SU MADDOCK

CHALLENGING
women
gender, culture and organization

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W O M E N

To
Joe, Kate, Same and Eddy

CHALLENGING
WOMEN

*Gender, Culture
and Organization*

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

This book is concerned with the role that women play in organizational change and how male gender cultures influence the direction of public administration transformation. The influence of male gender cultures on men, women and institutions is tacitly accepted but its effect on challenging women and their creativity is little acknowledged. Gender matters are complex and the dominant gender culture influences men and women in their reactions to those who challenge common narratives and behaviours. Women are not all the same; they are as diverse as men and every woman has her own particular way of handling the male cultures in which we live. The accounts in this book demonstrate how challenging women managers are extremely innovative and should be in demand within any changing global economy in which people are struggling to adapt and survive. Yet the voice of radical women is suppressed and rarely heard because, in spite of the logic of economics, the patriarchal attitudes remain powerful throughout the world, in the west as anywhere else.

The women most irritated by male cultures are those who are vilified precisely because they are radical managers. Gender debate within business and organizations focuses on senior women and on women's distinctive management style, but there is little public recognition of challenging women nor of the role they play in organizational change and especially within public sector transformation.

Those innovators who can shift the pendulum swings between the market and bureaucratic, rule-bound behaviour are in demand. Equality programmes continue to focus on women as victims and the potential of women as transforming innovators is hidden behind a smokescreen of rhetoric about 'gender differences'. Organizational theorists and management gurus talk of 'dismantling structures', 'virtual organizations', the retro-organization and taking down the Berlin Walls which continue to separate employees. The language has changed from one of competition to one of partnership, network and collaboration. Within the British public sector the market is no longer considered a satisfactory motor for change – yet market mechanisms and managerialism have colonized thinking on the 'Left', the 'Right' and in administrations. The way in which New Public Management has taken root in many public administrations is through a systems approach and through structural change – in spite of the renewed interest in 'individual agents'. There is a need for sustaining organizational cultures, but the reality in many public authorities is an intensification of work and the blame culture. The top-down systems approach to change

gave rise to a huge interest in senior executives and women high-flyers – but it is clear that the vision of senior managers is important only as a gate through which creativity can flow from many others below them. Even senior individuals can only act as innovative catalysts. They can never be substitutes for healthy work environments which sustain staff and their relationships with those inside and outside the organization.

Organizations cannot deliver quality services if their staff are unwilling to participate in change and are not motivated to work collectively. The spirit of competition has become redundant within the 'global market' and in service organizations where those with the confidence to seek out new partners and 'know-how' to develop trusting and collaborative relationships are to be nurtured. Notions such as 'partnership' and 'collaboration' are hardly new or revolutionary – but valuing the ideas of co-operation and collaboration is very different from knowing how to get hostile parties to co-operate.

Managers are searching for ways to improve servicing and to motivate staff, recognizing that both were difficult under the command–control management regime. There is an interest in new organizational forms which will encourage partnerships, learning and change. The concept of innovation is not usually connected with social relationships but with high-tech research. However, it is precisely the lack of collaboration and motivation in all sectors which focuses attention on what conditions and factors facilitate positive people relationships and partnership in organizations. Critical to new forms of partnerships, alliance and networking are 'trusting relationships' which release the social capital in any community of its people and their resources. Yet these new forms and collaborative cultures are hard to find.

The search for new forms and partnerships in a climate of competivity is also hampered by the tendency of the male academic establishment to seek new models in the mainstream when the creative process is developed in the margins. A synergy between 'innovative individuals' and 'structures' is required if social innovators are to be given the space, opportunity and encouragement to kick-start the transformation processes. This is no easier in a competitive environment than it was within the rigidity of corporatism and bureaucracy; the obstacles to partnership and social change are not so neatly packaged as previously presented by various forms of Marxism or liberal economic theory. Both bureaucratic and competitive purchasing systems create suspicion rather than openness and while there is a desire for change, there is also a mismatch of systems. For instance, companies spend huge sums of money on training and career development while at the same time 'downsizing' and 'restructuring' – thereby creating insecurity and hostility. Executives may declare a commitment to partnership but then rely on reductionist performance measurement which is insensitive to emergent relationships. Within the global market few feel safe from redundancy; most are fearful of not meeting unrealistic goals or are unable both to develop practices and fulfil existing workloads. The resultant

increase in employee stress, sickness rates and reduction in morale makes learning new ways of working less rather than more likely.

