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# **Outsiders Within**

**Women in Management in the Public Service in  
Aotearoa/New Zealand**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Management**

**at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand**

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**2005**

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the management practices of a small number of women in management positions within a large government department in New Zealand, and the factors influencing those practices. Using a feminist standpoint epistemology the study took as its starting point the day to day experiences of managers and their staff.

Through analysis of these experiences the context of New Public Management and the reforms of the public sector in New Zealand that took place in the 1980's and 1990's were identified as important features in the management practices of the participants.

The study found that the doctrines of New Public Management were embedded within the organisation from which participants were drawn. Within this context, they had an organising or mediating effect on the day to day management practices of the participants, what they valued, how they perceived management and the language they used to talk of their experiences. Overall the participants did not consider that gender relations created either supports or constraints to their management practices or their entry into management positions. They considered that gender-related constraints were a thing of the past. They did, however, note particular events that suggested that women managers continue to be judged in relation to deeply held gender stereotypes.

The management practices that the participants valued and/or described as their own practice did not conform to the gendered dichotomies of management that have been prevalent in the literature on successful management and women in management in particular. The participants demonstrated a more androgynous approach to management that is adaptive and sensitive to the wider context.

## Acknowledgments

*This thesis is dedicated to my sister Gabrielle who suffered a debilitating stroke toward the end of 2005. Her determination through the early days of her recovery was a lesson to me. She has a long road to travel, but hers is the true achievement.*

Many people have contributed directly or indirectly to this project. Firstly I would like to thank the participants whom I cannot name. Thank you for making time in your busy days to be interviewed and for your honest responses. Your professionalism and commitment to the aims of your organisation was evident in your responses.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of my supervisors, Craig Prichard and Marian Court who kept the train on the track with timely advice and comment.

Thanks to friends and colleagues who offered support and encouragement, read and proof-read chapters and offered advice on everything from participant selection to 'why you shouldn't complete your thesis on a Friday'. June Rout deserves a special mention for being prepared to wade through and edit draft chapters and for checking in on me on a regular basis.

Most importantly, thanks to Suzanne and Badyr for putting up with every surface of the house being covered in books and paper, limited access to the PC and lack of meals. I'm sure you are very thankful that we found on-line supermarket shopping before I was completely embedded in this project.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which gave me twelve weeks leave to attend to the writing phase.

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## Chapter One - Introduction

This thesis explores the management practices of women in a large government department in Aotearoa/New Zealand and looks at the factors that influence those practices. Its genesis was in my own musings about managers in general, women managers in particular, my interest in feminism and a particular assignment I completed for an Organisation and Management paper in 2002. I have worked in the public sector off and on for over twenty years, gaining my first job in the Department of Social Welfare as a sixteen year old 'cadet'. During the years of most significant reform of New Zealand's public sector, the late 1980s to the early 1990s I was less engaged in paid work, doing part time work in the period until my son went to school and then joining a community organisation. So I re-entered a re-engineered public sector in the mid 1990s.

I began to encounter women in management positions in greater numbers, many I admired for the strength and tenacity they had needed to get there and their ability to foot it with the 'boys' and still support other women in the organisation. Others I observed withholding this support and seemingly making it difficult for women around them to advance. In 2002 I enrolled in the paper that led me to identify this topic. One of the assignments I completed asked students to debate the statement "Women's leadership styles are different to men's". This was my first foray into the literature around gendered management styles. I found, of course, that there were many debates on the topic resulting in positions ranging from 'there is no difference' to 'there is almost nothing but difference'. This focus on difference can be seen in the literature review that follows in Chapter Three. My on-going reading and still-developing understanding of different feminist theories and methodologies however, lead me to the position that 'difference' was not the place to start my research from. The lived experience of women managers from the location of gendered institutions (the public service, and the role of management) was that place. This position is influenced by many feminist theorists, but particularly Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Dorothy Smith and Nancy Naples who developed or subscribe to what has come to be known as feminist standpoint epistemology. 'Difference', of course, continues to shape the context in which women manage.

So, I set out to carry out research that did not start from 'difference'. I also sought to complement some of the New Zealand literature on women's management that had focused on the education field, for example Strachan (1997) and Court (2002) by looking at the public service. I considered how women managers in a large public service organisation view the role of manager and how they describe their own behaviour in that role. I also explored whether the managers perceived the organisational and societal environments to enable or constrain them in their role of manager. A small number of staff were included in the study to explore how they perceived their manager's approach to management and the specific behaviours they observed. Staff were also asked to comment on the contextual elements that they considered to be enabling or constraining their manager.

### ***Why focus on women's management practices?***

As noted above, there has been much management literature and debate focused on management styles, and particularly the differences between women and men as managers. Early trait theorists described the characteristics of managers as the characteristics of men. Therefore, managers, by definition were men, and more importantly, women, by definition, were not managers. As Wicks and Bradshaw point out:

*Historically, organisational research has been largely oblivious to issues of gender, assuming either that organisational arrangements impact men and women equally or that only the experiences of men matter since they occupy the majority of important jobs in formal organisations (2000, p. 1).*

Prior to the 1980s it was difficult to find a management or business text book or article that used anything but the male pronoun. Over the past twenty years there has been much debate over the existence of difference, the nature and cause of any difference, whether those differences identified are positive or negative and why we should care anyway. This rich debate is discussed more fully in the literature review in Chapter Three.

This debate has also occurred in New Zealand, although much of it has remained focused on examining the representation of women in management and the factors that have affected women's under-representation in senior positions. There has been some research into leadership approaches or practices, much of this has been carried out in the education sector, (Court, 2002; Hawk, 1997; Strachan, 1997).

New Zealand in the 21st century also provides an interesting context in which to study the management practices of women. The year 2003 saw the 110th anniversary of women gaining the vote, women's labour force participation has reached a high of 60.9% (Statistics New Zealand, 2005) and the four key constitutional positions, the Prime Minister, Governor General, Attorney General and Chief Justice are held by women.

### ***Why the public service?***

The public service is a setting that has provided some specific policies and practices that have influenced the numbers of women attaining management positions and the type of management styles that are valued. These include equal employment opportunity policies, family friendly work environments and a new focus on communication, transparency, integrity and trust in public management.

The New Zealand public sector also has a history that has been characterised by gender segregation across organisations. Women are under represented in advice giving departments such as the Treasury, and in the Departments of Corrections, Fisheries and Conservation. Women in the public service can be found predominantly in large service departments such as the Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice (Mintrom & True, 2004). I initially set out to draw participants from one female dominated and one male dominated organisation to allow a richer comparison of context to be made. This did not occur due to the difficulty experienced in gaining access to staff. The issue of access is discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

The public sector has also undergone significant reform over recent years. The Labour Government that held office from 1984 to 1990 embarked on a radical programme of public sector reform which was carried on by the National government until 1999. The key elements were the splitting of commercial from non-commercial activities (Wallis, 2001) and a shedding of numbers in the public service. In 2001 the public service was around 37% of the size it had been in 1985 (Mintrom & True, 2004). Expectations are now that government agencies will be more open and responsive, will consult more and will adhere to an expressed set of values. This can be seen in documents such as the State Services Commission's Public Service Code of Conduct (State Services Commission, 2005b) and Development Goals for the State Services (State Services Commission, 2005c). These documents talk of the public service being accessible, coordinated and trusted and its employees having personal strength and courage, integrity and the ability to connect with people.

These factors mean that the New Zealand public service provided a unique opportunity to carry out a distinctly New Zealand study. Whilst the research did not seek to make any comparison to the management practices and approaches of women in the private sector, or to men, it will provide a basis from which this could be done in the future.

### ***Research questions***

This study set out to answer two key questions:

*What are the management practices of women in the public service in Aotearoa/New Zealand?*

and

*What are the factors that influence those practices?*

### ***Organisation of this thesis***

I have attempted in this thesis to use language that is accessible not only to academics, but also management practitioners, aware of the divide that often exists between these groups. I hope that I am following the trend identified by Barley, Meyer and Gash (1988) of the language of practitioners and academics converging and more importantly for me, that this influence is from the practitioner to the academic. I use the first person

pronoun throughout. This part of locating myself in the research (Leatherby, 2003) and acknowledging the role of the researcher as the producer of knowledge (Harding, 2004a; Naples, 2003; Smith, 1990a) and the potential power of that position. This thesis is necessarily partial and is constructed from within my own worldview.

In **Chapter Two** I provide some contextual background to women in the public service in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The increased participation of women in the workforce generally, and in the public service in particular, is discussed. I also outline the distribution of women within the public service in terms of their location in different departments and in managerial positions. I also discuss the gender pay gap as one of the important elements of the context in which women's management practices occur. A number of the participants in this study raised remuneration as the one area where they feel they are discriminated against. In Chapter Two I have also included an introduction to the public sector, the reforms it has undergone, the 1990's focus on efficiency and the current focus on increasing capability, transparency and trust.

**Chapter Three** contains my review and analysis of literature on women in management. I begin by discussing how the study of management has historically defined it as a masculine pursuit that either excluded women all together or put pressure on them to behave 'like men' in order to be perceived as successful. I then explore how researchers have approached investigations of women's management and leadership styles. Many looking for, and finding, significant differences between the way men and women approached leadership. Other researchers finding more within-group difference. I then present a discussion on androgynous leadership as an alternative to the masculine/feminine divide. Issues of cultural difference and the importance of context are raised as part of the critique of the literature.

In **Chapter Four** I outline my journey through feminist theories to my decision to begin this study from feminist standpoint position and to include an analysis of discourses occurring within the organisation the participants worked in as part of the context of their management practices. I also examine the ethical questions I needed to consider in carrying out this research from a feminist position.

**Chapter Five** presents the design of the study and outlines how I went about gaining access to organisations and collecting and analysing the data.

In **Chapter Six** I present my analysis of the participants' responses in relation to the doctrines of New Public Management (NPM). This chapter developed out of what I initially thought to be one of many influences on the participants' management practices. Because of the strength of the impact of NPM on management practices that was evident in the data, this evolved into one of the major findings of the study. In this chapter the impact of discourses of NPM on the day to day activities of participants is presented. These discourses include strategic planning, the focus on effectiveness and efficiency, managing performance, customer focus and mechanisms of control. The participants' unquestioning acceptance of and involvement in the discourse of public management is discussed.

**Chapter Seven** presents the themes that emerged from my initial content analysis. In this chapter the management practices and styles, as reported by participants, are presented and related to the literature discussed in Chapter Three. I also discuss two influencing factors on the management practices of participants. The first is the influence of role models through exhibiting both behaviours participants wanted to emulate and those they did not. Secondly I look at gender as a potential influence within the organisational culture.

In **Chapter Eight** I conclude the analysis with comment on whether the participants conceive themselves as insiders or outsiders in relation to the role of management, gender and the doctrines of New Public Management.

**Chapter Nine** concludes this discussion with implications and opportunities for future research.

## **Chapter Two: The context, women in the work force and the public sector reforms**

### ***Introduction***

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some context about women in paid work and women in the public sector. The number of women in management and the barriers to them moving into more senior positions is not the focus of my research. The nature of their participation in paid work and the remuneration they receive are, however, important parts of the contextual picture. The recent history and nature of the public service, which I discuss in the second section of this chapter, is also an important contextual consideration.

The statistics presented on women in the workforce are largely drawn from reports completed by, or on behalf of organisations such as the State Services Commission, the Ministry of Women's Affairs or the Human Rights Commission. Many of them use the 2001 census data. The State Service's Commission's report on EEO in the Public Sector 2000- 2004 was also an important source of information. I begin with a brief outline on women's participation in the paid workforce. I then follow with a discussion on the representation of women in the public service, particularly in senior positions and a comment on the gender pay gap.

The second part of this chapter contains a description of the recent history of the public sector from the reforms of the 1980's to mid 1990's and the pendulum swing (Norman, 2003; State Services Commission, 2005a) that began in 2000-2001.

### ***Women's workforce participation***

The participation of women in the workforce has been steadily increasing over the past fifteen years. From 1991 to 2001, women's labour force participation rate increased by almost 10 percentage points to reach 60%. Over the same period the rate for men increased 4 percentage points to reach 74% (Statistics New Zealand, 2001a). From

1990 to 2003 the total labour force increased by 25.2%. During this time female proportion of the labour force increased from 43.5% to 45.7% (Mintrom & True, 2004). This participation is unevenly distributed across occupational groupings. In 2001, 51.2% of the population of New Zealand were women. According to the 2001 census occupational data, women made up 55.7% of professionals, 51.6% of technicians or associate professionals, and only 39.5% of legislators, administrators and managers. They were also under-represented in trades and plant and machinery operators (Statistics New Zealand, 2001b).

### ***Women in the government sector***

In 1990, 47.8% of workers in the government sector were women. By 2003 this had risen to 54.8%. (Mintrom & True, 2004). Women make up a higher proportion of the core public service; in 2000 they represented 56% and by 2004 this had risen to 59% (State Services Commission, 2005 a). They are not evenly spread across the departments. Women in the public service can be found predominantly in large service departments such as the Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice. They are under represented in advice giving departments such as the Treasury, and in the Departments of Corrections, Fisheries and Conservation (Mintrom & True, 2004).

