of always doing the same things every week or every day so that suits me well and I don't mind situations that are fairly turbulent either.

Some FTMs considered optimism to be part of their personality and general outlook, which therefore determined their affective response to change despite the manner in which it was managed by senior managers. For others, optimism was qualified and contingent:

Linda (Eastshire): Generally I'm optimistic but if it's a change that's going to require lots of additional work maybe - yeah I might think 'oh is it worth it' you know, 'is it worth it?'

Carol (Parklands): I'm usually pretty optimistic about it as long as I can see the rationale for it. Sometimes I need to have the rationale explained to me because people don't always make the rationale clear. I think that's absolutely fundamental. If somebody can explain why a change is going to happen or should happen and I agree with that rationale I'm very – usually – very optimistic about it.

Interviewer: How do you generally feel about change?

Kevin (Blackton): Optimistic. It depends what the final outcome's going to be, what are the reasons to [make] any changes. If it's for the good, yes; if it's economic then I might be slightly against it.

Vicky (Parklands): Sometimes it depends how tired I am. If I'm really shattered I [laughs] think 'oh for god's sake!'

While it must be remembered that the data comes from a small sample, the findings from the second round suggest that qualified optimism is contingent upon six factors:

1. *The rationale behind the change*: if FTMs understood the reasons behind the changes they were more likely to be optimistic regardless of whether they agreed with them.
2. *The values underpinning the change*: change for purely financial reasons were received less optimistically than those that were curriculum driven or explicitly for the benefit of students.
3. *The effect upon the FTM*: the extent to which change would affect the FTM in terms of workload was the primary consideration; however, where change presented opportunities for career advancement, optimism was increased.
4. *The effect upon the teaching team*: if teams were likely to oppose changes, the impact would naturally affect their relationships with FTMs. In addition, there was protectiveness towards their teams.
5. *The likelihood of successful outcomes*: FTMs did not want to squander valuable time on initiatives that were unlikely to be successful.
6. *The current wellbeing of the FTM*: stress, tiredness and illness obviously affected how change was received.
7. *The source of change*: changes that were initiated from within departments were usually responded to far more optimistically than those initiated by

senior managers or government. Given that senior managers were found to be distant from teaching staff in the first round, this is perhaps unsurprising – with little understanding of what life in the classroom was like, senior managers were considered ill-equipped to present changes that were easily implementable.

At the next point in the spectrum were those participants who responded stoically to change – change was inevitable in education and so optimism and pessimism were superfluous:

Liz (Woodside): I think that in education you have to go with the changes and that you can't really be either way particularly. You've got to go with it and you've got to make the best of it [laughs].

Pat (Blackton): I've seen it change and if you don't want to move with the changes you don't survive... You move with the changes, you have to, cos that's how education has gone... You can stand there and be as negative as you want but you're not going to get it back again [laughs], you're not going to get the nice Silver Book back again, you're not going to get all these holidays back again [laughs].

Lastly were those, very much in the minority, who were pessimistic about changes:

Cheryl (Woodside): It's always fairly negative. I know the old adage that no one likes change.

Sue (Parklands): Change like restructure sends me into a complete panic... I have been with three different line managers and three different structures over the last three years.

Both worked within a state of fearful anticipation where they dreaded what was coming next. Change from their point of view always meant things getting worse. In this last category, FTMs here exhibited elements of Ford et al.'s (2001) 'resigned background' conversation where the failure of past change programmes creates a pessimistic lens through which the current change is viewed. Initially I had hypothesised that most FTMs would inhabit this background yet the fieldwork disproved this. What was not in the resigned accounts, however, was any hint of culpability in past failures, which is an integral element of Ford et al.'s model.

Instead, blame was firmly attached to senior managers. To this extent, their responses were more closely aligned with the ‘cynical background’.

### **Lecturer Responses to Change**

Having discussed the affective responses of FTMs to change, the interview moved to how teaching teams responded to change:

Steph (Blackton):      Panic [laughs] yeah I think they go ‘ohhh why do things have to, why do things have to change, why can’t we just do it the way we’ve always done it’.

Interviewer:            What about your team, how do they mostly respond to changes?

Mike (Eastshire):      Here we go again [laughs]. As a sector further education changes a lot anyway, it always has. The team are experienced and they’ve been in the job long enough to accept and know that change is inevitable, ‘here we go again. Let’s just see what happens this time... we know it’s going to happen so we’re just ready for it when it comes’.

Interviewer:            How do lecturers generally respond to change?

Georgia (Parklands):   ‘Oh not again. Why do we always have to be doing something different? Why can’t they just let things be so we can actually get on with what we’re supposed to be doing?’

Jim (Parklands):      A lot of them are quite positive I think, certainly most of the team... They’re here for the students, they love what they do. Sometimes I think there’s a little bit of lack of understanding of why change is happening so sometimes I think people don’t understand why.

It was clear that there was little accord between the attitudinal responses of FTMs and the teams they managed. All four of the participants quoted above claimed they embraced change optimistically, yet only Jim suggested that his team shared his positivity. In the previous chapter, the data suggested that FTMs engaged in leadership practices only sporadically; given that a major role of leadership is to impart a vision and motivate teams, the pessimism of lecturers towards change may

suggest that the leadership of change is lacking at the first tier as well – according to FTMs’ responses – as at the senior tier.

FTMs’ depiction of lecturer resistance to change can be located within Ford et al.’s (2001) cynical background conversations which draw on past failures and assign the blame towards another group, namely senior managers. Here there is alignment with the pessimistic FTMs discussed above, who also blamed senior managers for change-failure.

What is crucial, however, is that the cynicism of lecturers is not directed at the individual changes themselves but rather to change in general, especially its repetitive nature and the repackaging of previous initiatives as novel. The extent to which this is a true depiction of lecturer responses or whether it is the transference of FTMs’ conversational backgrounds is, of course, questionable.

The data also suggest that newer members of staff were more likely to accept change optimistically. More experienced lecturers were highly cynical about changes, often on the grounds of institutional amnesia:

John (Blackton): I’ve got three elderly chaps, probably getting up near retirement now. Now it’s just like water off a duck’s back - they’ve seen it all before, it all goes round in circles... Old staff it’s just ‘here we go again, same old same old, just give it a different title, a different name’.

Lecturers were cynical not necessarily because changes recurred but because the recurring changes were presented as new or innovative by senior managers. However, that did not mean that lecturers did not comply with changes; regardless of their assessment of the change, they would (at least according to the interviewees) support the FTMs in their implementation of change:

Linda (Eastshire): There’s a couple of guys that’ve been in the team for a long time and they every time – ‘oh yeah we’ll fully support you but it’s not going to work!’ [laughs].

What was noticeable in the data was that there was no suggestion that the pessimism of lecturers in response to change was a reflection of FTMs' lack of leadership behaviours. If the leadership of change was lacking, it was attributed to senior managers rather than FTMs themselves. Whether this was an attempt to avoid responsibility, manage impressions or whether they did not consider the leadership of change to be within their remit is debatable.

## **Resistance**

In the first round there was little reference to resistance from lecturers; instead, willing compliance was the most commonly reported attitude from FTMs' teams. My suspicion was that resistance was considered by participants only in terms of its overt expressions rather than everyday varieties. To investigate the extent of different types of resistance, participants were presented with a list of behaviours, drawing on Prasad and Prasad's (1998) categorisation of routine forms of resistance (open confrontations, subtle subversions, disengagement and ambiguous accommodations) and asked to identify those forms that they observed most frequently. Questioning then explored the FTMs' experience of routine resistance.

The selection and categorisation of each type of resistance was not straightforward and drew extensively upon the literature. Prasad and Prasad include only a handful of examples in each category and so the significant studies on resistance were drawn upon in the categorisation process. It was obviously impossible to include all variations of routine resistance within the survey and so I chose five representative resistant strategies for each category as detailed in the Table 3 below. There was also a concern to ensure that there was a range of types in each category in an attempt to capture as representative a sample of everyday resistance as possible.

<b>Table 3: Categories of routine resistance</b>			
<b>Open Confrontations</b>	<b>Subtle subversions</b>	<b>Disengagement</b>	<b>Ambiguous accommodation</b>
Refusal to cooperate	Sabotaging initiatives	Distance themselves from managers or changes	Pretend to accept changes or instructions but actually ignoring them
Open criticism of managers of changes in meetings	Spreading rumours and gossip	Not attending meetings and/or ignoring emails	Withholding information or manipulating data
Using policies like grievance procedures or whistleblowing	Deliberately misinterpreting	Avoiding responsibility	Being cynical
Going to the union for support	Using 'management speak' back to managers	Making jokes about managers or changes	Finding loopholes or ways around rules
Working to rule	Exaggerated agreement with managers or changes	Being unenthusiastic	Asserting professionalism

## **Types of Resistance**

### ***Open Confrontations***

The most common type of resistance in the category of open confrontations was *criticism of management or changes in meetings*. However, such open dissent was contingent upon a number of factors: firstly the size of the meeting was crucial; in smaller meetings – mostly team meetings – lecturers were more likely to adopt a critical stance. In larger meetings – especially whole college meetings – open criticism was limited or non-existent, often due to the fear of reprisals (Jameson, 2010). The second factor was whether minutes were being taken. Such was the accountability imbued in minutes that lecturers would not wish to be identified as being critical, although whether individuals would actually be linked with criticism in the minutes is debatable; the assumption that they would be so identified was clear



however. Thirdly, criticism would be less likely when senior managers were present. Finally and perhaps most crucially, is the extent to which lecturers felt speaking up would make any difference:

Linda (Eastshire): In meetings what I imagine is that people think that even if they disagree with [head of department] that there's not much point... they'll just come up to the point where he'll go 'well, that is how it is'. I don't think they feel that if they're not happy with it that he's going to back down... or 'I've already said this and he hasn't taken it on board so what's the point saying it again?'

Cheryl (Woodside): We had a meeting yesterday and of course straight afterwards felt it had all just been something that was repeated from the meeting before you know. It's just the same speech at every meeting. You just think [tuts] 'we've been here before, we've talked about this before, we've discussed this before'. It seems as if it's just the same every time.

Central to understanding the extent of open criticism is whether the culture of the college was conducive to 'speaking up', whether there was 'context favourability' in Milliken et al.'s (2003, p1455) terms: whether they would be listened to and the supportiveness of management. In Blackton and Eastshire the principals encouraged their staff to speak up whether in traditional meetings or via blogs and, to an extent, some staff did engage with the process:

Pat (Blackton): Well [the principal] is saying she does take that on so some of these meetings we've been to she's stood there and said 'ask me anything' and some people have asked her some quite controversial things and she's answered them.... So she seems to tackle things. She said 'don't worry, nothing will be held against you' [laughs]. Whether people will be sure of that and willing to say what's on their mind I don't know.

Where senior managers did create opportunities for speaking up, it engendered respect from staff. While occasionally it was seen as inauthentic leadership or contrived collegiality (Brundrett, 1998), mostly it was seen as a genuine attempt to engage with staff. There was of course still cynicism that dissent would be responded to, a finding which mirrors Anderson's (2008) study of academic resistance in HE where many

lecturers felt that speaking up was a fruitless pursuit. In the FE context, Lumby (2009) also discusses how 'listening' was often performed as a ritual rather than an authentic collaborative activity.

However, while principals seemed to court speaking up, this willingness to embrace dissent was not always evident at lower levels of management. Middle managers in particular were often accused of stifling openness and involvement, a finding at odds with Fenton-O'Creevy's (2001) conception of the middle manager as scapegoat in terms of stifling employee involvement:

Interviewer: Are people encouraged to speak up?  
Liz (Woodside): No I think you're encouraged to keep quiet.  
Interviewer: What would encourage you to keep quiet?  
Liz: Well I think the problem is if you speak up you're not very well liked. Seems to create atmospheres. I have in the past done that [spoken up] but I've decided that it's easier not to say anything at all, just carry on, do your job.

In an extreme example, Sue had formed a coalition with other Curriculum Team Leaders and drafted a paper setting out a number of issues that they wanted senior managers to address. Following protocols, the paper was first presented to the deputy directors to take forwards (upwards):

We took it to the deputy directors who said 'you realise what would happen if we take these conditions that you've got or demands or whatever you want to call them, if we take them to SMT, you know what will happen?' We said 'no' and they said 'we'll lose our jobs because if you start having that communication between you and SMT then they will consider that [our] tier doesn't need to be there'... We went 'OK, we don't want you to lose your jobs' [laughs] and that was the end of it. So we all got back into our little silos.

Middle managers (usually heads of department), while almost universally lauded in the first round of fieldwork, were discussed in more critical terms in this round. Many spoke of middle managers operating as gatekeepers to negative information or criticism; where it was felt that they did pass on expressions of dissent, the reports were often highly diluted and re-presented in a more positive light, a finding that echoes Morrison and Milliken's (2000) model of organisational silence.

Other open forms of resistance such as *going to the union* or *using HRM policies* such as grievance procedures were far less common yet were occasionally used as threats. *Working to rule* had all but been eliminated according to Mike (Eastshire) because of the wording of contracts:

Working to rule doesn't work in this sector because there's a lovely clause in the contracts and it's actually fairly standard across most [contracts] where there's a clause that says 'any other duties that the principal or senior management sees as being appropriate'. It's a wonderful get out clause; it basically means that if you don't like it we can make you do it anyway and it's in your contract.

Similarly, *refusal to cooperate* was seen as a rarity. When it was discussed it was usually succeeded by compliance after tempers had settled. However, refusal was the form of resistance that David at Blackton took most seriously:

I've had one member of the team that's refused to cooperate quite a lot but I managed to – well, they found another job. I pushed them as hard as I could towards finding another job. I sort of pushed them through a disciplinary route as well, started to... sometimes people refuse for very valid reasons but you still need them to do it. Still made them do it and deal with the outcome in terms of their resentments [laughs].

### ***Subtle Subversions***

Most of the subtle subversion types scored low in the survey. *Sabotaging initiatives* was virtually non-existent; where FTMs had observed it, it was more likely ambivalence rather than sabotage. The example given by Jim at Parklands was around an initiative to increase achievement rates of key skills. Vocational staff were required to embed key skills within their subject specialism and to ensure students engaged with communication, application of number and IT. However, rather than refuse to comply, lecturers adopted an extremely ambivalent approach, emphasising to their students that Key Skills was of marginal importance compared to their vocational qualification. The result, unsurprisingly, was that there was little discernible increase in achievement.

The most significant and reported type of subtle subversion was the *spreading of rumours and gossip* (perhaps tellingly, most participants laughed or at least smiled when I asked them about this). For some FTMs, rumours and gossip were non-malicious, inevitable in every workplace and, rather than being resistant, some FTMs saw them as a coping mechanism in times of insecurity:

- Lynette (Eastshire): Spreading rumours and gossip is just part and parcel of being in such an organisation and often it's connected with 'we're not going to get a pay rise' or you know... 'we've got to do this again'. There's little maliciousness in it.
- Interviewer: So it's more to do with feeling uncertain?
- Lynette: Yes. Again, it's how they deal with the uncertainty of what's coming and at times it does, probably around inspection time, it tends to heighten and then once we've got through it tends to lessen again.

It was noticeable, however, that spreading rumours and gossip was one of the few strategies that FTMs found were directed at them rather than more senior managers. Tracey at Parklands, for example, had found herself to be the subject of two specific rumours: firstly, after a successful interview, a rumour was circulating that senior managers were unwilling to appoint her and so were conducting other secretive interviews; secondly, her sickness leave was rumoured to be a ploy to avoid being at work during a mock-Ofsted inspection of her department. Here then was an example of the malicious variety of gossip:

- Interviewer: How did that make you feel?
- Tracey: Oh, I've got very broad shoulders so takes a lot to upset me – occasionally I do. I try not to and not where it's very visible. I might go home and scream and shout but at the end of the day, you know, all the time they're talking about me they're not talking about anybody else [laughs].

Gossip, in particular, also appeared to be used by lecturers in an attempt to manipulate FTMs. Where FTMs shared a staffroom, lecturers would engage in gossip that was critical of heads of department within the hearing of FTMs. Given that in many

colleges speaking up to HoDs was discouraged, gossip provided a method of dissent in anticipation that FTMs would act on it. In Linda's department at Eastshire where lecturers were unwilling to confront the HoD, they would regularly gossip about his personal life affecting his work in front of Linda. In Steph's staffroom at Blackton College, lecturers would gossip in a 'bitchy' manner about inequalities in resource allocation. Finally there was the use of gossip and rumours as impression management where, in David's terms, they would 'exaggerate their own importance, their own impact in what they've done'.

The spreading of gossip and rumours provided a relatively risk-free form of resistance although, as is clear, its use as a method of acquiring resources and managing impressions may be more significant. This type of routine behaviour is also one of those strategies in the typology that may be more significant as a coping mechanism rather than a resistant strategy.

### ***Disengagement***

Disengagement provides the perfect example of the diversity of perspectives on routine resistance. For Fleming and Sewell (2002, p860), disengagement is the act 'whereby the self is detached from the normative prescriptions of managerialism through irony and cynicism'. For Prasad and Prasad (1998), disengagement is cognitive, emotional and/or physical and it is this theoretical position that is adopted here.

Disengagement was the most common category of resistance observed by FTMs; indeed the most common type overall was *being unenthusiastic*. Lacking enthusiasm was seen as endemic among lecturers but only in response to certain stimuli: instructions from managers, organisational changes, meetings and procedural changes being the most common. In essence, this type of resistance is an absence rather than a presence and can either be seen as a deliberate withholding of enthusiasm as a form of resistance, or the response of a workforce tired of continual and repetitive changes that have little impact upon their core business of teaching. Lecturer enthusiasm is therefore restricted to their classroom activities, to curriculum changes and to

continual improvement of their practice – given the huge workloads of teaching staff within FE (see Clow, 2005), there is only a certain amount of enthusiasm to go round and lecturers seemed agentic in their rationing, prioritising students over organisation. Indeed, being unenthusiastic is perhaps the most energy efficient resistant strategy of all in that it requires no activity and no investment. It is also efficient in the fact that it is, according to this data, so observable but unpunishable.

There is also a suggestion that the repetitive nature of change within colleges as a result of institutional amnesia is a likely antecedent of much of the unenthusiasm observed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the amnesia referred to here is not that of Fernandez and Sune (2009) which describes the loss of institutional knowledge; here forgetting is literal – changes in many cases are merely re-presentations of previous initiatives as new. To the participants, who remembered previous changes, it appeared as though senior managers had forgotten the previous attempts; the repackaged changes were unlikely to provoke enthusiasm:

Jan (Eastshire):           A lot of people feel it's change for change's sake because it's so frequent and they just think 'oh god, not again, what are they doing this time?' You've got to get used to who you're working for again and what the structure is even though at the end of the day your actual job might not be that different if at all, it feels as if it is.

*Avoiding responsibility* was the fourth most observed type of resistance and is allied to being unenthusiastic. Despite attempts by middle managers and FTMs to delegate responsibility and engage staff within change processes, when these strategies are reacted to without enthusiasm, lecturers seemed to avoid responsibility as a further attempt to conserve energy and protect their teaching focus. Avoiding responsibility allows lecturers to 'avoid notice and detection' (Scott, 2008, p34) which means they can manage their workload without additional responsibility.

One type of resistance allied to avoiding responsibility was the next disengagement strategy, that of *ignoring emails and/or not attending meetings*. However, the deliberateness of these inactions was debatable as FTMs reported that lecturers

usually claimed they had forgotten (see Pentari, Schlenker and Christopher (2002) on excuse-making), a reasonable claim given the workloads of teaching staff, although the exploitation of the prevalence of institutional forgetting (in the literal sense) may be present as well:

Steph (Blackton): Yeah, saying ‘yes that’s fine I’ll do that’ and then when you ask them ‘oh I forgot’ or ‘erm, oh, when was that supposed to be in by?’ Well I did send you an email and you have had the minutes of the meeting blah blah blah but all kind of not recorded that, not taken that on board... they’re very ‘oh I’ll go and do it now’ and they will go off and do it but there’s often a ‘you should have reminded me’. Well no actually, you should have remembered.

*Distancing themselves from managers and changes* – a form of organisational dis-identification (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) – was also a strategy that scored highly. The perceived distance of senior managers reported in the first round of fieldwork was again evident but this time such distance may also have been created by lecturers as much as SMTs:

Carol (Parklands): I have a feeling that teachers don’t particularly want to be involved with senior managers, they just want to get on with their job and they see senior management as something quite separate that doesn’t really have a huge – that it wouldn’t benefit them really in any way to be more involved. I think that’s borne out by the lack of attendance at meetings senior managers arrange, drop in sessions for people. So unless I specifically request staff to go, they usually wouldn’t.

But it was not just senior managers that lecturers sought distance from. Other functional sections of the college were also kept at arm’s length:

David (Blackton): They distance themselves from other parts of the college like the Management Information Systems people because they work in such a different way, they understand things in a different way.

Both targets of distancing – senior managers and functional departments – were seen as removed from teaching and lacking understanding of what the contemporary

classroom was like; the distance was perhaps value-based or professionally oriented at inception but was manifested in communicative and interactional distance.

However, while these strategies of distance were perceived as founded upon professional values, it was also evident that some lecturers distanced themselves from the workplace entirely, seeing teaching not as a vocation but as a job, a distance that was shared by Cheryl:

Cheryl (Woodside): I think most people see it as a job yeah. I mean there are one or two that don't have a family and you can see that they throw themselves into the job more than the majority of us do... I just wouldn't be able to commit myself to the amount of time and energy required to throw yourself into a vocation rather than a job.

It must be remembered that the position of Programme Area Leader at Woodside where Cheryl was employed was the least formally managerial of the FTM roles and she tended to see herself as a lecturer rather than a manager. However, Sue at Parklands, where the position of Curriculum Team Leader was the most formally managerial, also provided evidence of this form of distancing among lecturers:

Some people seem to think that they come in, they teach whatever they've got to teach and they go home and there's nothing wrapped around that at all and they don't need to know about anything else if it's not completely their subject.

Here we see two causes of distance – the idea of seeing teaching as a job rather than a profession and the distance created because of subject specialism and the emphasis on the primacy of teaching over any other responsibilities.

As discussed in the review of literature, the use of *humour* is perhaps the most problematic strategy of everyday resistance in terms of categorisation. In some cases humour can be pure disengagement, an attempt to relieve boredom or avoid becoming entangled within the stresses of the workplace; in other cases it can be more directive in its expression and acts as an overt form of resistance. The data collected in round two found evidence of both types:



Jim (Parklands): Again I think that's [joking] quite common. You see little enclaves of staff and that chattering but again I think it's probably done more as a defence mechanism or understanding or coping - you know, we've got to deal with it, let's make a joke of it, let's tell everybody how rubbish it is, you know.

Lynette (Eastshire): I think it's to deal with their own uncertainties about what's happening in the future and just a way of releasing pressure. It's a way they deal with stress. It's often black humour but it's I think a release valve more than anything, making jokes about management, nothing vicious or malicious about it.

In both cases – humour providing distance from the workplace and humour directed at managers – FTMs viewed humour as a form of coping. While other forms of resistance were considered to have a coping element, only humour was linked with coping so directly. However, to view humour exclusively as a coping mechanism is to excuse it and, then, to make it resistance that need not be challenged; indeed humour functions well as an unchallengeable form of resistance – it is a safe form of expressing dissent (see Bryant in Weaver, 2010). Ultimately however, according to the FTMs, it seemed to precede compliance:

Mike (Eastshire): They might not like it, they might take the mick, they don't like the change, they think it's a joke but they'll still knuckle down and do it.

### ***Ambiguous Accommodation***

After disengagement, ambiguous accommodation was the most common category of resistance and most common in this category was *cynicism* which was seen to be endemic throughout the colleges. For some FTMs, that cynicism arose from the perceptual difference between senior managers and lecturers in that SMT did not understand what work as a lecturer was like; for others cynicism was a result of senior managers being without values and forgetting the primary purpose of education:

Carol (Parklands): I think they perceive that managers don't really know what a student is, that in this target-driven culture a student is a little

figure on a piece of paper which indicates success or failure and is not a real person.

However, lecturer cynicism was not only targeted at senior managers – in some cases it was directed at students as well:

Tracey (Parklands): I think from the point of view of the students, how staff can be cynical [about them] as well, that actually they're only here because they get their EMA [Educational Maintenance Allowance] which is a very cynical thing... We did have a member of staff who did actually say some of our students are here because of EMA to senior management and the senior manager actually turned round to the member of staff and said 'don't be so cynical'.

There was a range of evidence that lecturers routinely *manipulate data* or 'make-out' when it came to systems and top of the list was the completion of registers. All of the sample colleges employed electronic register systems and most reported that the system was ineffective; staff would complete registers religiously then receive reports that they had not been done. In many cases lecturers (and FTMs) would go back to the weeks where the system was blank and mark everyone as attending. Alternatively staff would use a range of marks for not attending – such as 'authorised absence', used in cases of medical appointments and the like – where students were known to have personal difficulties; in this way, students would not lose their EMA. Also found was the practice of not recording lateness for students experiencing personal hardship. In yet other examples, lecturers would mark everyone as present to avoid being seen as a poor teacher:

Jim (Parklands): We had a member of staff who we got rid of eventually who a lot of his registers were marked as present to get his attendance figures so they looked good when they weren't... I think part of the ethos is that if you look at the system and you've got poor attendance it would often be deemed that if the students aren't turning up you're doing something wrong, so therefore, as a defence against that, you'd mark them as present.

The electronic panopticon (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Ball and Wilson, 2000) is highlighted clearly in Jim's response where data is used as a means of surveillance.

Other examples of such ambiguous accommodation included the practice of marking work leniently when stricture meant failing students:

- John (Blackton): They're doing practical assessments you know – you start off marking it quite rigidly because you wanna do it right, you wanna do the new qualification justice, then after a while you think 'fuck me, all these kids are failing, we've now got to put them in for re-sits or we've got to do it all over again'. You start being a bit more lenient, 'oh, it's not that bad really, I'm gonna tick that, that's ok', you know? Those kinds of things
- Interviewer: And that's fairly common practice?
- John (Blackton): Yeah I'd say that was fairly common, yeah.

## **Unionisation and Resistance**

One point that was central to the interview data concerned the union. The literature documents a global decline in unionisation in general (Machin, 2000, Waddington and Kerr, 1999) and FE is no different (Mather and Worrall, 2007, Times Education Supplement, 2010). For some writers, this decline is evidence of the death of resistance in the face of indomitable managerialism in the post-bureaucratic context. However, this research proceeds from the perspective that the weakening of unions has moved resistance into the realms of the subterranean rather than killing it off. Therefore, before any discussion of the individual types of resistance, the questioning focused on the FTMs' perception of and involvement with the union.

The University and College Union (UCU, formerly NATFHE) was the predominant union within each of the colleges yet its visibility and perceived strength was variable. In Blackton, FTMs were divided in their opinions on the effectiveness of the union: Elaine had engaged the support of the union during her recent 'realignment' and, while they had been supportive, she doubted the extent of their influence:

We've not got a strong union here so it's hard for them as well. They've been good, I've got to say the union has been good. They've been there, they come in the meetings with us, they go into every meeting with us. They're trying to be as proactive as they can but they're still – they don't know company

[employment] law you know, you need experts for that. Of course the college has got all the experts they need on their side.

Kevin, on the other hand, reported that the union was strong within the same college and was well supported by staff. However, while they were consulted by the previous principal, he was unsure whether they would exert the same influence under the new regime.

In Eastshire, the union's influence was still seen to be a key factor in organisational life although its strength was perceived to be in decline:

Interviewer: Is the union quite strong in this college?  
Lynette: Not any more, not as much as it used to be but we do have a union presence here... and the senior management team and the union – they talk to each other, which is perhaps why we are not militant because they do talk and they're both open to negotiations and flexibility, which has meant for the most part this college has very good conditions to work with.

In Woodside and Parklands the union was perceived to be extremely marginal and lacking visibility and impact. The FTMs in Woodside in particular reported an almost total lack of profile on campus and only one was a member.

Grace (Woodside): I haven't attended any union meetings, I'm not aware of union meetings being held. I'm not actually sure of the union position within the college and that's just being really honest.

Interviewer: So they're not very visible?

Grace: No, clearly not or maybe I just go around with my eyes blinkered. Maybe because I've never had any need to call upon the union... but I've never even heard my colleagues talk about the union or union meetings.

Interviewer: Are the union quite visible?

Carol (Parklands): I don't see them no, you just see the odd poster up saying 'join' but no. I think lecturers are aware that they're there as a matter of recourse... I don't think very many people are particularly union focused.

Many of the FTMs were not members of the union – some had never been members, some had allowed their membership to lapse – and there were a range of reasons for non-membership:

1. Most common was the refusal to strike, a reasoned and increasingly common decision (see TES, 2010). In the majority of cases this stance was adopted because strike action was seen as detrimental to students and therefore compromised their values. Secondly, strike action was seen as fruitless and had never achieved significant gains. However, non-striking was not confined to non-members; Linda in Eastshire, although a union member, suggested that she could not afford to lose money and so had crossed picket lines.
2. Some non-members were from industrial backgrounds where unions had never been prominent such as Jim (Parklands) whose experience was in catering and Mike (Eastshire) who had an IT background. Despite the transition to education, neither agreed with unionisation in principle and had never joined.
3. The final category of non-membership was those who had felt they had been failed by the union in the past. Rob (Woodside) in particular felt that the union had been ineffective when he was made redundant from his previous college. He had asked the branch chair for support but he felt that she took the side of the college as she was a member of the senior management team as well as chair of the union branch.

However, despite the fact that none of the FTMs were actively involved with the union, most felt that if they were ever in a situation of potential redundancy, they would approach the union for support. These findings support those of Mather and Worrall (2007) who suggest that while the union in FE continues as an important part of the dialectic of power and resistance, the actual effectiveness of unionised activity is seen as minimal.

## **Targets and Audience**

Before beginning the research project, I hypothesised that FTMs would be the target of lecturer resistance because of their position as implementer of change and their proximity to teaching staff. However, the data did not support this and there were few mentions of routine resistance being directed at participants. The main target of resistance, as observed by the FTMs, was senior management and service departments, especially those that dealt with management information systems. FTMs were, however, the *audience* for resistance – where senior managers were present, lecturers were reported to be compliant and acquiescent. Given the transactional distance between lecturers and senior managers, this may be an issue of lecturers lacking the opportunity to engage in directed resistance. However, we have seen that the distance between hierarchical levels may be created as much by lecturers as senior managers; where opportunities to resist directly were offered, lecturers were reluctant to embrace the opportunity. Being the audience for resistance therefore placed FTMs in a difficult situation and they faced the dilemma of challenging resistance that was not aimed at them or turning a blind eye.

## **Turning a Blind Eye?**

FTMs are in a position to observe a wide range of everyday forms of resistance and when resistance is observed, each must decide whether to challenge the behaviours or to turn a blind eye. There were three main factors to consider:

1. FTMs reported that they themselves were rarely the target of lecturer resistance, with senior managers being the primary recipient. Therefore, if they decided to challenge behaviours, they risked being seen as siding with senior managers, thus risking the withdrawal of support and cooperation which they needed to be effective (see Pendleton, 1997).
2. Turning a blind eye on the other hand, necessitated the potential for being seen as colluding with resistance and eroding the authority of their position and

potentially damaging their prospects for promotion if collusion was discovered by senior managers.

3. In order to challenge resistance or misbehaviour, FTMs would need to be sure of receiving the support of human resources and senior management.

The issue of whether to challenge resistant behaviours was thus one of the most precarious situations FTMs were faced with.

In terms of the FTMs themselves, there was little accord between them as to whether they would challenge resistance or turn a blind eye. Firstly there were those who said they would not hesitate to challenge resistance:

Vicky (Parklands): You can't turn a blind eye cos the job has to be done but there's ways of managing it, it's often not necessary to – if you get people who are resistant to things it's better to manage the person I think rather than the process because you will get it all done.

Interviewer: These types of resistance – do you challenge them?  
Tracey (Parklands): Yes I do and more so now that I've been in post about 18 months, I'm much more 'well if you don't like this you don't have to work in this industry, you can go back to...' Yeah and I have said that on numerous occasions now. Now I don't go down the lines of trying to persuade a member of staff to stay... I will say 'you know, I'm not sure education's right for you'.

Both Tracey and Vicky were Curriculum Team Leaders, middle managers effectively, who had retained their programme leadership in addition; as a result, there was a sense that, because of the greater accountability of their role and the time pressures under which they operated, they felt challenging resistance was the most effective and efficient method of managing. Tracey, in particular, had seen her relationship with her team change dramatically since being in post, especially having been the target of a rumour campaign (as discussed above) which may have affected her adoption of challenging.

Other FTMs were more selective about the types of resistance that they would challenge. Steph (Blackton) for example would challenge 'forgetting' or avoidance of

responsibility when it came to administration but turn a blind eye to the creative marking of registers if for the benefit of students; John (Blackton) would challenge resistance from new staff in an attempt to ‘keep them on the right road’ but ignore resistance from ‘old staff’ who were seen as set in their ways; Lynette (Eastshire) would challenge malicious humour but not when it was tongue-in-cheek.

Then there were those FTMs who would generally exercise ‘benign neglect’ (MacLean, 2001, p186) and turn a blind eye to resistant behaviour; here their decision was often mediated by their relationship to more senior managers. Linda (Eastshire), for example, who considered her head of department to be neglectful of his duties, felt unmotivated to challenge routine resistance and when she did, her reaction was ambivalent. In response to office gossip for example she said:

Three quarters of the time I probably turn a blind eye to be honest and then [the] other quarter I might sort of say ‘come on guys, it’s really not the place to talk about it’ or something like that but yeah, it’s a bit of a half-hearted attempt to be honest... I’m not sure I’d know exactly how to go about doing that without actually make them feel like they can’t actually say anything in front of you... or isolating myself from them in a way. Which I guess maybe for the role – well, in some ways it might be a good thing, in some ways it might not be a good thing.

Here is the dilemma of FTMs: if they challenge resistance they create distance from their teams; however, as Linda suggests, creating distance may also be beneficial for the role.

The most extreme case of turning a blind eye was with Elaine who had been presented with the ultimatum of redundancy or demotion. The sense of betrayal that emanated from this incident had changed her perspective on challenging resistance entirely:

Interviewer: Do you feel now it’s sometimes better to turn a blind eye?  
Elaine (Blackton): Yeah yeah... I turn loads of blind eyes now, yeah. I think any loyalty that I had towards them [senior managers] has gone out the window.

Here then we see the importance of the FTM’s relationship with or loyalty to senior managers in determining whether resistance is challenged or not. However, a further



mitigating factor is the focus of the FTM. In the first chapter I discussed how each FTM could be described in terms of their focus: student, team, organisation or omni-focused and it was clear that these foci played a determining factor in the willingness of FTMs to challenge routine resistance.

The data from this round of fieldwork suggests that organisation and omni-focused FTMs were more likely to challenge resistance. Organisation-focused FTMs were those who sought advancement and so appeared more overtly managerial, drawing on the institutional procedures – especially disciplinary – in their day to day practice. This identification with the organisation may be a prime antecedent of their willingness to challenge resistance. It is also possible that willingness to tackle resistance was perceived as another quality looked for by senior managers when considering promotions. Furthermore, organisation-focused FTMs tended to be more individualistic in their work, talking less about the need of their team's support. Omni-focused FTMs tended to have the largest teams within the sample, up to 30 lecturers in the case of Vicky. As such, it is possible that they were worried that routine resistance such as gossip and cynicism might be detrimental to their teams and even become a catalyst to the undermining of their position.

Team-focused and student-focused FTMs were more likely to turn a blind eye or were ambivalent in their challenge. As un-organisationally focused, they would challenge only those behaviours which were likely to affect their teams and students – those forms of resistance that affected senior managers or the organisation were tolerated. Team-focused FTMs, as the name implies, would be naturally unwilling to damage their relationship with lecturers – if the behaviours did not harm students or colleagues they could be ignored. Student-focused FTMs were those who saw themselves primarily as teachers rather than managers and so would turn a blind eye for fear of being seen as 'Management' rather than a colleague.