There is a desperate need for strategic management frameworks and change processes that will motivate rather than demoralize staff and which will encourage and support partnership and innovation. Policymakers are seeking partnership and collaboration and need to know the following:

- What type of organizational framework can generate a sustaining culture and encourage staff to work collaboratively?
- What are the critical conditions for a collaborative culture?
- What structures, if any, will allow staff to forge new relationships inside and outside the organization in order to respond to local conditions flexibly while endorsing corporate principles?
- How to support collaborative working relationships and to kick-start a process of change?
- How to identify resistance to social innovators and overcome it?

Answers to the above questions presuppose a social value framework that supports social transformation and staff relationships which are capable of developing more inclusive forms of measurement. A paradigm shift in thinking about change is needed which focuses on a people perspective rather than technical systems, in order to facilitate a meeting of minds between leaders and those engaged in grassroots activity. At a time when corporations are searching for a new business ethic and public sector transformation is at a turning point, those who have experience of developing social alternatives are vital to the organizational transformation. The experience of those in the sociale economie makes them trailblazers in terms of networking and new ways of working. Although evidence of networking is often absent in mainstream research and organizations, it is thriving in the margins where people are struggling to develop new organizational forms. It is these innovators who are the most likely to demonstrate pathways for social change, in organizations and across apparently deep cultural divides.

Public sector transformation

The UK political climate in the 1970s was a time of radical change, with local activists stimulating debates around local democracy, diversity and decentralization. Issues concerning community involvement, local accountability, service responsiveness and the need for more integrated services were debated in many community consultation meetings and in some council chambers. More radical decentralization policies led many radical women to believe that there were possibilities for them within local government, especially in metropolitan authorities and the Greater London Council. Thousands of women became managers in local government during the 1980s. Many had been active in the women's movement, including those in

northern cities such as Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester. The changing nature of local government and the fact that so many women had a strong commitment to public sector provision created an ideal opportunity to analyse their distinctive contribution to management and organizations.

Those women managers chosen for interview were innovative and passionate about the public services and their desire to transform management practices. They were innovators, leaders and confident of alternatives; they were accustomed to discussion and supported each other. Their views were not merely representative of women's experience but demonstrated the extent to which these particular women were innovators capable of thinking through many of the obstacles to partnership, collaboration and new organizational agencies. Although frustrated and thwarted by male gender cultures, these women were far from being victims, but were innovative and daring in their efforts to challenge institutional practice in order to transform public sector management and to develop more equitable and better local services.

Findings

What emerged from the research was that women managers appeared to have a strategic approach to change both inside and outside organizations. These women were challenging structures and the management frameworks; they were less concerned with style and more with social objectives and inclusive management. Those with experience of the sociale economie sector and community organizations were experienced at juggling social objectives within finite finances, at negotiation and in developing contacts and networks staff. Those with previous experience in innovative projects appeared to have the advantage of a knowledge of how to resolve tension conflict and handle ambiguity. These women also had a sense of 'connectedness' and were confident of the possibility of collaborative working partnerships. This was particularly true of those who had worked on the margins of local government in the community or radical community projects. They had learnt how to build bridges between users and mainstream services and were well suited to co-ordinate inter-agency work and partnership. Radical women with diverse and varied experience had observed the tensions between policy and real lives, management formalities and local diversity, which made them astute and good judges of realistic strategies and other potential managers. This ability to make judgements on the basis of a breadth of experience enabled some women to be able to assess which type of change programmes would work and which would not.

This is a significant skill, given that the major problem in almost all organizations is how to create cultures which will sustain collaboration. This is something which those institutionalized in bureaucratic departments find difficult, whereas those on the margins have had the experience of

developing new ways of interacting and working and have less fear of change.

Women managers did have a strong 'user' focus, which influences their everyday judgements and decision-making, and a people approach to change. Themes emerged that reinforced some fundamental thinking which many of the women shared. These factors, experiences and attitudes made them innovators in organizational change. They tended to have a principled but hands-off approach which stimulated motivation among some and hostility among those opposed to change and their ideas. Characteristics of these radical women included:

- a process approach to change and new relationships;
- a people approach, not a systems approach;
- confidence in the social values of the organization;
- a local connectedness or social awareness;
- confidence that those who are on the margins or challengers were instrumental in social transformation;
- a confidence in the community and the workforce that inspired trusting relationships.