Although women make up well over half of the public service workforce, in 2000 only 40% of managers were women. This had risen to 46% in 2004. Of those in senior management positions, that is: first, second and third tier managers, in 2004, 40% were women. This had risen from 33% in 2001 (State Services Commission, 2005 a). There are currently 35 government departments that make up the core public service, women lead only nine (25.7 %) of these (State Services Commission, 2005 d). As Mintrom and True lament:

*The more depressing story is that women do not populate the leadership ranks in New Zealand in anywhere near the proportions that would be expected, given their numerical presence in the paid labour force. Men continue to occupy the vast*

*majority of top leadership and management positions across the various sectors of New Zealand society (2004, p. 47)*

This is despite the role models in powerful positions in the public and private sectors. Women who occupy these high powered roles include: The Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, the Attorney-General Margaret Wilson, the Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias, the Governor General Dame Silvia Cartwright and Telecom's Chief Executive Theresa Gattung. The appointment of these women to powerful positions is held up as an example of how there are no longer barriers to women achieving high profile, high power positions. As the statistics presented above show, however, they remain the exception and there is still a long way to go until the proportion of women in senior management positions reflects their participation in public service as a whole, and within individual departments.

### ***(lack of) Pay equity***

New Zealand has had legislation requiring equal pay for women and men in the public sector since 1960 (the Government Service Equal Pay Act, 1960) and in the private sector since 1972 (the Equal Pay Act, 1972). These two pieces of legislation did away with separate male and female pay scales (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2002). Since 1972 the average hourly earnings of women as a percentage of the average hourly earnings of men increased from 72.5% to 79.9% in 2003 (Mintrom & True, 2004), hardly a staggering improvement. Much of the difference between what women and men are paid is attributed to differences in education, qualifications, years in the workforce, the occupations and industries they work in and the effect of producing and caring for children (Department of Labour, 2000).

Despite the legislative change in 1960, women in the public sector have continued to be paid at lower rates than their male counterparts. Within the statistical category of government administration and defence, the average hourly earnings for women as proportion of those for men hardly changed between 1990 and 2001. In 1990 the gap was 22%, in 2002 it was 21 %. During this period, the proportion of women employed in this sector increased from 47.8% to 54.8% (Mintrom & True, 2004). Women in the

core public service fare a little better. In 2000 women in the public service earned 83 cents for every dollar earned by men in the service, a gap of 17%. In 2004 the gap had reduced by one percentage point to 16% (State Services Commission, 2005 a). In 2002, the State Services Commission made this comment:

*where women and men work in the same occupation, women on average earn less than men and the greatest discrepancy is in the managers' occupation group (2002, cited in Mintrom & True, 2004, p 49)*

### ***The public service – from New Public Management to a new subtlety in public management***

The context in which the participants in this study work is a public sector that has undergone significant change over the last two decades. The Labour Government that came into power in 1984 and the subsequent National Government, changed the landscape of the public sector through reforms aimed at addressing structural and economic issues (Wallis, 2001). The aims of the reforms were to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector, improve the responsiveness of agencies to their clients or customers, enhance accountability of managers, particularly Chief Executives, and perhaps most importantly, reduce public spending (Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996). This was part of an international movement of public sector reform. Although New Zealand is held up as one of the more radical examples (Norman, 2003; Wallis, 2001), it was only one of a number of countries grappling with similar issues and turning to the operation of the private sector for answers. The reforms in New Zealand were influenced by a number of economic and management theories, including public choice theory, agency theory, transaction-cost economics and managerialism or New Public Management (NPM) as it came to be known, (Boston et al., 1996).

The key legislative tools that gave effect to this far-reaching change were the Public Finance Act 1989, the State Owned Enterprise Act 1988 and the State Sector Act of 1988. These statutes enabled a number of changes to occur. These included the move to smaller, single-purpose agencies, the separation of policy from implementation,

separation of the government's purchase and ownership interests, maximum decentralisation of management decision making, and the introduction of accountability systems such as purchase agreements, contracts and performance management systems (Boston et al., 1996; Norman, 2003). New Zealand's experience of the reforms became something of a legend internationally (Christensen & Laegreid, 2001; Wallis, 2001). The impact of the reforms in New Zealand was largely due to the comprehensiveness and speed of the change which was unparalleled elsewhere (Boston et al., 1996; Norman, 2003).

From these reforms, a new discourse of public management emerged. Terms such as contracting, contestability, outputs, outcomes, performance agreements, strategic planning and many more have entered the day to day parlance of the public servant (Boston et al., 1996). Much of this is borrowed from the private sector, with its focus on ends rather than means. Underpinning this approach was a view of management as instrumental, with a focus on efficiency and achieving results (Eriksen, 2001).

Boston et al. (1996, p. 26) summarise the key features of NPM as including:

- *a belief that the difference... between the public and private sectors are not generally significant; hence public and private organisations can, and should, be managed on more or less the same basis;*
- *a shift in emphasis from process accountability to accountability for results;*
- *an emphasis on management rather than policy, in particular a new stress on general management skills;*
- *the devolution of management control coupled with the development of improved reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms;*
- *the disaggregation of large bureaucratic structures into quasi-autonomous agencies, in particular the separation of commercial from non-commercial functions and the policy advice from delivery and regulatory functions;*
- *a preference for private ownership, contestable provision and the contracting out of most publicly funded services;*

- *a shift from relational to classical modes of contracting (ie. from long-term and generally poorly specified contracts to shorter-term and much more tightly specified contracts);*
- *the imitation of certain private sector management practices such as the use of short-term labour contracts, the development of strategic plans, corporate plans, performance agreements and mission statements, the introduction of performance-linked remuneration systems, the development of new management information systems and a greater concern for corporate image;*
- *a preference for monetary incentives rather than non-monetary incentives such as ethics, ethos and status; and*
- *a stress on cost-cutting, efficiency and cutback management.*

The impact of the application of these doctrines on the role of managers in the public service was far reaching. Functions that were previously carried out by departments, particularly commercial functions, had been moved to a range of non-departmental or non-government agencies. Managers were responsible for contracts, departments were much smaller and Chief Executives now had responsibility for human resource management and higher levels of discretion (and accountability) to go with it. Pressure was on managers to be bold, risk-taking and entrepreneurial like their private sector counterparts (Boston, 2001).

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, something of a sea-change began to swell in the approach to public management. Part of this was due to the re-election of a Labour Government in 1999 which sought to distance itself from the work of its predecessors (Norman, 2003). The case of Christine Rankin, former Chief executive of the then Department of Work and Income, is viewed by many as an example of the possible consequences of the implementation of NPM (Wallis, 2001). Ms Rankin's department was meeting its targets, it was being managed for results, but the way in which it was done, and in particular the inappropriate expenditure of public money was dubbed a 'culture of extravagance' (Norman, 2003) and epitomised for many all that was wrong with NPM. Other issues that began to gain attention across the public sector were the fragmentation of services, the costs of compliance and the erosion of trust (Norman,

2003). In his introduction to the State Services Commission's Annual Report 2000-2001, the then State Services Commissioner Michael Wintringham made the following comments about two of these concerns:

*I now think that the multiplicity of organisations in some parts of the State sector is inconsistent with the onerous stewardship responsibilities we place on Responsible Ministers. In some cases, we should consider merging organisation (State Services Commission, 2001, p. 14).*

*The net result is that separating policy advice and service delivery may well have an initial beneficial impact on both the policy function and on service delivery. But over time the separation may well create a situation where a reversal of the separation seems desirable. (ibid,p.16).*

Over the past three to four years there have been some subtle changes in the expectations of managers in the public sector. There is more focus on the means not only the ends, an emphasis on outcomes rather than outputs, cross department collaboration and some evidence of bringing back into the fold some of the services that had been cast out. An example of the later is the reintegration of the Special Education Services, and the Early Childhood Development Unit into the Ministry of Education (Norman, 2003).

Some of the changes that have been observed in the New Zealand public management system since 2001 are the move to increase the capability of the public service and the focus on outcomes as opposed to outputs (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003). This has lead to a whole new discourse around 'managing for outcomes' that is evident in the courses and conferences aimed at public servants run by private firms and business schools alike. Norman (2003) also notes the emphasis on returning to a core of permanent employees and a reduction of the reliance on contractors, expectations of greater collaboration and less competition and a formal restatement of public sector values. The Development Goals for the State Services reflect something of this change. The following six goals have been adopted with milestones set for 2007 and 2010.

*Employer of Choice*

*Excellent State Servants*

*Networked State Servants*

*Co-ordinated State Agencies*

*Accessible State Services*

*Trusted State Services* (State Services Commission, 2005c, p. 4)

As managers, the participants in my study are expected to be aware of these changes and adapt how and what they do accordingly. The way they interact with customers, including Ministers, report performance and develop policy is changing. There is an increased focus on co-ordination and improving the capability of the sector as a whole. This will need to be balanced with the on-going expectation of fiscal responsibility (Norman, 2003). The goals now are around achieving long-term outcomes through a cross-government co-ordinated approach to developing and implementing policy.

## **Summary**

Women have historically been under represented in management positions in New Zealand, particularly in the ranks of senior managers. Despite Equal Employment Opportunity policies and anti-discrimination laws, this remains the case in 2005. In the public service, from where the participants in this study are drawn, women make up nearly 60% of the total employees but only 40 % of the senior (first, second and third tier) managers. When they do gain management positions, they are paid less than their male counterparts although in the core public service this gap is slightly less than it is in the wider public sector or the private sector. Added to this context of under representation and lower pay is the influence of the public sector reforms of the 1980's and 1990's and their on-going impact on the expectations of managers in the public service today. The managerialism of the reforms with its focus on competition, outputs, efficiency and accountability is slowly being softened by discourses of collaboration, networking, personal integrity and responsibility. In this chapter I have attempted a brief description of these important contextual components that impact on the experiences of

women managers in the public service. The following chapter reviews the literature on women in management and leadership positions.

## Chapter Three - Literature Review

### *Introduction*

My initial interest in looking at the topic of women in management developed through the papers I undertook as part of my post graduate study and my own observations of a number of managers, women and men, in my 20 plus years in the public sector. I had myself been in leadership roles in a number of work environments and during the course of developing this thesis gained a position with a formal title of 'manager'. During my paid work experiences I had observed women adopting very different approaches to management and began reflecting on how I was going to approach management and the sorts of expectations others might have of me in this role. These experiences in both the academic and work environments have impacted on the literature I gathered, how I have interpreted it and how it is presented in this chapter.

Like my experience of choosing a methodology, which I discuss in Chapter Four, the process of developing this literature review was a little like following a street map of a tourist destination city. There were many routes I could have chosen, a number of major historical sites to see, some less well known attractions and choices to be made about what to visit and how to fit as much in as possible within given restraints of money and time.

I have arranged this review under a number of sub-headings which helped me to sort through and make sense of the literature. It also helped me to define how this thesis would add, albeit in a limited way, to the research conversation on women in management. I begin with a brief look at the concept of management and how it has excluded women. I then consider the various approaches to investigating the phenomenon of women in management including studies that have set out to identify differences between the way women and men lead, those that have found more similarities and more within-group differences and studies from different cultural settings. I also look at the concept of androgynous management, a concept which has elements that ring true for me when reflecting on my own approach to management.

## ***'Man'-agement***

The practice of management is an ancient one, having its beginnings in the need to organise groups of individuals around tasks such as gathering food or building structures. Management as a role/career and as an academic discipline, however, is generally accepted to have emerged out of the industrial revolution (Wren, 2005). The move to large-scale production of goods required activities such as planning, leading, organising, and controlling (ibid). These activities became known as management. The management function is inextricably linked with the concept of leadership.

Wren talks of leadership as focusing on:

*... the attainment of organizational goals by working with and through people and other resources (2005, p.442).*

Chemers describes leadership as:

*...a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid of others in reaching a goal (1997, p. 5).*

Much of the literature discussed in this report uses the term 'leader' to describe the person who carries out the management function. In this sense, the terms 'leader' and 'manager' are used interchangeably and I have not attempted to draw a distinction between them.

Much early management literature ignored the existence, or potential existence, of women in management roles (Kanter, 1977). Early trait theories of management focused on the individual on the assumption that there would be identifiable differences between those who were leaders and those who were not (Chemers, 1997). This led to the development of what Kanter calls the "great man theory" of leadership (Kanter, 1997, p.253). The subjects of trait theory research on leadership and management were generally white, middle class and male (Strachan, 1997). Therefore the traits that

became associated with successful leadership reflected culturally defined male characteristics. Collinson & Hearn (2000) note that stories of managers reflected masculinities of control and bullying and 'military-like efficiency'. They also suggest that in the 1980's management discourse became even more aggressive. "Highly autocratic managerial styles were widely celebrated as the primary means of generating corporate success" (ibid, p.264).