## **FTM Resistance**

Turning a blind eye, colluding and adopting ambivalent approaches can all be seen as forms of FTM resistance that were not apparent in the first round of fieldwork but the second round also contained more evidence of doing unofficial favours, humour directed at individual senior managers, cynicism and distance. However in this round I focused on three contrasting forms of resistance: open dissent, making out and escape.

### ***Open Dissent***

To investigate open dissent I asked the FTMs what they would do if they were asked to implement a change they didn't agree with and there was general agreement on how they would react:

1. Demand to know the rationale for the change; if they were dissatisfied with the reasons they would use other sources of information to find the 'real' reason:
2. Build a case against the change and present it officially to senior managers (see Schilit and Locke, 1982 and Fo and Yukl, 2000), sometimes with the support of the team:
  - Kevin (Blackton): 'If it's legit then obviously it'll have to go through but if it's not legit, if it's for another reason, then obviously I appeal, I get the staff, get construction to have a meeting with that person so they can hear the reasons why they wanna do something face to face, not memos or emails or middle men, come face to face and have a meeting with whoever's been involved'.
3. If senior managers still insisted upon the change they would implement it, albeit with ambivalence:
  1. Mike (Eastshire): 'I'd implement it, I'd do it, I don't have to like it but I'll still do it, that's the job. We don't like everything we have to do. If you did I think you wouldn't be very realistic. We all have to do things we don't like'.

4. Make their opposition known through ‘playing up’:

- Keith (Woodside): ‘moan like mad and then do it [laughs]. Everybody knows when I’m not happy [laughs]. I do wear my heart on my sleeve so if I’ve got the hump everybody knows it but eventually you just gotta go along with it ain’t you? I mean I can’t *not* do it. Yeah, without a doubt. I always tell him [HoD], shit goes up [laughs].
- Cheryl (Woodside): ‘just sort of put your fed-up head on and your defeatist head on, that usually works’.

While there was evidence that there was a culture of discouraging open dissent, few FTMs kept quiet. Generally their dissent was directed towards their line manager and most reported that HoDs listened to them. In Linda’s case this was taken to the extreme; after months of her line manager neglecting his duties due to personal issues and after hearing endless ‘bitching’ and gossip from the team, she confronted him about his behaviour during her appraisal:

There was quite a lot of feedback relating to the fact that they [lecturers] feel he’s not visible in the office; there’s no sort of head of department presence and there’s some things I can’t deal with; that, you know, he’s not there and I can’t deal with them and just the fact that they felt like he needs to be there, there needs to be more support from him as well. I told him that and he took it all, he took it all on board. Well, he listened to all of it, he didn’t argue with any of it.

The dissent initially worked – the HoD became much more visible and tackled the issues within the department. However, within a few weeks he once again began to neglect his duties. What was also clear is that the gossip of the team within Linda’s hearing also worked as she felt compelled to take *their* dissent forward.

In the regularity of open – and often very vocal – dissent, we see elements of O’Brien’s (1996) conception of ‘rightful resistance’ which is ‘noisy’ and public as opposed to the quiet, disguised and anonymous routine variant. In open dissent, rightful resisters ‘mitigate the risks of confrontation by proclaiming their allegiance to core values rather than opting for disguised dissent’ (ibid, p34). O’Brien’s rightful

resisters however are in positions within the hierarchy that have protected status, a quality that the insecure environment of FE does not offer. In this regard, though FTMs may be on solid moral ground, the element of courage is significant.

### ***Making Out***

There was a range of making out strategies employed by the FTMs from cutting corners to 'being creative' with data. Stretching the concept of resistance was fiddling which is usually considered a form of misbehaviour (Noon and Blyton, 1997) rather than resistance.

Cutting corners was considered a natural part of the FTM role – in a context where the workload exceeds the limits of endurance and time, it was seen as a natural response. The extent to which FTMs would cut corners and the areas they would cut corners in was dependent upon the likelihood of being caught. For many, this meant that they would cut corners in their teaching, sometimes using outdated resources or failing to plan appropriately. Students were seen as unlikely or unable to detect that corners had indeed been cut; cutting corners on management tasks, however, was a different story:

- Interviewer: When you talk about short cuts would that be in terms of teaching or the managerial duties?
- Steph (Blackton): Sometimes it's my teaching so it's planning... quality goes out the window. You'll teach the subject but sometimes I come out and think 'if I'd planned that better or if I'd added that resource in that would've gone a lot better' but because you're doing other things you don't really have time to spend doing lots and lots of planning so that's the shortcuts... I don't think you can take short cuts with the managerial bits because that'll come back and bite you on the bum really [laughs]. I think your manager would be watching and so would senior managers, so you have to have the statistics and everything else, you have to have the reports and everything like that sorted.

Again the focus of the FTMs – student/team/organisation/omni – appeared to determine where corners would be cut. Organisation and omni-focused FTMs tended to cut corners on teaching rather than managerial duties but did employ other making out strategies:

- Kevin (Blackton) for example, an organisation-focused FTM, while insistent that he would never cut corners on managerial duties, was happy to exploit the weaknesses in official bureaucracy. For example, the principal at Blackton had decided that staff could not take four weeks of continual leave in the summer. Kevin therefore took one week's leave, came in for one day, then took the remaining three weeks;
- Jim at Parklands, in an attempt to improve retention figures, would not officially enrol students until half way through their course – those who had dropped out were therefore not included and so the class sizes and retention figures were routinely high;
- Tracey (Parklands) was usually too busy to hold regular teams meetings; as soon as she heard an external verifier was due to arrive she cobbled together the staff she could find so that she would have minutes to prove a meeting had taken place.

Rather than outright cutting corners, team-focused FTMs would tend to impression manage their managerial duties rather than cut corners – rather than lie they would 're-present':

Pat (Blackton): I've got the SAR [self-assessment report] coming up and I know I've got to sit there and rack my brains about what did happen and what didn't happen – I wouldn't actually put anything there that was a lie but you're sort of pulling at your brain to find something that happened and maybe sort of make it a bigger issue or make it a lesser issue... I can't even think where I would cut corners in there cos I wouldn't lie in a report cos that always comes back and bites you.

It was with the student-focused FTMs where the line between making out as resistance and fiddling as organisational misbehaviour was most blurred:

- In response to the continual demand for evidence of meetings, Elaine at Blackton would doctor minutes, presenting casual conversations as official meetings and include topics that hadn't been discussed;

- Keith (Woodside) would use allocated group tutorial time which was supposed to be ‘protected’ as pastoral support as additional qualification-driven teaching time to assist weak students;
- Rob at Woodside would consistently estimate course-related statistics in official quality reports rather than spend time finding the actual number.

In the most extreme example of making out – or fiddling to use the more correct term – John at Blackton had regularly been signing off what he considered onerous paperwork connected to students’ work. Each student had to produce a portfolio which was collated by a workplace ‘recorder’; these extensive portfolios were supposed to be checked through and verified. Due to time pressures, John had been signing them off without checking the contents. In addition, the assessors were supposed to be registered with the college before they could assess; when it was discovered that none of them were registered, he instructed the assessors to leave their reports undated – he would then wait until their registration was completed before adding the appropriate date. Unfortunately for John, these practices had just been discovered and the department was now ‘sanctioned’ by the awarding body and put under the equivalent of special measures.

### *Escape*

A further form of resistance that emerged during the second round was exit or escape: Sara had already left, having become disillusioned with management and Jan had handed in her notice following several periods of stress leave. However, just short of actual escape there were Georgia and Tracey who presented two different forms of escape. When the interview turned to the stresses of the job and changes that were occurring at Parklands, Georgia talked about her options:

I look at where I am in my *life* not where I am in my *career*... I actually think to myself ‘what I should do is have a look at my own personal finances and see if I could organise to live without working and go and spend the time with my mother who is perfectly healthy at the moment, but in her early 80s and at the moment we could go off and do all kinds of things and I rather think that that’s what I ought to be doing’. However, during the term I don’t have time to think about it properly so I will investigate that as a possibility.

More than just mental disengagement, the planning of escape can itself be seen as a form of resistance. Tracey at Parklands also engaged in a similar process. She was highly engaged in building a school in Ghana and regularly flew there to give funds and help with the actual construction. After the interview, as she was walking me out, she discussed how her charity work was her greatest passion and what she would ultimately like to spend her time on rather than continuing to work in FE. In both cases the potential for escape was clear and helped to ameliorate the stress of their roles. However, while mental disengagement is often seen as resistance by distance, from a different perspective it can be seen as coping rather than resistance. Indeed, from this perspective other forms of behaviour that are labelled as resistance could be seen as coping as well. Here then was a primary driver of enquiry in the next round of fieldwork.

### **Professionalism**

Collinson (1994) argues that ‘resistance by distance’ can be enacted when workers emphasise different knowledge from managers and maintain an alternative discourse. From this perspective, the concept of professionalism – one of the most contested terrains within research on FE – may perhaps be considered as a form of resistance, a key argument of Robson, Bailey and Larkin (2004) whose study considered discourses of professionalism as resistance to restrictive qualifications; professionalism is here part of the FTMs’ narrative identity, ‘power effects’ of ‘complex outcomes of processes of subjugation and resistance’ (Humphreys and Brown, 2002, p423). The data collected suggests that FTMs exist within a context of managerialism, surveillance and accountability that have all been seen as propagating the proletarianization of the teaching workforce. However, the first round of fieldwork suggested that professionalism is alive and well in the FE workplace and this second round pursued that theme.

Every single participant in the sample considered themselves to be professional; furthermore, all considered that their teams were professional, yet there was a wide range of factors that constituted professionalism for the participants, from ‘functional’ items such as holding a teaching qualification, to ‘person-oriented’ items such as caring for students (see Colley and James, 2005). For Furlong (in Robson et al., 2004), professionalism, traditionally, consists primarily of autonomy, knowledge and responsibility. While autonomy was documented in the previous round of fieldwork (see pp84/85), the responses to the issue of professionalism in this round emphasised the importance of knowledge and responsibility:

Linda (Eastshire): I suppose [a professional in FE is] someone who upholds good standards of practice, who turns up on time, who does everything their job asks them, is educated in what they do, dedicated to continuing development and progression.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you’re professional?

Grace (Woodside): Yes I do, yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think makes a professional in FE?

Grace: Somebody who’s got the right qualifications for a start but more than that, someone who has the expertise, someone who has the confidence, someone who has the real integrity, the real heart to deliver and really I think what makes a professional in FE... somebody who puts the student above and beyond any other consideration at work.

In these responses we can clearly see items that draw on both the functional and person-oriented models of professionalism.

However, while emphasising the importance of knowledge and responsibility, the responses also highlighted the importance of two other paradigms: belief in the values of education and interpersonal effectiveness:

Jim (Parklands): I think being professional in everything, it’s a belief in what you’re doing and doing what you’re doing for the right reasons. If you’re in teaching for the pension, you’re not in for the right reasons. If you’re here because you really believe in young people and you really believe you can provide skills and give them a chance, an opportunity, then that should come across in



the attitude, in the way you behave, the way you act, the way you do your job. All those things impact on what's professional.

Vicky (Parklands): I think [professionals] need to be resilient, I think they need some stamina; I think they need flexibility, they need to be quite thick skinned; they need good interpersonal skills. And be quite a calm person but also they need to be dynamic... I think a lot of teaching is innate to be honest, it's about interpersonal skills, it's about understanding people and being able to empathise.

What is perhaps most clear is that virtually all of the constituents of professionalism discussed by the participants are related to teaching and students rather than the organisation or the wider sector. For example, none of the participants mentioned the need to be aware of policy change within the sector; none mentioned administrative skills or any other quality associated with being an employee of the college. What is also apparent is the difference between responses from FTMs and those from lecturers as reported by Robson et al. (2004). In their study, the authors detail the self-defined notions of professionalism from lecturers and the responses are far more related to their subject specialism in terms of 'adding value' to the curriculum, 'protecting standards' of their industry and 'sharing expertise' they had garnered from their industrial experience. In this study it was apparent that, presumably as a result of acquiring managerial responsibility, the professional identity of FTMs was more focused on the whole student experience rather than just classroom practice. In this regard, the FTM perception of professionalism is related to their motivators as detailed in the next chapter (see p193) where the prime motivator was student welfare in general rather than teaching specifically. However, while their responses suggest that the emphasis on the student experience as a whole may suggest a more managerial perspective, the actual nature of the discourse is still within the professional paradigm as presented by Randle and Brady (1997, p 232) rather than its managerial equivalent: loyalty is to the students and colleagues rather than the organisation; professional autonomy is emphasised over performance management; accountability is to students rather than senior managers.

These findings present a picture of self-defined professionalism that echoes Jephcote and Salisbury's (2009) discussion of lecturer agency 'in control of and constructing their own professional identities' (p 971). However, if lecturers develop their notion of professional self in response to the 'social processes inside their classrooms' (p971), FTMs negotiate their professional identity in relation to their wider involvement in their college: their management of a team of professionals, their increased proximity to senior managers, their more frequent interactions with 'systemic' departments (e.g. MIS) and their participation in wider college processes such as marketing activities. This wider involvement may be the reason that FTM professionalism is concerned with wider student welfare concerns rather than the primacy of teaching itself. While there may therefore be differences between the conception of the professional identity of lecturers and the conception of the professional identity of FTMs, the paradigm remains the same. As such, and opposed to the managerial paradigm of professionalism, the discourse of self-defined professionalism can be seen as another form of routine resistance, that which emphasises oppositional discursive positioning (Harrison, Clarke, Edwards and Reeve, 2003).

However, in opposition to the constructions of self-defined professionalism that were evident in the data, FTMs also discussed the presence of the 'official' version of professionalism within the sector, embodied and codified within the Institute for Learning. The IfL was created in 2002 after NATFHE (now UCU) members voted in favour of a professional body for the lifelong learning sector, an equivalent to the General Teaching Council for school teachers. Initially membership was optional; however, in 'Equipping our Teachers for the Future' (DfES, 2004), the government signalled their intention to make membership compulsory for all FE teaching staff.

The aim of the IfL is to: encode professionalism; raise the status of teachers in the sector by granting 'Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills' status via the achievement of standardised teaching qualifications and engagement of 30 hours of CPD per year for every member; finally, to police the Code of Practice. At the time of the fieldwork, membership had been compulsory for just over a year.

What was most evident was that there was little engagement with the IfL by the participants and a lack of understanding of its function or connection with their jobs:

Elaine (Blackton): To be honest I've not had a lot of dealings with them.... we've all got our numbers and our membership cards and I get newsletters from them.... I don't quite know what their role is really.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the IfL?

Georgia (Parklands): Neutral to negative. I don't have time to benefit from what they might be offering.... I haven't heard anybody talk about anything they've gained from it.

For many, rather than viewing membership of the IfL as part of their professional identity, it was yet another administrative task that had to be completed, one that was on the bottom of their list of priorities:

Steph (Blackton): I know I'm a member. I haven't logged in, I haven't got time [laughs]. It's something that perhaps I know I should do and basically I'll probably end up doing something on that over the holidays when I've got time to sit down and reflect because at the moment there's no time for reflection here.

Linda (Eastshire): I've obviously registered and sent my self-certification for my CPD. I suppose when I had to enrol I thought 'oh it's another thing we have to do' if I'm being honest. Now I'm indifferent to it really... I actually thought I probably should take the time and sit here and have a look at what's going on... it's one of those things to get around to.

However, this is not to imply that all the FTMs were opposed to the IfL. Some saw the value in having a professional body to represent the lifelong learning sector that might perhaps enhance parity with other professions:

Mike (Eastshire): The licence to teach, yeah, it's a good thing, it is building that whole parity issue that FE have been shouting about for many, many years.

Grace (Woodside): I suppose it's good to be accredited with a body of people, there is some kind of security in that. I can understand the legislation being there and having something that governs us.

What was also evident was that those FTMs who had previously worked in other professionally regulated areas such as health were even more in favour of the IfL. Sue (Parklands) for instance had previously been a nurse before coming to FE and was perhaps the most vociferous supporter:

I think it's absolutely right that you should, to an extent, justify what you're doing and why you're doing it and actually spend time on that because otherwise people just exist in their little bubbles. I think there's always the constant moaning in FE that we don't have the same terms and conditions as they do in school and the pay's different... but until we start putting ourselves more in line with what's expected in the maintained sector then we're always going to be looked upon as a tin pot organisation really.

What was also clear was the level of resentment at having to complete CPD records twice, once for the college HR department and then again for the IfL. Some resented having to report on their updating at all as they saw participating in CPD as normal practice and part of being a professional. The time implications of such reporting were also identified as an area where overworked staff were likely to cut corners and falsify their CPD records:

Vicky (Parklands): I'm not quite sure how valid and reliable it all is because when you're filling in your initial [details]– you could just bung in anything because people were taking ages finding their certificates in their loft and someone else said to me 'just put in the month and year and it takes it'. Someone else said to me 'actually you can just put anything in, how are they going to check?'

Rob (Woodside): If you take IfL – I would have absolutely no compunction whatsoever making up a complete and 100% pack of lies as far as my CPD portfolio was concerned... I haven't done it yet but I think I'm probably going to be tempted to put an awful lot of fabrication into something like that.

What is clear from these last two responses was that, as well as ideological and discursive resistance to the IfL, the pragmatic resistance of making-out was also present.

For many the compulsory recording of CPD was the extent of their involvement with the IfL. Few had read the code of practice and none had read the disciplinary procedure or were even aware that it existed. As a result, the next line of questioning was about the power of the IfL to remove a teacher's licence to practise if misconduct was proved. Though little publicised in the early stages of the IfL's existence, this power technically bypasses the employer-employee contract in that, should misconduct be proven and the licence withdrawn, lecturers would be unable to be employed as teachers without the college instituting their own disciplinary action. Some FTMs saw this as increasing their vulnerability within the college, especially as the IfL allows anyone to inform them of a breach of the code of conduct, whether a colleague, a manager, a student or a member of the public. What was more surprising to the participants was that details of professional transgressions – including the names of the transgressors – were posted on the IfL's website.

However, a significant number of FTMs actively supported the IfL's power to remove a licence to practise:

- Jim (Parklands): There are teachers out there who are unprofessional so providing it's done and it's controlled and it's monitored and it's done for the right reasons, I don't have a problem with that... I don't have a problem if someone's really not doing their job having their ability to do that taken away or being made to retrain.
- Sue (Parklands): All for it actually... it's always been one of my big beefs about working here is that you have people who have been in post for god knows how long, are patently unfit to be doing what they're doing for a number of reasons and the college has always appeared to me to be toothless in dealing with these things... If IfL adds weight to that then it's no bad thing because we've got to be accountable; at the moment we're not really... it's like we always say: 'what are they going to do, sack me?' And the answer to that is probably 'no'. Maybe for some people the answer to that ought to be 'yes'.
- Pat (Blackton): We've had over the years staff that have been absolutely useless but we can't rid of them. Yeah, if we had another means of getting rid of staff that were useless and we knew were useless cos the college doesn't seem to be able to.

What seemed common in these responses was that incompetence and organisational misbehaviour were rarely dealt with by the college; participants reported that the HR departments were ineffective in dealing with challenging staff and that even when disciplinary procedures were put in place, loopholes or poor implementation meant that misbehaving staff would remain in post. The IfL's power to remove the licence to practise was in a sense seen as a mechanism of organisational justice that could circumvent 'toothless' HR procedures within colleges and remove poor or misbehaving teachers.

## **Commitment**

The emphasis of the post-bureaucratic workplace is to gain the commitment of employees in an attempt to increase quality and productivity. It has been argued that committed staff are likely to be more compliant, less resistant and more effective and so this is a crucial area of investigation for this research. The extent of resistance present in the data collected from the first round of fieldwork initially suggested that the commitment of FTMs to the organisation is at best limited but the final focus of the second round of fieldwork was to examine commitment explicitly.

All of the organisation-focused FTMs were committed to their organisation as a total entity but so also were some omni-focused and student-focused FTMs:

- Interviewer: Are you committed to the college?  
Lynette (Eastshire): Yeah I've been here nine years now and I can see myself retiring from here... because I like – at the moment – I like the way the college operates, I enjoy the different aspects of my role and I like the people I work with so I actually – for the most part – I don't mind coming to work in the mornings.
- Cheryl (Woodside): I suppose so. If someone was slagging [the college] off I would feel hurt, yeah, I would be on the defensive, yes.
- Keith (Woodside): Absolutely, yeah. I can say this at the moment because I slept last night. No, I am completely committed, I think it's – I'm proud to work here yeah.

For the most part however, commitment was to the department, to teams and to students rather than the college as a whole:

Rob (Woodside): I think first and foremost I feel committed to the students and then committed to the team and then committed to the college...it's a good college... the fun isn't there as much as it was when I was young but that's maybe because I was young.

John (Blackton): I've been here 20 years... all said and done it's not a bad college, I think there's a lot worse but yeah I'm fairly committed to my section. I think, you know, I suppose it's the section more than the college I think.

Both Elaine (Blackton) who faced demotion and Jan (Eastshire) who was leaving to become a hypnotherapist reported being previously highly committed to the college; the way they had been dealt with during the various changes, however, had severely eroded how committed they felt. Four other FTMs reported that they regularly searched for other jobs and would leave with no hesitation if a better position arose. However, most felt that despite the various problems they encountered in their current positions, many other colleges were far worse and so this affected their willingness to leave.

It is clear that the idea that FE colleges are post-bureaucratic organisations concerned with the commitment of their staff has been exaggerated. However, it may be that senior leaders do indeed attempt to gain loyalty and commitment but are failing in their attempts. A further possibility is that because senior managers know that their staff are committed to their students and their departments there is little need to gain their commitment to the organisation – even if teaching staff have no commitment to the college at all, they will still do their jobs.

## **Summary of Chapter 5**

This chapter has detailed how FTMs feel divorced from the processes of change within their colleges both at the level of strategic planning and evaluation but also

from their own role as leaders of change. Even so, it was also apparent that FTMs were found to be optimistic in the face of change, some even relishing it. Their optimism was not shared by their teams, however, who adopted a cynical position in response to continual and often repetitive change. Lecturers also displayed a range of resistant behaviours from the overt to the subtle, from disengagement to ambiguous accommodation. While FTMs were rarely the target of resistance, they provided an audience for its expression and as such were faced with the dilemma of challenging the behaviours or turning a blind eye. Further examples of FTM resistance were also found with the three main types being open dissent, making out and escape. A further form of resistance was enacted through the discourses of professionalism and the narratives of professional identity that was often in opposition to the ‘official’ conception of professionalism represented by the IfL. Yet while FTMs were often highly resistant, their commitment – whether to students, their team or their college – was consistent.

As a result of the findings in fieldwork round 2, there were a number of areas to be investigated in round 3:

1. Stress: the first two rounds identified a variety of stressors such as the simultaneous demands of the trialectic and the frequency of requests for data and the impact upon the psychological and physical wellbeing of FTMs and their private lives was investigated.
2. Coping: at the initial stages I intended to examine coping in the third round. The findings from round 2 suggest that what is sometimes labelled as resistance may in fact be coping strategies and so the next round provided an opportunity to further examine this theme.
3. Career Progression: in many cases, the FTM role was the first experience of management for many of the participants. The next round also focused on the career plans of the sample, especially whether they intend to pursue the next tier of



management. However, given the data collected so far, I also investigated whether any of the participants regretted becoming a manager.

4. Motivation: as the last two rounds have highlighted, the difficulties of the FTM role were clear yet FTMs still obviously felt passionate about their work. The next round examined their motivation for their work and its antecedents. Of course, the demotivating aspects of the role were also examined.

## **Chapter 6: Fieldwork Round 3**

### **Introduction**

The third round of interviews took place in November and December 2009. Of the 23 remaining participants, two from Parklands withdrew via non-response to emails and phone calls. However, two new participants were recruited within the existing colleges via recommendations from existing FTMs: Patrick in Eastshire and Jamila in Blackton. Semi-structured interviews again formed the basis of the fieldwork and pursued a range of themes including motivation, stress and coping. However, a significant and unexpected theme also emerged during this round, that of guilt.

Change being perpetual within the sector, I will again begin with an update on each college; however, what was clear in this round was that the major organisational changes reported in the previous chapters had gradually subsided. Of more import were the changes in personal circumstances of many of the FTMs.

### **Blackton College**

Blackton was the college that had undergone the most significant changes since the research began. The new principal had been in post for over a year now and the 'realignment' (restructure) was in its final stages. What had originally been promised as a 30 day change process (but had taken far longer and was still ongoing) had transformed many areas of the college structurally as well as physically: many areas of the campus were undergoing major building works which was causing tremendous disturbance for the participants and their students. Evident within the process was a degree of mismanagement with misunderstandings between senior managers and building contractors. John told of the kitchen rebuild: originally the cookers were to be kept to reduce the expense yet apparently no one had informed the builders who removed them and failed to leave enough room for replacing them in the new floor

plan. On a more critical note, the FTMs reported a significant shortage of classrooms coupled with a drive to increase the number of students, which added tremendously to their timetabling workload.

All of the participants reported that the insecurity caused by the realignment/restructure remained throughout the college, as Steph related:

We keep being told it's not a restructure but it feels like that. The people that you've known and worked with for quite a long time who you thought did quite a good job, you see them put through disciplinaries and things like that and I think it's unsettling for the staff really and a lot of them are starting to put the feelers out looking for jobs. And you're trying to keep them motivated and calm and 'don't be hasty, don't jump' but to be honest some of them really do want to find something else now because they're not feeling supported and safe. You don't know if your job's going to be there or not.

There could be no better evidence of justified insecurity than what had happened to Elaine, formerly FTM of Access provision. The previous round of interviews took place a week after she was given the choice between redundancy or a demotion; this time, while trying to contact her, I was informed by a previous colleague of hers that she had left without another job to go to. Keen to speak to her, I contacted the HR department and asked them to send a letter requesting another interview. Elaine responded and we met, ironically, in her old staffroom at Blackton while she was visiting ex-colleagues.

Since we last met the college had created an alternative FTM position managing Access and A levels, a post Elaine had held three years previously, before A levels were moved to another department. Although she had initially been offered a demotion, she was subsequently given the choice of being considered for the new position or redundancy. The signs of success, however, were not promising. As soon as she had submitted her application, she was removed from a management training course she was due to attend in July (before her interview) and put on the cohort for November instead; the interview date was also moved to the same day as the deadline to apply for voluntary redundancy, a Friday on the last day of term before the summer break. She was interviewed and, as had been the case with a number of senior

managers in the college, was not successful. Instead, one of her team was given the position instead. Once she was informed of the panel's decision, Elaine had to ask for feedback:

I went to my would-be new line manager. She was in floods of tears and her words to me were 'you could've swung from the chandeliers and still not got the job'.

Post-interview, Elaine was asked to stay in post until Christmas to assist the new FTM with recruitment and enrolment. Devastated at how she had been treated, she declined and took voluntary redundancy. To add even more incredulity, the principal met with Elaine and asked her why she was intent on leaving; the most comfort that was offered was a personal reference.

Elaine had remained unemployed for most of the summer and told of how competitive the job market had become with many colleges making staff cuts. She had, however, just secured a position as curriculum manager in a prison education department. While she had previously spoke of her willingness to speak up against changes that she disagreed with, this willingness to resist had been curtailed and was also posited as a cause of her treatment.

Although the realignment had been disastrous for Elaine, David had benefited. While all the other curriculum team leaders in his department had seen their posts deleted, David had been promoted to Senior Curriculum Team Leader, a promotion that he had expected the last time we met. However, while he had been keen to be promoted, the role had not lived up to his expectations. The new position had not been clarified by senior managers and, when his line manager had been established, he found that she took a significant amount of his autonomy and responsibility from him. The college had also employed the services of a consultant within the new sector who treated David as though he had no management experience whatsoever. While he had formally been promoted, he felt he had actually been demoted:

I had a meeting yesterday with my line manager and the consultant and there's some management training happening in Holborn – they're saying 'all the

managers are going?', 'yes all the managers', 'so there's nobody here?' 'No there's nobody left' and I'm sitting there thinking 'am I or am I not a manager? I'm clearly not in your eyes'. You get promoted to a post supposedly with more responsibility and the people who're managing you don't even see you as a manager phh... I'm fed up with the way things are decided and I'm not consulted at any point, I've just got to get on with it... still not to be knowing what exactly my role is or my responsibilities are, it's just very unsatisfactory six months into the job.

Jamila was one of the newly recruited participants and was the first non-white FTM to be interviewed. She had been in post for just over a year and managed the adult and community IT provision. Her current priority was employer engagement, an attempt to secure alternative sources of funding for the college. Previously Jamila had been employed as a programmer within a number of highly pressurised environments such as the stock market. She had been in education for only a few years and was still frustrated by the college's attempts to become more business-like with little awareness of how businesses actually operate, a view reminiscent of Hood's (1991) metaphor of the cargo cult mentality of the public sector, eagerly attempting to transpose the practices of industry without possessing the skills, understanding or culture to successfully implement business practices.

Steph, John and Jamila, while experiencing acute insecurity, remained untouched by the realignment. They were working in areas of growth – Health and Social Care, IT and Painting and Decorating – and so felt some comfort. However, the growth in student numbers had provided an additional burden for them which they were still trying to resolve at the end of the first term.

### **Eastshire College**

Eastshire had remained relatively stable at the institutional level. Some departments had been restructured to respond more effectively to their employer engagement agenda but there had been no demotions or redundancies that the participants were

aware of. There had, however, been some significant changes in the personal circumstances of two of the FTMs.

At our last meeting Lynette suggested that her departmental restructure included the possibility of promotion and this had indeed happened – she was now Head of the Curriculum Department for English. Whereas she had previously only managed the ‘academic’ English strands of A levels and GCSEs, she was now also responsible for literacy in its functional skills incarnation. The position therefore had two aims: in addition to the academic strand of the provision, the literacy strand necessitated increased employer engagement and selling functional skills courses to businesses. Naturally Lynette’s workload had multiplied:

Quite difficult from the extra load – mainly the number of meetings I have to go to, that has gone up four fold and the work that that generates and you’re still trying to cope with the day to day, you’re still teaching... I thought ‘oh yeah, I can cope with this’ but it has been difficult... it is a very big role.

Linda had also seen a significant change in her position. In the first and second rounds of fieldwork she had related the difficult relationship she had with her head of department who had, in her opinion, become unfocused and without leadership due to his personal problems. He had now been signed off sick with stress and she suspected that he might not return:

Obviously technically he’s meant to be coming back after three weeks. I have a funny feeling that he might not come back... He’s obviously not well and I really hope he gets better but I actually think it might be best for everyone if he makes the decision that he’s not going to come back... In my mind I think it’s almost worse having someone here who’s not actually up to the job - that’s only my opinion - than not having someone here at all, to be honest.

In his absence Linda had taken on the HoD role as well as her own workload.

Patrick was the second new addition to the sample and, coincidentally, the second non-white FTM to be interviewed. Previously an electrical installation lecturer, he was now the Work Based Learning Coordinator for the faculty. One of four coordinators across the college, his role was to design curricula in response to

employer need: there were a number of ‘salesmen’ (to use Patrick’s term), who would approach employers, identify their training needs and sell the college brand. Once the deal had been agreed, it was Patrick’s responsibility to liaise with teaching staff to design the courses.

The creation and implementation of this new role, however, followed a very familiar pattern:

No one knows what it is, what it’s supposed to be... No one quite knows what we’re supposed to be doing. The business account managers, they’re salesmen so they’re all keen, they wanna be here, there and everywhere. On paper it should work but I’m not so sure.

It appeared that while the aim of engaging employers was clear, the actual method of proceeding was ill-defined, echoing Jamila’s experience of the business/education frontier. While there was some suggestion that he felt ‘performance pressure’, a common experience of black managers in FE (Mackay and Etienne, 2005), this was deemed to be located within the poorly understood and expounded role rather than his ethnicity. Consequently Patrick found himself creating his own boundaries and processes without ever being sure that what he was doing was correct. While this could be seen as freedom over the creation of context, the primacy of employer engagement within Eastshire meant that exploiting such freedom was a significant risk; as such, the lack of boundaries was a source of de-motivation for Patrick, as will be discussed below.

### **Woodside College**

In the previous rounds of fieldwork Woodside had been consistently stable, avoiding the perpetual restructures evident in the three other colleges. However, this round was different.

Having been in post longer than any of the participants, the principal had decided to retire. In rounds 1 and 2 the FTMs had considered the principal the source of stability,

good working conditions and the college's excellent reputation and so his retirement had caused some unease. In addition, the new principal who had recently been appointed was coming directly from a college a few miles away that was deemed to be unsatisfactory from both an Ofsted perspective and from the opinion of the FE grapevine (although it must be noted that Woodside itself had only achieved a satisfactory Ofsted grade at its last inspection 3 years prior to this research). The participants, noted for their commitment to the college in the last round, were understandably concerned at this appointment:

Cheryl:           The principal of [the other] college is coming here. Hmm so that's caused a bit of interest as you can imagine – coming from a failing college to what's considered a successful one is interesting [laughs]... plus [the other college] have an Ofsted inspection this year – mmm interesting, sort of naffing off in the middle of that and then coming here just as we're supposed to have one.

However, the responses fell far short of panic, perhaps as a result of none of the FTMs being organisation-focused. Grace and Rob adopted a cautious position choosing to wait and see what would happen. Liz and Keith thought that a change of principal might precipitate change for the better:

Liz:                I just hope it will be dynamic – he's a really nice man our principal... he's obviously done really well for the college in that he's got all the funding now for the build... but I just think that a lot of the management are quite sort of just ticking along and maybe they – some of them need a bit of a kick, a kick start and I hope he will be a bit more dynamic and push things along and make us all a bit more aware of what's happening.

What was consistent among the participants was that none of them adopted the lens of personal interest when considering the new appointment, they were all more concerned for the college as a whole and its reputation. One possible explanation for this perspective may well be the previous stability of Woodside – only Rob had experienced redundancy in another college and so the others were perhaps unaware of the impact new principals in FE tend to have.



## **Parklands College**

Parklands had emerged from a period of significant change and had become comparatively semi-stable. There were no major changes occurring, yet other issues were becoming evident. As reported in the previous round, levels of staff sickness across the college had been escalating in recent years and, in the first term of the New Year, they had again increased. Vicky, for example, who attempted to cover for sick lecturers, had fulfilled her yearly teaching hours by the first week in November. In the previous year she had engaged lecturers to provide cover for their colleagues with the promise of overtime payments; the payments themselves, however, had taken four months to reach the teachers concerned and so they were unwilling to take on additional hours this year. As a result, the college had only just approved the use of a teacher agency to provide cover for classes.

Tracey was the only participant who had changed roles. Previously the Curriculum Team Leader for construction, she had now become the cross college Curriculum Coordinator for level 2 courses, a quality role designed to improve struggling areas and disseminate good practice. The role had been designed to prepare the college for inspection (of which more below) and seemed to be created for Tracey, given her success at moving the construction department from a grade 4 to a grade 2.

### **‘Terrors of Performativity’**

In the first part of each interview, when I asked how things had been since our last interview, there was one phenomenon that was mentioned in almost all of the responses: preparation for an Ofsted inspection. Now that the inspectorate had drastically reduced the period of notice of a visit, each of the colleges was experiencing institutional panic, the ‘terrors of performativity’ (Ball, 2003). Parklands, Blackton and Eastshire had already gone through their internal observation

protocols which, although an annual event, had this year provoked greater levels of anxiety than usual:

Keith (Woodside): We've had our recent round of lesson observations and it's hell to be honest, I hate it. I got a one but I mean it's two weeks of hell and it seems unnecessary stress, why do it?