Although cultures vary from company to company, many of the frustrations and experiences recounted by the women in this book in their struggle for social change are not confined to those in local government or in the UK but appear to be common to organizations in all sectors. The most radical women who were insistent about the need for a change in public sector management if services were to improve showed:

- confidence in alternatives based on social values;
- ability to handle diversity, ambiguity and change;
- experience in developing organizations where social objectives determined work – plans, programmes and indicators;
- an awareness of diversity and gender cultures;
- a capacity to be critically aware and capable of trusting others;
- a desire to develop a collaborative culture.

Challenging women are shown to have a significant role to play in the transformation processes – and exhibit the very skills required to manage change programmes. The problem remains that the gender cultures within organizations thwart such women. In the 1980s it was difficult for women to deviate from the civil servant role and traditional practices and radical women were ridiculed for being outspoken. These women were thwarted, ridiculed and sometimes 'sacked' or penalized, often for management innovation. Although most women are struggling to shed the male definitions of them, those women who challenge the criteria and frameworks are most vilified. Questioning women were often said to be a nuisance and when they voiced their opinions and attempted to initiate change they were

bypassed or sidetracked. The women interviewed were largely committed to social change not personal career development, yet were penalized for their leadership qualities. Women have been developing new ways to manage for many years but their potential and skills were not recognized in middle management unless they adopted 'caring' or 'coping' responses. The male preferences which underpinned acceptable manager qualities and practices continue to undervalue those women who do not conform to female roles. It was precisely because so many women felt constrained that they were zealous in their efforts to transform management.

Those most political in their outlook labelled themselves 'challengers'. They rarely used the term 'innovator' and the majority thought that their perspective on management was really just 'commonsense'. Those women who were confident of new possibilities were able to transcend the pressures because they had the vision in alternative practices which many of their colleagues lacked. Their decisions and managing style were rooted in their political perspectives and social values. They were concerned to influence change or inject social values into the work culture and they recognized that without an agreed (corporate) social-value base within management, partnership would be difficult between workers and managers, community and officers, men and women. Women's own experience, thinking and politics make an enormous difference to their confidence in alternative forms and ways of working.

Those who questioned traditional practices recognized that promotion was unlikely to be offered to them. Senior women were well aware that had they been innovative in the middle grades they would have been less likely ever to have been promoted; they were often politicized by the boys' room banter in the board room. Quite unconsciously gender management strategies divide women and there is a growing tension between those who are committed to change and those who are more energetic in 'making the systems work'. Women who are personally ambiguous often have to be very skilled at management in order to overcome the pressures to conform. The macho climate of the 1980s resulted in a growing tension between those who challenged performance management and those who were intent upon improving their managerial skills and making the systems work. It is difficult to remain confident of social change during periods of restructuring when parameters are constantly shifting around narrow financial objectives unless reinforced by experience and active engagement with the realities of the processes of change. It is both an opportune and difficult time for managers who have to grapple with structural change while also being 'open' in their leadership style in order to steer staff in the direction of 'collaboration' within the combative environment of market contracting.

Many women wanted managers to develop a greater responsibility for services and respect for users. Decentralization policies in the UK were largely ineffective because they did not dismantle bureaucratic practices and could not respond to the needs of various communities and local people. Local democracy requires sustenance and cannot be decreed

'overnight' from 'the top' by politicians. Managers need to develop organizational parameters that can encourage the community and their staff to engage with each other more openly. Since the 1980s government public sector reforms and managerialism have been tempered by public service staff, managers and practitioners and the public; who demonstrated the limitations of the market and fought for various forms of 'quasi market' by active transformations, partnerships and alliances. This is not merely because of a change of government, although that provides some cultural change, but is dependent on collaboration between agencies and individuals at all levels of service with organizations and institutions which measure what matters as well as money.

The conflicts between women usually concerned their gender management strategies. There is a need to unpack the mindsets and thinking among women as well as traditional gendered power relations. Too often, the emphasis on 'definitive theory' has dismissed the voice of those women most engaged with change, almost because they did not fall into the convenient stereotype of the downtrodden. Radical practitioners and difficult women are apparently 'deviants', not leaders or innovators. The most frustrating experience for those demanding systems change in local government was the belief in the neutrality of management and the total separation between policy and practice. The political lack of interest in the effects of bureaucratic practices on all was then transferred to managerial methods. The question that policymakers need to ask is why are so many strong and articulate women managers underutilized during periods of transformation when all organizations are desperate for alternative practices and innovative staff.