Against this benchmark women were found to be wanting. They were emotional, soft, dependent and intuitive rather than aggressive, dominant, objective and independent (Orser, 1994; Wajcman, 1996). This difference was used to explain why women were under-represented, or unrepresented, in management roles. It has also led to dilemmas for women. Wajcman (1996) suggests that in order to succeed, many women felt they had to adopt characteristics associated with masculinity. This created a catch-22 situation, in order to be successful women needed to act like men which would invite criticisms of their unfeminine behaviour (Hull & Umansky, 1997; Korabik, 1990). If they exhibited the more 'acceptable' feminine characteristics their chances of making it into leadership positions, or being judged as successful leaders should they get there, were diminished (Strachan, 1997). On this basis some authors suggested that women were therefore 'outsiders' to organisations and to management (Olsson, 1992). Still (1993) expanded this to suggest that this meant that women needed to change to fit in to the management culture and that organisations saw no need to address that culture. Threads of this 'outsider' status can also be seen in Grace's conclusion that management is a form of male hegemony and this is the context in which women manage.(Grace, 1995)

### ***Looking for difference***

In more recent times a body of research has focused on identifying differences between the ways women and men manage. This has looked not only at characteristics, but other aspects of managers and management such as ways of managing (Reay & Ball, 2000; Rosener, 1990), linguistic styles (Fischer & Gleijm, 1992), job stress and mental health (Gardiner & Tiggermann, 1999) and decision making and risk taking (Johnson & Powell, 1994). Some of this research has been conducted with the intention of debunking the

difference myth as a reason for keeping women out of management positions. Other studies have focused on the 'feminine in management' and assert that women's management styles are not only different, but are better suited to the modern management role (Mintzberg, 1988). A third purpose was to show that women and men manage differently but complementarily and therefore both are needed in management in order to access the widest possible range of skills (Hall-Taylor, 1997). Vinkenburg, Jansen, & Koopman characterise the approaches to looking at the gender differences in management as having one of the following starting points.

*Women are opposite and deficient*

*Women are just like men*

*Women are opposite and superior* (2000, p. 122)

It is difficult to achieve a simple binary distinction of studies that have found differences between male and female management styles and those that have not. The range of measures used, the aspects of management style measured and the different contexts in which management takes place all add to a wide range of results. Indeed, even those who have identified significant difference between the management styles of men and women concede that some women behave in ways generally associated with men and vice-versa (Rosener, 1990). In the remainder of this section I will very briefly summarise the literature that sets out to comment on whether women and men manage in different ways.

### **Dichotomous pairs**

Following and overlapping with the trait theories, behaviour or style theories emerged as a way of talking about how leaders lead. Behaviours or styles were generally presented as dichotomous pairs: as task oriented versus interpersonally oriented (Bale, 1950 in Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003) autocratic versus democratic (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) or transactional versus transformational (Burns, 1979; Rosener, 1990).

Rosener's (1990) International Women's Forum survey is one of the most cited studies to have found difference between the ways men and women manage. Rosener found that

men were more likely to describe their leadership style as transactional, that is, a series of transactions between themselves and their subordinates, and were more likely to use the power that their position in the organisation gave them. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to describe their leadership style as transformational. The transformational style is characterised by interactive, inclusive processes that value input from all levels, are based on power and information sharing, involve encouragement and motivation and sharing of goals. It is argued that this transforms the self interest of the staff member into the interest of the organisation (Rosener, 1990). She also found that women leaders do not covet formal authority in the way that men do. She suggests that women have largely lived without this formal authority and have learned to survive and lead without it, placing more value on informal, spontaneous recognition based on relationships and leading by example.

One of the criticisms of Rosener's work is that it essentialises the feminine in management without analysis of the motivations of the manager who transforms the self interest into the organisation's interest. An example of this criticism is from Jenkins who would interpret this 'transformational' behaviour as using the rhetoric of collaboration and power-sharing to gain support for an initiative, perhaps one that would have been implemented anyway (Jenkins, 1999). On the surface this criticism has some weight, particularly if we look that the transformation of self interest to organisational interest as the goal. The use of the relationship and interpersonal approach in order to move the focus of staff from individual to organisational interests can be interpreted as being somewhat manipulative. It is hard to argue, however, that increased information sharing, involving staff in decision making, providing encouragement and sharing power are manipulative behaviours. A number of the participants that I interviewed for this study described management practices that would fit with Rosener's description of the transformational manager.

## **Feminine in management approach**

Other writers that have championed the 'feminine in management' approach and suggested that women's management styles are not only different, but better suited to the modern management role (Amos-Wilson, 2000; Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990). . For many of these authors, the focus is on the relational nature of the way that women manage. Helgesen (1990) describes how the four women in her study spent time on relationships both within and external to the organisation. This extended to how they dealt with correspondence, setting aside time to deal with it and ensuring that everyone who had taken the time to write to them received a considered reply. These and other authors suggest that contemporary management requires teamwork and collaboration, less of a focus on hierarchy and more of a focus on the manager as a coach and mentor. In this environment the manager empowers and supports their staff (Eagly & Carli, 2003). The argument put forward is that women, because of their gender-related and/or biological dispositions already have these skills and are therefore more suited than men to 21<sup>st</sup> Century management roles. This of course assumes that all women will have a nurturing and caring orientation, are devoid of ego and prepared to share power, assumptions that I do not share. This essentialism also limits women and adds to the rhetoric that invites criticism of women when they do not exhibit these characteristics.

## **Linguistic styles**

As noted earlier, there are a number of studies that have looked at whether specific aspects of management were gendered. Fischer & Gleijm (1992) refer to the different linguistic styles of men and women as one of the ways they manage differently. They assert that women are more attuned to the people around them and will therefore use the language of connection. Men, on the other hand, focus on the power and status aspects and thus speak and hear in those terms. These authors also discuss the differences between the behaviour of men and women in groups. As many managers spend a significant portion of their time in meetings, this dimension will be an important part of how they view themselves, and how they are viewed by others.

## Focus on context

Gardiner and Tiggermann (1999) introduce a useful contextual element to the discussion on difference. These authors focussed on differences in behaviour within male and female dominated industries and the related levels of job stress and the effect on mental health. They found that in male dominated industries women faced pressure to conform to stereotypically masculine styles of management. The women in these situations felt the need to adopt a masculine style of leadership in order to be perceived as successful leaders. Kanter (1997) was one of the first to identify this point. She asserted that women adopt whatever behaviour is needed to succeed in a male dominated environment. This assertion is supported by Wajman who states that her data:

*...suggests that gender stereotypes are still deeply entrenched and that, despite the current enthusiasm for a 'feminine' style of management, to succeed women have to adopt the style associated with male management. (1996, p. 334)*

One of the questions that arises out of these studies is that of 'who is finding difference?' and are there research environments in which difference is more likely to be observed? Eagly and Johnson (1990) offer some useful insight into the circumstances in which difference is identified and by whom. One of the key findings of their meta-analysis of 162 studies was that practitioners were more likely to find differences in management styles than social scientists. The analysis focused on two dimensions, task vs interpersonal orientation and autocratic vs democratic decision making styles. They identified the number of different measures used, and categorised them according to how directly they related to these dimensions. As both a practitioner and a researcher, this difference between the studies carried out by practitioners and researchers was of great interest to me and set me wondering whether my lay observations of women taking an eclectic approach to management would be borne out by my research. According to Eagly and Carli (2003) The goal of a meta-analysis is to combine findings from a number of studies and measure the magnitude of the effect across the studies. It should be noted, however, that one of the key limitations to this type of meta-analysis is the range of measures used and the difficulty this causes in making drawing definitive conclusions.

### ***Finding similarity***

For every researcher that has looked for and found gender-related differences in management styles and behaviours there is one that has found no difference between the way women and men manage and/or more within group difference than between group difference. Even studies that seem to support the notion that men and women manage differently report contradictory findings (Osland, Snyder, & Hunter, 1998; Rosener, 1990). In their study of Latin American women in management, Osland et al (1998) conclude that male and female management styles are converging as societal roles and stereotypes are challenged. Similarly, Chirikova and Krichevskaja's commentary on gender differences in leadership styles in Russia concludes that there have been significant changes, with more men describing their own style as consultative and empowering as opposed to the more traditional authoritarian style associated with men (2002).

Other studies have also produced mixed results. Samartseva and Fomina (2002) conducted research using Blake and Mouton's managerial grid, which is based on two dimensions, concern for people and concern for production. This study found that on the dimension of concern for people there was no difference between the men and women surveyed. Even Judy Rosener, whose 1990 article in the Harvard Business review is one of the most often cited as proof of the different management styles adopted by men and women, found some men do use a transformational style.

There are others who have been less than convinced by the feminine in management argument. Johnson and Powell's (1994) study into differences in decision making and risk aversion, found no significant differences between female and male management students in risk taking. Similarly, studies of conflict management have indicated that gender is not a significant factor in an individual's approach to conflict management (Munduate, Ganaza, Peiro, & Euwema, 1999).

Billing and Alversson also see more similarity than difference. “There is no difference between male and female leaders – only difference between people” (2000, p. 148). The consideration of ‘male’ and ‘female’ as diverse groups with many sub-groups is often overlooked in discussions on management styles. Colinson and Hearn pick up this theme when they comment that men and masculinities are not “...homogeneous, unified or fixed categories”(2000, p. 267). Within each category there are diversities of style, character, approach and behaviour.

Brewis & Linstead (1999) are also critical of the emphasis placed on the differences between male and female leadership styles. They conclude that the research has been inconclusive, with as much discovery of commonality as there has been of difference. The major criticism they make is of the lack of attention to the internal organisational environment and its effect on behaviour. Similarly, Hall-Taylor’s (1997) review of the sex-difference literature concludes that the results are inconclusive and calls for a closer look at within group difference in relation to dimensions of class and race. Wajman (1998) also concluded that the similarities between women and men as managers far out weighed any difference.

So it would seem that whilst differences have been identified in particular settings and along particular dimensions, no one can describe a truly female way of managing in a way that would be instantly identifiable by an observer in an organisation. There has been a strong call to move away from difference as the starting point in research and an equally strong call to look more carefully at sub groups and cultural settings.

### ***Adding cultural context - experiences outside of North America***

During my search for literature on women in management, I became aware that most of the literature I was looking at described studies carried out in North America so I set out to find studies in different cultural contexts. I was particularly interested in studies from societies that I perceived to have very strong sex-role stereotyping that could be

expected to influence the ways of leading available to women within them. The following studies, from Latin America, Bangladesh and Russia are examples of the studies I found.

### **Latin America**

A 1998 study of 46 Costa Rican and 78 Nicaraguan women found that women managers in these Latin American countries adopt a more consultative style than their male counterparts (Osland et al., 1998). Many women in this study described the need to adopt this style in order to avoid appearing too 'bossy' and thus stepping outside the cultural expectations of women within the Latin American setting. For these women managing like a man would be counterproductive as they would be judged more harshly for abandoning their expected nurturing role. Within this context, the adoption of the consultative style can be seen as a result of social conditioning and contextual reality.

Osland et al. (1998) make strong links between gender role expectations and the way participants describe different management styles. The women in this study identified the difficulty for a Latin American woman pursuing an authoritarian style, even if that were her preferred approach. Interestingly, the men in this study identified the consultative style as both the style they preferred their managers to adopt, and as describing their own approach to management. The authors conclude that this may reflect a general trend away from authoritarianism that can more clearly be linked to modernisation than to anything to do with gender roles.

### **Russia**

Two Russian studies found different approaches to management in two different groups. The first investigated the characteristics of the management style of women executives in Moscow. The authors found that female managers felt that they needed to prove their right to lead and therefore employed reliable, rational decision-making techniques at the expense of taking risks and challenging (Chirikova & Krichecskaia, 2002). This adoption of rational, levelheaded decision-making, itself a gendered process, demonstrates Kanter's (1977) claim that women will adopt whatever approach works according to the context. The authors however, concluded that the economic crisis and the increasing complexity of management is producing a less gendered expression of

management. This claim appears to be based on women adopting more masculine styles as the appropriate response to this crisis even though they believe the 'softer' approach of being attentive to staff is essential for modern managers.

Another Russian study asserted that women are achieving success in management by developing a uniquely female style of management and not, as has been suggested, by learning to play the men's game (Samartseva & Fomina, 2002). These authors suggest that women prefer fraternalism (sic) and partnership rather than paternalism and bureaucratism (sic). This study also found that women were more likely than men to employ mixed strategies. This argument is supported by de Matteo (1994) whose review suggests that the future of management is more androgynous, with managers selecting the most appropriate behaviour for the setting, rather than adopting a particular style. These comments lead me to consider whether New Zealand's social, political and industrial context is such that the concept of androgyny and of using flexible and adaptive styles is one that is likely to appeal to managers and subordinates alike. The discussion of androgynous leadership will be continued later in this review.

## **Bangladesh**

A study carried out in 2000 looked at transformational leadership among women in the public service in Bangladesh (Amos-Wilson, 2000). In this study Amos-Wilson found that women civil servants in Bangladesh were likely to describe themselves as leading in a transformational way but found in her observation that the style was more transactional than described. This difference between reported and observed behaviour could be attributed to many things. Amos-Wilson was particularly interested in why the women valued the elements of the transformational style even though their management practices may not always have been consistent with it. She looked for her answers in the role of women in Bangladeshi society and in particular, the positions of highly educated or higher class women. These women were used to having domestic help to care for their homes and children, but the overall responsibility for ensuring that the housework was done and the children fed remained with the mother. Women in the civil service, particularly in management positions were relatively new phenomena in Bangladesh. Amos Wilson suggests that in the absence of women as role models in leadership

positions, the model of the family where the mother took responsibility for reproductive work, albeit having help to carry it out, is the benchmark for their management practice.