Georgia (Parklands): It just makes people feel very insecure I think and moreover it makes them feel that they're not doing what they're supposed to do and therefore they feel rather inadequate and it damages your own sense of self worth and your professionalism and makes you resentful that people are implying that you're not professional... they just feel their heads are exploding and they can't quite manage to see how they're supposed to do it all.

Traditionally in internal inspections, lecturers were informed of the lesson which was to be observed so that they could prepare all the accompanying paperwork such as a lesson plan, scheme of work and group profile for just that one lesson. However, it was apparent that this had been abandoned and lecturers were now told that they could be inspected during any lesson within a week or two week period. This had increased the levels of stress that FTMs and their teams had experienced.

There was also evidence that, given the Ofsted reliance on rigorous self-assessment in formulating final grades, colleges were becoming more punitive in their internal inspections. Liz at Woodside had been told by her line manager that the self assessment grades of the college were too generous and that this would have an impact on the grading of observed lessons. The implication was that lecturers would be graded more harshly than in previous years to provide evidence of rigour:

I thought it was a funny thing to say to me because I just felt like mmm, maybe they're going to pick on me this year, who knows.

Liz's was not the only account that provided evidence of the punitive element of internal inspection. Sue's team at Parklands had just had their internal inspection and it had gone less than successfully:

Last week, which was our mock Ofsted, was a bloodbath really. People were marked down on the state of their rooms, they were marked down on lack of IT, someone who has consistently been graded as good or outstanding came in with a satisfactory cos she's got 26 students in a room that comfortably seats 16 so she couldn't do effective group work.

Parklands as a whole was undergoing massive building works and Sue's department had been seriously affected, having to teach in unsuitable rooms, an issue she had raised with more senior managers on a number of occasions:

What should have happened is the person observing her should have come to me and I could've shown them the list of emails saying 'I need to move these groups'... to prove we hadn't just parachuted her in and left her there... We are being Ofsteded out of our skulls...

Sue's perception of the unfairness of the grade her team member received did not hint at the inexperience of the observer; her account implied that the college was seeking to abrogate responsibility for the building works disruption and punish teachers instead.

However, while anxiety was one reaction from lecturers, another was resistance. David's team at Blackton had organised a collective protest, not against internal inspection itself, but at the way it had been managed. From the lecturers' perspective, they claimed that they had been given inadequate notice of observation which was contrary to the tradition of the college's procedures. Secondly, the observation had been intended as a standardisation procedure to quality-check the assessments of internal observers – an ex-Ofsted inspector was to observe the observers. However, the team felt that this was not the case and that their performance as teachers was being observed by stealth. As a result, the team refused to be observed. David, having been in his new role only a matter of weeks, then had to negotiate with the lecturers to facilitate the process. Eventually the team agreed on the basis that they would not be graded and that the observations would be developmental only. While David was relating this event, a member of his team walked into the room; on her exit David made a strangling gesture towards her and said that she was the one who had organised the revolt.

While David's team had provided organised and overt resistance in the form of principled dissent, Lynette at Eastshire experienced an entirely different expression of resistance to internal inspection – sabotage:

This week we've had a pre-inspection check, checking paperwork, and some staff have decided that they're going to rebel against this by not having the paperwork necessary that they should have in order to teach. So when various managers and curriculum leaders turned up to observe their lessons and check their paperwork they wouldn't have a scheme of work, they wouldn't have a lesson plan, they wouldn't be doing what they would normally be doing, they would just sit and talk – it would be very teacher-centred and it was a way of protesting against having what they see as a mini-inspection and an unnecessary burden at this time of year.

At first Lynette assumed that this was confined to her own team; on speaking to other managers, however, it appeared that this was happening in departments across the college and that it was, to varying degrees, organised resistance with lecturers intentionally refusing to provide the basic paperwork and intentionally teaching poorly.

Lynette had not been informed of this officially and it was clear that the college was attempting to play down lecturers' actions. Instead, reports of observations were to be anonymous and a general report on what inspectors are looking for published so that curriculum managers could use the best practice model of development rather than highlighting resistance. The college's response brings to mind Scott's (1985, p26) depiction of the powerful: insubordination is unacknowledged 'as this would be admitting that a policy is unpopular and exposes the tenuousness of their authority'. Here then is perhaps the most effective form of resistance that teachers have: where the withdrawal of labour is punished by the withdrawal of wages for the days on strike, the voluntary withdrawal of professionalism and expertise is unpunishable when exerted on a mass scale. By intentionally teaching poorly, lecturers remind senior managers that they have the power to achieve an unsatisfactory Ofsted grade,

perhaps the single biggest threat to a college's existence and, by implication, the job security of senior managers<sup>5</sup>.

### **Progression and Regret**

At the time of the third round of fieldwork all of the participants had been in their post for at least a year and now had a good understanding of what managing in FE was like. As this was the last of the interviews, the topic moved to their career plans and whether they would seek promotion to the next layer of management. For the majority, promotion would mean moving into a head of school role or equivalent; for the curriculum team leaders at Parklands who occupied a dual position as first tier and middle manager, promotion would mean moving into a deputy directorship or equivalent.

Only four of the participants expressed an unequivocal desire to move up the hierarchy, one in each of the colleges, and all four had begun to make plans to achieve their aims. For Liz at Woodside and Steph at Blackton this involved gaining additional qualifications: Liz had begun to investigate management qualifications while Steph was looking to begin a degree course. Jim at Parklands, while happy to be promoted internally, was aware that he had only ever worked in one college and was keen to experience other environments to achieve his long term aim of a principalship. Mike at Eastshire had seen significant growth in his subject area and was hoping that the impending Ofsted visit would prompt a restructure and the creation of a new department which he would be in line to manage.

Five other FTMs were more ambivalent about promotion and, while they were not actively seeking advancement, were familiar enough with the sector to know that opportunities often arise. For John at Blackton, promotion at this stage of his career

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<sup>5</sup> Six months prior to this event a college principal within the same region as Eastshire had been removed from post (along with all the senior managers) following an unsatisfactory Ofsted grade; the event had become infamous in FE

with 10 years until retirement meant that his final-salary pension would be increased.

Patrick at Eastshire saw promotion in serendipitous terms:

Interviewer: Would you consider going up to the next level?

Patrick: I wouldn't consider it but I can see it happening because there's always changes... I've got on that runway now. It's not something I would particularly plan but you know sometimes people come and offer you something. Sometimes it's braver to say no than yes... I could see that happening, I can see being just sucked in it.

Rob at Woodside and Grace at Parklands, while they would apply for a suitable vacancy, considered their age a major barrier to promotion:

Rob: I don't have any career plans, I'm past the age now when I apply for jobs they bother to call me in for interviews. I've come to accept that but whilst I'm here I'd like to get some recognition for the job that I do... it would nice to have the recognition in the form of a title... if the opportunity came I'd apply for this head of school maybe. I think I've got the capabilities. I think members of the team wouldn't be unhappy about that... [outside] they don't want people heading up schools past the age of 45.

The remaining 14 FTMs were less ambivalent and determined that they would not seek promotion or take a position that was presented to them, echoing Barker's (2006) and Fletcher-Campbell's (2003) findings on succession planning for middle managers. For some, like Keith at Woodside, the reasons were very pragmatic: he had recently decided not to apply for head of school at another college because it involved extra travel for little extra financial reward. Similarly pragmatic were Jamila and Georgia whose family circumstances dissuaded them from moving upwards. Jamila had two small children who demanded her time and she was not prepared to compromise her familial responsibilities. For Georgia, the needs of her elderly mother had negated the possibility of promotion.

The experiences of many of the participants in their current work context had profoundly affected their attitude towards promotion. For some, such as Linda, the stress she had encountered as a FTM had dissuaded her from seeking promotion, certainly within her current faculty. Vicky and Steph were similarly reluctant to apply for promotion at their colleges: Vicky was highly critical of senior managers at

Parklands and did not want to work even more closely with them; the immense changes at Blackton meant that Steph was now far less secure and unsure whether the current culture would accept her:

There's been so many changes – before I knew that's what I was doing, I was working my way up and now there seems to be lots of little things going on where I'm not sure of what level or layer is coming next.

As a result, both were actively seeking promotion in other colleges.

Another common perception of promotion to the next hierarchical level was that it would necessarily involve the compromise of values, moving away from a student focus to a more business focus:

Lynette (Eastshire):           The further up you go you tend to have to sing the party line as it were and be putting the management side, the executive side, forward all the time and sometimes you question that, particularly if it's going to impinge on students and student learning... they're [senior managers] looking at it more and more in terms of a business venture and we don't have 'students' any more, we have 'clients', we have 'customers' and that goes against the grain; so that does make me question whether I'm actually going against my principles.

For Sue at Parklands, her resistant nature and refusal to compromise her values was even seen as the main impediment to promotion:

Interviewer:   Would you move up to the next level?

Sue:            They wouldn't give me the job even if I wanted it. Been here too long and I'm not very good at keeping my mouth shut. I don't comply all the time.

However, for some, compromise was not confined to middle or senior management.

As FTMs, the compromise of values was an everyday occurrence:

Rob (Woodside):   The reality is we've all got to compromise haven't we? Values are important but we don't live in that sort of world where always you can honestly say you've never had to do something you don't believe in.

In two cases, compromise entailed enrolling students who were unlikely to be successful on their course. For Rob this meant accepting students on A level courses because of the insistence of their parents and the need for student numbers in an at-risk curriculum area. For Steph at Blackton it meant accepting a student on a child care course who had autism. Steph and her team, because of their industry experience, knew that she would not pass the nursery placement element of her course because of the reluctance of child care managers to accept a trainee with autism. Despite bringing this to the attention of senior managers, she was overruled.

However, compromising values was not unanimously experienced. Six participants felt that management was not necessarily synonymous with compromise.

Significantly, all six had considerable industrial experience and saw moving into higher managerial positions as an opportunity to shape the environment based on their own values, a proclivity ascribed mainly to male academics in McTavish and Miller's (2009) research that found men were twice as likely as women to seek promotion as an opportunity to influence college strategy. Of the two who expressed this perspective, both were male:

Mike (Eastshire): Moving up to the next tier means you can be more effective in transmitting your values via the people at this tier to the team as a whole. If anything your values can have a wider impact.

Jim (Parklands): You sometimes think you've got to compromise your values but again it depends on the way you're viewing it. If you don't think something is right, am I best placed to make that change by sitting here moaning, or am I best placed to make that change by getting myself higher up the ladder where actually I'm in a position to do something about it? Is it really compromising your values or is it putting yourself in a position where actually you can use your values or your ideas to actually influence?

Given the general reluctance to move to a more senior management role, I asked participants whether they regretted becoming a manager and only one participant – Sue at Parklands – did. For the rest, while most said they had days when they wished they were a full time lecturer, none would return to that role. Indeed, for some, the idea of teaching full time again was unthinkable:



Georgia (Parklands): I wouldn't have taught 24 a week with these kids. I don't mean that quite like that but I don't think I could do that, so no, I don't... I'm very pleased I haven't taught all my life as I think I'd be a little dry old shrivelled lady by now because it just demands so much emotional energy.

Sue, the one participant who did regret becoming a manager, felt that she could not return to her previous role, even though the idea of teaching full time appealed to her:

I think I've got into the position where I can't go back. I'm doing safeguarding training... and to my horror I have gone right back to how I was when I started [teaching] which is wanting to be sick before I go in... Much as I do say to myself quite frequently 'I'll just jack all of this in and go back to being a point five' ... I'm kind of caught between a rock and hard place.

## **Motivation**

Given the demands of the FTM role documented in the first two rounds of fieldwork – the elasticity of the role, the immediate gratification needs of senior managers, routine resistance of lecturers – this third round investigated the motivation of the participants before moving on to consider the coping strategies adopted.

With such a plethora of theoretical perspectives concerning motivation, the findings will be discussed with reference to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as it offers a clear model of those factors intrinsic to work that motivate and those extrinsic to the work that provide dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg's (1987) motivation-hygiene theory of job attitudes, the single most common motivator was achievement, yet the findings from this round did not accord with this. Instead the most frequently discussed motivator was the work itself. However, given the complexity and elasticity of the FTM role, this categorisation requires clarification. While previous studies of teacher motivation (see Sturman, 2006; Muller et al. 2009, for example) found that teaching itself was a prime motivator, the data collected here detailed working with students in a wider remit rather than classroom based practice – teaching itself was only mentioned twice. Instead it was the student experience that formed the bulk of

the responses in this category, from enrolment right through to completion with the emphasis on the FTM involvement and responsibility for that process:

Elaine (Blackton): The students, the students, getting them – being successful with them, making sure they're on a good course and the course is working, that's the main thing.

Keith (Woodside): The reason I keep going, the bit that motivates me, is working with students to get them qualified or not necessarily even qualified – if they can leave here unqualified and still get a job in the trade then I'm happy, although the college isn't.

While the work itself – especially the client relationship in Herzberg's terms – was the most common response, it is hard to differentiate from 'achievement'. To the participants the work itself is often indistinguishable from student achievement which is, by implication, also an achievement of academic staff. However, there was no uniform perspective on student achievement. For Rob, Programme Leader for A levels, achievement was firmly linked with exams and qualifications. In Keith's account above, however, we see the emphasis he placed on gaining employment within the carpentry industry. John, FTM for painting and decorating at Blackton, similarly took little account of qualifications and discussed achievement in behavioural terms:

Every time we turn a student round, put him back on the straight and narrow, kind of makes your job worthwhile. Doesn't happen as often as you'd like but we do have some successes.

For John, such 'moments of grace' (Davison and Burge, 2010, p123), made the demands of his job bearable.

Achievement as a motivator was also evident in a more mundane sense of completing routine tasks. Given the perpetual fire-fighting and never ending to-do list of FTMs evidenced in the first round of fieldwork, completing even the smallest of tasks was seen as an important motivator (as will be seen in the section on coping):

David (Blackton): Just getting things done really. Do a lot of problem solving. If there's a problem I can solve, that success motivates me... More so having everything in place... a lot of my job is just making sure things happen so it's an awful lot of communication and checking.

For Maslow (1943), achievement falls within the esteem needs level of his hierarchy. Yet interaction with students was also found to meet the self-esteem needs of recognition and attention from others:

Grace (Woodside): The overall thing is students because I do get a good response from students generally. It's lovely to go in a class and feel you're actually liked and accepted and they're enjoying their time with you and I enjoy my time with them.

Yet while recognition was the second most common motivator in Herzberg's research, it was mentioned by only three of the participants in this round. Grace was motivated by the recognition of competence from her students and Jamila also identified this need but extended it to recognition from her manager as well:

I like to get positive feedback mainly from students but it's nice when my line manager gives me good feedback.

Carol at Parklands shared the same perspective though one that focused solely on senior managers:

Interviewer: What motivates you?

Carol: Getting a job well done and getting students where they need to be going and getting the recognition for those things... I think I probably get recognition from my direct line manager and we occasionally collectively get words of praise from more senior management but not really focused recognition from more senior managers.

Herzberg's fourth most common motivator was responsibility, yet it was not mentioned by any of the participants. Similarly, advancement, the fifth of Herzberg's motivators, was also not mentioned, a finding perhaps unsurprising given the reluctance of many FTMs to seek promotion as detailed above. The final motivator – growth – was mentioned only once.

Significantly, a number of the hygiene factors of Herzberg's model – those factors extrinsic to the work that mainly provide dissatisfaction – were reported to be motivating factors by the participants. Three FTMs found management of their team to be motivating; two reported being motivated by their interactions with their peers and two were motivated by their families, mainly in terms of the need to provide a stable income. One response that did not fit into Herzberg's model was provided by Sue at Parklands:

Interviewer: What motivates you?

Sue: I suppose ultimately it's fear of failure, either for the team or for the students and then, I suppose, [for] me in the end.

## **Demotivation**

In the responses to the question of demotivation, there was significant congruence with Herzberg: company policy and administration was the prime demotivator for 14 of the FTMs. The responses echoed the findings in the first two rounds where disorganisation, lack of communication and the repetitive nature of senior management requests were everyday occurrences for participants:

Interviewer: What de-motivates you?

Steph (Blackton): Just disorganisation, not being told things, bad communication, not being able to get on and do what you want to do because there's other little minor things in the way. Paperwork, lots of things like that that just pile pressure on you. You've done the job once but then you've got to do it again in another format because another system or another paperwork comes through when you feel you've already completed the task. Lots and lots of repetition of things that could be slimmed down.

Vicky (Parklands): It's the frustration over systems. Top of the list at the moment is the electronic register system which does not work, we know it doesn't work. Senior management just will not listen. The director of MIS who is responsible for it says it's down to curriculum staff; we say it's not.

However, two participants also cited external policy – the LSC, Ofsted, government policy drivers – as a source of demotivation, a category not included in Herzberg’s model, perhaps testament to the increase in centralised control:

Rob (Woodside):       What de-motivates me... is not being trusted. Not being trusted by government, by being distrusted. It’s not about not being trusted it’s about being *distrusted*. Not having my professionalism trusted, not having my professionalism recognised, not having my professionalism given credit. Being told by people who’ve got virtually no clue of what it’s like to teach, how to teach. That’s what de-motivates me.

Yet the lack of recognition of professionalism discussed by Rob was also attributed to senior managers within college as well as external bodies:

Sue (Parklands):       The lack of recognition of our professionalism and our knowledge about our staff, our students and our courses, that’s the biggest de-motivator of the lot.

Significant here is the notion that while FTMs had constructed professional narrative identities, it was felt that these were not respected or acknowledged by the government or senior managers.

Supervision – being managed – while the second most common source of dissatisfaction for Herzberg, was not mentioned at all by the respondents and only one discussed the relationship with their supervisor as demotivating. Again this accords with the first two rounds of fieldwork which found that FTMs were largely autonomous in their work and generally supported by their immediate line managers.

Work conditions were cited by five FTMs in terms of not having enough time to complete the multiplicity of tasks:

Carol (Parklands):       Not being able to get the job done properly because it’s never – you never see an end to it, it’s never enough time to do it and you feel you’re rushing things and not doing things to the best of your ability.

Tracey (Parklands):       What de-motivates me completely is when you’re asked to do one thing and then you’re asked to do something

else then you're asked to do something else and nothing gets finished. I find that so infuriating. You've got lots of little things so you can't put closure to anything. That completely de-motivates me.

Relationship with subordinates was mentioned by two FTMs:

Lynette (Eastshire): It de-motivates me when I have staff that don't want to do the job that they're actually employed to do and if you ask them to do something which they should be doing within their job role they'll go sick. That de-motivates me.

## **Stress**

I'd worked for 10 years self-employed keeping my family, making sure enough money's coming in but I did not know what stress was until I came here, that feeling of sickness in the bottom of your stomach that you get and you think 'oh no I haven't done this' or 'I haven't done that and it's not ready'. That is horrible.

Keith, Woodside College

The extent of stress experienced by FTMs was clearly evident in the first two rounds of fieldwork yet, as stress is often seen as an admission of incompetence and has a health impact, I felt it was better to leave questioning on this area until I had established greater openness and trust with the participants. Yet while most FTMs reported regularly feeling stressed, there were some who claimed they did not experience it at all. Where stress was encountered however, the causes were often the same across the colleges.

The overriding stressor from the data was the lack of time to complete myriad and often competing tasks:

Rob (Woodside): The bloody paperwork gets in the way and every time you turn on your computer in the morning you get an email from somebody wanting something from you, bit of information here, bit of information there or 'you haven't filled in your

register right? .... I think that's what really gets people down, that's what's most stressful of all, the constant repetitive requests for information that's been collected once, twice, three times, stored once, twice, three times yet it's still being asked for, the same information.

Carol (Parklands): There are a huge number of requests for information that's got to be delivered quickly – by yesterday if possible – coming from lots of different people. I think one of the things that we've found is these requests for information are coming from lots of different people and quite often it's requests for the same kind of information so a lot of the stuff is duplicated. That's the pressure really.

Steph (Blackton): You feel like you've got a list of things you've got to do and you never get to the bottom and you'll tick some things off and then there's a few more hit the bottom of your list. So you've always got this kind of huge task to get through and it would be nice to think one day 'I've actually done it all' but that never ever happens.

Yet while these themes were visible in virtually all the accounts of stressors, they were not the only causes of stress. The second most common cause of stress was, in opposition to systemic pressures, interactional: dealing with their teams and other colleagues. It is worth remembering that in the first round of interviews the FTMs were unanimous in their praise for their teams. The second round highlighted significant resistance which, if not directed at FTMs themselves, was intended to facilitate their collusion. In this third round, managing lecturers was seen as a significant source of stress, especially by one of the two participants who were new to the sample. Jamila found managing her team the most difficult and stressful part of her work. Coming from the IT industry, she was much more comfortable 'talking to machines' than she was dealing with human interactions. This had been compounded by the major changes in her area which had engendered a number of lecturer outbursts and 'difficult' behaviour:

Tasks – not a problem at all. I do a lot of stuff other people might feel a bit scared of doing, I don't know, setting up courses, doing a lot of research and getting the right courses on board. That stuff is second nature to me but I'm

not a people-person I guess, that's my background. I used to talk to machines 12 hours a day so this is an imbalance I'm trying to address.

Patrick, finding himself in the unfamiliar area of business development, a priority within Eastshire, did not find his work stressful; the transition from the anonymity of being a lecturer to suddenly interacting with senior managers was the primary cause of stress:

The only stressful part is lately I've been going to a lot of meetings with people who are a lot higher up than me... it can be a little bit stressful, some of these things – you're sitting there thinking 'hang on a minute, what am I doing here?'

For Cheryl at Woodside it was interactions with students that caused her the most stress:

Cheryl: The stress of all these girls with all their problems, oh, sometimes I can't get to sleep at night thinking oooooo god. Sometimes some of them have got terrible problems...

Interviewer: Would you say dealing with students is one of the most stressful situations you deal with?

Cheryl: Oh yeah yeah probably on a day to day basis, yeah. Cos management stuff I can just try and shrug that off usually but when you're faced with these students day after day, you know, especially if you've fallen out with them [laughs]. It's not easy.

For Lynette at Eastshire, the interactional element that caused her most stress was dealing with sensitive situations. In her new position she was now managing a member of staff who had once been her line manager. A number of her team had approached her to complain about his body odour and she had to speak to him about it, an experience she found highly stressful. Luckily, however, her former manager accepted the comments and, from Lynette's point of view, handled it better than she did.

The third main stressor was operational, ensuring the delivery of lessons. Across all four colleges there was an increasing issue with staff sickness reported, an issue that was also mentioned in the previous round and Linda's experience at Eastshire was representative of the sample. Only six weeks into the new academic year, a number of



Linda's team were off sick and, while stress was not cited as the cause, she suspected that it was. To begin with, she had covered lessons herself as well as asking other members of her team to cover, thus placing increased pressure upon them. When the issue became unmanageable, she had to find cover from a recruitment agency. Whereas in previous years departments could approach the agency directly, increased frugality in budget management meant that requests for agency staff had to be sent to HR for approval as a first step; HR then sought permission from the director of finance to approach the agency who then sent CVs of potential teachers to HR – HR would then pass them to Linda to vet. The CVs of those she approved – and these were in the minority as suitable lecturers were apparently hard to come by – were then sent back to HR who contacted the agency. The process – a prime example of needless complexity (Olsen, Reger and Singer, 2010) – took up to a week, by which time the sick member of staff had usually returned to work. In one case, however, where the lecturer was on long term sick, three temporary lecturers were recruited and reported for duty. One was clearly not equipped for teaching teenagers and was asked to leave; the other two left of their own volition within the first week, citing conditions of work and the behaviour of the students.

The situation was the same in all of the colleges – suitably qualified temporary lecturers were extremely hard to find and the agency would try to foist staff from different cognate subject areas upon the colleges. However, in Parklands, the use of agency staff had only just been introduced – before this, existing permanent staff and FTMs were forced to cover classes. The alternative was to cancel classes yet, with the pressure on retention of students as well as the feeling of responsibility towards learners, FTMs adopted this strategy only as a last resort. The outcomes were inevitable: increased stress on lecturers and FTMs which exacerbated the levels of sickness.

The immediate effect of stress upon the FTMs was clear and manifested itself in a number of ways. For the vast majority the impact was emotional:

Cheryl (Woodside): We have a few tears sometimes, frustration; usually it's tears of frustration.

Linda (Eastshire): I think 'emotional' would probably be a good word to describe it and it can be from almost feeling like crying to getting really moody or agitated.

Carol (Parklands): For the first time in my life I think I've been feeling a bit panicky and I'm not a panicky person. I'm quite calm generally but some of the emails that come through have made me feel panicky.

John (Blackton): Angst I suppose, up tight. Sometimes you find your head's in a bit of a fuddle, you can't think straight.

However, it was clear that it was not only the immediate stressor that provoked emotional reactions; for some, the stressor would become internalised as a fault of the FTMs themselves either for not anticipating the stressor, not preventing it, or for not reacting more calmly. Emotional responses also impacted upon the cognitive efficacy of FTMs who reported making increased errors such as poor sentence structure in emails and also becoming more forgetful and missing meetings, issues which compounded the stress of their role.

Emotional responses were not always self-directed however:

Linda (Eastshire): I have noticed that times where I am [stressed], four people have dumped things on me in the same hour I will start getting a bit short with people. I wouldn't say rude but I suppose on occasions I have been a little rude.

Tracey (Parklands): I get annoyed with myself but then I get annoyed with other people because I can see what needs to be done and if I'm working at home in the evening then they should be as well [laughs] but they don't and that isn't them – they're right, it's me that's wrong and I recognise that. It's not anger but it's frustration, it's the frustration.

However, while stressors existed for all participants within the sample, not all of them reported experiencing stress and the difference was correlated with the focus of the FTMs as discussed in Chapter 4. Those FTMs who were team-focused, student-

focused and omni-focused all reported feeling stressed as a regular occurrence; those participants who were organisation-focused did not. There are two potential explanations for this finding:

1. Most of the organisation-focused FTMs had come to teaching as a second career having previously worked in industry. Jamila, for example, had worked in IT in highly pressurised environments such as the stock market<sup>6</sup>; Jim had worked in catering; Kevin and Patrick were from a construction background; Mike had worked in IT and Georgia had been a director of her husband's company. David was the only organisation-focused FTM for whom teaching was a first career. As such, the experience of other pressurised environments had perhaps increased their ability to withstand or cope with stress.
2. The greater identification of organisation-focused FTMs with the college may have spawned increased motivation towards organisation-focused tasks, 'regulation through identification' in self-determination theory terms (Ryan and Deci, 2000b, p72). Their experience of private sector businesses may have created sympathy for the financial imperatives of senior managers thus reducing, to some extent, the negative effects of managerialism. In fact, both Jim and Jamila felt frustrated that their respective colleges were not *more* business-like. Jim, for example, found the most challenging aspect of his role was yet another example of the needless complexity (Olsen et al., 2010) of the decision-making processes of senior managers:

I think getting decisions made, getting decisions made quickly so you can actually say 'look this is what I've gotta do, we know where we're going'. Big thing for that is the qualifications have gotta change, the whole way that I'm going to have to look at how delivery within the sector area is set up, the qualifications, the staffing. I've got an idea where I wanna go with that. Go to the director or vice principal, say 'this is what I wanna do, can I do it?' and getting a straightforward yes or no; but I won't get that, it will go via directors and vice-principal's meetings for discussion which then slows down my ability to be able to work on it. I do like to – if you've got

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<sup>6</sup> Jamila's response to the key findings I sent her in the respondent validation stage confirmed this: 'I'm quite surprised to see that I appear to be in the minority i.e. not so critical of senior management. Probably due to the fact that my previous career was in industry and I am 'hardened' to the business stance that is becoming prevalent in education'.

a job, get it done, get it finished, move on to the next thing, whereas I think you tend to have lots of things open at the same time, you just can't get a resolution.

## **Stress and Health**

When asked the question 'do you think being a first tier manager has affected your health?' 78% of the sample felt it had. Of the five participants that felt it hadn't affected their health, four were organisation-focused. However, given the levels of stress described, it is perhaps surprising that only two of the sample – Jan at Eastshire and Elaine at Blackton – had ever taken sick leave with stress diagnosed.

Before discussing the impact of their role upon the health of FTMs it is important to include a number of caveats. In many cases the attribution of illness to stress was only suspected by the participants; only in a minority of cases had stress been medically diagnosed as the cause. However, it is perhaps more critical for this research – certainly in terms of coping and hardiness – that FTMs *themselves* identified stress as the most likely cause of their illness. Secondly, the personal lives of FTMs were, in some cases, stressful and likely to impact upon their health. David, for example, had two small children and reported that his fatigue was due to his parental responsibilities as well as his job; Liz was experiencing personal problems and stressful situations within her family, although she did not elaborate upon those circumstances. The third caveat is age. Several participants suggested that, while their job was undoubtedly stressful, their ability to withstand the effects of stress may have been militated against by their age. Only three FTMs were under 40 and 10 were over 50.

The range of ailments that FTMs attributed to stress ranged from mild to severe. At the more benign end of the continuum was disturbed sleep which the majority of the sample experienced; for some it was occasionally waking up in the middle of the night thinking about work and struggling to get back to sleep. For others, disturbed sleep was so common that they kept a pad and pen next to their beds so that they could write down things they had suddenly remembered they had to do.

At the next stage of the continuum was tiredness and headaches:

David (Blackton): I know it's the winter months, health is always lower then but I'm pretty tired at the moment, quite drained, feeling fairly exhausted generally.

Cheryl (Woodside): I probably get more headaches, that's the only thing I'd say, I get quite a lot of headaches. That's probably a bit stress related, anxiety I suppose.

FTMs also reported that they were more susceptible to colds and flu and many had taken time off sick as a result. Lynette was a prime example – she had suffered the symptoms of a cold for a number of days before our interview and she could barely talk when we met. She was determined to keep going until the end of the term however, even though she suspected it would 'wipe me out at Christmas as soon as I take some leave'.

A number of participants had, however, suffered more severe illnesses:

- Linda reported that the glands in her neck were continually swollen and the lymph nodes in her armpits were sore;
- Steph was on iron tablets for fatigue;
- John had suffered from depression and now had continual indigestion;
- Sue's tinnitus had been aggravated by stress which had induced vertigo attacks;
- Tracey had recently suffered a visual migraine and temporarily lost her sight while she was driving.

Of these more significant illnesses, only Sue's and Tracey's had been attributed to stress by a doctor; in the other cases, stress was suspected of being the cause.

## **Coping**

The vast majority of studies of coping have adopted quantitative methods – Folkman et al. (1986), Carver et al. (1989) and Frydenberg and Lewis (2002) being prime examples. In the last, for example, participants were required to state whether they employed particular coping strategies ‘a great deal’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘very little’ or ‘don’t do it’. However, more recently qualitative methods have been employed to investigate coping, primarily through the analysis of interview data (see Kelso, French and Fernandez (2003) and Pendleton, Cavelli, Pargament and Nasr (2002)), often in the medical field. In common with these qualitative studies, rather than reproduce a quantitative study, the aim here was to analyse the interview data to identify the coping strategies participants were most aware of. Potentially this could limit the extent of the coping strategies found, as participants were not given a full list, as in the quantitative studies. However, the advantage of a qualitative method was that it would identify the coping strategies that FTMs were actively aware of and would thus be grounded within the data. In addition, without a full list of coping strategies, participants were perhaps less likely to choose what they felt was the ideal or most appropriate strategy.

Three theoretical frameworks informed the coding of the data: Folkman et al. (1986), Carver and Scheier (1989) and Frydenberg and Lewis (2002) each of whom had developed a separate (but overlapping) scale of coping strategies. The data were then analysed according to grounded theory principles (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) so that the categories of coping arose from the data rather than from an a priori scale.

The first level of analysis revealed 16 distinct coping strategies and it was clear that these items could be potentially classified into three different categories. Firstly there were those mechanisms that were associated with compliance: here FTMs would ensure that stressors – the competing demands of their work for example – were addressed and completed. Within this category we find ‘planning of work’ and ‘self-coaching’. Secondly, were those strategies that focused on the emotions generated by

the stressors and attempt to manage the affective result of stress such as ‘exercising’ or ‘venting of emotions’. These first two categories draw heavily on the three theoretical frameworks outlined above, especially Folkman’s (1984) conception of coping as either problem-focused (the attempt to solve problems or address the source of the stress) or emotion-focused (diminishing or managing the emotional effects of the stressor). However, the data revealed a third category of coping strategies that fell outside of either problem or emotion-focused coping and was more closely associated with resistance. The individual coping strategies are summarised in table 4 below.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Coping Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Compliant	Prioritisation and Planning	7
	Seeking support for instrumental reasons	8
	Increased effort	7
	Multi-tasking	6
	Self-coaching	4
	Focus on positives (holidays etc)	3
Affective	Exercise	8
	Tension reduction	11
	Seeking support for emotional reasons	5
	Venting of emotions	8
	Humour (self and situation directed)	4
Non-compliant	Ignoring	5
	Escape	9
	Focus on personal relationships	6
	Dissent	4
	Cutting corners	1

The table reveals a synthesis of the three coping scales – Folkman et al., Carver and Scheier and Frydenberg and Lewis – plus new items. ‘Planning’, for example, is from Carver’s scale; ‘seeking social support’ is common to all three; ‘exercise’ is from Frydenberg and Lewis. The non-compliant strategies also include items drawn from the various theoretical models: ‘escape’ draws on the ‘disengagement’ type from Carver and ‘focus on personal relationships’ from Frydenberg and Lewis; there is, however, a difference in the interpretation of the coping mechanisms described – in

the previous models these strategies are emotion-focused, an attempt to manage the affective element of stress. Given the findings of the previous two rounds of fieldwork, however, and the context of responses in this round, the coping mechanisms in this category are considered to be within the non-compliant rather than affective paradigm.

### ***Compliant Coping***

Compliant coping is about eliminating stressors by focusing directly upon them until resolution. The demands of the FTM role are various, often competing, concurrent and with short time limits and FTMs were found to adopt six coping strategies that were compliant. Most frequently mentioned was *seeking support for instrumental reasons* (n=8). In Eastshire, Blackton and Woodside, the source of the support was the participants' line manager; where line managers were concerned – heads of department in these colleges – support was generally forthcoming:

John (Blackton): I've got a pretty good line manager and if I was that stressed out that I really can't cope with this, I'll go down and see him and he's not a bad bloke my manager, as managers go.

Keith (Woodside): I scream and shout at the associate head of school and head of school, say 'I just can't do it, can't cope' and they say 'OK Keith, just do what you can'. That's it; they're very understanding, I'll give them that.

What is noticeable in Keith's account, however, is that no solutions to his stress were offered and no additional resources proposed; the support here was that they would reduce their expectations of what he could do. Similarly Linda at Eastshire, as she found herself as unofficial acting head of department in her manager's absence, approached the Vice Principal when she was struggling. In the best spirit of coaching, the VP ended up putting the issues back on Linda rather than provide the managerial support she needed:

The Vice Principal – who I made it quite clear to that I was stressed – said 'right, well I'm here to support you' but since then I actually feel like he's been giving me more to do [rather] than less. Everything you send to him he



turns around back to you – I thought maybe he'd deal with it but he just kind of puts it back on you.

Mike at Eastshire had also sought the assistance of the same Vice Principal over a recruitment issue, yet in this case he felt he received more than adequate support.

Seeking support for instrumental reasons was also in evidence at Parklands; however, the source of support was not their line managers. The participants at Parklands were – as well as being Programme Leaders of their cognate subject area – heads of department for a cluster of subject areas. Their line managers were deputy directors and none of the participants mentioned approaching their managers for support. Instead, support was provided by their peers, other Curriculum Leaders.

The second most frequently cited compliant strategy was *planning and prioritisation of work* (n=7) which was seen as an essential skill in the job even if it was not an innate ability as in David's case:

I've got an instinct really to avoid them, to not face up to it directly, but I try and make myself think right, how are we going to deal with this, what do we need to do and try and make it as much of a priority as it needs to be?

The data suggested that the success of this compliant coping relied on lists and compartmentalisation.