The inability of managers and policymakers to comprehend the obstacles to change appeared to be largely due to the entrenched male gendered cultures and the dominance of 'gender narratives' that ridicule radical and challenging women – a fact given force by the cases of Professor Wendy Savage, Dr Daly and Alison Halford. Overcoming traditional divides and working beyond 'role' with colleagues in other agencies and departments in the public sector is fraught with difficulties and innovators frequently make enemies rather than allies when they tentatively suggest changes or challenge tradition. The irony of the situation is that those senior managers and theorists who claim that the collaborative culture is the key to transforming public service practices do not acknowledge or accept challenging women and continue to characterize them as 'difficult'.

Many women were aware that to be too direct about the operation of gender dynamics was a dangerous strategy. Even those conscious of the deep gendered underpinning of management knew it was better to focus on specific projects rather than to challenge irritating, patronizing behaviour or object to personal slights. There was a tacit acknowledgement to remain 'silent' about gender dynamics, however frustrating that proved to be. Many men realized the extent of the power of male attitudes and culture and appeared to be just as 'cowed' by them. Masculinity and male codes do

need unpacking but the spate of press articles (1996) suggesting that 'men are misunderstood victims' is disingenuous. Women manipulate because they cannot be straightforward within a male culture; men remain silent about masculinity because of its confining nature. Articles presenting men as victims are unhelpful for the male gender cultures oppress men as well as women; but this is a much narrower oppression than that experienced by women who have to survive within an alien male public world. If gender analysis were more seriously focused on the dynamic within gender cultures and its influence on organizational practices, then men and women may be less threatened by women's capacity to transform practices and relationships. An openness about male gender identities and masculinities is needed. Traditional masculinities undoubtedly inhibit possibility and confidence in alternative relationships – would benefit both men and women and certainly allow communication to be both freer and more open.

However, although gender cultures play a dominant role in the continuation of blocking tactics in organizations, so too do the professions, economic and management systems. The polarized thinking of the market and state, biology and the environment, public and private, or male and female is far too limiting and makes the articulation of the transforming processes difficult. The language is missing and those who are cognisant of the key process relationships are unnoticed, undervalued and unrewarded. While the centralizing role of national governments results in people feeling powerless within the modern world, there is also strong evidence in the UK public sector of how collective and individual agency can have a transforming effect on even the economic and management mechanisms; although they appear immutable, they are in fact malleable. These transforming relationships are not ineffectual and do play a role in resisting change and socializing work cultures. Although employees are weak as individuals and people are colonized by overpowering economic and management narratives, challenging innovators can generate sea change in thinking as well as structural revolutions and work towards new structures, new ways of working and the introduction of social value to management decisions. Out of the old divides is emerging a new nexus of power relationships, especially between agencies, staff and consumers; but to be effective and sustaining they need political support and financial and regulatory frameworks.

There needs to be a synergy between the 'social realities of individuals' and 'conceptual paradigms'. New paradigms for organizations and thinking are developed on the margins, not by the establishments. Change agents are on the margins of the western world, corporations and the formal and male establishments. Yet, the search for the individual innovators and identification of their leadership skills continues in the mainstream, using traditional measures and techniques. Making sense of gender relations is part of the process of change. Individuals can overcome the confines of material, social and intellectual mindsets more easily when the reality of an alternative is articulated or experienced. The following chapters show that, in spite

of the obstacles, women are never so passive or so trapped that they cannot create new realities and relationships – even if only within their own department.

Challenging and creative women

From talking to creative women managers a powerful conclusion emerges that they cannot be contained within one category; neither do they conform to one model, refer to one philosophy, nor maintain one strategy. But they do share a holistic and analytical approach. They appraise their work cultures, environments and colleagues and make informed judgements, which are not merely rational (in the narrow sense) but the result of an intellectual feeling and experience. They talk of moving between having a sense of optimism for change and a deep pessimism. They are tactical and strategic, thoughtful and reflective, sometimes passive and sometimes very determining. Their sense of possibility is dependent not just on themselves, their thinking and experience, but on their work environments and support from colleagues – especially that of the chief executive. They demonstrate the potency of agency, but also its tendency to sleep and hide when oppressed or overwhelmed by alienating social surroundings. Each woman has her own personal (political) philosophy which is not insignificant in her attitude to her own role as a change agent. It is the conceptualizations of individual agency and potency within a framework of institutional constraints which is difficult, especially if individuals are thought of as isolated beings, either trapped or empowered, depending on the particular (political) perspective of the observer.