As I read through the reports of studies carried out in non-Western environments I got a sense that the participants had struggled to fit their answers within the framework of the research, much like Smith talks of the Native American family she saw through the window of a train. From her location inside the train, she describes them as being a family, and as watching the train (Smith, 2004b). Of course, they may have been something other than a family and their purpose may have been very different to that which she presents. She uses this example to demonstrate how:

*We may not rewrite another's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework which extracts from it what fits with ours. Our conceptual procedures should be capable of explicating and analyzing the properties of their experienced world rather than administering it (ibid, p.30)*

## **Canada**

The importance of cultural difference was also identified by Orser (1994) as one of the motivations for carrying out a study of Canadian business and non-business students. Orser comments that research into sex role stereotyping is largely conducted with American samples and therefore reflects American societal and cultural and political influences. Orser's study differs from many others in that it compares the attitudes of women and men enrolled in business studies courses with those of women and men enrolled in other courses such as nutrition and family studies. Orser found that students perceived a significant association between the characteristics of a successful manager and the characteristics of men. The female students however, regardless of what course they were enrolled in, also considered the traits they associated with women to be similar to the traits they associated with successful managers. The male participants did not make this association.

This led me to question the research carried out in different cultural contexts using the concepts, language and measurements of the West, usually the United States. I was left feeling that it was no wonder that the Bangladeshi civil servants ended up telling the researcher that what they did was just 'common sense' (Amos-Wilson, 2000). This was one of the considerations in my quest for a methodological approach that would allow me to begin from women's experiences rather than beginning with a measurement tool and attempting to make their experiences fit.

### ***Criticisms of the binary difference approach***

There have been many criticisms of the research that has identified gender-related difference in leadership styles and behaviours. Colwill (1995a) suggests that studies showing differences have an advantage when it comes to publishing because they fit the paradigm of research as looking for difference. She suggests that this publishing bias overstates the case for difference between the sexes.

One of the key areas of criticism of the 'looking for difference' approaches is their lack of attention to the diversity within the group 'women', the context of male environments and the effect of power within organisations (Blackmore, 1999b; Court, 2002; Fuchs Epstein, 1991; Reay & Ball, 2000). Colwill (1995a) also suggests that it is impossible to separate 'sex' from 'status' and the lack of attention to status in research means that it is difficult to know whether differences observed are truly related to sex.

There has also been a significant amount of criticism both of the basis of claims of the feminine in management research and the conclusions that have been drawn. Wajcman (1996) supports Eagly and Johnson's (1990) view that those differences that have been found are more pronounced in laboratory studies than they are in field studies. This indicates that the contextual setting of the research may be a better indicator of what will be found in relation to management style than notions of gender. Wajcman's study found that women and men in senior positions were very similar in their management styles. Another of the criticisms Wajcman levels at the feminine in management theorists

is the limited attention that is paid to origin of the qualities and behaviours that are associated with management. As discussed earlier, these qualities and behaviours are characteristic of men. With this as the starting point, the observer of women managers is set up to attribute any differences to gender.

Some of the strongest criticism of the feminine in management approach has come from Calas and Smircich (1993). These authors raise concerns about the adequacy of research on the feminine in management. This argument is taken up by Billing and Alvesson (2000) who find the notion of feminine and masculine leadership styles misleading. They believe that researchers have been looking at the wrong thing and attributing differences to gender that could be more to do with the setting. They also caution the use of scales of masculinity and femininity developed in one cultural context being used in another. These authors believe that the use of gender vocabulary unnecessarily limits the research and does not allow identification of within-group variations that may be more significant than those identified between-groups. These concerns have also been voiced by Blackmore (1999b), Fuchs Epstein (1991) and Reay & Ball (2000). Riger also criticises the use of standardised scales suggesting that they “will not reveal the way women would define their own experiences if given the opportunity to do so” (1992, p. 5).

### **Privileging white women’s experience**

The lack of attention to the experience of women of colour in North American management literature is given the term ‘whitewash’ by Betters-Reed & Moore (1995). They assert that white women are the “normative models of professional success” (1995, p. 25) as they are considered to be the most successful, or the most likely to be successful in adopting behaviours that are similar to the white male norms of managerial behaviour. Increasingly in the North American literature there is an attempt to un-pack the assumptions in the ‘white’ of ‘white, male management’ for example (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Miller & Katz, 2002) and to ensure that white women’s experience in management does not become the proxy for all women’s experience. Narayan (2000) draws parallels between this cultural essentialism and gender essentialism. She also suggests that in trying to avoid gender essentialism, some researchers have slipped into

essentialism of groups of women based on their cultural identity. This lesson is equally pertinent for New Zealand where Maori women are even less well represented than their Pakeha counterparts in managerial positions, and in participation in research that might explore their different experiences. I elaborate on this point in relation to the process of carrying out this research in Chapter Four – Methodology.

### ***Androgynous Leadership***

Earlier in this chapter I referred to the concept of androgynous leadership. The literature on androgyny, like much of the literature on women in management, comes largely from North America (Strachan, 1997). During the late 1980's and 1990's there was increased interest in this concept of a leadership style that was neither masculine or feminine but allowed the most effective attributes of both to be employed in the leadership role. De Matteo described this as a “style that blends behaviours deemed previously to belong exclusively to men or women” (1994, p. 21) and suggested that androgynous styles of leadership were likely to become more prevalent and to be more effective in business world of the future.

Others, such as Sargent (1983) identified advantages to both men and women of a large scale adoption of an androgynous style as the most effective management style. It would give men access to management strategies that had previously been deemed ‘feminine’ and vice versa. Sargent saw the introduction of an androgynous style as increasing the behavioural options available to both men and women and reducing the need for them to split their home and work personas. Sargent acknowledged that androgyny would not just ‘happen’ and that both men and women would need to act in ways that were at odds with their socialisation. She did not, however, seem to see the attributing of behaviour to categories of masculine and feminine to be in itself problematic. She also lays the work to be done in introducing androgyny to management at the feet of individual female and male managers rather than considering the organisations, or the discourses in which management takes place, as sites of change.

Like the research into specifically masculine and feminine styles of working, there were differing views about whether an androgynous style existed. Korabik (1990) offered qualified support, suggesting that effective management required both instrumental and expressive skills that would be exhibited to different degrees in different situations but that further research was required. In Rosener's terms these would be a mixture of both transactional and transformational approaches to management (Rosener, 1990). In her study of six women school principals in Britain, Hall proposes an approach to educational leadership that "draws on behaviours that are the exclusive property of neither men nor women" (1996, p. 3). There are some clear similarities between her findings and the responses of participants in this study, which I discuss in Chapter Seven.

Baril, Elbert, Mahar-Potter & Reavy (1989; Bell & Nkomo, 2001) however are critical of research on androgyny in management, suggesting that the literature was inconclusive at best and misleading at worst. Their claims were based on their view that it was not possible to measure androgyny with instruments like the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, which had been used in many studies, as they did not measure a full range of potential sex-role identities.

In the lead-up to my study I decided to keep an open mind about both the existence and the effectiveness of an androgynous style of leadership. My own observations were that women used a range of management strategies in different situations and contexts. These contexts are made up of many aspects including organisational culture, the needs and expectations of the specific group of people they are working with and the pressures of organisational processes. This is supported by Helgesen who quotes one of her participants as saying: "Sometimes it's like I'm in a play. I have different roles, with different scripts, but I'm the same person" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 26). I was uneasy, however, with the notion of these strategies being linked to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. Code (2000) notes that this use of stereotyped masculine and feminine characteristics without them being seen as problematic contributed to the concept of androgyny falling out of favour as a feminist approach. As you will read in the summary of New Zealand literature below, however, adaptive leadership, using

different responses to different situations has been a common finding in the literature on New Zealand women in management.

### ***The Aotearoa /New Zealand story***

Organisation studies does not have the history in New Zealand that it has in North America. Within its relatively short history, however, there have been a number of studies and reviews that examine women in management.

### **Women's participation in management**

One of the earliest identifiable New Zealand studies is Pace's (1981) research into the experiences of 130 women in management. Pace looked at the backgrounds of women who had made it into management to identify any commonalities and trends. Like most studies carried out internationally in the early 1980s much energy was invested in exposing the under representation of women in management across various industries. The themes of women being unrepresented in management across industries and being concentrated in a narrow range of industries are also picked up by other authors (James & Saville-Smith, 1992; McGregor, Thomson, & Dewe, 1994).

McGregor et al. characterised the New Zealand literature on women in management as 'practical' writing that "included profiles of successful women managers as role models" (1994, p. 4) and lacked empirical studies. To address this perceived gap they carried out a benchmark empirical study on women's participation in management in 1993. This was followed up with a further study in 2000 to compare progress (McGregor, 2001). During that time respondent organisations reported an increase in the proportion of managers who were female from 15.7% to 27.1%. Female managers were, however, still concentrated in junior management positions and paid substantially less than their male colleagues (ibid.). McGregor (2004) notes that the existence of a number of women in powerful positions in New Zealand (Prime Minister, the Attorney General, Chief Justice, Governor General and Chief Executive of Telecom) has lead to increased visibility and attention being paid to women in power. She asserts, however that while this might on the surface point to the attainment of equity, the reality, particularly in private

organisations is rather different. Women continue to be significantly under-represented in senior management roles. This is supported by the statistics on women's participation in management that I presented in Chapter Two.

### **Ways women manage**

There are also a number of New Zealand studies that have looked at the ways women manage once they get there. Pace (1981) supplemented her analysis of the backgrounds of women in management with the administration of the Bem Sex-Role inventory to 100 management and 100 non-management women. Pace's conclusion from this exercise was that New Zealand women in management were more likely to have an androgynous self-concept rather than anything specifically masculine or feminine. This was a significant finding at the time as the international literature in organisation studies did not really embrace the concept of androgynous leadership until the mid-to-late 1980's.

### ***Women in Educational Leadership***

The largest body of New Zealand research into women's management practices comes from the education sector. In the absence of a similar body of work on women in the core public service, I have drawn heavily on the studies I now outline.

Court (1994) used a case study of shared leadership to demonstrate how women are transforming management through the use of informal management techniques, leading by example, using both formal and informal communication and selecting the most appropriate communication channel for the purpose. This shows women adapting to suit the context rather than always using the same management techniques.

In her 2001 doctoral thesis on shared leadership, Court used a poststructuralist analysis to show how shared principal positions were established within, and drew on, discourses of "professionalism, managerialism and feminism" (2001, p. 491). This showed how the women who established these co-principal arrangements resisted some elements of these discourses whilst embracing others. In using this approach Court expressly sought to avoid "valorising a so-called 'woman's approach' to leadership" (2001, p. 496)

considering that it could lead to equally discriminatory and exclusionary discursive practices.

There have been a number of other New Zealand studies on women in leadership in the education field mostly focusing on compulsory education. These have focused on educational leaders, including 'inspectors' (Neville, 1988), principals (Strachan, 1997), board chairwomen (Hawk, 1997) and recruitment practices of boards of trustees (Brooking, 2003).

Neville's study sought to celebrate the success of women in management in education and explore the influences on their career paths. Strachan built profiles of three school principals that described their leadership as feminist. These profiles included how they came to identify themselves as feminist and what principles they applied to their leadership. This was then analysed within the context of the 'new right' education reforms and how this impacted on their leadership. Strachan, like Court, found that the principals both resisted and appropriated different aspects of the competitive managerialism discourse of the reforms. Hawk's (1997) study on chairwomen of school boards of secondary co-educational schools also sought to acknowledge both differences and similarities of styles and practices and to avoid essentialising women's 'style' of management. Many of the characteristics that she identified, such as having high energy, being motivational, sharing power and caring for people were also evident in my study.

Brooking's (2003) study on the recruitment practices of boards found that the discursive practices of managerialism, competition and gender equity influenced recruitment decisions. These discourses were, however, mediated by a 'local logic' in recruitment decisions. An example of this 'local logic' was the appointment of a male on the basis that the school needed someone to coach sports teams. Boards demonstrated awareness of requirements such as adhering to EEO principles but "quite blatantly disregarded or subverted in subsequent actions or decision making" (Brooking, 2003, p. 4).

Due to the very low numbers of women in top academic positions, the New Zealand studies of women in management in higher education continue to focus on the barriers to

women achieving management positions. In a comparative study of senior academic women in Australia and New Zealand Neal & White (2004) discussed the under-representation of women in the higher levels of academic management. They concluded that expectations of roles, recruitment and promotion practices and pay scales were gender linked and had the effect of limiting women's ability to advance to senior academic positions.

