Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
It’s all about relationships: 
Women managing women and the impact on their careers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Management

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Jane Ann Hurst

2017
Abstract

Women represent nearly half of New Zealand’s workforce, making it likely that a woman will, at some stage during her working life, have a woman manager. She may also manage women employees. However, despite this likelihood, very little is known about the nature of women’s hierarchical workplace relationships and even less about the impact these relationships have on women’s careers. This research used narrative inquiry, relational cultural theory and the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) to explore the relational experiences of 15 New Zealand women and the impact of these hierarchical relationships on career decisions. It was undertaken in two phases. Phase One used a combination of creative methods and semi-structured interviews to explore the participants’ experiences. Phase Two brought the participants together in workshops to develop personal and organisational strategies aimed at strengthening workplace relationships.

Phase One found that most of the participants had experienced a negative relationship with a women manager and/or employee. Many of those participants subsequently left the organisation they worked for as a direct or indirect result of that relationship. Conversely, nearly half of the participants spoke of a positive relationship and while these were beneficial, they were not linked to a subsequent career decision. These findings suggest that negative relationships affect a woman’s career decisions to a greater extent than positive relationships. The research also extends the KCM by adding the impact of women’s hierarchical relationships to the career parameters of balance and challenge.

Phase Two delved further into these findings to determine that women have gender-based expectations of women managers, such as an expectation of a higher degree of
emotional understanding and support from a woman manager than would be expected from a man. In addition, while the participants look to women managers for some form of career support, most were not striving for senior management positions. They were instead motivated by a desire to make a difference and live a balanced life, with the demands of senior organisational roles seen as being in conflict with their relationships and family responsibilities. This raises a dilemma from a gender equity perspective, with research suggesting that a critical mass of women at the senior leadership level reduces the gender pay gap and increases the promotional opportunities of women at all organisational levels.

Phase Two identified a number of personal and organisational strategies to better support women’s hierarchical relationships, as one way of enhancing women’s careers. Taking a relational approach, an holistic gendered framework is proposed that situates relationships within the broader personal, organisational, societal and temporal context. Strategies are recommended to enhance personal and organisational relational awareness and acceptance, development of relational skills and support, as well as structural change to better align career paths to senior management with women’s career aspirations and realities. In doing so, this thesis aims to progress the discussion on the ways in which organisations and women can better support each other to promote workplace gender equity.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to all of those women from the past who have struggled, fought, and sacrificed so much for the rights that we take for granted today.

I feel extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to listen to and share the stories of the 15 women who participated in this research. This thesis may be my work, but it is based in their lived experiences. I have learned so much from them and feel very grateful for the generous contribution of their time and willingness to openly discuss their experiences with me.

I would also like to warmly thank my supervisors, Professor Sarah Leberman and Dr Margot Edwards who have inspired, challenged and supported me throughout my PhD journey. I have thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the supervision process.

Finally, thank you to my wife, Caroline, for believing in me, supporting me, helping me to celebrate my successes, and most of all, reminding me to enjoy and treasure every moment of this amazing opportunity and journey.
Submission of a Thesis Based on Publications

This PhD was completed by articles for publication. It meets the requirements of Massey University that have been listed below.

Massey University allows the submission of theses based upon published research (or research accepted for publication), providing it conforms to the following:

- The research must have been conducted during the period of candidature (this stems from CUAP requirements, and it has implications for funding).
- The candidate may be the sole author of the publication(s), OR, where the candidate was a joint author, the research contributed by the candidate is normally expected to be in the capacity of primary author. The contribution of the candidate to jointly authored chapters must be clearly documented by a statement signed by the supervisor and candidate and bound into the thesis. To protect the interest of candidates, it is important that authorship is discussed at an early stage of candidacy, ideally with the involvement of an independent party.
- Published material may be submitted for examination once only and by one doctoral candidate, so where team research is involved, it is important to clarify roles at an early stage. Where material submitted for publication or examination by another candidate is critical to understanding the thesis, it may be included in a non-examinable appendix with an appropriate explanation. In special circumstances, different parts of the same publication may be submitted for examination by different candidates (e.g. where experiments and modelling have been done by different people).
- Theses based upon publications must have an appropriate introduction, including research objectives, and a comprehensive conclusion which clearly identifies the original contribution to knowledge of the subject with which it deals. The thesis must work as an integrated whole, and linking sections may also be used to this end.
- Submitted manuscripts and accepted and published work, in part or in full, may all provide the basis for chapters in the thesis. Where work has been previously published, a journal may need to give copyright permission for the material to
be included in a thesis which will be placed in the Library’s electronic repository. Candidates should gain copyright clearance as early as possible.

- Candidates are strongly advised to standardise the format and referencing of chapters. Copies of articles and/or creative works, as appropriate as published may be included in a pocket in the thesis, or in pdf form on the thesis CD.
- Candidates are advised to fully reference previous publication of their own sole-authored work, including graphs, tables and images that they themselves have generated. Any other intellectual content must be fully and appropriately referenced to the person(s) that supplied them. They are then able to sign a statement that the thesis is their own work. It is advisable to list in the preface publications that have arisen out of the work.
- The University sets the standard by which theses are examined, and acceptance of any part by a publisher does not necessarily mean that it meets examination standards. Examiners will be instructed to examine all parts of the thesis with equal rigour, and may request changes to any part of the thesis regardless of whether it has been published or not.
- The candidate is expected to have a working knowledge of all parts of the thesis, and to be able to answer questions about the thesis as a whole in the oral examination.
- The candidate is required to complete the form DRC 16 - ‘Statement of Contribution to Doctoral Thesis Containing Publications’ - for each article/paper included in the thesis.
Publications

As well as the articles contained in this thesis, I have co-authored the following refereed book chapters.


# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iv

Submission of a Thesis Based on Publications ............................................................... v

Publications .................................................................................................................... vii

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... viii

Chapter One: Introduction ............................................................................................... 1

  1.1 The New Zealand context ................................................................................ 2

  1.2 Benefits of gender diversity ........................................................................ 3

  1.3 Factors influencing the gender gap .............................................................. 4

  1.4 Women’s workplace relationships .......................................................... 5

  1.5 The shadow side of women’s workplace relationships ....................... 6

  1.6 Women’s careers .................................................................................... 7

  1.7 My experiences ....................................................................................... 9

  1.8 Research aims and approach .................................................................. 12

  1.9 Terminology ............................................................................................ 14

  1.10 Thesis structure .................................................................................. 15

Chapter Two: Literature Review ..................................................................................... 18

  2.1 Gender equity ....................................................................................... 19

    2.1.1 Gender equality ........................................................................... 19

    2.1.2 Gender equity ............................................................................. 21

  2.2 Relational cultural theory ......................................................................... 23

  2.3 Gendered career theory .......................................................................... 25
Chapter Five: Exploring Lived Experience – Hierarchical Relationships and Career Impacts

5.1 Chapter overview

Article 2: The career impacts of women managing women

5.2 Abstract

5.3 Introduction

5.4 Gender and workplace relationships

5.5 Gender and careers

5.6 Method

5.7 Findings

5.7.1 About the relationships

5.7.2 Career impacts of positive relationships

5.7.3 Career impacts of negative relationships

5.7.5 Organisational context

5.8 Discussion

5.9 Conclusion

5.10 Chapter summary

5.11 DRC 16: Statement of contribution to doctoral thesis containing publications

Chapter Six: Relational expectations of women managing women

6.1 Chapter overview

Article 3: The relational expectations of women managing women
6.2 Abstract ................................................................. 175
6.3 Introduction .......................................................... 176
6.4 Literature review ..................................................... 178
6.5 Methodology .......................................................... 180
6.6 Findings ................................................................. 182
  6.6.1 Support .............................................................. 184
  6.6.2 Holistic approach ............................................... 187
  6.6.3 Emotional understanding ................................. 189
6.7 Discussion ............................................................. 191
6.8 Conclusion ............................................................ 196
6.9 Chapter summary .................................................... 197
6.10 DRC 16: Statement of contribution to doctoral thesis containing publications ........................................... 198

Chapter Seven: Strategies for supporting careers and enhancing relationships ........................................ 199

7.1 Chapter overview .................................................... 199
7.2 Supporting women’s careers ...................................... 199
  7.2.1 Ways women managers can support the careers of their women employees ................................................. 200
  7.2.2 Women’s career aspirations ................................. 207
  7.2.3 Career support, aspirations and gender equity ............. 210

Article 4: Women managing women: An holistic relational approach to managing relationships at work ............................................ 215

7.3 Abstract ............................................................... 215
7.4 Introduction .......................................................... 216
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Viewing workplace conflict through an holistic relational lens</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Methodology: Delving into lived experience</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Findings: Personal and organisational strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7.1</td>
<td>Developing awareness</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7.2</td>
<td>Enhancing personal and relational skills</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7.3</td>
<td>Building support networks</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7.4</td>
<td>Finding acceptance</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Towards a more holistic relational approach</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.1</td>
<td>The framework</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.2</td>
<td>Temporal and contextual factors</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.3</td>
<td>Multiple and interlinked responses to conflict</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Conclusion and future implications</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>Chapter summary</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>DRC 16: Statement of contribution to doctoral thesis containing</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>publications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eight: Conclusion</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>The three research questions</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Theoretical contributions</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.1</td>
<td>Gendered relational expectations</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2</td>
<td>Relational component to gendered career theory</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Practical contributions</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Methodological contributions</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.1</td>
<td>Using narrative inquiry in management research</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2</td>
<td>Combining participant-generated creative material and interviews:</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits and challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Areas for further research</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables and Figure

Tables

Table 1.1: Thesis structure ................................................................. 15

Table 3.1: Summary of Phase One data collection ................................. 67

Table 3.2: Summary of participants’ creative material ............................ 70

Table 3.3: Phase One data analysis ...................................................... 75

Table 3.4: Example of categorisation of relationships – Steph ............... 78

Table 3.5: Phase Two data analysis ..................................................... 84

Table 4.1: Demographic details of participants ...................................... 89

Table 4.2: Summary of elements from Helen’s collage ............................ 109

Table 4.3: Summary of participants’ experiences .................................... 142

Table 4.4: Examples of participant comments about their positive and negative relationships ................................................................. 143

Table 8.1: Organisational strategies to strengthen relationships between women managers and employees ......................................................... 248

Table 8.2: Reflective matrix ................................................................. 249

Table 8.3: Benefits of participant generated creative material (pre-interview) .. 253

Figures

Figure 1.1: My poem about my manager, Lyn ........................................ 10

Figure 1.2: My poem about my client/manager, Virginia .......................... 11

Figure 3.1: Research design ............................................................... 66