Gender culture oppresses not just women but anyone wanting to break free from professional or managerial formalities. If policymakers and politicians desire an egalitarian infrastructure for service and its management, then management needs to be anchored by local connection, social values and a people-oriented approach to change. Women are breaking through the barriers of gendered institutional and professional traditions and challenging the motor of globalization and authoritarian relationships. They are capable of steering public sector management on a course which brings synergy between fair industrial relations and staff development and closer to 'quality' service provision. However, a lack of seriousness about the gender imbalance in politics and economic life has resulted in a distorted colonization of New Public Management that monitors performance by reductionist measures of efficiency which inhibit evolving and emergent relationships upon which partnership is dependent. Depressingly, those who have most experience of managing social change and developing new organizational forms and practice are not those who are determining either policy or the public sector restructuring process.

1 Management innovation

> Downsizing has resulted in increasing levels of stress, insecurity, lack of trust and decreasing motivation, fun and career opportunities. Survivors are less prepared to initiate new ideas and participate whole heartedly for the good of the company as their own futures are uncertain. This suffest a conflicting scenario from the perspective of generating creativity and innovation in the workplace, this confirming the motivational paradox. (Sahdev and Vinnicombe 1977: 15)

The concept of globalization and the realities of international trade have had a deadening effect on politicians and organizations. However, while there has been vigorous opposition in the UK to the 'free market', there is much less debate about the colonized thinking about management systems which appears to be working against the forms of collaborative practices desperately sought by public sector policymakers. The author suggests that those developing collaborative practices are innovative and innovators.

The concept of management 'innovation' in this book refers to approaches to managing and change which could facilitate shared practices and collaborative cultures, and improve working relationships. In the global marketplace organizations require innovative thinking about management itself, how to manage staff in a manner which is supportive and developmental rather than commanding and dictatorial. New ways of managing people and systems are required by organizations in the public, private and independent sectors. No organization, however small, is immune from the effects of the international financial markets and the constant flux of changing markets. Cosmopolitan customers demand both style and quality, or so the advertisers would have us believe. Business organizations and public bodies have been through constant and massive restructuring in search of efficiency and greater competitiveness. Within global markets competition drives the squeezing of public sector investment, the delayering of management hierarchies and demands for greater worker flexibility, open markets and revised tax and welfare systems. The Labour government (1997–) appears intent upon riding the waves of international capital rather than attempting to quieten the sea, and the minister responsible for European financial and market integration appears ready to pressurize other European countries in the same direction.

The term globalization is used and abused, mostly as a blanket term to describe the domination of international financial markets, and tends to infer that there is only one global market economy which is set on an unstoppable trajectory. Undoubtedly the influence of international market

forces can be seen throughout the world. However, globalization is also fuelled by its own terminology and used as a concept to persuade people of the futility of challenging the motor of liberalization. Whole governments appear undermined by this narrative, as do those who seek to socialize international trade; there is, in fact, no dominant system which cannot be tempered within the human sphere. Collective action and social judgements can have an effect on even the most deeply ingrained market and finance systems which are confirmed and operated by conscious people, not robots.

The dominance of one international financial system has the effect of persuading politicians that their role has become managerial rather than political. Yet all systems have a social-value base, some more limited and oppressive than others. The introduction of managerialism into politics and public sector management was intended to create more effective systems which analyse impact and cost as well as activities, but systems themselves have an impact. There is more to politics than law enforcement; there are also socially just rules and systems which are inclusive rather than exclusive–perfecting efficiency is not enough and in politics it is dangerous.

Management and management innovation are not neutral concepts; they can be adapted and changed not only by politicians and leaders but also by collective action from the bottom up. Too often 'management techniques' are assumed to be good or bad. Although the dominant managerial models have serviced capital and have been developed in the private sector, there is no reason why management innovation cannot be articulated and utilized by those wanting to socialize the markets and management – but this requires a critical analysis of the impact of management systems and the development of new approaches to managing staff. Management innovations that support emergent practice are highly significant in a context where competitiveness and quality depend on staff motivation, and where new organizational forms and partnerships are business and political objectives but are thwarted by market conditions. Management approaches and strategies that provide a synergy between standards and diversity and individual judgement and reduce the conflict between workforce and managers in a context of change are much needed.

What do we mean by innovation?

The Austrian economist, Joseph Schumpeter (1947), first distinguished between the concepts of invention and innovation. He suggested that whereas invention was about finding out about new things, innovation was about making things work better. Invention and innovation both tend to be associated with research and development (R&D), invention and products. Creative scientists and intellectuals are viewed in the UK as rather isolated, clever but socially inept people, whereas those who manage processes and put ideas into practice are generally seen as more gregarious. People who invent 'things' tend to have very different skills from those who

are innovative in their efforts to get things done. Whatever the form of authority, managing people and processes requires greater interpersonal and social skills, whereas inventors tend to be wrapped up in more intellectual or artistic creativity. Chapter 3 analyses the various approaches to management and management skills.