### *Women as public and private sector managers*

A small number of New Zealand studies have looked at women in management in the public and private sectors. One of these is Humphries and Gatenby's (1996) longitudinal study based on participatory research. The project involved a survey sent out twice a year and meetings of participants every two years. Questions focused on perceptions and experiences of management. Networking groups have grown out of this study and at the time of writing the paper (1996) participants in the main centres were meeting on a regular basis. Achieving one of the aims of feminist action research, the authors comment that the survey questions have prompted women managers to take action, for example in identifying a mentor. This project also stands out for the adherence to feminist methods used in developing the design and scope. Participants were active in developing the purpose and design through a gathering held early in the research process.

In a more recent New Zealand study, Pringle and Olssen (2002) looked at the perceptions and experiences of 30 New Zealand women in the public and private sectors. The women in this study attributed their success to people skills and their ability to foster relationships. These responses are similar to those expressed by the women in Court's (1994) case study of women managers in an educational setting. Pringle and Olsson (2002) also identified a recognisable culture in the public sector, one of accountability, ethos of service, direct impact on people's lives and political culture. The authors also note the potential influence of New Zealand's relatively small size and the top constitutional positions being held by women. These contextual dimensions are essential

to the understanding of the attainment of management positions by women and how they perceive their role once they get there.

There is very little recent academic research that looks at women in management in the public sector in New Zealand. A key word search of the catalogues of the eight New Zealand universities and the National Bibliographic Database revealed only six theses or research reports completed over the past ten years that explore women in management beyond the issues of pay equity and representation. Of these, only one, Knight's (2003) doctoral thesis, explores women in the public service. This thesis looked at women in the public service from 1900 to 2000 and asked two main questions. They were 'why the women had been attracted to the public service?' and 'what problems it presented?' It did not look at management practices per se. Those interviewed were women who had worked in 'femocrat' positions such as EEO co-ordinators, or as policy makers in areas directly concerned with addressing gender equality. Knight suggested that in order to survive and maintain their own identities in the male dominated hierarchy that was the public service, the participants had become "bilingual" (Knight, 2003, p. 10). That is, they had learned to speak the language of their male counterparts. Knight also found that any gains made in participation and representation of women in the public service had largely been the gains of pakeha and able-bodied women. The women interviewed in her study also lamented the lack of awareness of political feminism in younger women. They felt that there was no one to hand the 'torch' onto as the label 'feminist' was now likely to invite disparagement.

Other academic studies have either ignored the gender question or included both public and private sector managers. In a study of a day in the life of six Chief Executives in the public service, McCann (1997) avoids identifying the gender of the participants, however whenever a personal pronoun is used, it is male. Jackson (1996) looked at subordinate perceptions of their female supervisors in a range of organisations including public sector organisations in the Nelson area. He found some differences in how male and female participants rated their 'ideal' supervisor, with stereotypical male items slightly preferred. Interestingly, women supervisors were rated as closer to this ideal than male supervisors. They were typically described as harder working, more likely to put the interests of the

staff before their own interests and to put work before family or home life. There was no dis-aggregation of results relating to different sectors.

## ***Summary***

Many theorists have analysed, theorised and detailed the reasons women have been, and continue to be, unrepresented in management. This has been done from different view points within a broad category of feminist approaches. Each of these approaches adds a layer of understanding, a view through a different window. A significant proportion of the literature paints a picture of women struggling against the social constraints of gender that deem her to be unsuitable for management work. The social relations of gender gate-keep promotions, deny her access to mentoring and support from colleagues and judge her against a gendered stereotype related to her role as mother and nurturer. If she breaks the stereotype by being autocratic and directive, she is likely to be punished (Rigg & Sparrow, 1994) but as the literature shows, if she doesn't break it she is deemed to be unsuitable, too 'soft' for management. Another body of literature celebrates the unique qualities that women have through those very same nurturing roles and suggest that this makes them more likely than men to be effective managers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The New Zealand literature presents women as adopting more androgynous styles of management that they then adapt to different contexts. This thesis aims to add to this conversation by exploring the management practices of a small group of New Zealand women in the public service and how the context they manage within influences those practices.

## **Chapter Four - Methodology**

### ***Introduction***

My starting point for this research project is feminist standpoint epistemology. This chapter describes how I came to this position. I begin with brief discussions on feminist research and its goals and then move to outlining feminist standpoint epistemology, its major theorists, its strengths, how it has evolved over the past thirty years, and its challenges for feminist researchers. I also touch on the other forms of feminist research I could equally have chosen to explore this topic and the reasons why I considered them to be less appropriate than the path chosen. I then describe the particular approach I have taken, feminist standpoint. This discussion includes the exploration of discourses that are part of the way social relations, particularly those of power, are ordered. A discussion on ethical issues as they relate to feminist research completes this chapter.

### ***Feminist research***

Feminist principles of research are unequivocal about the need to acknowledge women's lived experience and reject research that has made women invisible. Raven describes the feminist perspective as research that "has the potential to validate women's lives and make visible their concerns that previously been silenced, distorted or marginalised." (Raven, 1991). Feminist research also rejects the notion of one 'truth' that is outside, and independent from the knower (Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004). Instead, truth is seen as contingent and socially constructed, knowledge as experiential and embodied and its production as a political act (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). It is also concerned with naming power imbalances, accountability, acknowledging the role of the researcher in producing knowledge, debunking the objectivity myth and valuing reflexivity (Leatherby, 2003). In Stablein's terms, feminist research has an emancipatory interest (Stablein, 1996).

## What is this 'feminist' research?

There are many different feminist approaches to research, a number of which developed over similar periods of time and out of a growing unease with the usefulness of positivist approaches for understanding the lives of women. Feminism as a research tradition is often described as the most varied. Prasad talks of:

*...multiple feminist positions that are often united by little more than an overall interest in women's lives and the role of gender in structuring different aspects of society.* (Prasad, 2005, p. 160)

Feminist research has taken many different forms but there is a certain level of agreement about its principles and goals. Leatherby (2003) draws on the contributions of a number of feminists to attempt to develop a definition of feminist research. I prefer to present a description, rather than a definition. I think a description is more useful as it allows feminist researchers to locate their practice within it rather than being confined by it. From my reading, my understanding of the characteristics, or underlying principles of feminist research include the following. It produces knowledge that is useful to women (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991; Harding, 1986; Jaggar, 2004). It is an approach that is accountable to others (Scott, 1998, cited in Leatherby, 2003)(Leatherby, 2003). It is based on non-exploitative relationships (Leatherby, 2003). It values reflexivity (Leatherby, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). It explores the role of the researcher in producing knowledge (Harding, 2004; Naples, 2003; Smith, 1990a). And it has a political dimension that questions power in some way (Acker et al., 1991; Jayarantne & Stewart, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). As (Leatherby, 2003) points out, it is not the method that makes a researcher, or a project 'feminist', rather it is the way the researcher uses methods.

Within this city map labelled 'feminist research' there were many paths I could have chosen. In this section I briefly describe those that I did not chose, although in some ways, the path that I took crosses over or takes some of the same streets as those I now describe. To say that I 'rejected' them is perhaps too definitive for the process that took

place and over-represents the differences between them. Many of the 'signposts' (goals and concepts) of the approaches are shared by, influenced or in some way incorporated into feminist standpoint epistemology.

Taking a liberal-feminist pathway of doing positivist science better and thus eliminating bias was an option for exploring the topic of women in management. This approach would have led to a focus on the numbers of women in management, the presence of barriers to their achieving management positions and availability of education and training for women so that they can compete with men for positions. A liberal approach would not have allowed me to explore in depth the actual practices of women in management positions or to problematise the context in which they carried out those practices. I also wished to employ a more critical research theory that was less closely linked to the positivist tradition.

Another potential pathway was the cultural feminist approach where special qualities of women derived from both biology and culturally constructed roles are explored. In relation to management this would have meant that I would be interested in the qualities of women that make them particularly suited to the role of management. This approach would not have allowed me to critique the assumption that women are *naturally* collaborative, supportive and inclusive and would have excluded a discussion on the possibility of an eclectic style of management that is determined more by situation and context than gender.

The radical feminist approach, through Kate Millett, gave feminism the signpost of *patriarchy* (Millett, 1970). It views the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression (Bryson, 1992). Radical feminists called for personal and collective action to address issues of power and developed the political approach of consciousness raising where personal experience was shared and political actions were planned (Bryson, 1992). The basis of this approach was that the 'the personal is political' (Bryson, 1992). Radical feminist analysis centres around the ways in which all men, collectively and individually, oppress all women either by taking part in oppressive behaviours, or by benefiting from and failing to challenge oppressive social structures in

which men are powerful and women are not. Many of these concepts can be seen in other forms of feminist research and have certainly informed feminist standpoint. In some ways radical feminism is the roundabout that the other paths converge at, albeit only momentarily for some. I consider feminist standpoint's focus on the experiences of women as the starting point for analysis of the structures and discourses of power in which those experiences take place as one expression of 'the personal is political'.

I could also have taken the Marxist feminist pathway with its signposts of class and oppression. These lead to the explanation of women's exploitation and oppression in the workplace as the function of the complex ways in which gender relations interact with the processes of production (Barrett, 1988). I rejected this, however, as I did not consider that an analysis focused on the mode of production and the relationship between social relations and the forces of production (Ebert, 2005) would allow me to explore the aspects of women's management that were of interest to me. In the following section I do, however, acknowledge the influence of Marxism on the development of feminist standpoint.

I could also have chosen a postmodern/poststructuralist approach where the focus would have been on the discursive practices that control and organise management practice. Postmodern theories of which there are many forms, derive their focus on language from the work of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan (Bryson, 1992). The focus on individual subjectivities means that the

*term 'woman' itself is not a constant and unified category but one that conceals the different subjectivities of all female persons. (Bryson, 1992, p. 227)*

Despite this challenge to the concept of 'woman' the concept of discourses that are part of the 'ordering of social relations' (Smith, 1990a) and mediate the agency of the individual is an important aspect of understanding the reported management practices of the women in my study. I did not consider, however, that it would on its own provide an adequate explanation. A postmodern approach would also have limited my ability to talk about the experiences of the participants in this study in any collective way.

Most of these paths visit the well-known historical sites, some end up in almost the same place having taken different routes, still others could be seen as short-cuts that do not give the visitor a full view of the city. I began by searching for just one pathway (or approach) within which I could carry out research on my proposed topic and maintain a focus on women's management practices and on the context in which they occur. The feminist standpoint approach that I identified as my preference draws on many of the concepts and forms of analysis that originate from the traditions noted in the previous discussion. Its links, particularly with Marxism and more recently with concepts of discursive practices are discussed in the following section.

### **Feminist standpoint epistemology**

The starting point of my research is a feminist standpoint approach. Feminist standpoint epistemology developed from within the women's movement of the 1970's and 1980's (Smith, 2004) and the call for research that used women's voices, investigated phenomena that women wanted to know about / would find useful, and did not further oppress them. It was a political as well as a scientific movement and as such, it challenged the widely held view that politics and science shouldn't mix (Harding, 2004a). As noted in the previous discussions this was a common base for the development of a number of feminist research traditions. Standpoint epistemology is part of the critical tradition that had its beginnings in the development of opposition to "the all-powerful dictates of rationalist/empiricist epistemologies and methodologies" (Harding, 2004 c, p. 256). The many variations within the critical traditions have in common their emancipatory interest and their focus on identifying oppression and exploitation in its various forms (Prasad, 2005). Feminist standpoint's development can be viewed as an example of Kuhn's concept of crisis. This occurs when disquiet with the theories and wisdom of the time and their ability to capture what is really going on, creates the environment in which new understandings and approaches emerge (Kuhn, 1996).

Feminist standpoint epistemology drew heavily on the Marxist concept of materialism where the day to day material reality of the individual is dictated by the forces of

production (Ebert, 2005). Hartsock (2004) saw this materialism as having possibilities for explaining the gendered nature of society. Within Marxist theory power comes from the relationship with production and specifically who benefits from surplus production ie the ruling class. Marxist theorists consider that, if a true understanding of social relations is to be gained, the place to start looking is from the position of those who are oppressed by such relations, the proletariat. Feminist standpoint theorists have applied this approach to the position of women suggesting that social relations of power can be better understood from the experience of women (Hartsock, 2004; Jaggar, 2004). Whilst it has these roots in modernist traditions, its proponents have developed their approaches over the past thirty years to include learnings from Black feminist theories (Hill Collins, 1991), Third World Feminism (Sandoval, 2004), and Poststructuralism (Harding, 2004 c; Smith, 1990a).