Patrick (Eastshire): I like to list things, I've got to put things in boxes. Once I've put them in boxes and they're not all flying around, I feel comfortable. It's when it's all flying around that's stressful.

Grace (Woodside): I just prioritise, say 'right', sit myself down say 'right, that needs dealing with first, give an email back'... you write it down and it's done, you've boxed it then.

While this strategy functions as a to-do list and a memory aid, it can also be seen as an attempt to impose order onto a disordered workplace. Practical though 'boxing' may be, it is also a mechanism for increasing control, even if only in symbolic form.

When prioritisation was not possible, *increased effort* and *multi-tasking* (n=7) were required. As detailed in Chapter 4, increased effort here often meant extending the

working day and week to include working in the evenings and at weekends although noticeably many FTMs had now refused to work at home since the first round of interviews eleven months ago. More often than not, multi-tasking was employed to cope with simultaneous demands:

Jamila (Blackton): I generally work through my lunch breaks and I find ways of doubling up my work, so if I'm in a lesson and they're getting on with some work and I've worked the group and I know they're all on task, I'll spend about 10 minutes checking my emails and replying to them. That way I get all my work done.

*Self-coaching* (n=4) was another compliant coping strategy routinely employed by FTMs where they talked to themselves in an attempt to induce motivation.

Steph (Blackton): There's been times when I've sat in the office and thought 'I can't do this today' and then I've just had a quick word with myself and said 'pull yourself together and go and get a quick cup of tea and deep breath and then off you go'.

Linda (Eastshire): Quite often recently I've started to consciously think to myself on my way into work 'right, I'm just going to try and stay calm today and just think – at the end of the day you're going to get through the day and it's not going to make it any better by getting worked up or stressed'.

While this particular strategy does not focus on the stressor at hand, it functions by preventing emotional responses to stress, thus allowing the FTM to focus on work. Closely allied to this strategy is *focusing on the positives* (n=3) where FTMs remind themselves of the benefits of their jobs: Jamila counted down the days until the Christmas break; Sue emphasised the quality of interactions with colleagues that made the job bearable; Patrick reminded himself of the financial security of his job compared to his previous self-employed status.

### ***Affective Coping***

Whereas compliant coping was concerned with completing tasks, the affective category was concerned with emotion-focused coping, managing the effects of stress

in both physical and mental manifestations. This category of coping contained the most frequently mentioned coping strategy of all – *tension reduction* (n=11) – a truly diverse mechanism that generally focused on activities undertaken outside of work but also some within the college:

- Food: at work a number of participants reported that they frequently ate more when they were under stress as a means of tension reduction. David and Georgia both reported that they had put on weight as a result and were now becoming more conscious of their calorific intake. Steph's husband was a chef and so eating was also a significant mediator of stress as she benefited from high quality meals at home;
- Alcohol: three FTMs (John, Elaine and Keith) used alcohol actively as a means to reduce tension. Elaine was so exhausted from her work that two glasses of wine generally sent her to sleep; Keith kept his limit to two pints on a weekend lunchtime; only John reported becoming inebriated:

Couple of beers before bed time helps as well [laughs].  
Probably the drinking could be cut down as well. I do get a bit squiffy on a Friday – you get home – ‘ohh, I could do with a beer’;

- Hobbies:
  - Steph maintained an allotment
  - Jamila enjoyed baking
  - Lynette knitted
  - Mike watched films
  - Sue played computer games (both at work and at home)
  - Rob was a keen football supporter
  - Carol was renovating a camper van;
- Therapeutic remedies: during her first round of stress leave, Jan discovered ‘very sort of spiritual things’ such as meditation, the burning of essential oils and hypnotherapy (as had Tracey, also successfully). So affected was she that it partly informed her decision to leave to train as a hypnotherapist

herself. During a previous period of illness, Sue had used acupuncture to treat her tinnitus and general fatigue;

- Smoking: Sue and Lynette were the only FTMs who discussed smoking as a means of reducing tension and both suggested that their smoking had increased as a result of their jobs.

The joint second most frequently mentioned affective coping strategy was *exercise* (n=8), a key activity that was not included in either Folkman and Lazarus' or Carver's coping scale; both were devised in the 1980s however, a period before the explosion of the fitness industry. Frydenberg and Lewis's scale however does list exercise as a separate item and the responses in this research suggest how important it is.

Those FTMs who exercised did so regularly, even though many mentioned the difficulty of maintaining a regime due to lack of time and fatigue. Several FTMs, however, took exercise seriously and were relatively accomplished. John, Linda and Keith worked out an average of four times a week; Keith had lost a considerable amount of weight since our last meeting and John routinely ran over five miles as well as using the gym during his lunch hours when time permitted. Linda, FTM for sport and fitness at Eastshire, now struggled to find the time:

I was really good the first couple of weeks after half term and I was training four times a week and that actually does make me a lot calmer and a lot more together. But when things get busy I've been squeezing in one session a week and feeling rubbish while I'm there, probably because I'm so mentally drained. I haven't really been enjoying it and probably not doing it enough to see the stress relief benefits.

The *venting of emotions* (n=8) was mentioned the same number of times as exercise as an affective coping strategy; the venting itself took a variety of forms:

- Swearing: swearing as an outlet was one of the more negative forms, usually in staff rooms;
- Crying: several FTMs would cry when under stress;

- Screaming and shouting: Keith would shout at the associate head of school (while seeking instrumental support); Lynette would go into her garden and scream until she felt better;
- Grumbling: Georgia used her administrative assistant as an audience for her ‘grumbling’ when she was under pressure. Linda frequently grumbled (although, as she implied, it was more akin to bitching (see Sotirin, 1999)) if not to her team, then at least in front of them, a strategy (or at least an audience) that she recognised was not appropriate;
- Drafting emails: perhaps the most interesting of the types of venting were found in Tracey and Sue’s (both at Parklands) accounts. They would routinely draft abusive (or at least acerbic) emails to senior managers and other colleagues when stress levels were at their highest. As a precaution Tracey would ask one of her peers to read them before she sent them and frequently her colleague would suggest that she have a coffee and calm down before redrafting; Sue tended to self-edit: ‘I very frequently write emails that I instantly delete and then send another one because I kind of blugh [retching noise] ‘I hate you and ugh ugh ugh’ – delete it – ‘dear [principal]’...

The penultimate type of affective coping was *seeking support for emotional reasons* (n=5). What is significant is that this type of coping was mentioned just over half as many times as seeking support for instrumental reasons, testimony perhaps to the agentive nature of FTMs – rather than seek emotional support they would try and find someone who could help instrumentally. On the other hand of course, the high frequency of emotion-management strategies may attest to the fact that the participants would attempt to keep their emotional responses to themselves. Where emotional support was sought, it was located in fellow FTMs (mentioned once at Parklands) and the teaching team (twice at Eastshire, twice at Blackton, once at Woodside).

The final affective coping strategy was *humour* (n=4). In the previous chapter humour was discussed in terms of resistance; humour as a concept, however, is too diverse to be restricted, as was discussed in the literature review. To differentiate, humour as a means of resistance is conceived of as having a target (see for example Taylor and Bain, 2003); although it can also be seen resistantly as creating distance from the organisation, it is seen here more in terms of what Bovey and Hede (2001) call an ‘adaptive defence’, a means to protect oneself from the stressor and manage the emotional effects. It was this understanding of humour as coping that the FTMs themselves had mentioned as a behaviour of lecturers in the previous chapter. Whereas humour as resistance is generally directed at the organisation or management, here the target is often stress itself and the individual’s response to situations as is evident in Cheryl’s account:

We’ve got a new by-word in the staffroom which is that we’re now not allowed to say the word ‘stressed’ any more in the office, we have to consider things as a ‘challenge’ as ‘one of life’s challenges’ [laughs]. It’s not stress at all, it’s just another challenge.

### ***Non-compliant Coping***

The first two categories of coping are, conceptually, reasonably unproblematic: compliant coping is problem-focused and about meeting demands; affective coping is emotion-focused and concerned with attenuating the emotional effects of stress. The third category – non-compliant coping – is a departure from the established coping scales and includes those behaviours which can also be seen as resistance. The difference between resistance and these forms of coping is an issue that will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The two most common forms of non-compliant coping – *focus on personal relationships* (n=6) and *escape* (n=9) were concerned with the ability to switch off at the end of the day, to separate the self both physically and cognitively from their jobs, an ability – and it was often seen as an ability – that many FTMs struggled to master:

Kevin (Blackton): No, can't separate it cos it's always on your mind, cos your mind always keeps thinking what you've got to do, what's required all the time, so you can't really divorce yourself.

Linda (Eastshire): I don't really feel like I can switch off... It's not necessarily always major things that have happened, it can be just stuff I've got to deal with tomorrow, must remember to talk to that person. Even occasionally if I am in a situation where I have switched off something will happen that will trigger off a thought and then I'll catch myself focusing on what I'm thinking about rather than what's going on or whoever I'm with.

Cheryl (Woodside): I can't, I'm still thinking about what I'm going to be doing all of the time, can't switch off and I wake up in the night thinking about it.

However, only five FTMs stated categorically that they could not switch off at all; six reported that the ability to switch off varied; twelve, just over half of the sample, said that they were able to switch off most of the time, a significant finding given that home invasion was such a regular occurrence. The question of focus (student, team, organisation or omni) appeared not to be a determining factor with one exception: five out of six organisation-focused FTMs reported that they could switch off easily and Jim's response summarises the majority of organisation-focused FTMs' perspectives:

Interviewer: How easy do you find it to switch off at the end of the day?  
Jim (Parklands): Very easy I think. I've just got that ability, I can just walk out of here and leave it... When I'm here, I'm working and I'm committed to it. When I'm at home, I'm at home.

Key to separating the self from work was the second most common form of non-compliant coping, *focus on personal relationships*, an item proposed by Frydenberg and Lewis (2002). In essence this item is a form of resistant prioritisation and puts personal relationships before work. As such, primary cognitive appraisal judges transactions according to the harmful effects upon the FTMs' personal life, especially their family. Given the 'home invasion' documented in the first round, the potential of work to dominate the existence of participants was very real. While in the first round a year ago many participants accepted working at home as an inevitable part of their

lives, in this round there was a significant change with many now consciously and firmly putting their personal relationships first:

Lynette (Eastshire): I try and do something with my family because they are my lifeline so it's clinging onto that more than anything... I enjoy spending time with my girls who are teenagers now and with my husband, we'll just go out, just to completely divorce myself from this place. So again it is my family that keep the stress at bay.

Grace (Woodside): I can switch off and I'm in home mode. I've got so much going on in my real life which *is* my real life – my real life's my home life, my family, my friends.

Jim (Parklands): I've always said to myself that I'm not going to let it get to me. At the end of the day it's a job and at the end of the day I can walk out of here – it might cause me a few hassles but I'll get another job. I can't walk out of here and get another life... when I leave the college, that's it, I switch off. That helps me relax. Good family life, mess about with the kids, whatever.

Intentionality was evident throughout the accounts of the prioritisation of personal relationships. Rarely was the ability to separate themselves from work and focus on their home life a natural ability; many FTMs described how they had to force themselves to switch off or risk detriment to their relationships:

Carol (Parklands): I switch off at the weekends I make myself yeah. I've got a lot of other things in my life. I've got a family that has to be looked after so yes, I just make myself, make myself.

The most frequently mentioned non-compliant coping strategy (and the second most common overall) was *escape* which included both physical and cognitive manifestations. The conceptual difficulty with this item was that a number of other items could be subsumed within it. Exercise and activities identified in 'tension reduction' could also be seen as forms of escape. To differentiate, escape here is a



strategy that is intended to remove oneself from the work context – the strategy itself is about *movement away from* the stressor rather than *managing* a stressor.

1. In terms of the physical variant, a number of FTMs would remove themselves from their office when they experienced stress. Steph and Tracey both reported going for walks in the middle of the day to remove themselves from the immediate work context; Kevin would find an empty office or classroom to escape the demands of the team and outstanding administrative tasks; Vicky would go to the college gallery for her lunch. One thing was common though - physical escape was seen as an immediate solution to feelings of anxiety or anger. For Rob, physical escape meant leaving work on time, regardless of whether he had completed his tasks:

I think you've just got to be hard sometimes and say 'no, I am going home today at 4.30' or 'I am going home at 4 o'clock, I don't care what's on my desk I'm going'. You've got to do that – you've got to be hard and you've got to prioritise... prioritising and sometimes just saying 'ah that's it, I'm going'.

Vicky adopted the same stance:

If I get to a certain point at any time during the week and I think I've actually had it now, I need to rest, it doesn't matter what I've got to do... I will just walk away and I think 'well, really I needed to do that tonight but I can't, I haven't got the brainpower to do it because I am too tired'. So I then reschedule stuff and I then do actually think 'I'm going to go home tonight, I'm going early, I'm going to put my feet up and just chill out'.

2. For Lynette, escape was found in teaching:

Lynette: One thing I will cling onto is my teaching and the majority of middle managers, even if it's only one and a half hours a week, they have to cling onto that. In a lot of ways it's their lifeline and it is my lifeline cos in a classroom I can escape

Interviewer: You really see it as an escape?

Lynette: It is an escape from all the paperwork and the pressure that comes from the top down. It's a chance to connect again with the reason I came into the profession.

Though compliant in the sense that teaching was part of her role, the escape from the managerial element moves this strategy into the non-compliant coping category.

3. For Jan and Elaine escape or 'exit' was literal: both had experienced considerable and medically-identified stress and had chosen to leave their respective colleges. Jan's escape was primarily health-defined – she could no longer tolerate the demands of her position; Elaine, who felt betrayed by the college, had left even though the college asked her to stay to help her replacement.
4. While Jan and Elaine had escaped physically to new jobs, for some FTMs the act of searching for new jobs helped them to cope. As was discussed in the section on promotions, several participants were actively looking for other jobs. Linda at Eastshire had even attended an interview at another college; even though she was unsuccessful, the experience of an alternate workplace had given her strength to tolerate her current predicament – while she thought it was bad where she was, the other college seemed worse.
5. When discussing coping, Tracey again talked about her charity work in building a school in Ghana. This presented both cognitive escape in terms of defining her job as providing the finances to support her charitable endeavours but also provided her with the potential for physical escape from the college as she intended, one day, to move to Ghana and teach in the school.

These final two forms of escape present another difficulty in the conception of escape as coping; in the last round exiting the job and thinking about exiting were seen as forms of resistance and have been interpreted in that way in some of the literature (Gabriel, 2008, Cohen and Taylor, 1978). In round two the difficulty of escape was suggested to be one of interpretation: it could be interpreted as resistance or coping. The conceptualisation of non-compliant coping attempts to find a middle ground between the two behaviours.

One category of coping that had also been identified as resistance in the first round was *ignoring* (n=5):

Rob (Woodside): If I get an email requesting something and I don't think it's important I'll switch off... I take the view that if someone wants something and it's really important they'll keep on to me about it until they get it. If they don't, can't be that important then can it.

Sue (Parklands): It's like phone messages – I pretend I don't see the phone flashing.

Tracey (Parklands): The other way I'm actually dealing with [stress] is when I'm being asked to do something and somebody's saying 'do you agree' I'm not actually answering, I'm not giving them an answer so my body language is hopefully saying 'no I don't agree'. And then that way I haven't got to get into a confrontational situation where actually I know this person desperately wants x y and z because that'll just get me stressed more so I just sit there.

Here though, ignoring is not a behaviour that positions itself against the demands of senior managers on the grounds of values, it is an attempt to shield the self from the demands of the work. Ignoring as a coping strategy is highly pragmatic and requires little energy – if a demand is ignored it does not posit the transaction as a problem to be solved which would require effort; neither does it generate negative emotions which must be attenuated. Instead, it removes the necessity for dealing with the transaction at all.

Two other non-compliant coping items occupied familiar territory from the first two rounds and were again, in those instances, examples of routine resistance: *cutting corners* (n=1) and *dissent* (n=4). Jamila was the only participant in this round to discuss cutting corners as a coping strategy (the majority of the others had discussed this extensively in the previous round before Jamila joined the study). Despite having highly developed multi-tasking skills from her time in the IT industry, she reported that sometimes the workload was so massive that she had little choice but to cut

corners, often in terms of her teaching. She would, for example, intentionally not give detailed written feedback on students' work to save time.

*Dissent* was highlighted four times within this round and it was mainly located in Parklands, the college that contained significant accounts of principled dissent in the last round. Most notably, this was one of only two colleges where most of the participants – being simultaneously middle managers and first tier managers – met each other regularly, both formally and informally. As such they had developed a collective – and resistant – identity:

Vicky: We are quite a belligerent bunch because we have to be to survive because if I did everything I was asked to do I would be a nervous wreck, I'd be in hospital by now because it's just not possible... interestingly enough I don't know of any curriculum managers who have gone off with stress, I think we are just quite a belligerent, punchy bunch which is probably why we survive because you have to be.

Interviewer: So how do you cope?

Sue: Dunno really. Don't let the bastards grind you down really. It's trite but it's true. I'm not going to leave until I feel I'm leaving on my terms unless I'm stretched out rather than having to leave because I feel I've been put in a position where I feel I've got to go.

As is evident from Vicky's and Sue's account, the transactions in their work are judged to be potentially detrimental to their well being and so dissent here is a matter of survival – and therefore coping – rather than a matter of principles or values, a contrast to the resistance both exhibited in the first two rounds of fieldwork.

## **Hardiness**

Given the levels of stress reported, it is significant that only two participants out of 23 had ever taken stress leave; few had even taken time off for illness that might have been associated with stress. Indeed, sick leave for FTMs seemed rare. In short, the FTMs in this study appeared to be 'hardy'.

Kobasa (1979) argues that hardy individuals possess three primary characteristics:

1. They feel they have control over ‘events of their experience’
2. They are deeply involved in or committed to activities
3. They anticipate change as ‘an exciting challenge to further development’.

Throughout all three rounds of fieldwork it was clear that FTMs are deeply involved in their work, thus satisfying the second characteristic; in the last round, most FTMs reported greeting change optimistically, meeting the third requirement of hardy individuals. In this third round of fieldwork, the question of control remained to be investigated:

- Seven FTMs stated unequivocally that they felt in control of their work including all five from Woodside where, as Programme Leaders, they have less responsibility than FTMs in other colleges and a greater number of teaching hours. Jim at Parkside (where most of the participants were simultaneously first tier managers and middle managers) was the only respondent there who felt in control of his work. Mike at Eastshire was the final FTM in this category;
- Four participants said that they did not feel in control of their work: Elaine in Blackton who had recently been demoted and then chose to leave; Lynette in Eastshire who had recently been promoted; Vicky at Parklands who had the greatest span of control in the sample; Tracey who had experienced a number of health issues which she attributed to stress;
- The remaining participants all felt in control to some extent, from Jamila at Blackton who felt in control ‘80-90 percent’ of the time to Carol who felt it was ‘50-50’.

What the findings suggest is that the more hierarchically elevated the position, the less control FTMs seemed to experience.

19 participants therefore reported that they felt they had control over their working lives to at least some extent and, together with the data suggesting high commitment and optimism when confronted by change, FTMs would therefore seem to be a hardy group according to Kobasa's conception of the term. While they may routinely experience the unexpected, they all maintained 'decisional control' (Kobasa, p3), the 'capability of autonomously choosing among various courses of action to handle the stress'; they also maintained 'cognitive control', what Folkman et al. (1986) refer to as 'cognitive appraisal', identifying the risk to the self engendered by a stressor; lastly, all exhibited coping skills or 'a greater repertory of suitable responses to stress developed through a characteristic motivation to achieve across all situations' (Kobasa, 1979, p4). In this last characteristic we also see the link between motivation, coping and hardiness. FTMs were generally found to be a motivated group which in turn created a proclivity to cope with the demands of their position, whether the coping was compliant, affective or non-compliant.

### **Institutional Management of Stress**

Given the high levels of stress reported by the participants and the finding of the Learning and Skills Network (2008) that 73.9% of lecturers experience too much stress, the questioning next moved to how the colleges managed stress and the data was generally consistent across the sample sites:

- Few FTMs were aware of the official college policy regarding the management of stress and reported that if it did exist, they did not know about it.
- All colleges employed a counsellor for students, yet none for staff exclusively; the counsellor in Eastshire, however, though overworked, did sometimes see staff as well.
- Stress surveys had been circulated but no follow-up action had been taken:

Tracey (Parklands): We have all just been emailed this –

fill in this stress questionnaire, see if you're stressed... that came from the health and safety. But then when you fill it in and you've got the results, what do you do?

Interviewer: So they're collecting all these responses?

Tracey: No, they're not collecting them, it's just for you to do, see if you're stressed [laughs] which you don't really need cos you already know.

Interviewer: So is there any guidance on there saying if you are stressed you should-

Tracey: -Yeah it says you need to change your lifestyle or whatever because you're at risk of having a heart attack [laughs]. It doesn't say anything more than that.

- A 24 hour counselling service was available: the College and University Support Network was available to all staff and the University and College Union also maintained a telephone service for members.

The data suggested that, although stress was recognised as a major factor in each of the colleges, institutional responses were limited. Woodside, for example, had created a stress committee but no outcomes were evident other than stress awareness sessions and relaxation classes, neither of which, it was felt, dealt with the issue of workload:

Keith: They often have stress awareness courses you can go on and they have relaxation classes and things like that so I suppose they are doing a little bit towards it but I would rather spend my time marking or doing something useful than sitting down and pretending not to – you know breathing properly and stuff – doesn't help me.

Parklands had also instituted a stress focus group but it was greeted with cynicism as paying lip service rather than really addressing the issue:

Carol: There is a stress focus group which I've been asked to join but I was too stressed to join it [laughs]. I didn't have time so that's quite ironic really... the rationale behind setting up that working group, developing a stress strategy for the college seemed to be having a strategy in place cos we needed it rather than any concern about the fact that people might be stressed.

More positively, Eastshire had established a coaching scheme to enable staff to manage their work more effectively. Linda had just requested a coach on the recommendation of the principal and Lynette had already used the service and found it a useful experience.

The overall consensus was that colleges, at an institutional level, were addressing the *symptoms* of stress rather than acting on the *causes* of stress; to address the causes would perhaps necessitate an acknowledgement that senior managers, even as agents of government policy, were the primary cause and would thus be an unpalatable truth.

### **The Real Management of Stress**

In the absence of effective institutional responses, the management of stress appeared largely to be enacted by FTMs themselves as they attempted to attenuate the demands placed upon their teams. The data suggested that there was little stigma attached to stress at the team level and stress was talked about quite openly.

Jan (Eastshire): It's certainly commonplace for people to talk about it amongst the staff and I know the heads of department are really pressured.

Sue (Parklands): Because I work in an area where everyone is very people-focused, we all come from a background [nursing and care] where you discuss things like stress and issues and stuff... So we certainly talk about it – lots of tears, lots of upset, lots of 'I can't cope, I can't do this anymore', people get angry – that's how the problems kick off.

This was not the case on a college-wide level, however, though there were some variations between each site. At Woodside, for example, stress was relatively visible at the organisational level according to Grace:

I think it is taken seriously. There is a general awareness of what stress can do – not saying everybody is buying into it at all but I'm most certainly aware that it's being discussed and it's being acknowledged.



The data suggested that virtually all FTMs adopted a coaching approach when supporting a member of the team who couldn't cope:

Steph (Blackton): I have done a lot of coaching with staff, coached them through difficult situations, helped them to think about ways they could deal with the situation themselves and support them in whatever way I can do. Kind of break it down, see if there's anything that could be done from my side to alleviate the stress they're under as well so it would be a two way thing.

Linda (Eastshire): I'd obviously give them room to chat to me or to someone else about it, I'd have a look at their workload first of all to see perhaps if they had too much and then I'd look at what they were struggling with and obviously give them specific training or advice to help them hopefully make those areas easier. Perhaps set them targets if that was something making them struggle, if that was why they weren't coping, perhaps set them specific targets so they had more structure to work towards.

FTMs would also provide pragmatic support to their teams as well. Some discussed how they had reduced teaching hours by using agency staff or colleagues to cover classes; where the stress lay in the pedagogical paradigm, generic schemes of work and resources were provided.

In more severe cases of not coping, the responses of FTMs varied. A member of John's team at Eastshire, a long serving lecturer, found himself unable to cope with the demands of teaching former NEET young people who presented challenging behaviour on a routine basis. After attempting a coaching approach with limited success and following a series of conflagrations in the classroom, John decided to have a formal meeting with his team member and invited a union representative:

I've had him in on a one to one, I even brought a union guy in once, just to show I was dealing fairly with him. I'm quite a unionist myself, I brought the union guy in just to explain to him, because there had been a number of complaints put in and I'd kinda been shielding him from it all and to let him know that this had been going on... not to put the fear of god up him, just to let him know that if these things carry on that there are greater things waiting to happen and also as a way of offering support to him.

Vicky at Parklands also had a member of her team who was still not coping despite a number of support strategies put in place. In the end she felt that she had no alternative but to reduce the contracted hours of the lecturer:

They didn't want to reduce [their contracted hours] so in the end I had to impose that and now the person's actually just resigned and I think I'm expecting a grievance procedure... I always try and be democratic – I've gone from democratic, to coercive, to authoritarian and I've had to become *very* authoritarian because things just were not happening and it didn't matter how much support was put in place.

Here, while the perspective is on coping, the procedures Vicky felt compelled to follow were perhaps more akin to those invoked for incompetence; by approaching it as coping however, FTMs may avoid the multiple difficulties of managing incompetence (Blacklock, 2002).

The final type of response was that FTMs suggested non-compliant coping strategies based on their own proclivity. Carol at Parklands advised a member of her team that she should reduce her stress by not attempting to do everything and ignore some of her administrative responsibilities. Rob at Woodside adopted the same position:

I'd be blunt about it and say 'you've got to stop that. If it doesn't get done, it doesn't get done, leave it. Not the end of the world'.

## **Guilt**

Tracey at Parklands was the third participant in the third round that I interviewed and during the discussion she reported that she regularly felt guilt related to her work; as an unanticipated theme, it was pursued:

Interviewer: Where does that sense of guilt come from?

Tracey: It comes from me I suppose. I just think if I haven't done it, then I'm going to let everyone else down but then I know there are other members of staff that will walk out and forget about it and I wish I could be one of those people. I don't know, maybe it's because of the

caring nature – you care therefore you want to see everything succeed but in reality it doesn't.

As a significant theme, I included questioning on guilt in all the subsequent interviews and, for more than any other topic during the research, there was strict dichotomy of responses. Firstly were those who experienced guilt on a regular basis:

- Interviewer: Do you ever feel guilty?  
Steph (Blackton): About staff yes, about things I've asked them to do, more cover and making them use their DDs [departmental duty time] when that's their planning time to cover classes cos someone's off sick. I feel guilty about having to ask them to do these things when I know they're drowning and they're under pressure as well, but they fully understand.
- Lynette (Eastshire): I feel guilty if I can't cover a class, if a member of staff's off sick and I don't have anyone to cover and have to cancel – I feel guilty then because I'm letting someone down. At times I feel guilty when I have to say 'no' to a member of staff.... I have to acknowledge that I can't always find a solution to everything, I have to accept that... I still feel guilty even though I know I can't do anything about it but I have to put it into perspective.
- Interviewer: Do you ever feel guilty?  
Keith (Woodside): Yeah course I do, yeah. I mean sometimes – Andy comes in here, he must come in about half seven every morning and I walk in about quarter past eight so I feel pretty guilty that he's been here three quarters of an hour already.
- Sue (Parklands): Guilt's a big part of management, either the self-imposed stuff or the stuff they lay on you: if you don't get this done, this is going happen. If you don't do this the world's going to come to an end. Which it won't.

As is clear from these responses, those who routinely felt guilt mainly experienced it in relation to their teams and students. While most were cognisant of the fact that many of the choices they made were, however unpalatable, unavoidable, this did not reduce the feeling of guilt. There was, however, little correlation between the findings on control and the findings on guilt. Keith and Steph felt in control of their work, yet

experienced guilt; Sue and Lynette felt they had no control over their work yet also experienced guilt.

Baumeister (in Battigalli and Dufwenberg, 2007) suggests that ‘the cause of guilt would be the infliction of harm, loss, or distress’ (p170) on another individual and this would appear consonant with the experience of FTMs in this study, yet the actions of participants that elicit guilt are not perceived to be within their control. This is in opposition to the findings of Tracy and Robins (2005) who suggest that an internal locus of control in relation to the specified action is the main generator of guilt. Instead, the guilt-inducing actions in this research may be seen in terms of Molinski and Margolis’ (2005) conception of ‘necessary evils’: those ‘work-related tasks in which an individual must, as part of his or her job, perform an act that causes emotional or physical harm to another human being in the service of achieving some perceived greater good or purpose’ (p245). From this point of view, asking a lecturer to cover a class when they are on departmental duty time (preparation and administration) meets the purpose of providing for students but is to the detriment of the lecturer whose workload is increased. From this point of view, although the FTM is not responsible for the sickness of a colleague, they encounter ‘experienced responsibility’ which is ‘channelled into guilt’ (ibid, p251).

There is a further significant element concerning guilt that links to earlier findings on mothering. Leith and Baumeister (2008) argue that guilt, rather than (or as well as) being ‘a pointless exercise of self-torment’ (p3), may help strengthen and maintain close relationships and enhance the ability to understand the perspective of other people. Guilt from this point of view is attached to a transaction rather than the self. Within the transaction, the guilty party is able to reflect upon how their action has affected the other person and ‘stimulates people to counteract the bad consequences of their actions... by making amends’ (ibid, p3). Secondly, guilt may arise from the anxiety felt concerning the harm to the interpersonal relationship as a consequence of necessary evils and the damage to the leader-member exchange (see for example van Dam et al., 2008). Guilt, from this perspective, may potentially be a prime antecedent of the mothering that was reported in the first round of fieldwork: if FTMs routinely

feel guilty as a result of the exertion of their managerial responsibilities, mothering may be an attempt at making amends and repairing the interpersonal relationship.

For others, approximately half of the sample, guilt was categorically not a feature of their working lives; indeed, some struggled to understand why Tracey (whose anonymised example I used in this portion of the interviews) felt guilt at all:

Rob (Woodside): The answer to that is no, I don't feel guilty... I'm trying to understand why someone would say that... I think really that response – feeling guilty – is because they're taking on the – they're absorbing, they're internalising a management culture in this country that if you're not a slave sitting at your desk for god knows how many hours a day there's something wrong with you.

Interviewer:  
David (Blackton): Do you ever feel guilty about any aspect of your work?  
Not really, no. I think if I felt like that I'd definitely look for another job... I don't particularly feel guilty. It's work, I'm not betraying people, I don't have to – I have to tell people to do things they don't want to do, that's fine.

Jim (Parklands): No, don't feel guilty about anything. Can't really understand why anyone would come on that.

Georgia (Parklands): [Laughs] No, pointless emotion. No, I think I'm pretty open with the staff who work for me – if I ask them to do something they know either it's something I've been asked for so they have to do it or it's something I think we need to do.

The experience of guilt was not found to be contingent: either it was experienced routinely or not at all. While there seemed to be no correlation between guilt and control, there was a connection with the focus of the respondents: all of the organisation-focused FTMs reported that they never experienced guilt while team, student and omni-focused FTMs fell on both sides of the dichotomy.

## **Summary of Chapter 6**

This third round of fieldwork found each of the colleges gripped by the 'terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2001) as they prepared for impending Ofsted inspections. It

found that FTMs were highly motivated by student success yet demotivated by the incessant and repetitive demands of the college systems, which were also a primary cause of the significant stress experienced by the majority of the participants, often to the detriment of their health. In the face of stressful transactions, FTMs were found to engage a variety of coping strategies that suggested a new coping scale based on three categories of coping: compliant, affective and non-compliant.

Mostly in control, autonomous and committed, FTMs appeared a hardy group who, in the absence of institutional management of stress among lecturers, managed stress among their teams themselves. Finally, an unanticipated theme, guilt, emerged as a significant factor in the working lives of around half the sample as they performed necessary evils upon their team.

This third round of research marked an end to the fieldwork focused on FTMs and moved more fully to the validation and triangulation stages of the project. The fourth round shifted methods and focus to include:

- Observations: team meetings led by FTMs were to be observed to validate the findings of the first three interview-based rounds. There was to be one observation in each college representing the range of meetings experienced;
- Documentary analysis: as the first three rounds of field work had investigated the realities of work for the participants, an analysis of job descriptions for FTMs from colleges around the country was to be conducted to examine the official and intended nature of the role;
- Respondent validation.

## **Chapter 7: Documentary Analysis, Observations and Respondent Validation**

### **Introduction**

With the FTM-focused fieldwork ended, this final round attended to matters of triangulation in an attempt to increase the ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba in Bassey, 1999) of the data. The first method adopted was to conduct documentary analysis of the FTM role at a national level by examining job descriptions of FTM posts in the educational press; secondly, four observations were conducted, one in each college; finally, respondent validation was undertaken to confirm that the raw data collated represented a good understanding of the FTMs’ perspectives.

### **The FTM Role on Paper**

The findings from the first three rounds of fieldwork suggest that the role of FTM is highly contested, often poorly defined and elastic. The role was heterogeneous across the four sample colleges – FTMs ranged from Programme Leaders at Woodside with two hours remission and little formal responsibility, to those at Parklands who straddled both middle manager and first tier manager duties. This round of fieldwork thus began by examining the diversity of the role on a national basis to see whether a wider sample would reflect the heterogeneity that was apparent within the four colleges studied in the first three rounds.

Although I had gained job descriptions and person specifications from participants in the first three rounds, the most efficient method of collecting data from a wider sample was the internet. Using the Times Education Supplement job website, I gathered application packs for first tier managers from 46 colleges across the country over a two month period. This does not however reflect the total number of FTM vacancies during that period as 13 colleges advertised more than once for managers of different curriculum areas. In one case a college in the Midlands advertised 4 FTM positions concurrently.

Three studies of job descriptions informed this stage of the research: Cragin et al. (2009) who presented a poster on a study of job advertisements for data curators; Park, Lu and Marion (2009) who researched job descriptions for cataloguing professionals; and Middlehurst (2004) who analysed job descriptions for senior leadership positions in HE. Drawing on these three studies and the fieldwork conducted so far, the framework for analysis was constituted using the following categories:

- Job title
- Salary
- Teaching hours
- Qualification requirements
- Management experience requirements
- Duties

### ***Job Title***

Within the 46 college sample there were 19 different titles for first tier managers as summarised in the table below which echoes Martins' (2008) findings of a diversity of FTM titles in the private sector as well.

curriculum leader	10	curriculum team leader	2	curriculum coordinator	1
curriculum manager	8	subject leader	1	curriculum area leader	1
team leader	4	sector leader	1	course manager	1
programme manager	4	programme coordinator	1	course leader	1
programme area manager	3	programme area leader	1	course director	1
programme leader	2	programme area coordinator	1		
head of subject	2	FE coordinator	1		

Most of the job titles assume the title of 'leader' or 'manager' in a roughly even split with the less common 'head' and 'coordinator' also used. In just one case the term



‘director’ was used which is perhaps overly aggrandising. Also in evidence is a range of terms for denoting what is led, managed or coordinated: curriculum, programme, subject and course. Within colleges these terms tend to be used interchangeably and, as such, do not offer any suggestion of the breadth of management in terms of the number of courses managed. For example, while ‘course’ may suggest a cognate subject such as Maths GCSE, ‘curriculum’ may – to continue the theme – refer to the whole mathematics provision including GCSE, A level (where it still exists in FE) and functional skills numeracy. Here then the FTM job titles give us little clarity on the size of the provision to be managed. In addition, titles predicated upon curriculum do not provide detail of the extent of staff management; in fact, only four jobs were called ‘team leader’ which does at least connote the management of a team rather than a curriculum area.