The word innovation tends to be used in the context of scientific R&D to refer to high-tech product development, rather than the quality of people relationships, and conjures up a picture of 'boffins' at work. Invention or innovation are rarely used to describe innovative relationships. However, even the information technology industries require effective communication and positive staff relationships in order to turn innovative product ideas into real new products, increased sales and improved company performance. While individuals may be inspired to be intellectually creative, organizations require innovative environments and working contexts in order to encourage team working among all employees. Innovative management requires very different skills from those involved in product development. It concerns the creation of sustaining environments in which partnerships can develop and employees can work beyond their allocated roles and job functions. A creative environment is one which allows individuals to break from tradition and force new processes and interpersonal relationships. Edith Penrose (1959) was the first to apply the term 'innovation' to organizations and, in particular, to small businesses. For her, business growth depended on a manager's desire for fulfilment, usually by pursuing financial objectives; she considered that business organizations required an open system approach if they were to be innovative. The most significant feature of innovation was not what it referred to but having the personal space or the freedom to be creative. In other words, innovation requires a climate where people are free to innovate. Penrose (1959) suggested that innovation is a creative activity based on three fundamental characteristics:

- an ability to handle ambiguity;
- an overall or total perspective into which to fit the fragmented pieces of information;
- a fresh perspective.

Having vision is not enough. Innovative managers within organizations need to be able to recognize the barriers to change. It is also important to understand how to proceed to the next state or relationship and what obstacles may be encountered on the way. Those leading change or managing within changing circumstances must be able to see past obstacles to their ultimate objective and to envisage strategies and actions to overcome blocks and barriers. This is a quite different skill from overseeing operations and dictating orders within well-established routines. Often those given the responsibility of change are not aware of what is involved in the process, nor of how much they negotiate rather than dictate orders. Sometimes managers are asked and expected to network when they are not free to

do more than exchange views and have no power to initiate; they merely report to their corporate managers on contacts. In other words they are being asked to be creative within very confined boundaries and set parameters. This is very different from management innovation which is about breaking out of the existing frameworks or boundaries, whether in scientific thinking, in organizations or in relationships.

The big idea or management innovation at the beginning of the twentieth century was 'scientific management', a mechanical model of organization that was seized upon as the blueprint by American industrialists such as Henry Ford. This model persisted throughout industry and administrations during the 1940s and remained all-powerful until the 1960s. Although challenged by managers and management theorists, it still permeates private industry and public institutions in both the UK and the USA. 'Taylorist' concepts continue to dominate the thinking of the western world on how to organize labour in the production process. Until the 1980s, the organization of corporations and public bodies alike was seen as fixed, unassailable and fragmented. Personnel managers were responsible for matching staff to organizational functions and moulding employees to the job and the company culture. Rationalization and efficiency were important themes of organizational analysis from the 1940s until the 1980s, when the overwhelming objective was to make operational systems work faster and more efficiently. Large organizations developed a high degree of vertical compartmentalization and a separation between the managers who managed staff and those who dealt with finance, strategy and sales. Instruction tended to be in the form of commands and bottom-up communication was often nonexistent. The changing nature of the markets and increased competition forced many companies in the 1980s to think more seriously about the 'quality' of their products or services, while also increasing productivity. Peters and Waterman (1982) had a massive success with *In Search of Excellence*, which became the manager's bible for many years. Other American consultants and academics such as Moss Kanter, Porter and Drucker made fortunes by writing popular management recipes on how companies could deliver 'excellence' and profits at the same time. Organizations became aware of the competitive potential of 'quality': 'Excellent quality is not longer a competitive advantage for suppliers . . . without it suppliers are out of the game' (Kanter 1995: 99).

In the service sector the need for sustaining work environments is even more imperative, for staff relationships are the key to quality services. Management innovation within this sector is therefore essentially about developing new ways of working and organizing, with more open communication. Unfortunately, managers are too often obsessed by systems and technologies and confined by hierarchical structures and conformist behaviour. Bureaucratic administrations tend to reinforce negative relationships between managers who centralize, control and reinforce traditional assumptions about junior and female staff, while also generating blame cultures which degenerate into a total lack of motivation towards