Feminist epistemology centres on a number of key concepts. One is that knowledge(s) are multiple and situated. Haraway (2004) asserts that by situating knowledge(s) they become accountable. Linked to this is the idea that there are multiple, overlapping standpoints each of which develops from actors located in less privileged positions (Naples, 2003). This is based on the idea that those in historically privileged positions, such as white, heterosexual men, can only see the world from that location and therefore create a distorted and partial view that does not allow for an in-depth understanding of social relations. Because those in the less privileged position have had to live in world as it is created by the more privileged they have a vantagepoint that allows them to create a less partial view. Haraway (1991) refers to these as 'subjugated standpoints'. It should be noted that this is not considered to be a 'truth' but a representation of reality from a certain location from within the topography of social relations. Haraway acknowledges that the view from 'below' is not unproblematic (2004), it remains partial. It is considered however, that subjugated standpoints or knowledges provide at least the *potential* for a fuller, more objective account and certainly an account that adds to the understanding of social relations. The objectivity referred to here is feminist objectivity. Haraway describes this as being about "limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (1991, p. 190). This claim is based on the premise that those who are in dominant positions, or benefit from their

membership of dominant groups however unknowingly, are not able to appreciate subjugated knowledges as the very structures that give them their privilege hide these knowledges from their view. I will attempt to relate this to my study of women in public sector organisations. Bureaucracies and the role of manager have historically been constructed and controlled by men, using their world views, their discourses. This means that the positions available to men within those structures make them likely to perceive only a small part of what is going on within the organisation. This is not a comment on men as individuals, or males as a sex. It is a comment on how organisation have been historically constructed within what Blackmore (1999a) refers to as 'masculinist practices'. Knight demonstrates this when she quotes one of the women in her study as saying that "men are largely unconscious of their part in the drama...they just accept the power that comes their way" (2003, p. 46). Women, on the other hand, because of their subjugated positions are likely to perceive organisations and the relations that sustain them very differently, albeit still partially. I have taken this as the starting point of my research journey, the experience of women managers in public service organisations.

Smith describes how feminist researchers have interpreted and applied feminist standpoint in a variety of ways with the central acknowledgment that 'a woman is the only expert of her own experience' (Smith, 1990a, p. 5). This challenges the scientific quest for one 'truth' by suggesting that there are multiple realities each of which is partial and subjective. Some, such as Hilary Rose and Nancy Harstock, draw on Marxist feminist concepts, particularly the role of (re)production in the oppression of women. Production and reproduction are usually understood as social reproduction of the structures that underpin labour and production, reproduction of a man's labour through domestic work, and human reproduction through pregnancy, birth and childcare (Barrett, 1988). Others have borrowed from object-relations theory or postmodern approaches to textual analysis (Harding, 1986). As discussed later in this chapter, both Naples and Smith who provide most of the concepts for my analysis draw on the analysis of discourse in explaining the experience of women.

The concept of being an ‘outsider –within’ is an important one to standpoint theorists. This is looked at from two perspectives. Firstly, there is that of the researcher being an outsider in relation to the participants of her research (Naples, 2003; Smith, 1990a). It is important to explore the impact of this on access to information and the power relationship between the researcher and the researched. A researcher may occupy positions as both an insider and an outsider. As a woman who is a manager in the public service I could be considered as an insider. As a student conducting research and as someone who is not part of the workplace of the participants, I would be an outsider. I also have the position of ‘researcher’, a potentially powerful outsider position as a constructor of knowledge. This is a position that I have been particularly conscious of during the development of my research, not only in the field work stage, but also in the way I have represented the experience of the participants in this report.

The second perspective of ‘outsider-within’ is one developed by Patricia Hill Collins in relation to the position of black women in white society. The experience of black women as domestic servants, housekeepers and nannies, both part of the white family and yet outside it is used to show how a group can have this ‘outsider within’ status (Hill Collins, 1991). It is the basis of a standpoint that is not available to those who have not had this dual existence and the opportunity to observe how the power of a dominant group by works from within. I have used this concept of outsider-within as an analytical position provided by feminist standpoint epistemology to explore my research questions around the management practices of my participants and what has influenced these practices.

### ***Challenges for standpoint theorists***

Like any other approach to research, standpoint is not without its critics. One of the earliest criticisms was around the expression of a standpoint based on the experiences of white, middle class heterosexual women that didn’t ‘engage with, or account for’ differences between women (Harding, 1986, 2004a). The standpoint of other women who did not enjoy the relative ‘privilege’ of these women was not captured. Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks are two critics who developed standpoint from the positions of

Afro-American women (Hill Collins, 1991; hooks, 2000). As standpoint has developed, an acknowledgment of multiple standpoints has emerged.

This study of women managers in the public sector is, largely, a study of white, middle class women and can certainly be criticised on this basis. I do not make any claims that the experiences of the women in this study are necessarily representative, or can be viewed as a standpoint of all women in management or women in the public sector more generally. I do, however, consider that there are sufficient similarities of experience of being women entering the historically male world of management to make this a worthy starting point for research.

The move to acknowledge multiple standpoints has drawn further criticism, that this propels standpoint down the rocky road of relativism. Susan Hekman suggests that by embracing multiple, perhaps infinite, standpoints the epistemology risks going beyond its saturation point and therefore reduces to 'sheer confusion' (Hekman, 2004). From a political perspective it then loses the opportunity to talk about women's experiences at all. Standpoint's proponents, however, argue that not all accounts, locations, or social situations provide equally useful knowledge bases for understanding power relations and therefore rebut the claim that by rejecting universalism they are embracing relativism (Harding, 2004b).

Another challenge for standpoint theorists has been the criticism that standpoint gives the knowledge of women a privileged status. (Hekman, 2004). Standpoint theorists are clear, however, that they do not consider women's knowledge to be superior (Smith, 2004) and commonly acknowledge the risk of romanticising particular standpoints (Haraway, 2004). Having a 'perspective' or 'view' is also not the same as having a 'standpoint' (Smith, 1990a). Harding uses the metaphor of looking at a stick in a pond to describe the way that standpoint theorists use relations such as class, gender and race to show how different locations around the pond generate different accounts (Harding, 2004 c). From different viewpoints the stick will appear to be straight, or bent. There will be positions around the lake from which what is really going on is more likely to be perceived. It is the same with social relations that are based on power. Those who have

power, whether intentionally or not, are less likely to ask the questions that may uncover the social relations that support that power.

### ***‘Women’s’ standpoint or ‘feminist’ standpoint?***

Within standpoint theory there is debate about whose standpoint is being promoted and whether the participants of studies take a feminist standpoint. Dorothy Smith is clear that her approach is that of ‘women’s’ standpoint which she states is “nothing to do with justifying feminist knowledge” (Smith, 2004). Within this study I did not necessarily expect participants to take a feminist standpoint which included a political analysis of power relations. There was, in fact, a distinct absence of such a position. In my analysis, however, I link the experiences and reported management practices of participants to the wider context of social relations, including those of power, particularly the power of New Public Management. It is this analysis that provides the feminist standpoint.

### ***My approach***

Within the variations of standpoint, I have drawn heavily on the work of Dorothy Smith and Nancy Naples to inform my analysis. Naples’ calls her approach, which is informed by narrative and textual analysis, reflective practice and ethnography a ‘materialist standpoint analysis’ (Naples, 2003). One of Naples key concepts is that it is important to consider the interplay between materialist, non discursive practices and the discursive patterns that mediate women’s lives. She draws on standpoint epistemology for its ability to explain how subjects are constituted by social systems. She also draws on social feminist frameworks that focus on the points at which two primary ruling systems, capitalism and patriarchy, intersect. She also considers that textual and narrative analysis provides the opportunity to explore the relationships between everyday life experiences and the macro social structures, relationships and processes that mediate those experiences. Naples’ approach also allows for an examination of the ‘insider-outsider’ debate. Although she relates this to her ethnographic studies where she did, in a sense, attempt to become part of the community studied, I consider this debate to be equally relevant to the current study.

In Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnographic approach, the lived experience of the subject is explored. Through this exploration links are made to the macro relations that impact on that experience. In this way the relationship between everyday activities and practices and the social relations in which they occur can be better understood. Smith focuses on how texts allow us to understand the existence of organisations or institutions that have an impact on the everyday known world of individuals. In her 2001 work *Texts and the Ontology of Organizations and Institutions* Smith looks at how large organisations have the ability to "co-ordinate people's activities to achieve objectives" (Smith, 2001, p. 163). This link will allow me to show how managerialism impacts on the management practices of the participants and specifically the role of texts in organising the day to day activities of individuals.

## **Analysis**

You will recall from chapter One that the research questions that I set out to explore were:

*What are the management practices of women in the public service in Aotearoa/New Zealand?*

and

*What are the factors that influence those practices?*

The questions I asked of the data were:

- How do the participants describe their or their manager's, management practices and styles?
- What influences do they perceive on these practices, including organisational and societal?
- What wider contextual influences can be identified in the responses?

Starting from the experience of the participants is the hall-mark of standpoint research. This meant that I did not start with the concepts of different types of management and then try to fit the participant's responses to those concepts. Rather, it required me to develop linkages between the day to day experiences of the participants and discursive

fields in which they took place. Like Knight (2003) I expected that common concerns, experiences and understandings would emerge during the process of analysis. Two key concepts from within feminist standpoint epistemology, the ordering of social relationships and the taking up of positions as insider or outsider formed the basis for my analysis. These are described briefly below.

### ***The role of discourse in the ordering of social relations***

This concept was particularly useful in considering how the discursive practices of managerialism or New Public Management impacted on the management practices of the participants. As I indicated above, I did not begin with New Public Management as an element of the context in which the participants managed, it became apparent, however, that this was a significant organising feature of their work lives. By focusing on this element, the links between the micro (practices) and the macro (New Public Management) could be explored. Taking a feminist standpoint, I was also interested to explore whether the participants perceived gendered discourses at work within their organisation.

### ***The role of texts in organisations***

The concept of texts as mediating or regulating activities in organisations allows for an examination of how they act as co-ordinators of activities across large organisations (Smith, 2001). In my analysis I look at how the participants interact with these texts and the extent to which their management practices do or do not follow the prescriptions held within them.

### *The insider/outsider*

One of the foci of Naples' work is the extent to which individuals consider themselves to be insiders or outsiders within overlapping communities. I have used this concept to explore whether the women managers in my study thought of themselves as insiders/outsiders and in relation to what. The fluid nature of insider/outsider status (Naples, 2003) meant that I needed to be aware that the participants may perceive their status differently over time and in relation to different groups or structures.

Using these concepts I was able to identify the overwhelming presence of the discourses of New Public Management in the participant responses. The doctrines of New Public Management then became the primary set of categories through which the responses were analysed.

### **Ethical considerations**

*Within feminist circles the ethics debate centres around what counts as knowledge and to whom and the power imbalance inherent in the research relationship*  
(Edwards & Mauthner, 2002, p. 156).

Edwards and Mauthner (2002) discuss ethical considerations as deriving from a genuine concern with issues of power. This is central to a feminist discussion on ethics. Equally important is the focus on responsibility, accountability and care, which goes beyond considerations of fairness, justice or the rights of the participants. I will now discuss the issues of power, reciprocity, the role of the researcher and accountability in more depth.

### **Power**

As noted above, the imbalance of power between the researcher and the researched is a key issue in feminist research. The question of power arises in every step of the research process, from the identification of a topic area, choosing a methodology, formulating research questions, to data analysis and presentation and dissemination of results. Rather

than either pretend that this power imbalance doesn't exist, or give it a cursory acknowledgment and forge ahead anyway, feminist researchers have identified a number of strategies for power sharing within the research process. These include the researcher:

- allowing interview participants to take the lead in identifying what they want to talk about;
- sharing something of herself with the participant;
- recognising the potential for the relationship to be exploited, particularly when there is contact over an extended period of time and the participant essentially becomes a 'friend'; and
- sharing written material with the participants (Acker et al., 1991).

### **Reciprocity and feedback**

In feminist terms the knowledge gained from research should be useful to those being studied (Jayarantne & Stewart, 1991). Again, this starts from the identification of a topic through to the way the research findings are disseminated after completion. I also consider that the *process* of taking part in the research should be useful to participants. This was one of the considerations in developing the interview schedule. Part of the process was to think about the questions that would be useful in some way to me as a manager in the public sector and would help me reflect not only on my own management practice, but on the social relations within the organisation that employs me. Taking this approach allowed me to consider questions that might be useful on an individual basis to the women taking part in the research as well as to the community of women as managers more generally. This was balanced with the need to ensure that I did not assume that my own experience would necessarily be the experience of other women who share this particular location. Tuhiwai Smith cautions against making this assumption in relation to indigenous researchers and the experience of indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) and I consider it to be equally important in the context of this study.

The outcome of the research should also be readily available to those who have taken part. This may mean going further than supplying a copy of completed report, which can

be in language that is not readily accessible, or interesting to non-researchers (Palmer, 2000). In the organisation from which my participants were drawn, the possibility of presenting the findings to staff was discussed.

### **Role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher in this project was not one of disinterested observer. I was an active participant in the conversation (interview) that created the data (transcripts) for this project (Smith, 1990a). My own language, culture, experiences, social positions and understandings have impacted on every stage of the project. Throughout the research, I was forced to confront my own views and assumptions, particularly when the responses of the participants did not reflect a political analysis of the social and power relations that constructed their work environment. A number of researchers have discussed these tensions experienced when carrying out feminist research with women who did not identify as feminist (Andrews, 2002; Luff, 1999; Millen, 1997). Knight (2003) records that she deliberately avoided the 'f' word. She did not present herself as a feminist to her participants as she did not want to create a situation where they censored their responses in order to avoid clashing with what they perceived as her views. I took a similar approach to the way I presented myself to participants.

### **Accountability**

A researcher is not only accountable to their institution or employer but also to the participants that take part in the research, to the wider community from which those participants are withdrawn, to their own research community and other cultures or communities they may belong to. Accountability means the researcher ensuring she has the skill to carry out the research and that all possible causes of harm, distress or exploitation are identified and either removed or mitigated. Researchers who are part of ethnic or cultural communities may also be held directly accountable to those communities, particularly if the community is the topic of study.