### ***Salary***

There was a wide variation in the salaries in the sample<sup>7</sup>. While most colleges presented the salary on a scale, four gave one salary point only and five did not include a salary at all, referring instead to a number on an undisclosed management scale. The lowest salary point in the sample was a college in the Midlands with £20,449 progressing to £30,823; the highest salary was for a college in London with a scale of £35,124-£43,918. Both the roles were to manage the Foundation Level curriculum. However, while these extreme points on the salary spectrum may appear to reflect regional differences, it is essential to note that the second lowest salary starting point was also in London at £20,919, though it must be stressed that the highest point on this scale was £37,475, a range of £16,556, the largest in the sample. Salary averages were as follows:

- Average lowest salary point: £29,972
- Average highest salary point: £39,080

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of comparison, London Weighting was not included in the salaries reported.

### ***Teaching Hours and Remission***

One of the key issues raised throughout the first three rounds of fieldwork was the issue of teaching hours and remission. FTMs at Woodside received 2 hours remission from their 24 hours contact time; Blackton FTMs received 5-6 hours; Eastshire was 10-12 hours and Parklands 10-18 hours remission. In all cases hours allocated to managerial duties were highly contested between FTMs and more senior managers and seen as insufficient.

I had hoped that the documentary analysis across a sample of 46 colleges would yield additional data about this key issue, yet only five job packs included any detail about the ratio of teaching and managing. The majority of job descriptions merely stated that the post-holder would be expected to teach within the department suggesting that management was the primary role; in some cases the caveat 'as agreed by head of department/sector' was added. In the 5 colleges that did provide details, the teaching hours were specified as 14, 15, 16, 19 and 22.5. Given that the average teaching hours of further education lecturers is 24 per week, this equates to between 10 hours and 1.5 hours devoted to managerial and administrative duties per week.

### ***Person Specification***

The person specification for each post was analysed to establish the qualification and advertised requirements of the posts and found the following:

- A first degree was essential in 28 colleges; there were two who required a degree or substantial relevant experience; four listed a degree as desirable;
- A relevant professional qualification was essential in 15 colleges, desirable in one;
- Eight colleges listed a management qualification as desirable but it was essential in none;
- A higher degree was desirable in eight colleges, essential in none;

- 42 colleges required applicants to hold a teaching qualification (PGCE or Certificate of Education); one college included it as desirable, three made no mention of it;
- Five colleges specified the length of time applicants must have served in FE: four said three years, one said five years;
- Experience of managing or leading teams was an essential criterion in 20 colleges, desirable in seven.

While it might be a reasonable assumption that requirements in terms of qualifications and experience might be linked to salary, this proved not to be the case. Both the highest paid and lowest paid roles were designed to manage Foundation Level curriculum and neither required a degree; instead both referred to knowledge of own specialist area and possession of a teaching qualification. Managerial or leadership experience was similarly not specified while both required pedagogic experience.

### *Duties*

In the first round of fieldwork, a number of participants suggested that their job description was an inaccurate reflection of the reality of their work. In some cases (such as with Pat at Blackton), the job description was ignored and the duties negotiated between the head of department and the FTM themselves. The next theme of documentary analysis focused on the description of duties.

There was a huge variation in the level of detail included in the outline of the FTM role. One college in Lancashire listed six responsibilities while a college in outer London listed 48. However, there were some elements of the role that were common across the sample. First was 'marketing' as FTMs were expected to actively promote their course within the community via attendance at open evenings and marketing events external to the college; the second common duty was curriculum development explicated in terms of resource creation and enhancing the learner experience; third, external liaison was included, especially in regards to contact with external verifiers

and exam boards; finally was the that duty that FTMs in the interview round found most onerous: data collection and reporting:

In collaboration with course team colleagues, other appropriate Faculty staff and MIS section, ensure that accurate, complete and up-to-date data is input onto the corporate database and other information storage and retrieval systems.

Use Departmental and College MIS systems to ensure that accurate, complete and up to date data, relevant to the Courses, is held on the corporate and departmental databases, and other information storage and retrieval systems.

Ensure the collection and proper reconciliation of data particularly student attendance, retention and achievement data, undertaking rigorous activity to ensure it is properly reflected on the college’s data system.

In terms of commonality of other duties there was less congruence. Drawing on the duties reported through the first three stages of fieldwork, the table below details the number of colleges that mentioned the primary duties of the experienced role:

<b>Table 6: FTM duties</b>			
Managing Budgets	11	Participating in staff disciplinary action	2
Conducting Appraisals	22	Setting and monitoring targets	18
Conducting teaching observations	23	Contributing to strategy	6
Timetabling	18	Managing staff absence	3
Monitoring quality processes	42		

What is clear from the data is that managing quality was seen as the greatest priority of the FTM role across the sample – only four job descriptions did not explicitly

mention quality. The emphasis on performance management however is given less attention in this data than the first three rounds of fieldwork suggested where the management of staff and their performance was seen as critical to the success of the role. Only around half of the job descriptions detailed appraisals and teaching observations of teams and only three mentioned the management of staff absence, a key part of the devolved HRM role of first tier managers (Martins, 2007, Hales, 2005). Here then the data reinforces one of the key areas lacking clarity in the role: *line* management.

Line management – the fulfilment of devolved HRM processes – was only mentioned in 19 of the 46 job descriptions; even in those JDs that detailed appraisal and observations there was rarely mention of line management. Instead, the issue of who or what is managed remained a penumbra in many of the application packs as is apparent in the six examples below:

1. To provide leadership to the Sport and Physical Recreation team.
2. Manage/Lead the Motor Vehicle team in delivering the curriculum.
3. To actively ensure the timely and effective delivery of the curriculum in line with agreed timetables.
4. To lead a curriculum area and/or cross-college initiative within the School
5. To oversee course co-ordination within a curriculum area/initiative.
6. To lead a cluster of courses and to be responsible for the management of the learner experience within the College Strategic Plans.

As these examples show, the designation of whether the role is one of leadership, management or coordination is unclear. Only the first example is explicit and denotes leadership; the second seems unclear whether the role is one of leadership, management or both; examples 3-6 however see the role as managing a curriculum rather than staff and it is this distinction, perhaps, that contributes to the contestation and elasticity of the role. The majority of the job descriptions describe the leadership and/or management of the curriculum as though in an almost anthropomorphic manner; if not anthropomorphic, the suggestion that the definition of curriculum is

wide enough to encompass the HRM of teaching staff is a step too far. From this point of view, virtually any duty, role or task can be seen as part of managing a curriculum area. The unwillingness to delineate the roles in terms of line management suggests either that the college is unaware of the extent of HRM tasks performed by first tier managers or that this element of the role is to be negotiated at a local level.

The data derived from the documentary analysis confirms at a national level the findings from the first three rounds of fieldwork. The role here is diverse, poorly defined, poorly articulated and open to constant interpretation. It is little wonder that, as reported by a number of participants, new FTMs do what they think needs to be done rather than what is contained in their often nebulous job descriptions. Here then is perhaps further evidence that the poorly delineated (and understood) nature of the role is a source for FTM autonomy as suggested in round 1 of the fieldwork (pp84/5).

## **Observations**

In addition to the documentary analysis, four observations were conducted in this round of the research project. The aim was to observe the typical interactions that FTMs are involved in, especially with their teams and their own managers. The obvious opportunity to observe such interactions was in team meetings and four observations were conducted, one in each of the colleges, selected to reflect the range of meetings FTMs were involved in:

- A carpentry team meeting at Woodside, FTM and five lecturers;
- A meeting of all the construction FTMs (nine), the functional skills coordinator and the head of school at Blackton. This meeting was attended by both Kevin and John who had been interviewed previously;
- A departmental meeting of public services, early years and care at Parklands, FTM and eleven lecturers;
- A literacy team meeting at Eastshire, FTM and four lecturers.

Detailed field notes were taken during each meeting which were expanded as soon as possible afterwards.

### *Settings*

The settings in Blackton and Eastshire were much more formal than in the other two colleges, both being held in meeting rooms, both with agendas and minutes arranged at each seat prior to the arrival of the participants (contrary to the convention of minutes and agendas being distributed prior to meetings). The meeting at Woodside was perhaps the least formal and was held during a lunch break in the staff room with one of the team typing minutes at his desk while the others sat eating. The meeting at Parklands was held in a classroom at 9am and Sue had provided an assortment of pastries for the team which she served to them as they arrived, the serving interactions providing a prime example of mothering behaviour as she insisted that each member had at least one cake.

### *Content of meetings*

While each of the meetings concerned different curriculum areas, there were two related commonalities that dominated the content: financial matters (resources, staffing etc.) and changes in the funding mechanisms of government. In each of the meetings, the financial strictures of each college were explicitly highlighted in reference to a variety of agenda items. In Woodside, Keith was discussing the need to reduce timber wastage within the department but linked it with the rumour of redundancies that was spreading through the college. In Blackton the head of school began the meeting by telling the FTMs of his nine hour meeting the previous day with the director of finance who was 'looking at every penny'. While avoiding reference to redundancies, the HoD did make implicit reference to job losses:

FTM 5:            If we don't meet the target (recruitment) are we going to be forced to take on less able students?

HoD:             If we don't recruit to target we'll be overstaffed.

Sue at Parklands was less implicit and informed the team that the financial climate meant that senior managers were looking for volunteers to reduce their contractual

hours by 10%: ‘we’re using the ‘reduction’ word rather than the other ‘R’ word [redundancy]’. In Eastshire finance again dominated the agenda items with the increase in learner achievement in Key and Functional skills an essential method of increased revenue generation.

The changes to the funding system were also apparent in all four meetings with the emphasis now firmly on retention of students where previously recruitment had been the priority. The meetings at Blackton and Woodside both included an item on strategies for maximising retention, with the HoD at Blackton inviting a college youth worker to outline the services he could offer to support the teaching teams. In Woodside, senior managers had asked the team to identify students at risk of withdrawing so that support action plans could be put in place to retain them. However, it was apparent that funding changes had also caused a great deal of uncertainty, with colleges still unclear about exactly what would be funded under the new regime, especially in relation to over-19 students. Where funding for all learners had previously been channelled through the Learning and Skills Council, from September 2010 funding was to be in the hands of local education authorities for 14-19s and channelled via Train to Gain and ‘learner accounts’ for students over 19. While most colleges appeared to be relatively secure concerning funding from LEAs, the mechanisms for adults were still to be clarified.

Other than funding and finance, the content of the meetings focused mainly on systems:

- Non-completed registers
- Leave cards not sent to FTMs
- Enrolment arrangements
- Rooming difficulties
- Timetabling.



What was noticeable by its absence was discussion of teaching and learning, a finding that supports the data from the interviews that FTMs' work is dominated by administration and managerial tasks. Of course, this may also suggest that FTMs trusted the professional competence of their teams and so considered teaching and learning to be in their hands rather than an item for the agenda.

### ***Resistance and collusion***

In the section on types of lecturer resistance experienced or observed by FTMs reported in Chapter 5, open criticism was the second most common resistant behaviour and being cynical was third; in the observations, both forms were highly visible.

The meetings at Eastshire and Parklands both contained low levels of resistance. The revised admissions procedures attracted criticism from Sue's team who felt that, by tightening adherence to the entry criteria, they were discriminating against students they would have previously given a chance to. Sue's response was typically frank as she admitted that they were indeed discriminatory and necessarily so, given the financial implications. The advent of 'taster days' also attracted cynicism and humour as they suggested activities for public service students (prospective police officers and soldiers) to help them 'get in touch with their inner child'; the lecturer for public services, the only male in the meeting, sat silently but his facial expression suggested that he was not amused. At Eastshire, criticism and cynicism were aimed at the college's lack of understanding of the functional skills agenda and how it would be implemented; there was however, little humour attached and two members of the team signalled their fervent concern.

It was in the meetings at Woodside and Blackton where resistance was most evident, however, and it is perhaps significant that both meetings – unlike in Eastshire and Parklands – had almost exclusively male attenders (see Collinson (1988) for a discussion of masculinity, resistance and humour), the only female participant being the functional skills coordinator at Blackton. The first set of interactions are from the meeting at Woodside:

**Interaction 1**

Keith (FTM): Our part time groups are poor.  
Lecturer 2: Yeah they're crap.

**Interaction 2**

Keith (FTM): Let's talk about action planning [for students at risk of withdrawal]  
Lecturer 2: How do we action plan for students who smoke too much shit [cannabis]?  
Lecturer 4: Get them to smoke more.

**Interaction 3**

Keith (FTM): [Keith informed the team that they were expecting a teenager for work experience who had cerebral palsy and could only use one arm. He asked the team for suggestions on what duties they could give him to do].  
Lecturer 2: How many arms does he need to use a broom?

**Interaction 4**

Keith (FTM): [Head of department] has asked us to make a retirement present for the principal – any suggestions?  
Lecturer 3: What do you call that wooden frame that has a length of rope hanging from it?  
Lecturer 2: Give him a picture of [Woodside] and say 'you arranged for this shit hole to be built'.  
Keith: What about a picture of us showing our arses?  
Lecturer 2: Give him one of the tree seats that have gone wrong – it'll remind him of this place.

What was clear throughout the meeting was that that Keith did not challenge any of the resistant behaviours, even when it was evident he was uncomfortable with some of the remarks, especially the one concerning the work-experience teenager with cerebral palsy. Not only did he not challenge the behaviours, collusion was evident throughout as he joined in with the humour and cynicism. The resistance was also self-evident as after each cynical or humorous comment the speaker would turn to the lecturer taking minutes and say 'don't minute that' in a joking manner. In fact, 'don't minute that' became a repetitive refrain throughout the meeting, aimed at me as note-taking observer as much as it was to the minute-taker himself.

What was also apparent was that routine resistance such as cynicism and humour did not solely take senior managers as their subject but students as well, a finding concordant with Tracey's responses in Chapter 5 (p156). Resistance aimed at students was also evident in the meeting at Blackton but this time it came from FTMs:

### **Interaction 1**

Youth worker: What kind of disruption do you get [from students]?  
FTM 4: Messing around with electrical switches.  
Kevin: Make sure they're live.

### **Interaction 2**

HoD: Students start keen.  
John: Keen to claim EMA.

### **Interaction 3**

The youth worker was asking where the FTMs thought he should meet students who had been disruptive:

FTM 2: What about the gym?  
Kevin: Meet them in the ring, beat the crap out of them.

### **Interaction 4**

FTM 1: I'm not going to enrol students until they've done an assessment on the taster day – that way you're going to know if they're a numb-nut.

### **Interaction 5**

HoD gave each FTM a list of their team members who had not completed their electronic registers:

FTM 1: I could guess the names on mine.  
FTM 4: Who's got the biggest list – I've been trumped! Oh, I'm on the list. Oops.  
FTM 7: I've got George on here with 131.  
FTM 4: Top trumps!

### **Interaction 6**

During calls for AoB:

FTM 6: Just to put in the repeat prescription – rooming shortages. Students are like gypsies roaming round the college.

FTM 4: They can do room surveys.  
John: Is there an E3 [entry level 3] course for being a gypsy?

This meeting was different in that there were no lecturers present, only FTMs and the head of department. However, as with the meeting at Woodside, none of the resistance was challenged, either by the HoD or by their peers. Again, resistance was not aimed solely at senior managers or functional departments – students were often the subject of humour and cynicism.

### **Respondent Validation**

The final stage of the fieldwork was to gain respondent validation for the findings. To achieve this I collated a seven page summary of all the key findings from the four rounds of fieldwork (see Appendix 1) and emailed it to each of the FTMs I had interviewed, inviting them to comment on whether it presented an accurate picture of their roles. All of the participants who responded (n=18) suggested that the findings captured their own experience of being a FTM and a selection of responses is presented below:

Cheryl (Woodside): I have had great fun reading your findings. So very negative in parts it fills me with joy!! This is because there is so little to be positive about. Oh dear. Absolutely accurate in the main.

Steph (Blackton): This makes interesting reading and I can see evidence of my contribution in this overview. The key findings represent a good understanding of the work of a first tier manager.

Jim (Parklands): Looks like a reasonable analysis of the role/roles of FTMs in FE.

Grace (Woodside): I've read it through and the summary looks really interesting, I'd say it has been well worth all the effort you have put into it. I think this is probably a good representation of overall findings but can't say it really represents my personal understanding as I think some of my views were probably in the minority.

Sue (Parklands): Had a read through last night and your findings make very interesting reading! Overwhelming impression I had once I had finished was of the apparent disparity between Colleges in their expectations of FMTs and in turn the FMTs' response to those expectations (if that makes sense!), and of the lack of conformity in the College's approach to this tier of management... Really pleased to see that I am apparently a 'hardy' individual – actually did me the world of good to see that, as I think we all feel so overwhelmed most of the time, we don't have time to step back and acknowledge that if we keep coming back for more and remaining relatively unbattered & unbloodied that we must have a shred of self-esteem left!

Jamila: I have read your findings with interest and feel that it does capture my views accurately, although I'm quite surprised to see that I appear to be in the minority i.e. not so critical of senior management. Probably due to the fact that my previous career was in industry and I am 'hardened' to the business stance that is becoming prevalent in education.

## **Summary of Chapter 7**

This round acted in terms of triangulation of the primary data. The documentary analysis confirmed just how little similarity exists among FTM job design nationally and that the extent of top-down job design varies dramatically. The observations, while limited in scope and number, did confirm both the collusion of FTMs with the resistance of their staff but also marked their own resistance to senior management in front of their teams. Finally, the respondent validation confirmed that the main findings were a sound representation of the views of FTMs, even if they recognised their difference from their peers.

This round of research marked the end of the fieldwork element of the project that had stretched over the course of a year. Unsurprisingly, given the endless turbulence of the sector, I had been witness to many changes both within the colleges and within the perspective of the FTMs themselves as they became ever more familiar with the role and delineated the penumbral boundaries of their responsibility. The next chapter will draw together the findings from the fieldwork and will generate a number of theories

that will, I hope, provide clarity for the simultaneously important and insignificant role of first tier manager.

## Chapter 8: Discussion

### Introduction

While the majority of the literature focusing on leadership and management in FE has privileged senior positions and middle management, this is one of few studies to focus solely on the neglected role of the first tier manager in FE. Using a case study methodology, this thesis presents evidence of the FTM role as elastic, with boundaries stretched to accommodate the needs of the local context and the proclivities of middle managers as they mould FTMs' span of control to accommodate that which they cannot (or will not) accommodate themselves. Thus the role is also highly contested, its functionality negotiated by the sense-making of the FTMs themselves and the other constituents of the trialectic of students, team and organisation, each with their own immediate gratification needs precipitating a survivalist reactivity among the participants. Elasticity and contestation are inevitable, given the diversity of understanding and misunderstanding of the role and the extreme heterogeneity of role design evident in colleges across the country. However, as much as other influences shaped the role, FTMs were found to be the main crafters of their work.

This chapter will discuss the main contributions of this research project and will attempt to provide theoretical models that capture the lived experience of the participants. The main contributions of this thesis are as follows:

1. A typology of first tier managers that, while specific to FE, may well be applicable to other sectors where there is an element of care and emotional labour.
2. An addition to the under-researched field of managerial resistance.
3. A proposed new coping scale grounded in the data.
4. A contribution to the literature concerning perceptions and distance of senior managers within the sector.
5. A proposed new approach to the design of first tier management roles.

Following the presentation of theoretical propositions, this chapter will suggest a number of implications for practice and recommendations for colleges.

### **Understanding the FTM Role**

Being a first tier manager in FE is difficult. Senior managers experience the difficulties of strategic leadership, of securing the success and survival of the organisation against the turbulence of prescriptive and ever changing governmental policy. Middle managers encounter the difficulties of their status as ‘buffer’ between senior managers and the departments they lead, mediating between strategic change and the immediate needs of professional teaching staff. For first tier managers, the difficulties of the role arise from their position within the trialectic of student, organisation and team, each element exerting its own needs, each element influencing both the experience and identity of the FTM. As a result, FTMs saw themselves as fire-fighters within a workplace that was routinely chaotic, a workplace that fused interpersonal conflict with seemingly endless paperwork, concern for their own teaching with managerial duties and professionalism with pragmatism.

Reflecting upon the findings in this research, it is a wonder that anyone would wish to work as a first tier manager in FE. Indeed, some of the respondents joked that they often wondered why they did the job instead of choosing an easier career. As Cheryl from Woodside stated in her response to the key findings, ‘there is so little to be positive about’. Yet the majority of the participants continued in their role – they came to work each day, they endured ‘home invasion’, they ploughed through their never-ending to-do lists. For some, perhaps, such persistence was the result of the fundamental need for income and the comparative bleakness of the contemporary FE job market. For the majority, however, the reason they came to work each day, the reason why they endured the difficulties of the role, was due to belief – they believed in education, in FE in particular, and they believed that what they did made a real difference in the lives of their learners. Their belief motivated them and drove them to maximise student success, whether it was defined in terms of qualification achievement or behavioural modification, whether preparing them for university or



the workplace. It was belief that pushed them through the fire-fighting, it was belief that helped to ameliorate the continual changes within their colleges; it was belief that drove them to jeopardise their wellbeing in meeting the demands of their role; it was even belief that caused them to resist. However, personal belief is only part of the FTM narrative; the rest is more instrumental and it this duality, the individual perspective and the role as designed, that this thesis attempts to theorise within this chapter. As such, as demanded by a case study approach, the role must be considered within its context and the interplay of the personal and the institutional interrogated.

What was clear in this study was the heterogeneity of the role in the four colleges, but what seemed common was that the role was subject to two primary influences. Firstly there was the job design itself as explicated in the job description and the formal duties; secondly was the interpretation and understanding of the FTM themselves. However, this individual interpretation was influenced by other factors including contextual cues such as the changes occurring in the college and their interactions with others, especially their own line managers. This section will provide a summative analysis of the role within each of the four sample colleges, drawing together the primary findings presented within the fieldwork chapters.

### **Woodside College**

The role of FTM at Woodside was the least formally managerial among the sample and was, in essence, a lecturer post with additional responsibilities and a different title. As such, there was no process of application and competitive interview; instead, the Heads of School selected those lecturers who were sufficiently experienced and who, presumably, possessed the requisite managerial or leadership skills to fulfil the role. The actual requirements, the criteria for becoming a FTM, were unknown, even by those selected for the post. Immediately, then, issues of equity and workplace justice present themselves. However, from the perspective of the role incumbents, such issues were offset by the fact that the rewards for becoming a Programme Leader were meagre – there was no salary increase and the position attracted only two hours of remission from teaching. Within this time, FTMs were expected to fulfil ‘curriculum leadership’ a vague term that could encompass a host of curriculum

related matters such as overseeing quality procedures, maintaining schemes of work and looking after the welfare of a student cohort. Their actual span of control was limited – they were responsible for levels within cognate curriculum areas; Liz, for example, was responsible for students studying level two beauty therapy.

However, while the Woodside FTMs felt the role lacked official recompense, they did feel that senior managers considered Programme Leaders to be important to the college; as such, they were in opposition to the majority of FTMs in the other colleges. They felt that senior managers understood the role and valued their contributions to the success of the college. What complicates this finding is that the Woodside FTMs also reported that they had little direct contact with senior managers. The question of where the perception of being valued came from is therefore of interest. One possibility is that this perception of senior management support was a result of the structure of the college – there were only three tiers: senior managers, middle managers and lecturers, with FTMs as a ‘mezzanine’ tier between lecturers and middle managers. As such, the shallow hierarchy may have meant that communication from the top was less filtered than in tall organisational structures. From this perspective, it is possible that middle managers acted as surrogates (Galvin, Balkundi and Waldman, 2010) for senior managers, carrying their strategic sense, their values and ideals directly to the teaching team. A further explanation could be cultural. The principal had been in post for many years – longer than any of the FTMs had been in post. He was considered to be a solid and measured influence in the college, even through periods of sectoral turbulence. As such, the college seemed particularly connected to the principal, perhaps to the extent that staff felt valued even without regular interaction. The FTMs certainly held senior managers in high regard and felt that, if they needed to, they could speak directly to them. Indeed, one of the FTMs, Keith, had taken advantage of this openness and considered this a positive experience (see p118).

The role design, therefore, foregrounded a model of distributed, but largely informal, leadership and it is likely that this influenced the way that the FTMs perceived their role. Of the six FTMs involved in the study, five saw their role as student-focused.

These five saw themselves primarily as lecturers, which they were by contract. As such, teaching was prioritised over administrative and managerial tasks. Lacking the formal position of ‘manager’, they considered themselves as part of the teaching team; this understanding was also reported to be shared by their colleagues. Here, more than in the other colleges, student-focus appeared to be a direct result of the job design (or lack of job design). As such, the five student-focused FTMs did not see management as being part of their role and positioned themselves in opposition to ‘real’ managers. The two hours remission were devoted to completing administrative tasks connected with their curriculum responsibility and maintaining quality procedures such as liaising with external verifiers.

However, while five of the FTMs were clearly student-focused, the remaining participant, Keith, maintained an omni-focus. Keith was Programme Leader for carpentry and interpreted his role more formally. For him, Programme Leadership meant that he was effectively in charge of the carpentry staff even though he did not line-manage them. This disparity between Keith’s perception of the role and the other FTMs calls for additional analysis. While they shared the same role, salary and formal hierarchical position, there was one contextual difference. While the other FTMs worked in stable schools, the school of construction had undergone a lengthy period of instability. The Head of School had been on long term sick leave for over a year and his deputy had been standing in. With little experience of managing an entire school, the acting head had, according to Keith, been forced to devolve much more responsibility to the Programme Leaders. As such, Keith had perhaps been impelled to expand his span of control which led to becoming omni-focused. Here, then, while the role of FTM at Woodside was predominantly defined according to the role design and individual interpretations, in Keith’s case the influence of the middle manager also helped to shape the focus on the role. For Keith, this presented an opportunity to negotiate extra remission from his teaching which, he argued, was necessary to fulfil this enhanced role. As such, Keith engaged in ‘job-crafting’, an issue that will be discussed in the recommendations section below.

## **Blackton College**

In contrast to Woodside College, the role of FTM at Blackton was formal. Curriculum Team Leaders had to apply for their positions and complete competitive interviews. In return, FTMs received 5-6 hours of remission from their teaching contact hours and joined the FTM pay scale which was above lecturers'. They were expected to fulfil a range of devolved human resources functions including appraisal, teaching observations and absence management as well as holding responsibility for quality procedures. While FTMs in Woodside were responsible for levels within cognate subject areas, at Blackton FTMs oversaw the entire curriculum area. Steph, for example, was responsible for all levels of health and social care and line managed the staff who taught in that area. The number of staff line managed ranged from five to 10 across the participants.

While the FTM role at Blackton had previously positioned FTMs as part of the teaching team, structural and cultural changes at the college meant that the participants saw this changing. A new principal had been appointed who clearly communicated her vision to drive Blackton to become outstanding. The means to achieve this was through a process of 'realignment'. While the FTMs interviewed interpreted this in terms of a restructure, their responses also suggested that cultural change was an aim. Part of that change, they felt, was to make their roles more 'managerial', a move they interpreted as focusing more on performance management and effective administrative control. Such a drive had never been formally communicated to the FTMs. However, the principal had recently engaged the services of external management trainers for FTMs. The training itself focused primarily on managing the performance of teams and included such topics as 'fierce conversations', a means of addressing unwanted behaviours among subordinates; as such, the FTMs interpreted it as a symbol of increasing the managerial focus of their roles, even though the job design itself remained unchanged.

Whereas in Woodside the lack of a formal role seemed a significant determinant of focus, with the majority adopting a student-focus, in Blackton there was more variety in the way FTMs interpreted their role. Here, two were student-focused, one was team

focused, three were organisation-focused and one maintained an omni-focus. What can be hypothesised is that greater formalisation of role reduces the extent of student focus among FTMs. Increased emphasis on the managerial element of the role may mean that FTMs are less likely to prioritise a student-focus as their attention is required by all three elements of the trialectic rather than just students. This finding also suggests that when the balance between teaching and management in role design is more even, the nature of the FTM role is determined more by individual understanding and interpretation than by formal job design.

While a student-focus was seen in Woodside as a response to the lack of role formality, here it adopted a different character. The two student-focused FTMs, Elaine and John, were, after all, in management positions and so a different explanation for their role focus must be sought. The most likely explanation can perhaps be found in how they reacted to the changes that were occurring within Blackton and the modernisation agenda that the new principal was ushering in. Both student-focused FTMs were highly cynical regarding the changes and so their focus on students can in a sense be understood as a means of distancing themselves from their managerial identity and thus their association with the changes, especially the drive to make FTMs more managerial. Both John and Elaine resisted this cultural shift; they considered it divisive and likely to separate them from their team. As such, they resisted the fulfilment of performance management duties: Elaine would observe teaching sessions that were 'satisfactory' and grade them as 'good' to avoid repercussions for the lecturer who had been observed; John routinely ignored absence management protocols. In this sense, student-focus at Blackton, rather than being related to job design, can be seen as principled resistance. However, for Elaine, student-focus came at a price and was attributed as a cause of the deletion of her post and her subsequent unsuccessful application for an alternative. The resistance embedded within her student-focus was seen, by her at least, as incompatible with the new drive of the college to make the FTM role more managerial.

The other positioning can also be seen as a product of the transformative changes that were occurring within Blackton. For David, structural change meant the potential for

career development and so he adopted an organisation-focus, prioritising managerial and administrative tasks and distancing himself, cognitively and physically, from his team. To an extent this was about impression management, about highlighting his managerial skills; David also perceived that these were the strategies integral to promotion. The other organisation-focused FTM, Jamila, also adopted her focus in relation to the changes within the college. Her area of responsibility was to develop employer engagement in IT training, delivering courses designed for the needs of small to medium businesses. This was a key area for Blackton and so her orientation drove her to focus on her managerial duties in an attempt to increase the extent of employee-based provision. However, the organisation focus of David and Jamila was not purely identification with the college, it was also influenced by their private lives. Both had young families that required huge amounts of attention and time. As such, adopting an organisation-focus was seen as the best means to balance work and their home life by minimising their focus on the other two elements of the trialectic, students and their teams.

Steph's positioning as omni-focused also appeared intrinsically linked to the changes within Blackton. Once the principal was in post, she commenced a series of senior management post-deletions where the current role-holders had to apply for newly designed roles and were mostly unsuccessful. For Steph, this created a certain amount of concern that such a strategy may be replicated at the first tier (as it was with Elaine); in response, in an attempt to secure her job, she attempted to 'keep her head down' and try to attend to all elements of the trialectic at once to avoid being seen as inefficient.

Pat's positioning as team focused seemed less related to the changes that were occurring in the college and, equally, were relatively free of the constraints of her job description. In Pat's case, the role was influenced by her own understanding of her department and the understanding of her own manager, the Head of Sector. For Pat, the critical factor in student success was the efficacy of her team and so, as their line manager, she prioritised their development and welfare. The Head of Sector shared this philosophy and so the nature and parameters of the role was negotiated between

them. This example is important for this research and will serve to inform the recommendations section below which suggests that this model of collaborative negotiation of roles may serve as a model for the sector.

### **Eastshire College**

The role of FTM at Eastshire was similar to that of Blackton but the managerial element was even greater. Again, the role required formal application and competitive interview and involved a highly structured job description that outlined the various duties of FTMs, including appraisal and teaching observation. Unlike Blackton, however, FTMs in Eastshire were not required to manage staff absence. A more significant difference was to be found in the extent of remission that FTMs received, 10-12 hours instead of 5-6 at Blackton. The formal job design, then, roughly balanced teaching and management time and, as such, there was little doubt that the role was formally managerial and this was reflected in the role focus among FTMs here: two were team-focused, two were organisation focused, one was omni-focused and one was student-focused. Again, as in Blackton, we find evidence of a correlation between the balance of teaching and management and a greater variety of foci adopted.

Whereas in Blackton the changing context of the college appeared a significant determinant of role focus, Eastshire was relatively stable in comparison so that factor was less influential. However, while there was no transformational change apparent in Eastshire, incremental change did have an impact, in particular in influencing the adoption of an organisation-focus. Mike and Patrick both worked in vocational areas that were expanding – Mike in IT and Steve in employer engagement, two key areas within the strategic development of the college. As such, both roles necessitated a greater proportion of outward-facing engagement, developing an employer based curriculum. As such, their focus was less on their students and their teams and more on positioning themselves within the strategic imperatives of the college. For Mike, this organisation-focus was also career oriented – he hoped that expansion would mean promotion and so he positioned himself in the same way as David at Blackton, foregrounding his commitment to managerial and administrative tasks.

Sara was the only student-focused FTM at Eastshire and, to a large extent, it was this focus that prompted her to leave the college. Despite the clearly managerial nature of the role, Sara still saw herself as a teacher first and foremost and as a member of the teaching team, just as FTMs in Woodside did. She had, she admitted, underestimated just how managerial the role was and the extent of home invasion – she was even required to take the department’s mobile phone home at the weekend so teachers who were going to be ill on Mondays could be covered in advance. In response, Sara attempted to remain student-focused and concentrate on teaching; this focus had caused conflict with the Head of School. As a result, Sara decided that a student-focus was incompatible with the FTM role and so she left for a purely teaching role. Here then, is an example of a mismatch between job design and individual perceptions of role and has echoes with Elaine at Blackton who also found her focus incompatible with the role. However, Sara had at least left by choice, unlike Elaine.

Eastshire had two team-focused FTMs, the most among the four sample colleges. Team-focus was very much in the minority with only three across the sample. In fact, Blackton and Eastshire were the only colleges that had team focused FTMs, perhaps as a result of their greater balance of teaching and management. Like Pat at Blackton, Linda and Jan were both committed to their teams and saw this focus as the best means of driving up student success. Their experience of maintaining this focus differed however. Linda found that maintaining a team focus compromised her position in that she found herself a regular audience for routine resistance from her team. As such, attempting to find the right balance between being supportive and challenging resistance was problematic. Challenging resistance, for Linda, risked threatening the efficacy of her focus by distancing herself from the team; not challenging it risked being seen as colluding. Jan’s account did not include such predicaments. However, similar to the student-focused FTMs at Blackton, she resented the performance management aspects of her role – for her, a team focus was about developing lecturers as autonomous professionals rather than contributing to the performative aspects of performance management. Here, role conflict occurred because her understanding of the role did not accord with the ever increasing



necessity to monitor and measure teaching efficacy. As with Sara, this conflict prompted her to leave, not just the college, but education.

Lynette was the only omni-focused FTM at Eastshire. In her accounts of her experiences, Lynette, more than any other participant, discussed the values intrinsic to her work – she had herself returned to education as an adult and saw FE as a real second chance for learners. As such, her focus initially was on students and their needs. However, in becoming a manager she tried to meet the needs of the entire trialectic as her area, English and literacy, was one of growth. She was aware of promotion to middle management becoming imminent but, rather than assuming an organisation-focus as some of the career minded FTMs did, her belief in teaching and the needs of her team meant that she felt she could not neglect the other elements. As such, although the impact on her wellbeing was significant, she maintained an omni-focus.

### **Parklands College**

In each of the previous three colleges the role of FTM, while contested and elastic, was at least bounded in terms of hierarchy. At Parklands, things were more complicated. Before this research began, Parklands operated with four management levels: senior managers, directors, middle managers (Heads of School) and Programme Leaders (FTMs). However, three months prior to the start of fieldwork, the college underwent a restructure, the third in three years. In this process, middle managers were upgraded to Deputy Directors. To replace the middle management functions, a new role of Curriculum Team Leader was created and, while technically subject to competitive interview, the positions were ring-fenced for current Programme Leaders. However, those Programme Leaders who were promoted were also expected to maintain programme leadership for their subject specialist area. For example, Vicky, who had previously been Programme Leader for administration and secretarial courses, was promoted to Curriculum Team Leader for business, leisure and tourism and sport. Despite this, she was also required to continue as Programme Leader for her specialism. As such, several of the participants in the sample – Jim,

Sue, Tracey and Carol as well as Vicky – were simultaneously first tier and middle managers.