Accountability to the institution is usually expressed in a code of conduct for ethical research. There is general agreement that there are a number of principles that govern the ethical behaviour of researchers and that certain processes should be followed to ensure

that the research practice ethical. Massey University (2003, p. 4) identifies these principles as:

- a) respect for persons;
- b) minimisation of harm to participants, researchers, institutions and groups;
- c) informed and voluntary consent;
- d) respect for privacy and confidentiality;
- e) the avoidance of unnecessary deception;
- f) avoidance of conflict of interest;
- g) social and cultural sensitivity to the age, gender, culture, religion, social class of the subjects; and
- h) justice.

The details relating to these principles as they applied to this project are outlined in the following chapter on research design.

### **Considerations of working cross-culturally**

This study in no way seeks to represent Maori women as managers, it is not my place to do so. I do not, however wish to fall into the trap of rendering Maori women invisible much as women generally were historically invisible in the literature on management. Maori remain even less well-represented in management positions than their non-Maori counterparts. This was an area identified by participants as being of concern to them. One of the participants in this project identified as Maori. It was important for me as pakeha, to conduct interviews in a culturally sensitive manner that did not dismiss the individual's experience or her interpretation of it, understanding that it was likely to be based on different cultural concepts, values and norms. In particular, it was necessary for me to be respectful of the individual, her world view and her connections to iwi and hapu. It was also important for me to recognise the potential for me to privilege her standpoint as a woman over her standpoint as Maori. I addressed this largely by checking with the participant about the use of any of her quotes to ensure that I had as much as possible avoided overlaying a pakeha interpretation.

## ***Summary***

In this chapter I have outlined the journey I took through the feminist theoretical literature to arrive at my starting point for this research project, that of feminist standpoint epistemology. I have also discussed the ethical considerations for carrying out research that is feminist including the need to attend to issues of power, reciprocity, accountability and cultural sensitivity.

In the following chapter I outline the research process that was followed.

## **Chapter Five – Design and Process of the Study**

As outlined in the previous chapter, this study uses a qualitative research approach with its starting place being the experiences of women managers in the public service. This chapter outlines the choice of a qualitative semi-structured interview as my data gathering method and how I went about doing the research, including some of the challenges in following my original plan.

### ***Introduction***

I conducted this research over a period of two years. I am reluctant to identify specific phases of the research and present them in a linear fashion. The reality was a much more fluid process, with a number of circles that sent me back to the beginning to re-think my selection strategies, where I was positioning myself in relation to feminist standpoint, and my form of analysis. The need to be flexible in order to respond to unanticipated events is identified by Layder (1993). In a similar vein Leatherby exhorts researchers to acknowledge the ‘messiness’ of research (2003). Consider it so acknowledged.

### ***Qualitative Research***

I have chosen a qualitative approach as it provides the opportunity to explore issues, concepts, ideas, feelings, attitudes and experiences in depth (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The data that it produces is descriptive as it comes from the participants’ own words, whether written or spoken. Qualitative research generally involves participants in their own settings, living their lives (Patton, 2002) . This necessitates flexibility on the part of the researcher to accommodate any changes to the design or implementation brought about by the very nature of the subject material.

I considered that qualitative research was the most appropriate approach to this study of women managers in the public sector because of its ability to capture rich, descriptive data that a quantitative approach would not provide. I also considered that it was a better fit with my own feminist stance as it enabled me to start with the participants

expression of their own experiences and therefore validate them as holders of knowledge.

### **Use of the semi-structured interview**

I chose a semi-structured interview as my data collection method. This method was chosen as it allows the participant's reality, their lived world (Kvale, 1996) to emerge through the interview process. I also considered it to be a method that would give me the basis for a 'thick' description (Geerts, 1973 in Prasad, 2005) and had the potential to give me access to the many levels of meaning that may be present. I developed an interview schedule as a guide for the interviews<sup>1</sup> but decided against an overly structured interview. I considered that an overly structured interview would run the risk of stifling the emergence of this lived experience. As Smith notes, participants can sometimes have trouble fitting their experience into the questions that are asked within an interview (Smith, 2004b). This is because the interviewer generally asks the questions from their own standpoint whereas the participants answer is likely to come from a different location. I decided not to exacerbate this by having a structured schedule that I could not deviate from if the opportunity arose to explore the participants' views further. I also considered the use of interviews to be appropriate for the feminist research approach I had chosen which seeks to validate the subjectiveness and partiality of women's experiences.

### ***Selection of organisations***

In February 2005 two organisations agreed to give me access to their staff. As I explain below, despite initial agreement, I was not able to gain access to the second organisation. I refer to the organisation from which the participants of the study were drawn as 'organisation A' or 'the organisation'. The data that is provided in the following description of the organisation has been drawn from public documents such as annual reports and some internal documents that were provided. Organisation A did not wish to be identified in this report. I have not been able to reference these sources due to this restriction on naming the organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 for the interview schedule

In selecting the organisations from which participants would be drawn, I looked for large (over 2000 staff) government departments with a national office and a network of regional offices. I also looked for organisations that had policy, corporate and front-line or customer service functions. I initially identified four potential organisations and made my first approach by writing to the chief executives of two of them<sup>2</sup>. Had I received negative responses from these two preferred organisations I would have continued by approaching the third and fourth preferences. This turned out to be unnecessary as both chief executives gave positive responses and identified a person with whom I should liaise to gain access to staff.

### **Organisation A**

Organisation A is a large department with nearly 5000 staff, 82% of whom work in service delivery. It operates a national office structure and 17 regional offices. Its management structure has four tiers, with an additional tier of 'team leader' positions. I chose not to include team leaders as participants in this study. In 2005, 64% of its staff were women. Women made up 65% of Team Leaders and 38% of Managers. As at 30 June 2005 9% of its staff were Maori and 5% were of Pacific Island decent. A large proportion of staff (24%) was of 'unknown' ethnic identity. This may be due to the organisation having a large number of staff with very long tenure. In June 2005, a total of 27% of staff had been in the organisation for between 10 and 19 years and 16% had a length of service of over 20 years. These staff may have been employed before ethnicity data was collected in a systematic manner.

### **Organisation B**

Despite initial agreement to take part, I experienced difficulty in gaining access to Organisation B. By August 2005 I had still not been able to meet with the person who had been nominated as my contact. At this point I made further contact with the human resources manager by email and after some initial resistance gained agreement that my information sheet and contact details would be sent to women managers within the organisation. Through contacts I had within the organisation I learnt that this did not

take place, hence the lack of contact from any managers. Due to the constraints of time I decided to complete the study with only one organisation.

## **Documents**

A number of publicly available documents such as Statements of Intent and the 2003/04 Annual Report from Organisation A were consulted in this study. This gave me a fuller picture of the organisation, its goals and strategies and how they linked to the perspective of participants. I also obtained copies of the organisation's Business Improvement Plan (2004) and Human Resources Plan (2003).

## **Gaining access to staff**

In Organisation A I received a reply to my letter to the chief executive from a manager in the corporate human resources area. I met with this person once in mid March 2005. The first step suggested by this contact was to include a short introduction to my research in the weekly human resources update that was sent in electronic form to all managers. Also included was a note of support for the project from the organisation. This occurred during March 2005. My contact left the organisation two weeks after I met with her and some of the initial momentum gained was lost. I experienced some initial difficulty in making contact with her replacement, but once this was achieved in early May I was able to gain access to staff quite quickly.

My contact identified a small number of women managers based on seniority, ethnicity and areas of work within the organisation and invited them to take part. Due to my own constraints, I also asked her to limit the request to managers who were Wellington based or travelled to Wellington on a regular basis. This resulted in four managers, one second tier, one third tier and two fourth tier agreeing to take part. I then worked directly with these managers to arrange interview times and to identify their direct reports. I had originally planned to interview up to three staff members who reported to each manager but revised this goal down to at least one direct report for each manager due to both my own time constraints and the level of response from staff members. Five staff members who reported to these managers also agreed to take part, three of whom reported to one of the women managers. Once I had a sense of the positions and demographic profile of

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 for the request for access letter sent to chief executives

my participants, I was able to identify three gaps in the range of participants that I wanted to address. The pool of participants did not include any Maori women managers, customer service staff or direct reports to the second tier manager. A number of participants had suggested staff that I could contact to address these gaps. I decided, however, to go back through the formal channel of my designated contact and emailed her about this issue at the beginning of August 2005. I gained permission to contact the suggested participants directly and this resulted in a further two women agreeing to take part in the study.

### ***The participants***

I interviewed 11 participants, nine women and two men. Five of the women were managers and the remaining six participants were staff members who reported to these managers. Three of these direct reports were also managers. Five of the participants were in the 31-40 age bracket with the remainder being 41-50. One of the managers identified as Maori, the other ten participants identified European/Pakeha as their ethnicity. I did not ask participants to identify their sexual orientation and no-one explicitly volunteered this information. Where partners were mentioned in the context of the interview however, the relationships were heterosexual. Of the five managers, four were married and three of those four had children.

This study does not include an analysis of class. To a certain extent, however, the participants by virtue of the positions they occupy can all be described as 'middle class'. None of the participants identified their class background as an influence, either positive or negative, on their entry into management or their approach to management.

### ***Interviews***

Nine of the interviews in Organisation A took place during the last two weeks of June and first week of July 2005. The final two interviews took place during the first week of September 2005. Each participant had been provided with an electronic copy of the information sheet <sup>3</sup> prior to the interview. A hard copy was also provided at the

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 for the information sheet provided to participants

interview. Prior to the interviews taking place I had trialed the proposed questions with an acquaintance who is a manager in the public service. This led to one change being made. I had originally planned to ask whether the women managers considered their management practice to be feminist. On the basis of her feedback I decided not to overtly ask this question, but to see whether this was either raised directly by the women themselves or whether any of the practices they described could be interpreted as feminist. After my first interview I did, however, decide to add a question about whether the participants perceived any supports or constraints to their management practice relating to gender as this did not seem to be raised unless I raised it.

The interviews ranged between 45 minutes and One hour and 20 minutes in length. All participants agreed to the interview being taped and signed consent forms<sup>4</sup>. I either left a copy of the tape transcript release form<sup>5</sup> with the participant at the interview, or emailed it to them with the transcript. I transcribed each tape myself and the transcript was emailed to the participants for comment, correction, addition or deletion of material as appropriate. At this point I emailed the tape transcript release form to the participant if I had not left it with them at the interview. Most transcripts were returned unaltered. Some participants made minor editorial corrections in relation to job titles, times and dates. One participant asked for two passages to be removed. Although this was disappointing, these passages were removed from the transcript. After I had completed the analysis and identified the direct quotations I wished to reproduce in the report I re-contacted participants seeking their agreement for these quotations to be used. At this point one of the participants was away from work due to ill health for an extended period of time and I was unable to gain her agreement to use direct quotations. These were removed from the report.

### ***Maintaining confidentiality in the report***

As the organisation from which the participants were drawn did not wish to be named, I needed to devise a way of eliminating any potentially identifying information. To do this I have referred to it throughout as ‘the organisation’. In addition, whenever participants

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 4 for an example of the consent form used.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 5 for a copy of the tape transcript release form used.

referred to position titles or specific units or teams within the organisation I have referred to the organisational tier that the position sits in and used the terms 'area' or 'unit'. I must acknowledge, however, that an informed reader, particularly one from within the organisation may still be able to identify the organisation and possibly the individual speakers.

## ***Analysis***

During the interview process and through carrying out the transcription myself, I was able to identify some initial themes while I was still in the fieldwork 'stage'. The fluid nature of qualitative research is such that the opportunity for insights to be identified early and for them to shape some of the later stages of data collection often arises (Patton, 2002). For example, during the transcription of my early interviews I noted that power, its use and where it sits in the organisation was not evident from the responses. I wondered whether, in this age of co-operation and collaboration in the public sector, power had become a dirty word. As the question of power is essential to a feminist analysis, I decided in my later interviews to include an overt question around power to test this observation.

My initial coding took the form of underlining, highlighting and adding notes in the margins of the transcripts, much like Layder's 'primitive pre-coding' (Layder, 1998). During this stage I was looking for responses that could be related to my initial research questions around management practices and relations. These acted as 'sensitising concepts' which I was testing to see how they manifested and were understood by the managers and staff (Patton, 2002). I also looked for other patterns or themes that this initial framework that I brought to the analysis did not identify.

I then copied the text I had highlighted into an excel spreadsheet with a different worksheet for each aspect of the management practices or of the social relations within the organisation. For example, I had a sheet on 'managerialism' with notes and quotations from participants that showed how the women managers appropriated aspects of managerialism. This grew into a chapter on New Public Management once I realised

the significance of the material. By using the filter function I could sift through the data based on whether the comment was made by a manager or staff member, the gender or age of the participant and whether the comment supported or contradicted the existence of the aspect I was exploring.