The design of the role at Parklands was therefore more complicated than in the other colleges. Programme Leaders received 10 hours of remission and line managed 8-10 lecturers; Curriculum Team Leaders received around 18 hours of remission and line managed up to 30 staff, a mixture of lecturers in their subject area, and the other Programme Leaders. As such, there was considerable confusion among staff, both lecturers and managers, about the span of control and the boundaries that separated roles. The perfect example of the complexity concerned departmental self-assessment where Curriculum Team Leaders would have to complete one programme self-assessment in their subject area then feed that into their own school self-assessment which they also wrote.

What was less disputed was that the FTM role, of both types, was considered to be highly managerial by the participants. The most direct impact of this perception was that there were no student-focused and no team-focused participants at Parklands. Instead, four were organisation-focused and five were omni-focused. Of the Programme Leaders, three were organisation-focused, one was omni-focused; of the Curriculum Team Leaders, those who were simultaneously first tier and middle managers, four were omni-focused, one was organisation-focused. Whereas analysis of the influences upon role-focus was relatively straightforward in the other three colleges, the complications of the role design in Parklands makes analysis more problematic. What is of course significant is that there are no student-focused or team-focused FTMs. It should not be inferred that FTMs here were somehow less concerned about student and staff welfare than their contemporaries. Other factors must instead be sought to explain this finding.

Careerism can again be seen as an important influence upon the adoption of an organisation-focus at Parklands. Given that there had been three restructures in three years, each creating new management roles, this was perhaps unsurprising. The organisation-focused participants were open about their desire to progress and so

devoted more time and energy to managerial and administrative tasks. Perhaps more significantly, all four of the organisation-focused FTMs had come to FE relatively recently from industrial backgrounds; with them they seemed to bring a greater understanding of – and sympathy with – financial imperatives and the ‘business’ side of education. This, again, is a likely antecedent of an organisation-focus.

Of the five omni-focused participants, four were Curriculum Team Leaders. All of them spoke of their desire to stay close to teaching and to students but, as they were primarily middle managers, they spoke about being dragged away from pedagogical concerns. Even though they led large teams, the content of their management rarely involved teaching and learning, much to their regret. As such, even though FTMs may have wanted to attend to all the needs of the trialectic, they were acutely aware that it was an almost impossible task and one that would be detrimental to their wellbeing. What underpinned this focus was the sense that, because of their increased accountability, school management was so unstable that to neglect any element of the trialectic risked failing in the eyes of senior management but, more importantly, failing to meet their own values and standards.

However, the lack of student and team focused FTMs may also be explained by reference to the culture of the college. Of the four sample colleges, senior managers at Parklands were spoken of in the most derogatory and pejorative terms. All of the FTMs here, even the organisation-focused ones, described the culture as highly managerial and financially driven. In addition, many spoke of the blame culture that was reported to be very much in evidence. As such, even though the FTMs may have desired to be more student and team focused, the culture may have more greatly promulgated a greater level of organisation-focus. As a result, some joined the culture and made the organisation the prime focus; others, perhaps as a form of resistance, adopted an organisation focus with a concern for students and their teams.

## **A Typology of First Tier Management**

Once a comparative analysis of the role across the sample was conducted, I began to consider a typology of the FTM role and the starting place was the ubiquitous management styles inventory or, more accurately, a range of such models. However, what soon became apparent was that none accurately captured the experienced work of the participants. Most models of management are based upon a dialectic between organisation and staff with typologies of management style located at various points along the continuum. For example, Blake and Mouton's model (see Milner, 2002) is defined according to two behavioural dimensions: a concern for production (organisational objectives) and a concern for people (staff). Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) contingency model of situational leadership follows the same dialectic between task and relationship behaviour, between the needs of the organisation and the needs of staff. What characterises both models is the restrictiveness and exclusivity of the constituents with only the organisation and employees represented. What is missing in these models – and many like them – is the *subject* of the outputs: while both are located within the private sector, neither include the customer. As such, dialectical models – although widely used within the educational sector – are inadequate for understanding the work of first tier managers in FE, as they exclude the subject of the service, the student. While Blake and Mouton's model may be applicable for senior managers who are engaged only in the dialectic between the organisation and their staff, the data from this research shows that FTMs work within a trialectic of student, team and organisation. As such, the model of management presented here is not universal; it emerged from and is designed for first tier managers in further education specifically.

As was evident in the previous chapter, the design of the FTM role as presented in job descriptions is at best vague. There is confusion over whether the role is one of leadership, management or both, whether managing holds primacy over teaching and whether the position involves managing people or the curriculum. In the interview rounds, evidence was also found that the role as experienced was no clearer. While occupying a role that is poorly explicated and inadequately understood presented

problems for the FTMs, it also created space for agency and subjectivity. Where there was contestation, there was also autonomy; where there was a lack of clarity there was also an opportunity to forge the role according to the identity, focus and values of the FTMs themselves and, more than any other factor, it was this perception that shaped the work and priorities of the FTMs, and this subjectivity that provided the basis for the model of first tier management articulated throughout this thesis.

As such, this research highlights the way in which employees – even within a common role – come to change the nature and identity of their jobs as was discussed earlier in this section; in this we see similarities with the theory of ‘job crafting’. Traditional approaches to job design such as the Job Characteristics Model (see for example Hackman and Oldham, 1980) focused on how the structural characteristics of a job such as task variety, autonomy, feedback, significance and identity could ‘enhance internal work motivation, satisfaction, performance and presenteeism by cultivating experiences of meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results’ (Grant and Parker, 2009, p6). However, such perspectives see job design only as a top-down process with senior managers delineating roles; this ignores the ‘socially constructed nature of work’ (ibid, p7) and the active nature of employees in the interpretation of job design. For Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), formal job requirements can never fully determine job boundaries, meaning and identity and so individuals engage in ‘job crafting’, the ‘physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work’ (p179). From this perspective, despite the best efforts of organisations to define a role in a prescriptive manner, employees will interpret it in their own way which will determine which tasks are prioritised and which aspects of the job are considered meaningful and will shape their organisational identity accordingly. From this point of view, the way that FTMs positioned themselves within the trialectic can be understood as job crafting – despite commonalities in the FTM roles, the role incumbents crafted their jobs to suit their particular understandings, inclinations, ideologies and career-orientations.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) argue that there are three motivations for job crafting. Firstly, employees craft to assert or maintain control over their work. For

FTMs this motivation to job craft was clear. The workplace was seen to be chaotic and complex with competing pressures from the student/team/organisation trialectic. In essence then, due to the penumbric design of the FTM role, everything was deemed to be within the task/responsibility boundaries of FTMs. One of the most frequent terms used throughout the fieldwork was ‘fire-fighting’ and, indeed, reactive management was considered an essential skill for the participants. Yet rather than demonising reactivity (see Bryce, 2008; Bohn, 2000; Young, Corsun and Shimar, 2004) and allocating blame to the fire-fighter as likely arsonist, colleges should perhaps be seen as fire-hazards. When virtually every problem from staff sickness to photocopier breakdown was seen to be within the FTMs’ span of control, the first motivation to job-craft as a means of asserting control over an inflammable workplace was evident.

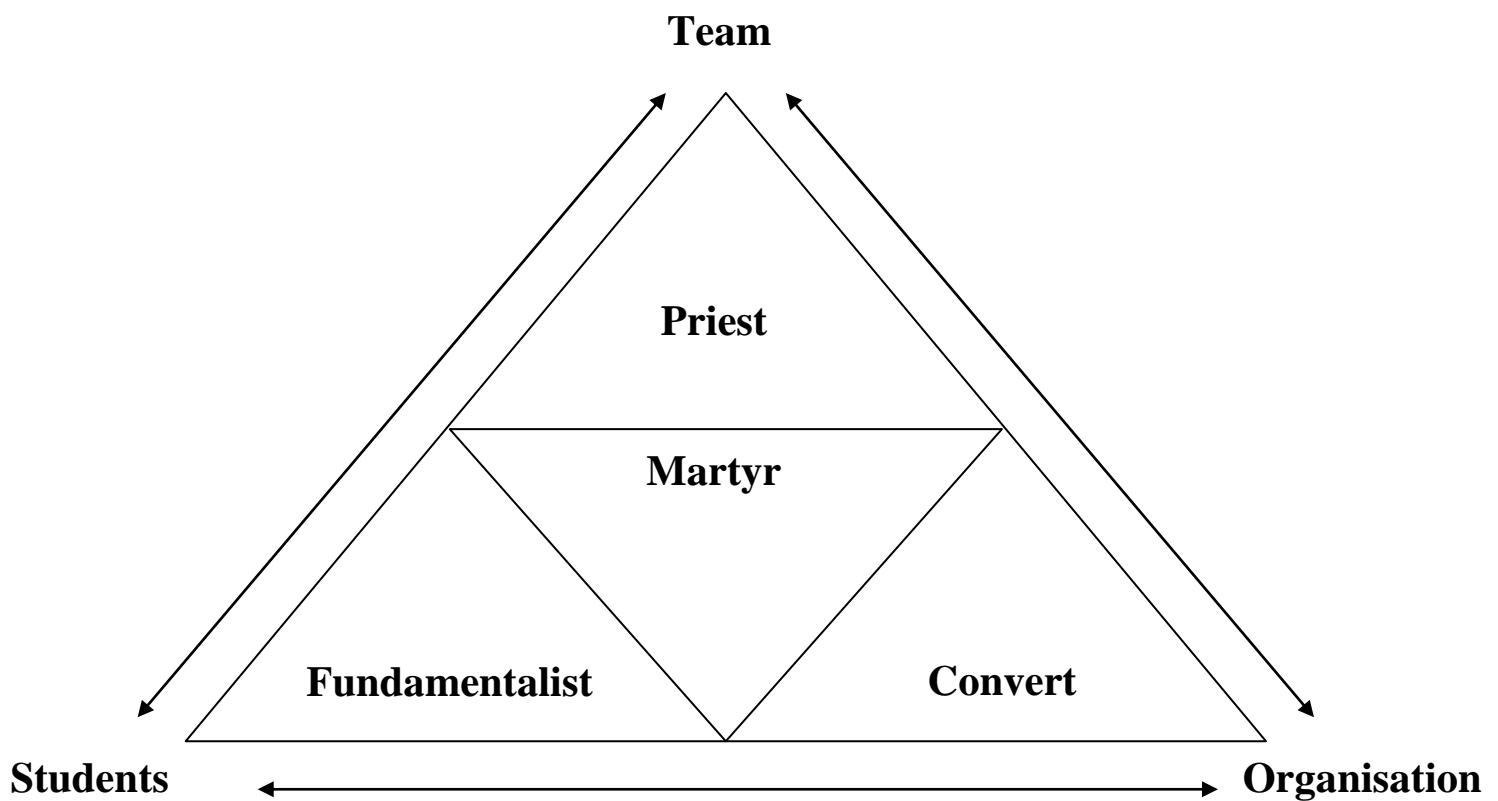
The second motivation for job crafting is to seek to ‘create and sustain a positive sense of self in their own eyes and in the eyes of others’ (Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001, p183). Here again we find resonance within the data: FTMs struggled to locate themselves within the teacher or manager paradigm of organisational identity. And it was not just to reconcile self-image in their own eyes – each participant was acutely aware of how they were perceived (or imagined themselves to be perceived) by lecturers, by middle managers and by senior managers, a symptom of the ‘liminal’ position of the role (Mulcahy, 2004).

Thirdly, ‘job crafting allows employees to fulfil a basic human need for connection to others’ (ibid, p181) and, again, FTMs were found to occupy a role that provides ample motivation for job-crafting as represented by the trialectic. Given the three categories of others (students, teams and the organisation), FTMs had to choose where to position themselves according to their own proclivities.

From this perspective, FTMs can be regarded as highly motivated to job craft but motivation is not enough – there must also be perceived opportunities for crafting to take place: job descriptions must include ambiguity and employees must have autonomy in how they perform their role. As the fieldwork suggests, the role was

found to be ambiguous both in the four sample colleges but also in the wider documentary analysis. In addition (and perhaps as a result according to Troyer, Mueller and Osinsky (2000)), FTMs were found to be generally autonomous, activated by a lack of role clarity, professional trust and middle manager overload. As such, FTMs found themselves in a situation where job-crafting was not only an option but a necessity.

Within the trialectic, FTMs were found to occupy one of four positions based upon their priorities: student-focused, team-focused, organisation-focused and omni-focused. However, to 'add analytical depth and richness' (Fleming, 2005, p48), metaphors will be used to articulate each of the four positions. In this typology the metaphors will be drawn from religion for two reasons: firstly, the belief of the FTMs in the value of education and the work they did was essential to their motivation and hardiness; secondly, religion shares many semantic items with education: we may think of the vocation of teaching, the ethical and moral foundations of the profession, its social purpose of empowerment. For Jauhianen and Alho-Malmelin (2004), education has 'taken over the role and functions of the church as the producer of morals that create social cohesion' (p462) and generates 'symbolic products' such as degrees and titles. However, Jauhianen and Alho-Malmelin offer the religious metaphor from the perspective of the learner, the seeker (or non-seeker) of educational salvation or damnation, in other words, the congregation. This typology of first tier managers is focused on those *within* the holy order, those who participate in the institutions of faith. Most critical here is the belief of the professionals within colleges, their faith that education and training is capable of acting as a transformative agent in the lives of their learners. From this perspective FTMs were fundamentalist, priest, convert or martyr, depicted in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: FTM Model**

Before discussing each of the metaphorical faith-positions, a justification of the choice of titles should be made. The terms – especially ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘martyr’ – are clearly emotive and connotatively loaded yet this was a deliberate attempt to highlight the strength of feeling among the participants about their role and their understanding of the organisational context that arose from the data. Fundamentalists saw themselves precisely in those terms and saw the increasing financial imperatives of their college as profane and heretical. Their fundamentalism was a deliberate oppositional positioning as an attempt to re-appropriate the educational terrain from senior managers. Similarly the accounts from martyrs foregrounded the deleterious effects of the role upon their health: we may think of Sue who compared herself to a carthorse who was repeatedly beaten (p102); we may also think of Tracey who envisaged senior managers making a token visit to her grave after an untimely (and work-related) death (p133). With this in mind, the titles were deliberately chosen as those which were most representative of the depth of feeling that FTMs exhibited.



From this metaphorical perspective, student-focused FTMs are *fundamentalists*, those practitioners who foreground the student experience and believe most fervently in the purpose and principles of further education. Almond et al. (in Emerson and Hartman, 2006, p130) define fundamentalism as

a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled ‘true believers’ attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors.

For fundamentalist FTMs, the *militancy* is educationally-driven and a reaction against the financial imperatives that increasingly define their work; the *identity* being eroded is that of an autonomous, professional lecturer; fortified are the *borders* around the educational community, inclusive of students and teachers but repelling senior managers. Fundamentalist FTMs are the most devout adherents to the doctrine of student welfare and the educational salvation (to use Jauhiainen and Alho-Malmelin’s (2004) term) offered by FE as the ‘second-chance sector’ and perceive themselves to be teachers before all else – ‘manager’ is a title, not an obligation.

In the accounts of fundamentalist FTMs, accountability was evident, but it was not the variety of accountability ensconced with the performativity mechanisms of Ofsted, benchmarking and league tables. Accountability for fundamentalists was moral and social and measured in terms of student welfare and success. However, even ‘success’ tended to be accounted for in different terms and embraced behavioural transformation and skills-acquisition before pass rates and retention percentages. As such, fundamentalist FTMs were those who positioned themselves against senior managers and service departments in the most oppositional terms; as a result, tasks that were perceived to be managerial or administrative were attended to only after the completion of pedagogical and pastoral duties. That is not to say that teaching was a priority in isolation. Fundamentalists tended to prioritise the whole student experience rather than just their personal classroom activities. Here then, although ‘manager’ was an often disavowed term, fundamentalists had embraced their enhanced role to some extent, explicating their area of responsibility in terms of students’ entire wellbeing

while at the college. Seen objectively, they were fulfilling the managerial role even while distancing themselves from the organisational understanding of ‘managerial’.

Team-focused FTMs are *priests*, ‘representative of a society’s deity’ whose duty is to ‘ease the supernatural relationship between human and god’ (Hirst, 2010, p1). But, in addition, priests are also representatives of the church and its structures. In the FTM context, priests are the advocates for their teams, interceding between the mysterious and unknowable ways of senior management and the congregation of the devout and focusing on the administration of the rites of HRM. While priests are equally supportive of the salvation-potential of FE, salvation here was to be attained by the skilful and moral management, support and motivation of their teams (or acolytes) rather than prioritising their own relationship with learners. While performance management rites such as internal observations often adopted a self-flagellant aspect in colleges, for priests the observation of their team was an opportunity to facilitate development for the good of the learners. Similarly, the rite of appraisal with its shades of the confessional (Barry et al., 2001; Wilson, 2002) was transmogrified from its performance management origin to a means of identifying professional development and recognising achievements.

Where fundamentalists positioned themselves (even if only cognitively) within the teaching team, priests recognised their separation and foregrounded the discourse of cooperation between themselves and the lecturers they managed. Their hierarchical rise was discussed in terms of emergence – they all described how they had been fulfilling many of the FTM duties before taking on the role officially; promotion (ordination) was merely a conferment of title upon the leadership practices they performed on a daily basis. They generally accepted the title and obligations of a managerial position but saw their role as a means of facilitation – their *raison d’être* was to make the professional lives of their team easier, thus providing increased quality of teaching and learning.

Organisation-focused FTM are *converts*. Conversion here is a matter of ‘institutional transition’ (Paloutzian, Richardson and Rambo, 1999), the movement from one sub-

group to another in a larger religious tradition. Convert FTMs are those who most self-identify as managers rather than teachers, accepting and promulgating the discourse of the almighty, a zeal for the financial imperatives of the contemporary college where students are customers and pass rates are equated with organisational survival. Here administrative, reporting and managerial tasks are prioritised above learning and teaching concerns. While the adoption of business practice within colleges was considered profane or heretical by fundamentalists, converts were acutely aware of the pressures of governmental policy levers that forced colleges to focus keenly on financial matters. It is also significant that the majority of FTM converts in this sample had come from the private sector – ‘tradition transition’ in Rambo’s (in Paloutzian et al., 1999) terms – and brought the discourse of commercial survival. However, transitioning from the private sector to the public sector often brought frustration for converts who were used to business practices that emphasised speed and efficiency of decision making.

Converts were also highly aware of college strategy and how it related to their particular context. More than any other type of FTM they attended senior management open-invitation meetings and shaped their management of their teams according to a strategic plan. In addition (and it was likely connected) converts were the most likely to speak explicitly about their desire to be promoted. While they did not necessarily relish the extensive data collection and reporting tasks required of them, they understood the importance of these processes to institutional survival and also understood that speed and skill in these matters were highly valued in the contemporary FE sector and were likely to expedite promotion.

Finally, there are the omni-focused FTMs, *martyrs*, those who ‘should choose to be forgotten, mocked or exploited but never understood’ (Camus, 2006, p47). Martyr FTMs are those who bear the demands of the trialectic most keenly, sacrificing health and well-being – a signature of martyrs according to Cook (2007) – for the good of others and the sanctity of their beliefs in the transformative potential of education. While fundamentalist, priest and convert FTMs all exercise significant agency in their alignments, martyrs attempt to satisfy each constituent element of the

trialectic and are dragged between foci depending on the current imperative. As such, martyrs are the type most subject to home invasion.

Yet despite the impact of the role upon well-being and health, martyrs often adopted a belligerent defiance in their accounts – they were determined to meet the needs of all elements of the trialectic. In this we see the determination to make a ‘pro-social’ difference in Grant’s (2007) terms: they are ‘employees who see their work as a calling [and] want their efforts to make the world a better place’ (p393). Yet this altruism was accompanied by a resignation that, despite their best efforts, they were unable to devote enough attention to learners which created significant levels of guilt, a form of cognitive mortification to extend the holy metaphor. There was also the sense in their accounts that they never did enough, no matter how many hours they worked and how much effort they put in as the ‘relational architecture’ (Grant, *ibid*, p395) emphasis on management and administrative tasks reduced the motivation they enjoyed from student contact. For martyr-FTMs, the role was sisyphian.

As with any model or typology, not all of the participants fitted exactly within the conceptual boundaries. Where there was some overlap, the majority faith-position was allocated according to the characteristics in Table 7 below that they mostly corresponded to. However, while the FTMs in this study were found to be within four categories, it was also clear that the faith-positions of the research participants were not fixed within them, even in the space of the year of fieldwork. This metaphorical typology allows space for movement: FTMs may potentially be moved to apostasy and move from one position to another. In addition, the four types are not intended to be exclusive and it is quite possible that future research could add to the typology with categories such as ‘prophet’, ‘evangelist’ or ‘atheist’.

**Table 7: FTM metaphorical faith positions**

<b>FUNDAMENTALIST</b>	<b>PRIEST</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-defined as teachers rather than managers</li> <li>• Teaching and learning and student welfare prioritised</li> <li>• Moral and social accountability</li> <li>• Administrative and managerial duties performed only after student-focused tasks completed</li> <li>• Educational and professional discourse</li> <li>• In some cases the focus on students and teaching was a result of insufficient salary rather than moral conviction</li> <li>• Part of teaching team rather than management team</li> <li>• Imagined self: teacher with management duties</li> <li>• Resistance by alternative discourse of fundamentalism, making out and fiddling</li> <li>• Most likely to turn a blind eye to avoid identification with management</li> <li>• Commitment primarily to students and team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team-leader role prioritised</li> <li>• Development of the team seen as the best way to meet student needs</li> <li>• Focus on mentoring, coaching, teaching observations and personal issues</li> <li>• Mentoring and coaching seen as key activities</li> <li>• Intermediary between lecturers and more senior managers</li> <li>• Role seen in terms of advocacy for teaching team</li> <li>• HRM discourse adopted</li> <li>• Developing and leading team</li> <li>• Imagined self: supporting team</li> <li>• Most likely to turn a blind eye to avoid damaging their relationship with team</li> <li>• Making out – impression management</li> <li>• Commitment primarily to students and team</li> </ul>
<b>CONVERT</b>	<b>MARTYR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfilment was located in management tasks rather than teaching</li> <li>• Highly conscious of implications of organisational strategy for their context</li> <li>• Administrative and reporting duties seen as key to being promoted</li> <li>• College seen in business rather than pedagogical terms</li> <li>• Established clear boundaries between themselves and lecturers</li> <li>• Business/managerial discourse</li> <li>• Most likely to engage in resistance by distance plus most likely to be able to ‘switch off’</li> <li>• Most likely to challenge resistance to avoid damage to promotion prospects</li> <li>• Making out - cut corners on teaching, manipulate official systems</li> <li>• Commitment primarily to the organisation</li> <li>• Least likely to experience stress</li> <li>• Never experience guilt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts to meet the needs of students, lecturers and the organisation equally</li> <li>• Regret at being unable to focus solely on students or their team evident</li> <li>• Accepted that an omni-focus was likely to be detrimental to their own well-being</li> <li>• Most likely to work at home</li> <li>• Multiple discourses</li> <li>• Part of team but also managing team</li> <li>• Imagined self: variety but dumping ground key</li> <li>• Least likely to employ routine resistant forms; principled dissent common however</li> <li>• Most likely to challenge resistance – afraid of impact on success and undermining own position</li> <li>• Cuts corners on teaching in an attempt to meet the needs of the trialectic</li> <li>• Commitment primarily to students and team</li> <li>• Most likely to experience guilt</li> </ul>

However, while there was agency and crafting in the self-positioning of FTMs, other factors were also influential: salary, formal position in the hierarchy and the teaching/remission ratio. All affected the faith-positions of the participants. For example, FTMs at Woodside – Programme Leaders – were lecturers by contract and salary but held different titles and received two hours remission a week allocated to management duties. With the main burden of their time devoted to teaching and receiving no financial up-lift, fundamentalism became more likely. Here, with no line management responsibility, the institutional view of being an FTM was very much concerned with managing a curriculum. The ambiguity of this perspective – as discussed in the previous chapter with the analysis of job descriptions – meant that FTMs were able to craft the role in terms that distanced themselves from the term ‘management’. FTMs at Woodside largely interpreted the role as one of maximising student success and welfare. The extent of managerial tasks was overseeing processes directly connected to the curriculum: ensuring schemes of work were collated, completing paperwork connected to internal moderation and liaising with external verifiers. Anything else was seen as above their pay grade. Thus the structural elements of their post allowed them to remain embedded within the teaching team. In contrast were the Curriculum Leaders at Parklands – simultaneously FTMs and middle managers – who taught as few as four hours per week and received the highest salary. Of the five participants in this position, four were martyrs, one was a convert. Here the greater proportion of their time was dedicated to managerial duties and was therefore a significant influence upon their faith-proclivities. Their contact with students was limited – most of their teaching hours were devoted to providing cover for sick colleagues rather than enjoying sustained relationships with discrete groups of learners. Their elevated hierarchical position meant that they were embedded within the wider college network of managers – at the same level and higher – and so fundamentalism was an ideal rather than a reality. While cognitively they clung to their identity as educators, the formal delineation of their role appeared to offer a stark choice: conversion or martyrdom. Conversion meant simplifying their working lives and resolving role conflict by increased identification with the organisation; martyrdom necessitated the seemingly impossible task of attending to the needs of all constituents of the trialectic, often at the expense of their wellbeing.

Between the two extremes of role design at Woodside and Parklands, the position of FTM was more ambiguous. In Eastshire and Blackton, FTMs were elevated hierarchically from lecturers, paid slightly more than lecturers and received between six and twelve hours remission – in these colleges there was more of a balance between teaching and management and significantly there was a greater variety of faith-positions identified. In Blackton for example there were two fundamentalists, one priest, three converts and one martyr. As all shared roughly the same terms and conditions, the impact of functional job design seemed to exert little influence in the faith-positions of the FTMs. A possibility was that the culture of different departments exerted an influence but this was negated by the examples of John and Kevin: both worked within the school of construction but the former positioned himself as a fundamentalist, the latter as a convert. Both had the same salary, the same title, the same line manager, the same industrial background and the same teaching/remission ration yet they adopted entirely different faith-positions, perhaps based upon their personal values. As such, it may perhaps be inferred that when the functional job design is balanced relatively equally between teaching and management tasks, FTMs are able to exert more agency in their individual interpretations and individuals are able to job craft to a greater extent.

It is in the example of the FTM job at Eastshire and Blackton that we find evidence to support Grant and Parker's (2009) suggestion that ambiguity and complexity in work roles are not necessarily a bad thing; indeed they suggest that ambiguity can create proactive behaviours as employees job craft to reduce uncertainty and, in the process, create a role that suits the needs both of the individual and the immediate organisational context. They also argue that – in opposition to always creating stress – job complexity can encourage creativity, intellectual flexibility and feelings of responsibility. We may think of Pat at Blackton who, upon being promoted to FTM, sat with her head of department in bewilderment at the job description; they decided to ignore it and devise their own job role according to the needs of the department and, perhaps more importantly, the needs of the team. Clearly Pat crafted the job into the position of metaphorical priest as she and the HoD decided that supporting the

team was the most valuable use of her time. We may also think of Patrick at Eastshire, a newly appointed Work Based Learning Coordinator, a FTM position that involved creating curricula for employers. In this example it seemed to Patrick that no one in the organisation really knew what the purpose of the job was; ambiguity was the one certainty. The second thing everyone agreed on was that it was complex. In response – and seemingly quite autonomously – Patrick decided that the role was organisation-focused in its drive to gain more diversified income and involved little team management and so he adopted a position of metaphorical convert and distanced himself from his team. In both these examples we find evidence of creative responses, intellectual flexibility, proactivity and, perhaps most importantly for job crafting, feelings of responsibility.

However, while there may be organisational, departmental and individual benefits from role ambiguity and complexity, there are also limitations. It was clear from the data that the prime motivators for FTMs was working, and achieving successful outcomes, with students. What was perhaps the most motivating part of the FTM role overall, however, was the sense of meaningfulness that arose from the work and this was evident from FTMs in all four positions of the typology. While the meaningfulness may have been a result of different focuses, the work was still meaningful: for fundamentalists such as John, it was in turning round a student with behavioural issues; for Linda, a priest, it arose from helping a colleague to develop their teaching practice; for converts such as Jim, it lay in creating a healthy income from student numbers; for martyrs such as Sue, it came from getting through each day intact and on her own terms. In these contrasting pairs we see how the FTMs job crafted to make their work more *personally* meaningful via a process of ‘cognitive crafting’ (Berg et al., 2010, p166). In a general sense, meaningfulness is intrinsic within educational job designs in that it involves working with students to make a pro-social difference. What the data suggest is that FTMs job-craft to make their work idiosyncratically meaningful – meaningfulness was shaped by personal beliefs, perspectives and orientations. Here then, the typology of first tier management proposed by this research may also be a determinant of the *type* of meaning that is extracted from the work.



Meaningfulness and motivation, however, are fragile conditions. Johns (2010), calls attention to the way that ‘grinding workload pressure’ (p363) can undermine the meaningfulness that can be extracted from a job and this appeared true in this study. Such extreme workloads can reduce both autonomy and feelings of competence, two of the ‘supportive conditions’ for motivation according to Ryan and Deci (2000a and b). As well as undoing the positive elements of the role, the complexity, contradictions and insecurity of the FTM context may contribute to the formation of the FTM identity, the ‘active efforts of oneself fighting through a jungle of contradictions and messiness in the pursuit of a sense of self’ (Alvesson, 2010). Here the FTM identity is comparable to Alvesson’s ‘struggler’ category of organisational identity which becomes defined by the ‘inevitable gap between the desire for a perfect self and the profound disappointment of never being able to realize this desire’ (Brown and Starkey in Alvesson, *ibid*, p200). From this perspective there is the possibility that the FTM identity may become so defined by the struggles of the work that efforts at forward planning may be frustrated. And, as Johns (2010) suggests, ‘coping with a gruelling workload to maintain one’s self-worth is a poor basis for extracting meaningfulness from a job’ (p363).

The issue appears to be the conflict between the two forms of job design that are contested within the FTM context. While the job-crafting that the participants were engaged in provided meaningfulness and motivation, it was diminished by the top-down job design imposed upon them that increased the workload pressure by, among other things, extending the boundaries of the FTM network to include almost all levels of the college hierarchy as well as academic, managerial and service departments. Hornung et al. (2010) highlight further limitations of the two forms of job design: job crafting, when it occurs ‘without reference to broader interdependencies is a recipe for chaos’ (p190). While chaos is perhaps hyperbolic in the case of FTMs, the difficulties of such prolific and unconnected job-crafting are self-evident. On the other hand, top-down job design processes do not take into account the ‘capacities and needs’ (*ibid*, p 189) of the individuals. Arguably, additions should be made: top-down job design must also take into account the nature of each

department, its staff, students and the proclivities of each FTM. Such an approach would provide fidelity to Fullan's (2001) notion of being open to the realities of others. With limits to both top-down and bottom-up approaches to job design, a third approach is required, that of 'idiosyncratic deals' (Hornung et al., 2010), a blend of job crafting and organisational design that is perhaps better suited to the needs of colleges and FTMs. This approach will be discussed more fully in the recommendations below.

### **The Potential for Comparability**

As discussed in Chapter 3, while traditionally qualitative research has often been seen as largely incompatible with generalizability (see Denzin, 1983, for example), others have sought a new conception of the term. Goetz and LeCompte (in Schofield, 1989) suggest that generalizability in qualitative studies should be seen in terms of 'comparability', the

degree to which components of a study – including the units of analysis, concepts generated, population characteristics and settings – are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results of the study as a basis for comparison' (p179)

This research has attempted to provide 'thick' descriptions in a narrative form to allow such comparability to other contexts to take place. In addition, 'typical' colleges rather than specialised institutions were selected as sites for study and the research used multiple sites to study the same role, two methods identified by Schofield (1989) that may increase the comparability of studies.

As such, while this typology is created to represent the experience of FTMs in further education, potentially it can be compared to other areas of the public sector, wherever the subject of the service is critical and wherever the trialectic is evident (though the term 'student' would be replaced). One context where comparability is likely is nursing, a context where the FTM has been a particular topic of focus as discussed in the literature review. Bondas (2009), Johansson et al. (2007) and Viitanen et al.

(2007) all describe many features of the fundamentalist-priest-convert-martyr model (p23).

However, to provide comparable or translatable contexts, there must be evidence of four key features: firstly the work of the FTM must be founded upon clear and embedded values, ethics and beliefs in the purpose of the work; secondly, the FTMs must be in a context where the recipient of the service is foregrounded, even where the institutional drive may seem to be embedded within notions of financial imperatives; thirdly, there must be an extended relationship with the recipients of the service which would differentiate the contexts from single transaction encounters with 'clients'; finally, there must be an element of care and emotional labour. As such, as well as nursing, the typology may be comparable to FTM roles in other education and training contexts such as higher education, private training providers and schools. In addition, non-education contexts, such as the probation service and social work may also be comparable, wherever these four elements are found.

### **FTMs Resisting**

Just as the FTM is neglected in the literature, so too is the concept of managerial resistance. This research goes some way to addressing this scarcity. Perhaps the primary reason for the paucity is one of dichotomy: management and resistance are predominantly presented in binary opposition both in the labour process theory paradigm and the micro-political paradigm (Mumby, 2005). In the dichotomous view, power is often reified with research focusing on the indomitable mechanisms of control that subsume and ultimately extinguish resistance; alternatively, resistance is reified and romanticised to such an extent that resistance is found in almost every action. Such a binary approach frames employees as managers or workers, appropriators or re-appropriators, colonists or space-seekers, controllers or resisters. From this perspective managers are conceptually precluded from resistance. As a result, the literature predominantly discusses managerial resistance only in relation to external threats such as mergers and takeovers (Sharfstein, 1988, Yen, 2002) or union influence (Kleiner, 2001, Sims, 2007).

But management is not homogenous and hierarchical position is no measure of acts of subordination. As this research makes clear, managers are just as likely to resist as other workers as they ‘share in the subjugation and oppression that characterizes the lives of production workers’ (Braverman in Willmott, 1997, p1334). Instead of adopting a dichotomous approach, managerial resistance should be positioned within the dialectic of power and resistance which allows us to focus on the ‘interpretive struggles among discourses and practices’ (Mumby, 2005, p24) and engenders a consideration of control and resistance wherever it is locally and socially produced (Prasad and Prasad, 2000). From a dialectical perspective, those in formal positions of responsibility are both managers and managed, producers and recipients of control, conformists and resisters. And while writers such as Young (2000) and Thomas and Davies (2005) focus on the ‘decaf’ (Contu, 2008) managerial resistance of oppositional discourse and competing ideologies, such subjectivities are arguably ‘insufficient as a project of resistance if [they] are not accompanied by action’ (Karreman and Alvesson, 2009, p1122).

The issues of simultaneously managing and being managed are highlighted throughout this research – right from the very first round of fieldwork, FTMs were found to be resisting. The sheer range of resistant strategies employed by the FTMs must be seen on a continuum and can be framed by the typology proposed in the previous section. At one end are the overt forms of resistance: principled dissent, direct confrontations and refusal were all reported as means of responding to senior managers who were generally reviled by the participants in the study (see the section on senior managers below). What is significant in these examples is the element of courage displayed by the FTMs in environments that were often defined by insecurity; it is perhaps testament to the strength of feeling against managerialist practices that prompted such overt actions. Yet overt resistance was not adopted equally by the four types of FTMs: martyrs were the type most likely to openly – and sometimes publicly – signal dissent directly to senior managers: Curriculum Leaders at Parklands who formed a coalition and presented a list of objections and demands (p146); Keith who screamed and shouted at the Head of School when the pressure became too much

(p208); Vicky who threatened to resign unless her director agreed to her request for additional staff (p117). From these examples and by reference to their position within the trialectic, we may find an explanation for the propensity of martyrs to resist overtly. Martyrs are those FTMs most subject to the combined forces of students, team and organisation and, as the data suggest, the result is a high level of stress and a concomitant detriment to health. It is likely that, in trying to meet the needs of the three elements, overt resistance is the final recourse once personal coping strategies have been exhausted. In addition, few martyrs wished to proceed further up the management hierarchy and it is likely that this contentment with their current tier meant that they felt less constrained by careerism and therefore more able to resist.

While perfectly willing to engage in overt resistance behaviours, martyrs were found to be less likely to pursue covert forms; here, then, appeared to be the terrain of the fundamentalist, priest and convert. However, again we find that different types of FTM were more predisposed to certain types of resistance.

Converts, with an inclination to climb the management hierarchy, avoided overt forms of resistance, presumably for fear of damaging their promotion prospects. However, converts were found to be the group most likely to engage in resistance by distance (Collinson, 1994) – they were the only group that routinely reported the ability to ‘switch off’. Despite identifying with their colleges, work was strictly compartmentalised from their private lives. With the organisation prioritised in this metaphorical faith position, those elements of the trialectic that demanded the most intense emotional labour – teams and students – were distanced which perhaps engendered the ability to separate the self from work. However, this distance was only enacted away from the workplace, never within. This meant that the observable daily behaviours were still those of the convert and, from an external perspective, non-resistant. This ability to distance the self from work may also be connected to the background of the converts, almost all of whom had come to teaching as a second career, mostly from industries that lacked the intensity of emotional labour demanded by careers within the education sector (see Avis and Bathmaker, 2004, for example);

as such, they may have arrived in FE with a heightened ability to see work *as* work rather than as a vocation.

The final two types of FTMs – priests and fundamentalists – were those categories that employed the widest range of covert resistant behaviours but there were also differences. As the self-appointed intercessors between their teams and more senior managers, priests were the FTM type that most regularly engaged in granting favours to members of their teams. While they lacked the formal power to offer tangible (and official) rewards, priests would regularly allow members of their team to arrive late or leave early to make up for overtime or if a private matter necessitated absence. Having fully adopted the devolved HRM role, priests were acutely aware of the bureaucracy and needless complexity (Olsen et al., 2010) of formally requesting flexibility in their team's timetables; as a result, priests would keep such favours quiet – the transactions were between them and the individual member of their team.

However, it was fundamentalists who engaged in the widest range of covert routine resistance and most common were various forms of 'making out' (Goffman, 1971; Burawoy, 1979), those behaviours that 'work the system, subvert or manipulate the official practices of the workplace' (Page, 2010). Fundamentalists regularly cut corners on managerial and administrative tasks, estimating statistics rather than devoting time to data retrieval and precise calculations; in addition they would employ ignoring as a routine response to requests, especially when those requests came from service departments such as MIS or Human Resources, those departments that lacked direct control and formal power over FTMs. Yet their primary method of resistance was discursive: the very fact that they adopted a fundamentalist perspective and discourse placed them in direct opposition to the senior managers they considered were value-less and impelled only by financial imperatives.

The discussion here focuses only on the primary methods of resistance of each of the four faith positions and is not meant to be exclusive: converts also sometimes ignored requests; martyrs also occasionally distanced themselves; priests and fundamentalists also performed acts of principled dissent. The aim here is to highlight how the

positioning of FTMs – whether agentively or by means of top-down job design – may invite a proclivity to adopt specific forms of resistance. Here, then, resistance may be viewed as a result of the contestation between the two primary understandings of job design discussed in the previous section. But while the overt-covert continuum is one means of classifying acts of resistance, there is another, one that focuses on the potential impact of resistance. While for writers such as Contu (2008) and Young (2000) organisational resistance is often ‘decaf’ and lacking impact, this research highlights those forms of managerial resistance that are likely to be impactful, the ‘espresso resistance’ of managers (to continue the coffee metaphor): short, strong actions such as principled dissent, ignoring and refusal that are oppositional and do not merely activate a ‘specious sense of freedom’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2003, p162) but temporarily disrupt and suspend the mechanisms of control that operate within colleges.

The sheer range of managerial resistance behaviours presented in this thesis offer additional evidence of the agentivity of FTMs and the autonomy of their position. But this autonomous space, as well as being a result of the trust and overwork of middle managers, can itself be seen as a result of resistance: cutting corners, ignoring requests and estimating data all provide time to spend on more meaningful tasks; distance – both cognitive and physical – provides space for reflection and alternative priorities. Resistance from this point of view is a very real generator of autonomy.

However, while FTMs comfortably saw themselves as resisters even though they were managers, what was missing was any suggestion that, as managers, they were complicit in the subjugation of their own teams. In addition, they did not suspect that their teams saw them as ‘subjugating managers’ at all. Where this issue, myopic or otherwise, was most evident was in the discussion of the resistance from their teams. The data suggest that there was an even wider selection of routine forms of resistance that were employed by lecturers but rarely was it reported that resistance was aimed at FTMs themselves. Resistance from lecturers was seen as aimed squarely and definitively at senior managers and service departments such as MIS or HR. Thus, while FTMs were found not to be the primary target of resistance, they regularly

provided a proximal audience for the resistance. Cynicism, jokes about senior managers and ignoring behaviours were reportedly enacted within staffrooms, within team meetings (see p241) and within dyadic interactions between lecturer and FTM. Resistance was seen as part of the everyday experience of FTMs who, as observers, were faced with the dilemma of challenging the behaviours or exercising benign neglect (MacLean, 2001) and turning a blind eye. To challenge resistance created the potential for conflict with their teams, the very teams they relied on to achieve both organisational and curriculum objectives. In addition, challenging resistance risked self-identification with senior managers and thus admitting complicity in the acts of subjugation they themselves resisted. On the other hand, FTMs could turn a blind eye to the resistance they encountered and continue to ascribe subjugation to senior managers alone and maintain the cooperation and interpersonal ties which they valued so highly.

The choice of responses – challenge or collusion – was greatly influenced by the metaphorical faith-position of the FTMs: fundamentalists and priests were more likely to turn a blind eye, but for different reasons. Ignoring or colluding with resistance for fundamentalists appeared an attempt to avoid being identified with ‘Management’. For some this dis-identification was ideological, a reaction to the value-less and financially-driven leadership of their college; for others, dis-identification was pragmatic and a means to prevent a loss of cooperation from fellow teachers. Priests were equally likely to turn a blind eye but here the concern was with not damaging their relationships – both personal and professional – with the members of their team, not necessarily for the risk of withdrawal of cooperation but because these relationships were valued so greatly, the quality of the leader-member exchange (see for example Graen and Uhl-Behn, 1995) being a crucial part of the priest identity.

In stark contrast were converts and martyrs who were the types most likely to confront and challenge even routine forms of resistance but, again, the reasons differed. For converts, resistance was a challenge to their authority. Even if it wasn’t aimed at them, their identification with the organisation meant that resistance to senior managers was resistance to them as well. Furthermore, failing to challenge resistance



could also be seen as detrimental to the career advancement of converts – progression to more senior positions was unlikely if resistance at team level went unchallenged. Here then, within the act of challenging, was an admission of complicity in the acts of subjugation that occurred within the colleges. However, we must remember that converts were found to be the FTM-type least likely to resist within the working day – resistance for converts was an act of distancing the self from the college after hours. As such, it appeared that they expected the same from their teams – resistance should be in their own time.

While martyrs were also likely to challenge resistance, the reasons were different. Resistance for martyrs was seen as potentially damaging to every element of the trialectic and, as martyrs were already struggling to meet all needs, resistance held the potential to topple the balance and undermine everything they were trying to accomplish. Most martyrs were also those who held the widest span of control in their top-down job design, managing the largest teams and, especially at Parklands, occupied the highest hierarchical position. While we may suspect that managing the largest teams would lead such FTMs to adopt a position of priest and a prioritisation of care for their teams, this proved not to be the case. A potential explanation is perhaps that larger teams meant less interpersonal contact with each team member and less opportunity to develop personal relationships. Alternatively, it may be that colleges purposefully allocated the largest span of control to those FTMs who displayed the characteristics of martyrdom – the more work a curriculum area would require, the more it needed someone who would work at the expense of their well being. As such, martyrs perceived resistance in direct relation to their aim of meeting all needs of the trialectic. Routine forms of resistance therefore had to be controlled to prevent a loss of control and damage to the student experience, the cohesion of the team and the accountability of their position. Unlike converts, however, martyrs did not view themselves as perpetuating acts of subjugation. The most vocal and overt of resisters themselves, they did not challenge resistance due to organisational identification or because senior managers wanted them to, they did it because certain forms of resistance were seen as damaging to the student experience. Of course, it may be that this was rationalisation on the part of martyrs – by identifying student

welfare as the antecedent of challenging resistance they could avoid self-identification with senior managers; whether their teams understood their actions in the same way is, of course, debatable.

## **Coping**

From the perspective of the FTMs, none of the colleges in the sample were taking real steps to tackle the issue of stress. Those attempts that were made were seen as token gestures, acknowledgement that college employees worked in a stressful environment, but no concrete measures to minimise stress was forthcoming. As a result, FTMs found themselves responsible for managing stress among their teams. However, what were missing were any measures to assist FTMs to manage their own levels of stress. As such, FTMs relied upon themselves to cope.

Faced with the multiple demands of the trialectic, as well as resisting, FTMs were found to employ a range of coping strategies. In an attempt to capture the emic perspective of the research participants, I decided not to use any existing measures of coping but instead to formulate one based on the data from this project alone. While drawing on three highly influential coping scales (Folkman et al., 1986, Carver, 1989, Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002) I formulated an original coping scale (reproduced below) that includes the new category of non-compliant coping, the category that includes those behaviours that are problematic in terms of categorisation and can be perceived to be within the resistance or coping paradigms. Whereas previous coping scales have been created to be as general as possible, this scale arose from the data of this research project and is thus specific to FTMs within the sample colleges. As such it allows us to understand the range of coping responses that are employed by FTMs, from those highly problem-focused strategies such as multi-tasking, through emotion-focused behaviours such as exercise, to those non-compliant strategies that are intended to protect the self by resisting work stressors. However, differentiating actual resistance from non-compliant coping proved problematic.

<b>Table 4: Coping responses</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Coping Strategy</b>
Compliant	Prioritisation and Planning Seeking support for instrumental reasons Increased effort Multi-tasking Self-coaching Focus on positives (holidays etc)
Affective	Exercise Tension reduction Seeking support for emotional reasons Venting of emotions (shouting, grumbling etc) Humour (self and situation directed)
Non-compliant	Ignoring Escape Focus on personal relationships Dissent Cutting corners

As discussed in the second chapter, the literature provided little guidance on the relationship between the resistance and coping – studies were either concerned with resistance or with coping, rarely both. Where they were discussed together, they were treated as alternatives or two sides of the same coin in binary opposition (Mullings, 1999) – individuals either exhibit resistance or coping or, alternatively, coping is seen as synonymous with resistance (Parish et al., 2008). There are also differences of interpretation of the same behaviours: for example, Edward et al. (2007) interpret the search for agentive space as coping, while for Fleming and Sewell (2005) the same behaviour is defined as resistance; Newton (2002) suggests that ‘game-playing’ and impression management are forms of coping where for other writers such as Collinson (1999) and Noon and Blyton (1997) such behaviours are within the resistance paradigm; Troman and Woods (2000) define ‘exit’ as coping whereas for Gabriel (2008) the same action is seen as resistance.

However, this thesis argues that the two behaviours can be differentiated in the following way: resistance is a response to power and control, coping is not.

According to Prasad and Prasad (1998, p231):

all workplace resistance (whether routine or organized) is triggered by different forms of organizational control, namely, direct personal control, technical control, bureaucratic control, and worker or concertive control.

Coping, however, is not *necessarily* related to issues of control and subjugation. Coping can be triggered by any stressor, as easily proceeding from a student as from a senior manager. As such, coping is not related to the dialectic of control and resistance. Rather than being political and/or principled, non-compliant coping is therefore perhaps best viewed as pragmatic. To highlight this distinction, examples from the data are given.

In the first round, 'ignoring' was described as a form of routine resistance. One such example was reported by Abbie at Parklands: when the quality unit passed her copies of a student survey to distribute to her students, she threw them away because she judged them to be pure surveillance and contrary to the principle of trust in academics as professionals. This behavioural response, from Abbie's perspective, was triggered by organisational control. As such, her response can be seen as resistance.

In round three – with the research emphasis on coping – ignoring was again a common response but it was clear that perception of the event was different:

Sue (Parklands):       It's like phone messages – I pretend I don't see the phone flashing.

Tracey (Parklands):   The other way I'm actually dealing with [stress] is when I'm being asked to do something and somebody's saying 'do you agree' I'm not actually answering. I'm not giving them an answer so my body language is hopefully saying 'no I don't agree'. And then that way I haven't got to get into a confrontational situation where actually I know this person desperately wants x y and z because that'll just get me stressed more so I just sit there.

In these cases, it appears that the transactions – telephone messages and face to face discussions – are not seen as products of control or subjugation. Rather they are contextual events that are seen as potentially damaging to wellbeing – as such, they are judged to be stressful. Their choice of ignoring is therefore not connected to issues of power and control; they chose ignoring, a type of non-compliant coping, on the grounds of pragmatism – it would avoid increasing their levels of stress. Here then, an analysis of transactions (and the interpretations of those involved in them) is necessary to differentiate between resistance and coping. From this perspective, non-compliant coping is about resisting stressors rather than resisting subjugation. As such, it is pragmatic rather than principled.

However, while the types of resistance employed by the participants appeared to be contingent upon their faith-position – fundamentalist, priest, convert or martyr – the typology (see p260) appeared not to be a determinant of the form of coping strategies employed. Instead, coping appeared to be a product of individual personality and personal values rather than being affected by job crafting or structural job design. To illustrate the point, two comparisons will be presented. Firstly, David and Jim, both converts from Blackton and Parklands respectively; their coping responses are presented below:

<b>David (Blackton)</b>	<b>Jim (Parklands)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritisation and planning</li> <li>• Increased effort</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Tension reduction (eating)</li> <li>• Venting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Focus on personal relationships Humour</li> <li>• Exercise</li> </ul>

Here we can see the differences between the two converts in terms of coping. While they both adopted the same primary form of resistance (distance/separating the self from work), very different coping strategies can be identified in their accounts: David adopted compliant and affective styles of coping while Jim adopted affective and non-

compliant coping. Further evidence of the individual nature of coping can be seen in a comparison between two fundamentalist FTMs:

<b>Rob (Woodside)</b>	<b>Jan (Eastshire)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritisation and planning</li> <li>• Multitasking</li> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Escape</li> <li>• Exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tension reduction</li> <li>• Seeking support for emotional reasons</li> <li>• Seeking support for instrumental reasons</li> <li>• Focus on personal relationships</li> </ul>

Again we can perceive clear differences between the two accounts – both Rob and Jan draw on all three categories of coping but each adopt different strategies from within the categories.

However, the tentativeness of the coping scale at this stage of development must be emphasised, as it is based on only one research project with a relatively small sample size. What it does do is suggest that coping is far more individualistic than resistance and is less determined by job design factors. Even when individuals interpret and craft their jobs in the same way, their methods of coping with a similar workload and context will be highly variable. This hypothesis requires testing on a far larger sample and will form the basis of future research arising from this project. The coping scale needs to be tested on a college wide scale to investigate whether there are significant patterns of coping adopted by different hierarchical levels and within service departments as opposed to academic departments.

### **Senior Management**

Throughout the research project, the participants almost exclusively discussed senior managers in pejorative terms and, while it may have arisen from a single case study, the conflicting paradigms – professional versus managerial – of Randle and Brady (1997) appeared intact. If anything, the representations of senior managers in the participants’ accounts went beyond the managerial to, occasionally, the dictatorial. FTMs presented themselves as the heroic torchbearers of professional autonomy and

educative values, while senior managers were described as being obsessed by financial imperatives and managerialist intentions. We may think of senior managers in Parklands who decided to stop distributing paper without consulting their staff; we may also think of the vice principal at Blackton who informed Elaine of the deletion of her post and subsequent demotion with a redundancy policy in front of her as a symbolic threat; we may also think of the routine interactional distance between senior managers and their teams. Perhaps the most significant context for FTMs' mistrust of senior managers was in their accounts of change within their colleges.

Despite the perpetual nature of change within FE (Simkins and Lumby, 2002), the literature contains relatively few studies of the *nature* of the change, preferring to focus on how change should be managed (see for example Bailey et al., 2006 a and b) rather than how it is actually experienced within the workplace. As such, this research adds to the studies such as Watson and Crossley (2001) and Edward et al. (2007) in documenting the lived reality of change within colleges.

The data suggest that while continual change is largely a result of government policy levers, the processes of change are often badly managed within colleges, with senior managers neglecting the essentials. The data further suggest that rarely was a rationale for change provided; consultation was considered inauthentic or non-existent; communication concerning the changes was poor; changes were hardly ever completed or evaluated. While FTMs are pivotal in the implementation of change, they were largely excluded from the planning and evaluation processes. As a result, it would be reasonable to expect (and this was indeed one of my contentions before the fieldwork) that FTMs would occupy the resigned background (Ford et al., 2001) where the experience of past failures would lend a pessimistic perspective to any further changes. However, this was found not to be the case with the majority of FTMs suggesting that they adopted optimism in the face of change, even if that optimism was contingent upon an understanding of the need for change. The data then suggest that change in FE is not routinely resisted, a finding in opposition to much of the literature cited in the first chapter. What the research suggests is that FE is a *resistant context*, an environment characterised by managerialism, surveillance,

performativity, individualisation and de-professionalisation. These elements provide an inevitable proclivity to resist all actions of management, not change specifically. Change is thus seen merely as one of many actions of senior managers and is often seen as an example of performativity or managerialism rather than as a change in itself.

But such a depiction of senior management is problematic and is challenged by writers such as Lumby and Tomlinson (2000) who found that academic and professional values were at the heart of principals' work and students were their main concern; while funding was seen as important, it was 'the commitment to teaching and learning and to students and staff which is the underlying driver' (ibid, p142). Moreover, the data from this research – albeit in a limited way – also supports Lumby and Tomlinson's perspective to an extent. The principals at Eastshire and Blackton had made significant attempts to engage their staff in consultations which had created a perception that they were refreshingly open and even courageous in their openness; senior managers at Woodside were almost unanimously lauded for their openness and leadership skills. But even these examples did not ameliorate the paradigmatic opposition that was evident in the responses from the participants and there are a number of potential explanations for this divide.

Firstly, there is the issue of distance. Collinson (2005) highlights how crucial leader distance can be within organisations and that it can 'fuel employee resistance' when leaders are perceived to be 'detached and aloof from the realities of production and service' (p241). Communication between senior managers and FTMs (and between SMT and lecturers) was rarely direct; often it was filtered down through the hierarchy. But this distance cannot solely be blamed on senior managers; this research suggests that lecturers and FTMs often avoided opportunities for meeting with SMT and enacted disengagement strategies of resistance; from this perspective, the distance between principals and staff had created an organizational 'back region' 'largely inaccessible to leaders' (Collinson, ibid, p241). As such, senior managers appeared to have few opportunities to discuss the rationale or principles behind their strategies; as changes were filtered down through the hierarchies of the colleges, it may be that the



educative value-content was diluted – all that may have been left was the instruction rather than the rationale. Indeed, in two of the meetings that were observed that were chaired by middle managers, financial imperatives were offered as the only explanation for changes. While wishing to avoid the scapegoating of middle managers (Fenton-O’Creevy, 2001), just as they may act as gatekeepers of critical upwards communication, so their ambivalence in representing senior managers may also engender cynicism and distrust (see also Larson and Tompkins, 2005). In addition, Humphreys and Hoque (2007) suggest that middle managers are also plagued by role overload that reduces their ability (or willingness) to facilitate greater communication between senior managers and lower tiers.

Secondly, without direct interaction, the potential for paranoid cognition and sinister attribution error (Kramer, 1998) is greatly increased. Paranoid cognition, Kramer argues, occurs when individuals suffer heightened self-consciousness as a result of feeling that they are under intense evaluative scrutiny: as has been argued in this thesis and elsewhere (Page, 2010), surveillance is one of the prime constituents of the resistant context of FE, enacted through the checking of data, the emphasis on team work and punitive internal inspections. As such, the suspicion of intense scrutiny is perhaps an example of when paranoia makes sense (Kramer, 2002). In such a context, the actions and messages of senior managers, filtered through the pragmatism of middle managers, may be appraised through an overly negative lens, one that defines senior managers as being without morals and without concern for their staff or students.

However, it may be that the explanation for the persistence of conflicting paradigms is historical rather than psychological; the fact that the paradigms – from FTMs’ perspective at least – are intact 13 years after Randle and Brady’s article may offer support for this suggestion. In her study of resistance among airline pilots, Ashcraft (2005) suggests that the cause of (mainly male) pilots’ resistance was their ‘gendered heritage’ (p76). Their subjectivity was ‘a specific, historical product embedded within particular conditions and power relations’ (Collinson, 1994, p52). Their perspective and resistance was thus rooted within a historical context of power in which they

enjoyed a far higher status. The same may be true for the contemporary FTM and lecturer. Teachers' subjectivities may be a result of their *academic* heritage, the unofficial organisational memory (Walsh and Ungson, 1997) of a time before incorporation when lecturers (reputedly) enjoyed professional autonomy and FE was about the primacy of teaching, of a time of silver book contracts and union might. It may also be suggested that this academic heritage that positions teaching staff and management in binary opposition is also perpetuated by the unions. However, as both Lumby (2001) and Ainley and Bailey (1997) point out, some aspects of the pre-incorporation legacy may not have been as perfect as is sometimes remembered. Few of the participants in this research were in FE before incorporation and, as such, had never experienced the contractual protection of the silver book. The fact that several elements of Randle and Brady's (1997) professional/managerial dichotomy continue may therefore suggest the continued influence of the academic heritage.

The causes of the continuing perception of senior managers as opportunistic, financially-driven and without educational values is an issue that is beyond the scope of this research project and requires further research. While it is likely that the pejorative view of senior managers presented by FTMs in this research is overly harsh, it is also true that some senior managers exacerbate the situation. Parklands provides an ideal example: FTMs at Parklands were perhaps more critical of their senior managers than any other participants, accusing their leaders of high levels of managerialist excess. The fact that the principal of Parklands was engaged in appointing senior managers from non-education sectors including an accountant and an ex-car salesman did little to break down the professional-managerial paradigmatic barriers. At the other extreme were the senior managers at Woodside who were spoken of highly by the FTMs as prime examples of effective, values-driven leadership.

## **Recommendations**

The primary recommendations arising from this research concern the design of the FTM role and highlight a potential method for reducing the role ambiguity and conflict by the implementation of ‘idiosyncratic deals’ as the main method of job design. In addition, issues of transition, induction and training will be discussed.

## **Role Design**

Earlier in this chapter, two perspectives of role design were discussed in relation to the FTM role: firstly there was the top-down job characteristics model that specified systemic and functional tasks and boundaries such as duties, formal hierarchical position, salary and the teaching/remission ratio; secondly, the bottom-up design perspective of job-crafting was evident as FTMs interpreted the role according to their own values, perspectives and metaphorical faith positioning. However, there are significant limitations to both forms of job design. The top-down strategy neglects individual and departmental needs and understandings which can increase role ambiguity and therefore role conflict. On the other hand, job crafting – essentially the unsanctioned changing of work-roles – without ‘reference to broader interdependencies is a recipe for chaos’ (Hornung et al., 2010, p 190).

Within this research project the limitations of each of these approaches were evident. The top-down elements of job design were perceived to be at the heart of the role ambiguity and conflict experienced by the participants; this was also supported by the element in the research methodology where documentary analysis of 46 colleges that found a huge variety of design types for essentially the same role. At one end of the spectrum were those job designs that were highly specific with up to 48 discrete duties being specified. This level of detail (that was encountered in the FTM job description in Parklands, Eastshire and Blackton) is highly problematic as it:

1. Limits the extent of role-holder autonomy (thus reducing motivation)

2. Fails to account for the idiosyncrasies and needs of individual departments
3. Fails to take account of the needs, abilities and perspectives of those who actually have to fulfil the roles

At the other end of the spectrum were those job designs that were at best vague – the college in Lancashire that specified just six duties being a prime example. But opacity was primarily located within the lack of differentiation between managing a curriculum and managing a team. This approach, while leaving room for interpretation, also greatly increases the potential for role ambiguity, not just for the FTM themselves but for the teams they manage.

Both types of top-down design – the prescriptive and the vague – can be seen to cause the widespread job-crafting that was evident in the data. With FTMs and their immediate line managers largely confused about the purpose of the role, it is hardly surprising that FTMs job crafted. Where designs were overly prescriptive, FTMs, unable to fulfil the exhaustive list of duties, were forced to pick and choose the areas of the role they thought most worthwhile. In minimal job design, the FTMs were free to supplement the meagre details with what they thought appropriate. In both cases, the result was positioning according to the fundamentalist/priest/convert/martyr typology. However, such job crafting was not always in the best interests of the colleges. For example, as onerous as data collection and reporting were, to neglect these elements of the job design was to risk the financial survival of the college.

What is necessary then, especially for FTMs in FE, is a middle ground approach to job design that marries individual sense-making and organisational necessities. This middle ground strategy is described by Hornung et al. (2010) as the formulation of ‘idiosyncratic deals’ (i-deals) which can be defined as

voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employers and their employees regarding terms that benefit each party (Rousseau, Ho and Greenberg, 2006, p978)

These deals function to personalise work schedules and customise job content through negotiation between the role-holder, senior managers and human resource professionals. As such, in opposition to job-crafting, i-deals are officially sanctioned and ‘organizationally authorised conditions’ (p190). Such an approach, it is argued, brings together personal needs, abilities and goals with the needs of the organisation, and thus improves the ‘person-job fit’ (p191). In addition:

- The negotiation of i-deals allows employers to access ‘otherwise private information regarding worker preferences and interests’ (p191)
- I-deals signal to individuals the commitment of the organisation towards them by means of adopting a flexible approach to work design
- Negotiated job design gives employees the resources to reduce or cope with stressors
- I-deals provide a method of increasing the control employees have over their work which increases job satisfaction and proactive behaviours

I-deals suggest a potentially new approach to job design that could be highly applicable to FTMs. In fact, in at least one case in this research, i-deals were already found to be operating but in an unsanctioned fashion. Pat at Blackton College, on being appointed sat down with the head of department and attempted to interpret the FTM job description. Both found it largely incomprehensible and a poor reflection of how they thought the role should function in their particular department. As a result, Pat and the HoD began afresh and created their own design reflecting the needs of their curriculum area, their teaching staff and their students. As a result, there was an increase in three levels of ‘fit’: firstly the job-person fit as Pat was able to mould the role according to her own perspective and abilities; secondly the fit between FTM and HoD as the two, reportedly, worked together highly successfully and were engaged in a mutually supportive environment; thirdly the fit between Pat’s role and the needs of her team. However, it must be made clear that this i-deal was unsanctioned – senior managers were reportedly unaware that this level of negotiation had taken place.

Pat's was not the only example of i-deals: Keith regularly renegotiated his role, especially during times of stress. Although the amendments agreed by the head of school were only temporary, they were effective: Keith's teaching hours were reduced, sessional lecturers were used to cover his classes while he focused on managerial or quality tasks. Elsewhere, Lynette was able to negotiate a reduction in teaching hours to increase the attention she gave to her managerial tasks. Her manager was, again, reportedly very supportive and agreed that the new teaching/management ratio was better suited to her position and span of responsibilities. There is also the example of Patrick who, in a newly created position of Work-based Learning Coordinator, negotiated not only the breadth but the purpose and focus of the role with his line manager and the Vice Principal. Furthermore, there appeared agreement that the role needed to be fluid to allow for Patrick to respond to an ever changing context. While not meeting the recommendations of Rousseau (2001), these examples can be seen as prototypes of real i-deals and, as such, they represent a potential new approach to job design for FTMs in FE.

*Recommendation 1: The primary recommendation then, is the introduction of organisationally authorised i-deals for the design of the FTM role.*

### **Role Purpose**

The first step in designing an i-deal would be to agree on the purpose and the nature of the role. The first point to be addressed – though it might seem minor – is to do with the title of FTMs. While all of the participants in this study (and the majority of FTMs nationally) were entitled 'leader', it was apparent that leadership was very much a minority activity – the participants were truly managers. While there appears to be a general move away from the idea and title of management in the sector – perhaps to avoid attributions of managerialism and embrace the post-bureaucratic paradigm of 'leadership' – the FTMs and lecturers did not attach pejorative connotations to the term. Calling FTMs 'managers' would at least provide some clarity and be a far more accurate description of their work. It would also be a point of clarification for other staff as well as FTMs themselves. However, regardless of

whether ‘leader’ or ‘manager’ is chosen, there must be decisiveness when it comes to *what* is led or managed. I have argued that much of the role ambiguity comes from job designs that suggest it is the *curriculum* that is led or managed. This approach ignores the management of lecturers implicit within this approach and obfuscates the extent of human interaction and supervision that is involved. Instead, FTMs should be defined as the managers with teaching responsibility of a curriculum team and the students within that provision.

This does not, however, mean that FTMs should automatically have line management responsibility for their teams; it is possible to manage lecturers without being their line manager, just as the FTMs in Woodside did. This is a decision that should be determined partly by the size of the department and the size of lecturing teams. Where sectors or departments are relatively small, it may be preferable for the HoD to maintain line management duties. The conclusion from this research however is that, where possible, the FTM role *should* include line management – if they are managing their teams anyway, their increased knowledge of individual lecturers would offer a number of advantages:

- Firstly, given the regularity of interaction between FTM and lecturers and their interpersonal and professional knowledge, HRM functions such as appraisal and absence reporting would be performed in a way that meets the needs of the individual members of the team;
- Secondly, given the FTMs’ membership of the same curriculum team as the lecturers, HRM functions would be more contextualised within the idiosyncrasies of the department and student cohort;
- Thirdly, greater interpersonal knowledge should enhance the leader-member exchange far more than if conducted by the more hierarchically distant Head of School/Sector.

Let us take an example: a lecturer may achieve low retention rates with a particular group. In a de-contextualised appraisal, it might be assumed that the blame may reside

in the teacher's pedagogical or tutorial skills (and was in indeed attributed to this in Parklands College, see p148); however, if retention was low because the lecturer was teaching a group with a high proportion of disaffected students, the FTM who managed that provision would then be able to judge the lecturer's practice within that context. 50% retention may seem unforgivable in the contemporary benchmarking of FE but, if that statistic was achieved with a group of former NEET young people (Not in Education Employment or Training), 50% would be far more acceptable. If FTMs line managed their teams, they would be in a position to make such judgements and resist the assessment of teaching practice as a statistical endeavour. Appraisal and observations would, arguably, thus be far more meaningful and developmental rather than being ensconced within the 'hard' version of performance management.

*Recommendation 2: the FTM role should include the line management of a curriculum team.*

### **Teaching and Management**

Once it is established that the primary purpose of FTMs is the management of a curriculum team, student success within that curriculum area and their own teaching, the next priority for design is the ratio of teaching to management. We have seen that when there is too little remission – as in Woodside – managerial duties are eschewed and fundamentalism is more likely. On the other hand, when the bulk of hours are dedicated to managerial duties, the quality of teaching can suffer as conversion or martyrdom become the most common positions adopted, as was the case at Parklands. Eastshire was the college that included the most balanced teaching-remission ration with FTMs having between 10 and 12 hours devoted to managerial duties with 10-12 hours devoted to teaching (the remaining hours – up to a total of 38 on average – were 'departmental duties' time for lesson preparation etc.). The FTMs here, while still subject to the pressures of the role, felt that the balance was approximately right and that they could divide their attention proportionally between teaching and management. With such extensive remission, they were expected to fulfil fully devolved HRM functions including appraisal and conducting teaching observations. Crucially, they were also the FTMs who felt that their teaching did not suffer as a



result of their management responsibilities. As such, Eastshire seems the ideal model for the top-down element of FTM job design.

*Recommendation 3: the proportion of teaching to management should be 50-50 (with a 10% variation to allow for the zone of negotiability). This would allow FTMs to plan their workload far more effectively and should facilitate high quality in both areas of their work.*

## **Networks**

The third area that should be defined from the top-down perspective of job design is that of the networks (see Kilduff and Brass, 2010) – inside and outside the organisation – that FTMs should be embedded within. Firstly, the data revealed that all FTMs interacted with MIS, the service department that was responsible for the collection of data; secondly, FTMs are the primary point of liaison with those internal and external contacts responsible for curriculum moderation and verification, especially exam boards and awards bodies; thirdly, the documentary analysis highlighted the importance of marketing responsibility via interaction with the community at publicity events such as open evenings. On top of this were a number of examples of involvement in cross-college initiatives and, less frequently, interactions with FTMs in other areas of the college. When sporadic interactions with senior managers are also included, it becomes clear that FTMs are embedded within a complex network or inter- and intra-organisational networks which heightened role-complexity. However, this is not to suggest that role complexity is always a negative characteristic in job design – Grant and Parker (2009) suggest that role complexity can encourage creativity and flexibility if not taken to the extreme. What I am suggesting is that these networks must be defined and quantified if they are to be given adequate attention. For example, in terms of MIS interactions, some explication of what data will be required and how often it is to be provided would enable all FTMs to plan reporting procedures into their daily, weekly and yearly work plans. Furthermore, if data is to be reported to MIS, it should only be reported to MIS rather than FTMs receiving requests from multiple audiences.

There is, however, one final network that should be identified in top-down job design: interaction with senior management. Throughout the research, FTMs reported that they rarely interacted with senior managers; any communication they received was strictly top-down and imperative rather than interrogative. However, it was also evident that FTMs themselves perpetuated the distance by maintaining high levels of cynicism concerning senior managers. Specified interaction at the job design level, effectively specifying interaction as part of the FTM network, means that FTMs could function as ‘surrogates’ (Galvin, Balkundi and Waldman, 2010), carrying the strategies and values of senior leaders to their teams without the dilution of downward communication channels; this was hypothesised as the role of middle managers in the shallow organisation of Woodside (p250). However, in taller structures, the role of surrogate could perhaps be best performed by FTMs. FTM knowledge of how best to communicate to their particular teams would also personalise the messages senior managers send, especially regarding strategy and change and would perhaps increase buy-in. Such interaction need not be artificial or an extra activity but could instead be as simple as inviting FTMs to SMT meetings or strategic planning sessions.. Such formal interactions between senior managers and FTMs would perhaps help to break down the interactional distance between the two tiers, a distance that Collinson (2005) suggests is often the basis for resistance. But, again, these interactions need to be specified in advance to allow FTMs to incorporate senior management interaction into their everyday work contexts and yearly planning

*Recommendation 4: the networks FTMs are to be involved in should be specified in the formal job design.*

### **Skeletal Top-down Design**

I would argue that these three areas – job-responsibilities, remission-teaching ratio and network delineation – should be the extent to which top-down job design is specified within the i-deal. From this basis, a skeletal FTM role can be defined consisting of the following:

- 10-12 hours teaching, the remainder allocated to management tasks
- Line management of up to 8 staff
  - Appraisal
  - Absence management
  - Teaching observation
- Responsible for:
  - Quality procedures for a specific curriculum area
  - Curriculum development
  - Representing the curriculum area at marketing events
  - Reporting data to MIS (at specific times)
  - Liaison with external bodies responsible for curriculum moderation and verification
  - Marketing the curriculum provision
- Involvement in the strategic change process

This design makes it clear that only the *areas* of responsibility are defined, not the breadth or limits of each (with the exception of MIS interaction). The detail of each, the extent and method of fulfilling each responsibility, should form the basis of the negotiated job description, the idiosyncratic deal.

*Recommendation 5: The recommendation is that the actual negotiation of boundaries and practices should be determined between the FTM and their line manager, usually the head of school.*

The advantage of the skeletal job design is that it can be adapted to the specific context within which the FTM works and is informed not by homogenous senior management definitions of FTM work but by the greater proximal knowledge of the head of school/sector. In addition, as the majority of FTMs are promoted internally, they will themselves bring their own knowledge of their department, curriculum and, importantly, their colleagues, which can add an additional dimension to the

negotiations. This i-deal approach to job design allows the organisational imperatives to be shaped by departmental idiosyncrasies to create an FTM role that is appropriate to the context and meets the needs of the department, the team, the students and the FTM themselves.

The combination of the middle manager's framework, the sensemaking of the FTM and the skeletal job design represent the 'zone of negotiability' in Rousseau's (2001) terms. While the actual parameters and duty-emphasis may be idiosyncratic, there must be standardised practices in the *negotiation* of i-deals to avoid issues of social comparison (Anand et al., 2010) and accusations of favouritism. This is perhaps the most problematic part of i-deals, consistency versus idiosyncrasy. Rousseau (2001) acknowledges this and suggests that it is 'not a problem to be solved but a fact to be managed' (p267). This perspective sees the risk of perceptions of inequity as a reasonable trade-off against the motivational impact of i-deals; from this basis, inequity must be minimised within the process of negotiation by adherence to several practices. Firstly, Rousseau (*ibid*) suggests that there must be consistency and that i-deals should include concrete and measurable outcomes against which the performance of the role can be assessed. Such assessment should be performed by the FTMs' line manager because they are the ones who negotiate the deal and also because they already assess performance via appraisals. Secondly, the items within the i-deal must be judged against the values of the organisation to ensure that the negotiation is driven by operational imperatives rather than purely political gain. Thirdly, to alleviate concerns of equity and workplace justice, managers should 'make no deals that cannot be shared' (Rousseau, 2001, p268). I-deals from this perspective should be transparent and available by all employees rather than covert deals amongst collaborators. However, although not suggested by Rousseau, consistency may additionally be approached if all i-deals were collated and assessed for fairness by HR professionals. This would provide a means of comparing the practices within the college and also, perhaps, identify those features of job design that should become standardised.

However, the negotiation of the i-deal should not be the end of the process and Rousseau highlights further actions that should become standard practice:

1. *All parties should be open to further flexibility and experimentation.* This means that i-deals hold the potential to adapt to changes within the organisation and the sector allowing the FTM role to respond fluidly to external and internal influences and needs;
2. *Changes to the i-deal must be tracked and recorded.* As fluid, organic roles, i-deals are by their very nature difficult to pin down. Tracking changes is therefore essential to ensure that there is a continual relationship between organisational, departmental and individual needs;
3. *I-deals should be evaluated, re-designed and even terminated as contexts change.* Here it may be suggested that i-deals become an essential element of the appraisal system to avoid adding even more duties and meetings to the middle managers' role. This recommendation views appraisal, in common with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2011) definition, as part of performance management as well as being developmental. The data from this research suggests that this is also the case within the sample colleges.

### **Transition and Induction**

With the majority of FTMs being internally promoted, the issue of transition is critical. As few FTMs receive training prior to their appointment, responsibility for facilitating the transition rests with middle managers (heads of school etc.) who line manage FTMs. In many cases in the research it was apparent that FTMs were left to find their own way, which presented a number of problems. Instead, middle managers – who are also acquainted with the lecturers in the department – should discuss the issues of transition with the FTMs and identify strategies for managing the change. Ideally this should begin after the i-deal has been negotiated between the HoD and the FTM. There should also be a defined period of induction for the new FTM where middle managers coach them through the administrative and line management responsibilities of the post. While the HR department should also contribute to this

process, especially in the fulfilment of HRM procedures, the greater contextual knowledge of middle managers is essential – the principle and process of appraisal is one thing; appraising professional teaching staff who were once your peers is quite another.

Middle managers also need to allocate regular one-to-one meetings with their FTMs to facilitate the process of reflection on their new role, modelling approaches to the difficulties that may arise and proposing solutions to significant issues. However, this is to place additional demands upon middle managers who would require additional remission themselves as well as training on coaching techniques. Furthermore, many middle managers – usually previously FTMs themselves – may have never managed managers before; here then may be a further area of professional development.

As specified interactions with senior managers and MIS are recommended to be part of the job design, it is essential that both are included in the induction period. The suggestion is that the newly promoted FTM spends time with both parties: with senior managers they will gain a greater understanding of the overall management of the college, appreciate the wider context of their role and begin the process of involvement with strategy formulation and implementation. In addition, with personal interaction as part of the induction, the distance between the two tiers may be reduced; as argued above, FTMs may even become ‘surrogates’ of the strategy and values of senior managers. A similar pattern should be included to facilitate interaction with the MIS department – with data reporting and collection both essential and reviled, a more comprehensive understanding could be achieved between the FTM and the MIS representative. The FTM would understand how essential data is to the survival of the college, the ways that it is used and how it informs strategy; from the other side, MIS would perhaps gain an insight into the difficulties of the data collection and reporting processes and how onerous it can be in the contested work of the FTM.

*Recommendation 6: an induction programme for new FTMs should be designed that includes regular one-to-one coaching sessions by middle managers and interactions with senior managers and MIS department.*

## **Training**

Few of the participants had received any management training either before they were promoted or while they were in post; where training had taken place, the content of the courses tended towards the generic and considered management principles equally applicable in the private and public sector. They also often employed inventories of management style that are, I argue at the beginning of this chapter, inappropriate for FTMs in FE. However, while a number of areas could be suggested for training such as 'authentic' leadership practices or a greater understanding of change management, it must be considered that such training would only be truly worthwhile when the context is conducive. The findings from this study suggest that what makes FTMs successful in their work is not primarily an understanding of leadership and management, it is the fact that they must negotiate their own role and find their own way. In a very real way the FTM role is a matter of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Furthermore, it can also be argued that FTMs achieve organisational objectives through the enactment of resistant practices such as making out and cutting corners that are developed as an alternative to formal training and development. While sessions on the effective prioritisation of workload may liberate a certain amount of time, it is likely that resistance would liberate even more. As such, while training designed specifically for FTMs and based upon the fundamentalist/priest/convert/martyr typology would be of value, the value of agentive search for effective routine resistance in work effectiveness should not be underestimated. Here then is another element of idiosyncratic deals that could of benefit. Rather than provide homogenous training for a heterogeneous group, the negotiation of i-deals could function as a means of identifying personalised development needs which could be met not through generic training courses but through a process of interaction, mentoring and shadowing more experienced managers within other areas of the college. If interactions with departments such as MIS, HR and senior managers were specified within the job design and the induction period, this process could be begun early after appointment.

*Recommendation 7: FTM training should be individualised and arise from their coaching by the Head of Department. Professional needs should be identified within appraisal sessions and met through alternative methods of development such as mentoring and shadowing.*

### **Limitations of Recommendations**

These recommendations, of course, have three primary obstacles: cost, competence and trust. What is being proposed requires significant change leading to additional cost and is likely to be resisted by senior managers, especially in times of austerity. This research suggests that FTMs have always been neglected and some may question the need to change that approach when the work is getting done, students are still achieving. Secondly is the issue of competence – middle managers would need to be trained in how to effectively negotiate i-deals that balance standardisation with flexibility, consistency with idiosyncrasy, and are perceived as fair. In addition, HR professionals would need to receive training on how to assess the negotiated i-deals. In addition, there should also be training for HR professionals on the FTM role from the perspective of FTMs themselves so that there is greater potential for shared values and mutual respect for roles. Thirdly, the use of idiosyncratic deals requires trust: Heads of Department must be trusted to ensure FTMs are deployed in the most efficient way; FTMs must be trusted to perform the formally negotiated duties; senior managers must be trusted to leave the negotiation to the lower tiers. This then, the issue of trust, may be the greatest impediment to the implementation of i-deals, especially in a sector that is seen to lack trust (Jameson, 2010). However, while there are barriers to idiosyncratic deals, the benefits are likely to far outweigh them by increasing the job-person fit, enhancing motivation and meeting the needs of the organisation, the individual and the students. However, further work would be required to conduct a cost-benefit analysis, with research quantifying the exact costs to colleges of implementing i-deals.



## **Future Research**

This project has prompted a number of potential areas for research:

1. FTM typology: while any generalizability of the typology is at this stage tentative, the first possible research project is to test its application in a wider range of settings, using either a much larger sample of colleges investigated via a survey or by focusing on a different sector such as secondary schools. In addition, this project has suggested that further research into the influence of college culture and leadership on job design would be a fruitful extension.
2. Coping scale: my intention is to test the coping scale in three colleges by asking all employees to complete a series of questions to identify which of the coping items they mostly adopt; the responses will then be broken down by role to examine the differences in coping between the levels of the hierarchy and between teaching and non-teaching employees.
3. Managing construction: both the interview and observation data suggested that construction lecturers and FTMs are highly and openly resistant and that routine forms of resistance and organisational misbehaviour are directed not only at senior managers but at students as well – cynicism and humour directed at students was only evident amongst construction staff. As such, the heads of construction schools or sectors (middle managers) have an extremely difficult role: not only must they manage or collude with overt resistance, they must also manage (or resist) the transition (or not) of their team from the hyper-masculine culture of the building site to the emotional-labour driven lifelong learning sector. The role of head of construction is crucial in this process and the extent to which they manage or resist that transition is critical to the levels of misbehaviour and resistance they later experience.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

### Introduction

In fieldwork stretching over a year, presenting data from 29 FTMs as well as analysis of documents from 46 colleges and observations of team meetings, this thesis has offered new understanding of the role of first tier manager in FE. As a conclusion to the thesis, this chapter will review the aim and objectives of this research and will draw together the main findings. In addition, it will reflect upon the claims to new knowledge generated and summarise the contributions of the thesis.

### Review of Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research was to *investigate the role of FTM within further education colleges from the perspective of the FTMs themselves, to provide a narrative for their work that draws on a range of theoretical positions*. What was clear from the literature review was that the role of FTM in FE was neglected and was a valid focus for investigation. However, when researching a neglected role, the limited nature of existing literature means that the conceptual framework must be broadened and this research was no different. With few studies focused exclusively upon FTMs in FE, a broader conceptual framework was crafted, one that moved beyond the educational paradigm to draw upon studies of the role in business and the wider public sector. Upon reflection, the studies of FTMs in the private sector had low utility for this research – while the emphasis upon supervision in these studies contributed a general understanding of the managerial context, they lacked consideration of the impact of beliefs and values upon how FTMs understood and experienced the role. Of more use were those studies of the FTM in another context of intensive emotional labour, that of nursing. Here the literature found many points of accord with the presentation of the role in this research, especially in the interaction between organisational job design and individual sensemaking.

However, it was not just in terms of the role that the conceptual framework was broadened. The educational management literature was limited in terms of wider

organisational themes such as resistance and coping and so the conceptual framework was designed to include studies from the sociological, psychological and organisational paradigms that included concepts such as routine resistance and coping. The aim of this strategy was to see FTMs as employees in general rather than merely *educational* employees, and to frame their experiences within these wider paradigms.

Once the conceptual framework was constructed, the research was designed. As the aim was to gain an emic perspective, a qualitative approach was required, one that foregrounded individual understanding and sensemaking and positioned the individual within the organisational context. While an ethnographic approach would also be appropriate, the practicalities of spending extended periods of time within the colleges meant that an alternative approach, a multiple case study approach, was required. This approach allowed me to consider each FTM as an individual case bounded by their institution, an essential perspective in gaining the emic view. By structuring the fieldwork across a year, I was able to document how the FTMs interacted with the changes within the college as well as personal changes. I saw some become disillusioned with the role and leave for alternative, non-managerial roles. In contrast, the research also followed those who were promoted to more senior positions. Regardless of the changes in personal circumstances, what remained consistent was the approach adopted by this research, the focus on the individual. This approach allowed me to investigate how individual values, beliefs and histories interacted with the college environment; but more than this, it allowed me to document the similarities and differences between FTMs within the same college. Here, then, we can see how employees interact with their environment idiosyncratically. Once the emic perspective had been gained, the use of multiple cases allowed me to identify the common themes and the points of divergence among the sample to present a coherent meta-analysis of the role that considered the FTM role as the quintain (Stake, 2005, p6) bounded by the sector of Further Education.

The first research objective was to *investigate the extent of similarity and idiosyncrasy of the role design across colleges*. While the sample size was necessarily small with 29 FTMs in total across the four colleges, it proved large enough to begin to identify

the points of similarity and difference. At one level we have the role at Woodside College that was essentially a lecturer position with managerial responsibilities added on. At the other end of the spectrum were the Curriculum Team Leaders at Parklands who occupied first and middle management position simultaneously. In between these two extremes were the FTMs in Eastshire and Blackton where the role was far more balanced in terms of teaching and management. However, while this research examined the enactment of the formal role design, it did not include investigation of *how* the role was designed. Therefore, while the roles may appear to lack clarity and definition, the decisions taken by those within colleges responsible for designing roles are yet to be documented and provide a future research focus.

The diversity of the role was reinforced by the use of documentary analysis of the job descriptions and person specifications across 46 colleges and this element of the research provided additional evidence of the heterogeneity of the FTM role. Here the continuum between teaching primacy and management primacy was also found. The FTM role was sometimes to do with curriculum leadership, a vague catch-all term that obfuscated the work and provided fertile ground for contestation and misunderstanding; in other cases the role was clearly one of team leadership and management embracing responsibility for a curriculum area with the devolved line management of the teaching team.

The data from both the fieldwork and the documentary analysis provides a much greater understanding of the diversity of the FTM role and provides a framework to consider the points of similarity and idiosyncrasy that had been neglected within the literature. As such, it also provides a basis for considering the comparability of the role in other areas of the wider public sector.

The second objective was to *analyse how the role is shaped both by formal job design and individual sensemaking*. The interaction between organisational design and individual sensemaking begins at appointment, where the transition from being a lecturer to being a manager proved problematic in many cases. Unprepared and untrained for leadership or management, FTMs were often left to find their own way,

their own boundaries and, most crucially, their own identity within the confines of the teaching-remission-finance framework. As was clear from the analysis of the diversity of the role, the FTM role is often designed in ways that make a precise understanding of the priorities and boundaries difficult, not just for FTMs themselves, but also for lecturers and middle managers. This thesis has argued that part of the problem is the notion of presenting the role as one of ‘curriculum leadership’ that does not define the extent of people management. What arises, instead of shared understanding, is a lack of clarity and role-conflict. However, more positively, the lack of clarity also created autonomy for FTMs – if no one clearly understood the purpose and boundaries of their work, they were free to exercise agency and shape it according to their own perspectives. Indeed, the autonomy of FTMs in this research was a surprising finding, especially as many accounts of the FE sector detail the demise of professional autonomy (for example Randle and Brady, 1997, Ackroyd et al., 2007, Taylor, 2007). As such, in an opaque role and with significant autonomy, FTMs found themselves with ‘space’ and engaged in job-crafting, the physical and cognitive changing of work roles. Given the importance of belief documented in this thesis, this job-crafting was articulated in terms of a metaphorical faith positioning within a FTM typology: fundamentalists were those who prioritised the student experience before the managerial elements of their role; priests focused on the needs of their teams and the rites of HRM; converts devoted themselves to the organisation and foregrounded managerial and administrative tasks; martyrs attempted to meet all elements of the trialectic in spite of the detriment to their wellbeing. This positioning, this job crafting, was an attempt to add definition to the elasticity and contestation of the role and, more importantly, to make the work idiosyncratically meaningful. But, while job-crafting was mainly determined by individual sensemaking, it was also influenced by contextual cues and changes within the college.

This thesis has therefore presented evidence of how formal job design and individual sensemaking shape the role of FTM. What is key is the idea of the trialectic. While traditional typologies of management roles proceeded from the dialectic of organisation and staff, this thesis presents the concept of the trialectic which includes students as a significant determinant of the role.

The third objective was to *examine the involvement of FTMs in organisational change*. Important and insignificant, vital yet neglected, first tier managers in colleges spend their days attending to the needs of students, their teams and the organisation. Leaders by title, yet fire-fighters by perception, they are critical to the success of the contemporary college. However, at the beginning of this research I had hypothesised that FTMs would have to balance the multiple needs of the daily workload with the implementation of strategic change. The fieldwork, however, provided a different perspective. From the perspective of the FTMs, strategic change was something that happened *to* them, not something that they were integrally involved in. Change and change management formed a significant element in the conceptual framework yet, rather than being a guiding concern in their work, change was seen as a context rather than a preoccupation. Change was just something that happened, it was merely another challenge to be overcome and dealt with. Therefore, as recipients of change rather than managers of change, it was a reasonable contention that FTMs would resist it – after all, the vast literature on change management suggested that resistance to change was common. Add to this the generally pejorative view of senior managers by the participants and resistance to change seemed inevitable. However, this was not the case among the sample. The majority of FTMs were optimistic in the face of change, despite their assertions of how badly it was often managed within their colleges. For some, change was part of what motivated them, it was exciting and made their work enjoyably unpredictable. For others, optimism towards change was contingent upon a number of contextual factors such as the values underpinning the change and the likelihood of success. It was very much a minority of FTMs who felt pessimistically about change. This finding was perhaps the most surprising within the research; however, it can be explained by returning to the theme that runs throughout this thesis – FTMs believed in what they were doing and it was perhaps this belief that engendered optimism. Belief is not the only likely influence however; more instrumental factors are also likely to be at work. Given the continual change in the sector, FTMs are likely to be selected according to their inclination to change. As most were internally promoted, optimism in the face of change was perhaps part of their organisational identity and a key factor in their selection.

The fourth research objective – *to investigate the experience, management and enactment of resistance* – was central to this thesis and was informed by the integration of the wider sociological and organisational literature within the conceptual framework. Few studies had investigated resistance within the sector and none had considered resistance by managers within FE. As such, while the findings on resistance presented here are grounded in the data, the framework relied upon the wider literature. In particular, the notion of routine resistance was key to this project and framed the findings within the political organisational paradigm. Such an approach allowed me to investigate the nuances of resistance, covert behaviours such as creating cognitive distance, that were central to the way FTMs fulfilled their roles. By documenting these more routine forms of resistance, we can see how employees who believe strongly in their work resist without compromising student welfare and success – while FTMs resisted managerialism, surveillance and even aspects of their role, their resistance functioned to protect the meaningfulness they found in their work.

Once in post, FTMs find themselves in a precarious position: once a member of the team, now a manager of former colleagues, FTMs must negotiate the boundaries between teacher and manager. As implementers of directives from senior managers, FTMs are often faced with resistance from lecturers – as audience or, less often, as target – and they must choose whether to challenge or turn a blind eye. To challenge risks losing the vital cooperation of their team; to look the other way risks the erosion of their authority and the potential detriment to their career prospects. Yet the decision is mediated by their own relationship with (and opinion of) senior managers who were, almost exclusively, reviled, mocked and disregarded in equal measure, even by those FTMs who sought to become senior managers themselves.

This research highlights a continuing divide between staff and senior managers that is created and exacerbated by both ends of the hierarchy. While senior managers were considered primarily in pejorative terms, lecturers and FTMs perpetuated the distance by avoiding opportunities for interaction and preserving the academic heritage

ensconced within the professional versus managerial paradigm. And so, with SMT held in low regard, the resistance of FTMs themselves becomes an everyday occurrence, resistance that glides back and forth along the dialectic from overt acts of principled dissent, to the covert such as cognitive escape. It is here that the thesis adds to the few studies to investigate the resistance of managers, arguing that they are equally subjected to the processes of subjugation as lecturers and equally likely to resist. Yet while managerial resistance was found to be a reaction to managerialism, surveillance and proletarianization, it was also found to be pragmatic, a means to get things done without becoming embroiled in the labyrinthine administrative systems that spread throughout the college, a means of making sure the student experience was prioritised in the face of financial imperatives.

The final research objective was to *examine the ways in which FTMs cope with the demands of their work*. Despite the huge demands of the role, it was the welfare and success of students that motivated FTMs and got them through each day, even when de-motivation appeared systemic. Getting students through their courses, changing their behaviour, ‘turning them round’, all made it seem worthwhile and assisted FTMs in enduring the persistent stresses of the workplace with its immediate gratification needs and unpredictable nature. But the demands of the work came at a price – stress and ill health were reported as the default position of FTMs. Yet despite the frequent illnesses attributed to stress, FTMs were found to be hardy individuals: (largely) in control, committed and optimistic when presented with change. Hardiness is in one sense the defining characteristic of the FTM, an essential quality in the face of half-hearted institutional attempts at tackling stress. From this perspective, the documentation of the coping strategies of FTMs is a significant element of this dissertation’s contribution.

This research has highlighted a range of behavioural responses to stimuli within the organisation and some, such as ignoring or creating distance, could be seen as either resistance or coping. I have argued that the key to differentiating between the two is to examine the event or transaction that stimulated the response in terms of power: if a transaction is a product of subjugation, the response is likely to be resistance; when



the transaction is not about power but contains a threat to wellbeing, the response is likely to be coping. However, while the types of resistance employed by the FTMs were related to their position within the typology, the coping strategies adopted were not. As such, coping was found to be highly individual. To document the range of strategies, a qualitative approach was adopted that meant that the FTMs reported the active strategies that they employed rather than selecting from a given list. As such, this thesis presents a tentative new scale of coping that is grounded within the data. It categorises the coping of FTMs within three categories: firstly those behaviours that are compliant that attempt to overcome the stressor through increased effort or self-coaching; secondly there are those strategies, such as exercise or venting emotions, that try to ameliorate the emotional effects of a given stressor; finally are the non-compliant strategies, those that attempt to 'resist' stressors by ignoring them or focusing on personal relationships instead of work.

### **Final Reflections**

Looking back on the key findings of this research, it is hard not to admire FTMs and the work that they do. Throughout all the challenges and difficulties of the role, with all its stress and conflict, it is an important and vital role to the success of students and colleges. Yet the temptation to reify the role should be avoided. While the data has documented the challenges faced by FTMs, what is also clear are the challenges faced by lecturers and more senior managers. As such, while this research is about FTMs, it is also about FE as a sector: it is about the turbulence and continual policy shifts colleges are subjected to; it is about the difficulties of attaining successful outcomes for students when the mechanisms of funding necessitate a blinkered focus on funding methodology; it is about the impact of performativity from government that cascades through college hierarchies and pervades every aspect of the business of teaching and learning. As such, while the emic was the intention, the emic must be contextualised.

This thesis provides a means to understand the neglected role of FTM with more clarity. When a role is this diverse, research may help senior managers, FTMs and lecturers to understand how the role functions and the difficulties faced by those who

occupy the role. It has documented the influences upon the role design and how it is shaped by the sensemaking of FTMs; it has provided evidence of how the role operates within the dialectic of control and resistance, all within a context of change; it has identified the points of stress and the coping mechanisms of FTMs that can help senior managers to provide targeted support; it also provides a means to design transition and development opportunities to maximise the effectiveness of FTMs. Finally, with a role as important as that of first tier manager, this research recommends a new approach to the consideration of job design, one that moves beyond the top-down approach so prevalent within the sector. By drawing on the existence and often efficacious existence of job-crafting by FTMs and also the more effective elements of top-down job design, it proposes that the FTM role should be a product of the negotiation of idiosyncratic deals, a product of organisational imperatives and individual sensemaking that may more effectively meet the needs of students. Such an approach may more greatly achieve success for the college, the department, the FTM and, most importantly, the student.

Yet while this research has only begun to document the lived experience of FTMs in FE, it has, at least, highlighted the importance of their positions and their importance to student and organisational success. It has also suggested other neglected themes that may provide fruitful areas for further research. Above all, it has suggested that the role of first tier manager requires further investigation. After all, while previous calls for greater focus on the role have been largely ignored, it does not mean that a new call should not be made.

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# Appendix 1

## Respondent Validation Summary of Findings

### The Role

- Most FTMs are internal promotees; in many cases the positions were 'ring-fenced' which caused some cynicism around the validity of HR protocols
- The transition from lecturer to manager was often problematic; in some cases lecturers became more distant and identified FTMs more as managers than part of the teaching team. In other cases, promotion was seen as inevitable due to the abilities of the FTM
- There was little concordance between the colleges concerning the nature of the role and duties and responsibilities varied enormously. In one college the role was distinctly non-managerial, received only 2 hours remission and involved no line management. In another, the participants fulfilled both middle manager and first tier manager duties simultaneously, line managing around 25 staff with up to 18 hours remission
- The documentary analysis of FTM job descriptions from 46 colleges nationwide supported the interview data and found:
  - 19 different job titles
  - The average lowest salary point was £29,972; the highest average point was £39,080
  - A degree was essential in 28 colleges; 8 listed a management qualification as desirable but it was essential in none
  - Leadership experience was essential in 20 colleges
  - The duties specified were as low as 6 in one college and 48 in another
  - The most frequently mentioned duty was monitoring quality processes
- FTMs' line managers were largely responsible for determining the breadth of the role and tended to pass down whatever duties they could not accommodate themselves
- FTMs unanimously reported a great deal of autonomy in how they fulfilled their role. Autonomy however appeared contingent upon the success of delivery, especially the achievement of targets

### The Work

- FTMs operate with a trialectic, facing demands from students, lecturers and the organisation:

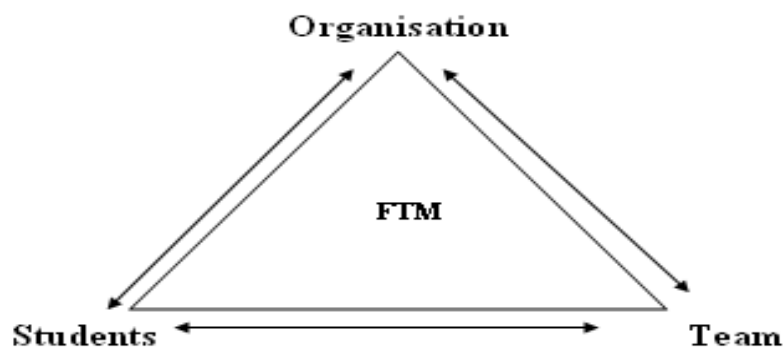


Figure 2: Trialectic

- Despite the intention to work proactively and plan strategically, most FTMs reported that the volatile nature of college life necessitated adopting a reactive management style – ‘fire-fighting’ was seen as inevitable and unavoidable
- Work routinely intruded on home life. Many FTMs worked in the evening and at weekends

### **FTM typology**

There were found to be 4 types of FTM differentiated by their primary focus:

#### *Student-focused*

- Self-defined as teachers rather than managers
- Teaching and learning and student welfare prioritised
- Moral and social accountability
- Administrative and managerial duties performed only after student-focused tasks completed
- In some cases the focus on students and teaching was a result of insufficient salary rather than moral conviction

#### *Team-Focused*

- Team-leader role prioritised
- Development of the team seen as the best way to meet student needs
- Focus on mentoring, coaching, teaching observations and personal issues
- Intermediary between lecturers and more senior managers
- Role seen in terms of advocacy for teaching team

#### *Organisation-focused*

- Administrative, managerial and reporting tasks prioritised
- Fulfilment was located in management tasks rather than teaching
- Highly conscious of implications of organisational strategy for their context
- Administrative and reporting duties seen as key to being promoted
- College seen in business rather than pedagogical terms
- Established clear boundaries between themselves and lecturers

#### *Omni-focused*

- Attempts to meet the needs of students, lecturers and the organisation equally
- Regret at being unable to focus solely on students or their team evident
- Accepted that an omni-focus was likely to be detrimental to their own well-being
- Most likely to work at home

### **The Perspective of Senior Managers**

An online survey was sent to 95 principals nationwide and received 39 responses. The key findings were as follows:

- 61% of principals felt they understood the FTM role to a great extent
- Teaching was seen as a secondary activity to managerial duties
- 'Administration and bureaucracy' and 'balancing teaching and managing' were considered the primary difficulties of the role
- 46.7% of principals claimed that senior managers met FTMs formally on a weekly basis, 26.7% on a monthly basis and 16.7% on a termly basis. 10% said they met when there is a need. The data from FTMs themselves greatly contradicts this finding; few participants ever interacted with senior managers
- The majority of principals claimed FTMs were involved in formulating and evaluating college strategy; the data from participants again disputes this

### **FTMs' View of Senior Management**

- Participants were extremely critical of senior management who were usually spoken of in terms of their immediate gratification needs: requests from SMT were expected to be responded to immediately; instructions had to be carried out to unreasonably short deadlines. This was the primary cause of over-work for FTMs
- In addition, SMT was considered to be variously:
  - driven only by money
  - unskilled in leadership and management
  - without strategic vision
  - reactive and unorganised
  - panic at every complaint from external sources
  - unsupportive of teaching staff
  - directive rather than consultative
  - unaware of what contemporary teaching is like
  - opportunistic
- The leadership of SMT was often seen as inauthentic and paying lip-service to collaboration and consultation

### **Change**

- Structural changes were most commonly discussed by FTMs; curriculum change was second; student profile change was third
- Change was generally seen as something to be coped with rather than managed
- The majority of changes were institutionally or externally initiated rather than department-initiated
- Virtually all FTMs were critical of the way change was managed in colleges and senior management were considered responsible. In particular:
  - Being given a rationale for changes was rare
  - Consultation was equally scarce and the communication of change by senior managers was poor; however, some principals were now trying to enhance the communicative channels between themselves and teaching staff

- Change was rarely evaluated
- Changes were often forgotten when a new priority emerged
- The majority of FTMs were optimistic in the face of change; some reported that they thrived on change, others were supportive if the rationale was clear and the impact on themselves and their teams manageable

### **Lecturer Resistance**

- Lecturers were largely considered resistant to change and to management in general
- The most common forms of 'routine' resistance were
  - Lacking enthusiasm
  - Open criticism of managers or changes
  - Cynicism
  - Avoiding responsibility
  - Making jokes about managers or changes
  - Spreading rumours and gossip
- FTMs were rarely the target of resistance – most commonly it was directed at senior managers. However, they were often the audience for expressions of resistance adding to the precarious nature of the role:
  - If they decided to challenge routine resistance they risked the withdrawal of support from lecturers
  - If they turned a blind eye they risked being seen as colluding with resistance

### **FTM Resistance**

- Few FTMs reported active involvement with the union. In two colleges the union appeared marginalised and largely invisible; in the other two colleges the union was highly visible and regularly negotiated with senior managers
- Few participants were prepared to go on strike citing the detrimental effect on learners as the main reason. Financial loss was also a factor
- Resistance was not to change but to senior management in general
- There was a wide range of resistance evident from FTMs; the most common types of routine resistance were:
  - Refusing to follow instructions or provide information
  - 'Principled dissent' where FTMs resisted overtly on the grounds of educational or social values
  - Ignoring requests or instructions
  - Doing unofficial 'favours' for lecturers
  - Cynicism in responses to senior managers
  - Humour directed at senior managers or changes
  - Creating distance (physical or cognitive) from senior managers or work
- Around 50% of FTMs reported that they 'turn a blind eye' to lecturers' routine resistance – team focused and student focused FTMs were most likely to ignore resistance
- Most FTMs regularly cut corners in their work; organisation and omni-focused FTMs would most often cut corners with their teaching whereas team and student-focused would cut corners with administrative tasks



- Student-focused FTMs were most likely to manipulate data or reports

### **Professionalism**

- All FTMs considered themselves and their teams to be professional
- Professionalism was only related to teaching and learning, not to managerial duties or the context outside of the institution
- Few FTMs had engaged with the IfL
- For some the IfL had little connection to their daily work; others saw it as yet another administrative burden
- FTMs who had worked in other professionally regulated areas such as health were more supportive of the IfL
- Many FTMs suggested that their reporting of CPD was likely to be fabricated as they didn't have the time to complete their REFLECT portfolio
- Some FTMs supported the IfL's power to remove the licence to practice; here it was seen as the only way to tackle incompetent staff – colleges were routinely seen as incapable of managing poor performance

### **Relationships with Lecturers**

- There was some evidence of lecturers being overly-dependent upon FTMs
- In addition there were cases when FTMs used a parental style of management drawing on their own experiences of raising a family

### **'Terrors of Performativity'**

- The work of FTMs was dominated by 'quality' and accountability procedures: preparing for Ofsted, managing internal inspections and managing the fallout from poorly planned and executed teaching observations by the quality department or senior managers
- Colleges experienced acute anxiety when Ofsted was suspected to arrive, even when official confirmation had not been received. Senior management panic was disseminated throughout the organisations and FTMs experienced this acutely

### **Progression and Regret**

- Only four participants expressed an unequivocal desire to move up the managerial hierarchy; fourteen were equally certain that they did not want promotion. The remaining FTMs were ambivalent
- The most common reasons for not seeking promotion were:
  - The difficulty of their current role
  - Compromising values
  - Becoming disconnected from learners and teaching
- Only one participant regretted becoming a manager

### **Motivation**

- Engagement with students was the most common motivator. However, teaching was infrequently mentioned. Instead FTMs discussed the wide

student experience embracing retention, behavioural change and progression

- The most common de-motivators were: lack of communication (from senior managers), poor organisation, inflexible and inefficient college systems (especially MIS) and external influences such as the LSC and Ofsted

### Stress

- Most of the participants experienced stress regularly
- The primary cause was the lack of time to complete too many tasks with too short a deadline given; interactional duties (dealing with staff or students) was the second major source of stress; third were operational matters, especially managing sickness and providing cover for classes, a major issue in three colleges
- Organisation-focused FTMs were the group least likely to experience stress
- 78% of participants felt that the role had affected their health yet only two had ever taken sick leave on the grounds of stress
- Disturbed sleep was the most common symptom of stress; a number of FTMs kept a pad next to their bed at night to write down reminders in the middle of the night
- The main effect of stress was emotional: frustration, mood-swings, irritability, crying, shouting and swearing were all mentioned frequently
- Team, student and omni-focused FTMs were most likely to experience stress; organisation-focused FTMs did not report significant stress
- Only two FTMs had ever taken medically-diagnosed stress leave; the majority attributed minor illnesses such as colds to stress however. In four cases the health impacts (self-diagnosed as stress induced) were severe

### Coping

- There were 16 distinct coping strategies identified which can be divided into three categories: 'compliant coping' in which participants focus directly on the stressor until resolution; 'affective coping' which was an attempt to manage the effects (mental and physical) of the stressor; and 'non-compliant coping' which refers to resistant coping. Each category and its associated types are detailed in the table below. The frequency column refers to the number of participants that mentioned each particular coping strategy (all mentioned more than one):

Category	Coping Strategy	Frequency
Compliant	Prioritisation and Planning	7
	Seeking support for instrumental reasons (going to line manager for support or assistance)	8
	Increased effort	6
	Multi-tasking	4

	Self-coaching (giving themselves motivational speeches)	3
	Focus on positives (holidays etc)	4
Affective	Exercise	8
	Tension reduction (alcohol, hobbies, therapy etc)	11
	Seeking support for emotional reasons	5
	Venting of emotions	8
	Humour (self and situation directed)	4
Non-compliant	Ignoring (requests and instructions)	5
	Escape (leaving work early, looking for other jobs, leaving the job)	9
	Focus on personal relationships	6
	Dissent	4
	Cutting corners	1

- The majority of participants were found to be 'hardy' individuals as evidenced by the lack of sick leave due to stress. According to the literature, individuals are hardy when:
  - They feel control over events in their work
  - They are deeply committed to their work
  - They anticipate change as a challenge and an opportunity to develop
- In general, FTMs possessed all three characteristics at variable levels

### **Institutional Management of Stress**

- Only one college actively publicised their management of stress policy; many FTMs did not know if such a policy existed at all
- None of the colleges employed a counsellor for staff-only purposes
- Stress surveys had been circulated in 3 of the colleges but there had been no follow-up action
- As a result of the lack of institutional involvement, the management of stress amongst teachers fell primarily to FTMs

### **Guilt**

- Around half of the participants routinely experienced guilt as a result of their role, mainly in relation to their teams and students
- The main cause of guilt was the necessity to perform 'necessary evils' such as asking already overworked staff to take on additional tasks
- None of the organisation-focused FTMs experienced guilt