I then returned to a manual form, using a printed version of these worksheets to make further comments and draw the themes together. The identification of themes and allocation of data to those themes was a fluid process. I could have allocated some information to more than one theme. Some themes that I initially thought to be separate, I ended up merging and others developed separate sub themes as I incorporated more of the data.

### **Convergence and divergence**

In order to be sure that the data I had in front of me was actually saying what I thought it was saying, I needed to think about convergence and divergence. What this meant was that, after I had identified the themes and concepts and organised the data into those categories, I re-read it to determine two things: *internal homogeneity* and *external heterogeneity* (Patton, 2002). That is, how much the excerpts I had put together in one category fitted together, and how much the data I had placed in one category was indeed different from other categories and could actually be considered a separate category. This process led to some shifting of data from one theme to another.

### **Significance**

In qualitative research, particularly that carried out from a feminist standpoint, a judgement of how significant findings are is made by the participants and the researcher rather than by statistical analysis (Patton, 2002). Firstly, if a theme, concept or idea has been significant enough to the participant for it to be raised in the interview then as part of the lived reality of the participant, it has significance in a feminist analysis. Secondly, the experience of the researcher is used to make judgements across all of the data about its relative significance. This does not mean that more than one participant has to raise an issue before it becomes significant. Its significance may come from the extent to which it

is consistent with the literature, the extent to which it challenges current 'knowledge' or its value in contributing to understanding of the topics being studied.

In the end, I had to make a call about what was included as a 'finding' and what was not. This is essentially a value judgement, one you as reader may make differently.

### ***Limitations of the study***

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the study departed from my original plan in a number of ways. Most significant was my inability to gain access to the second organisation that initially gave permission for me to interview staff. This meant that I was unable to explore the extent to which different organisational cultures impacted on management practices. I was also unable to draw any conclusions about whether particular organisations attract particular types of managers who are more or less likely to engage in different management behaviours.

The study was also limited by the 'snap-shot' nature of the data captured in a single event interview and that this was not supplemented by observation. To some extent this was mediated by the inclusion of staff who reported to the managers who participated. I comment on these further in relation to future research as part of my conclusion in Chapter Nine

### ***Summary***

My initial intention was to study the management practices of women in two organisations and to be able to make some comment on the similarities and differences between the practices and the influences on those practices in the two different settings. Although this is not what occurred, I consider that the exploration of the management practices of women within one public service organisation to have been a worthwhile endeavour that contributes to the research conversation around this topic.

In the following three chapters I discuss my findings. In Chapter Six I look at the influence of New Public Management on the management practices of the participants. In Chapter Seven I present the management practice themes I was able to identify in relation to the literature on women in management and leadership positions. In Chapter Eight I explore the participant's locations as 'insiders' within management, and within New Public Management.

## **Chapter Six – Managing within the context of New Public Management**

### ***Introduction***

In Chapter Two I outlined the path of the public sector reforms that changed the landscape of the New Zealand public sector in the late 1980's and early 1990's. As I noted in that chapter, the reforms in New Zealand were influenced by a number of economic and management theories including: public choice theory; agency theory; transaction-cost economics; and managerialism or New Public Management (NPM) as it came to be known (Boston et al., 1996). The focus was on effectiveness and efficiency, achievement of outputs and emulation of many private sector behaviours such as developing strategic plans and business plans. Public service managers had more discretion, were accountable for outputs, and were expected to be competitive and entrepreneurial and to embrace the practices of private sector management. In more recent years this approach has been reconsidered somewhat and there is now more emphasis on outcomes, more attention paid to means rather than solely ends and government departments are now encouraged to co-operate in policy development and implementation. As Norman notes, however, the basic principles of the reforms are still evident in the continued emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency and public accountability (2003).

This is the context in which the managers who took part in this study manage. Unlike Strachan who found in her study of feminist school principles that the 'cult of managerialism' (1997, p. 212) did not dominate as much as she had anticipated, I found the opposite to be true. The influence of NPM on the management practices of the participants, the things they prioritise, what they value and how they measure success was stronger than I had anticipated. This impacted not only on what they did, but how they described their approach to management. The managers were very much a part of the discourse of NPM. As I went over the data, the key doctrines of NPM became the framework for analysis presented in this chapter under the heading Women as New Public Managers.

An additional theme to emerge was that of mechanisms of control. A number of participants expressed frustration at the hoops they had to jump through in order to get things done. It is difficult to identify whether this is a 'hang-over' from pre- 1990's bureaucratic processes, or a result of the risk-averse behaviour of organisations in response to their increased levels of responsibility and accountability arising through the introduction of NPM. Perhaps it is little of both.

## ***Women as New Public Managers***

### **Being strategic: setting goals and objectives**

One of the building blocks of the reforms was the establishment of a system for strategic management (Scott, 2001). As Scott notes, most of the literature on strategic management was focused on the private sector where the imperative of maximising returns to shareholders drove decision-making (2001). The private sector approach needed some modification to take into account the diverse pressures on government departments but nevertheless was embraced by the public sector. Strategic management in many departments now occurs in layers, from the overall goals of the organisation through to individual units within the organisation. Whilst the purpose of my study was not to evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms, the extent to which the concept of strategic management has permeated the organisation my participants were drawn from cannot go unnoted. The managers and staff who took part in this study valued having clear goals and objectives. They were pleased to be working in an organisation that had taken the time to articulate these goals clearly in corporate documents, appreciated their own managers being clear about objectives and aimed to inject that clarity into their own management practices.

Phrases like 'clarity of strategic intent' were used often by participants, particularly in response to questions about what made it easier for them to carry out their management role. This statement from a senior manager shows how having clear strategic goals is viewed as key to organisational performance.

*I work on a premise that clarity of strategic intent, and high engagement of people in an organisation leads to improved results. And that's my core premise for working.*  
(Manager)

The same manager noted that one of the things she was employed to do was to clarify the strategic intent of the areas that she was responsible for and to recommend improvements that could be made in those areas of the organisation. One of her direct reports expressed a need for others to take more of a role in producing ideas to free this manager for higher level strategic thinking. She also supports the move to have staff take more of a role in developing ideas.

*I think that coming in she had a lot of the vision, a lot of the strategies of what would happen. And what she wants is to step out of some of that so that she is taking an even bigger, more helicopter role... She comes up with a lot of the ideas at the moment, so what she is doing... is getting us to do the thinking, getting us to come up with the ideas. That's what is kind of quite great really.* (Staff)

Managers were acutely aware of the imperative to look to the future and anticipate changes whilst allowing their staff to continue with the day-to-day work that was required in order to meet output expectations. One manager expressed this as:

*We've got to deliver today but we've got to design for tomorrow.* (Manager)

Staff were also aware of this focus on strategy, describing managers as strategic, conceptual thinkers who 'sow seeds' and 'make linkages'. At times this created some tensions for staff as demonstrated in the following quotation from a manager describing some feedback she had received from a staff member. The staff member had written:

*Remember that we are in the foothills, dealing with all the day to day junk, whilst you are on top of the mountain seeing the next one.* (Manager quoting staff)

Another staff member expressed awareness of the requirement for each part of the organisation to consider how it contributes to the organisational vision and goals.

*So there is a real need now to make sure we fit it not just to the environment now but to the environment of the future as well, so that's one key catalyst. This organisation...has been through a process over the last 18 months to two years of setting down really clearly its direction for the way forward...there's a need for all areas of the organisation to look at what they do and make sure they're aligned with that vision. (Staff)*

The vision and goals developed by this organisation are powerful controllers of the activities of staff. Dorothy Smith discusses the power of texts in organisations for their ability to control and standardise behaviour across numerous people and locations (2001). Thus, the transforming of organisational goals into texts such as a strategic plan, or statement of intent means that they can be replicated and then read and interacted with by a number of staff at the same time in different locations. Depending on the activity they are engaged in, the staff member may interact with the text in different ways. For example as part of a team planning day parts of a text, such as a strategic plan, may be a reference point for the development of further texts, such as a work programme, for the group. As an individual, a new staff member may read the strategic plan from cover to cover, perhaps in their own time, to try to get a sense of what the organisation is about.

As can be seen by the discussion above, staff interact with these texts to produce their own meaning and to decide on activities they will carry out as members of this organisation. There was a high level of awareness among participants of the organisation's expressed goals and a strong engagement with the strategic documents in their day-to-day work. In this way these documents establish what Smith calls "a shared and enforceable common ground" (2001, p. 176). This has the advantage of providing a common language which the readers of the text (in this case the staff) can use to talk about it and evaluate it. It also means there is a common reference point from which to identify the organisations' goals and to evaluate its performance against those goals. The

text can be said to translate the activities of individuals into achievements of the organisation (Smith, 2005). On the other hand, a powerful text also has the potential to limit the agency of the individual. The extent to which is it embraced by the organisation as a whole, which appeared to be the case in this project, can reduce the ability of individuals to challenge the process of developing the text or its content.

### **Organisational Performance: Effectiveness and Efficiency**

The increased focus on measuring the performance of organisations was one of the hallmarks of the public sector reforms in New Zealand. In the absence of profit as a measure of performance, tasks were specified as outputs (and in later years outcomes) so that organisations could be held accountable for their achievement (Norman, 2003). The focus on producing outputs and achieving outcomes can also be linked with the ‘let the managers manage’ approach where the strict rules around how and what they did were relaxed as long as they produced the goods (Scott, 2001). The influence of this approach can be seen in many of the responses of participants in my study. There is a focus on the outputs in the form of specific projects, or outcomes, and less concern with the detail of how it is achieved. Efficiency, i.e. minimising the level of input required to achieve maximum outcomes is the other side of the performance coin. There was a strong sense of the need to be efficient among the participants in this study.

#### *Effectiveness*

The focus on organisational performance was strong among participants in this study. In Chapter Seven I describe the high achievement culture and expressed desire of managers to be leading high-performing teams. This focus on performance drives many of the activities of the managers in the organisation. The following quotation shows how this focus permeates all areas of the organisation, including what it wants to measure.

*... so it really is about convincing my colleagues and the organisation as a whole that we are not only interested in employee satisfaction, we need as an organisation to focus on employee engagement. The correlation between employee engagement*

*and organisational performance is stronger than the correlation between employee satisfaction and business results. (Manager)*

For many of the participants in this study, their approach to effectiveness was to articulate the results they wanted to see and to let staff identify the activities they would need to carry out to achieve those results.

*I like to know what they are doing at a sort of superficial level I suppose. So here's the goal, the target, the outcome that we are looking for, pretty much its your baby, you find a way of achieving it. (Manager)*

Another manager described how she builds in events that allowed her to track how her area is doing against targets that had been set.

*...we put together a plan every year, and we're just putting one together for next year, and then we meet as a team and see how we're tracking. And I guess the purpose of that is to give me the confidence that we are doing what we said we would do, and we can deliver to the business.... and also to look at two or three other initiatives, how are we going in terms of our people initiatives, how are we going against our budget, how we are tracking in terms of our communication. (Manager)*

The managers were very aware of the amount of measurement that organisation required, particularly from its service delivery arms.

*But we had a lot of measurement in there as well. Which is something I've really picked up with this organisation...I suppose the discipline I've learned is that making sure we can show, if not how we've met hard measurement in data, what we've done, how what we've done has met our expectations. So we've done quite a lot of measurement in this area too. (Manager)*

Although the organisation has begun to use the discourse of outcomes that has been increasingly popular in the public service over recent years, its business processes are geared to measure outputs. This participant felt that because outputs were what the

system measured, they were valued more. This focus was a source of frustration for the participant not only because it was out of sync with the rhetoric of outcomes, but also because it was limiting in terms of her management practice.

*The outcomes, I really like the outcomes because it gives you some freedom to work out how you might best do something, whereas outputs narrows things for you and its too definitive for me. Whereas we as an organisation have talked a lot about outcomes in the last few years, we still value outputs more because you can measure it. So those sorts of things frustrate me. (Manager)*

### **Efficiency**

Efficiency was another of the key doctrines of NPM. Those championing the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s sought to achieve efficiency through competition and exposure to market forces (Norman, 2003). Influenced by transaction cost economics, the focus was on the relationship between inputs and outputs (Boston et al., 1996). While it has been recognised that an exclusive focus on efficiency ignores the need to ensure equity in access to services and distribution of resources, much of the discourse of efficiency remains in the language used by the managers in this study. The following quotation shows the influence of the discourse of efficiency on how this manager relates to her staff.

*I really feel that I get the best investment and the best return from really spending time with my managers and with the team leaders as well. So I guess, the way I've structured my diary and my day is really to exploit that because I absolutely believe that's where you get the best bang for your buck. And that I can get out of each... get much higher performance out of people by investing time in them. (Manager)*

The following quotations show how directly the doctrine of efficiency mediates the activities of some managers. It influences what initiatives are introduced and how the managers relate with other business units within the organisation. Efficiency is seen as a key goal of management activities, and in one case, a defining goal of the leadership role.

*Managing the budget kind of goes without saying, really, delivering the service that the business wants and to the budget, and also looking for savings, and look for smarter ways of doing things, that's what the leadership role is about (Manager)*

*I've really trimmed it down from 9 staff, I've really pared it back. That structure wasn't working, and we're doing some work in terms of how service delivery works, (Manager)*

*One of the things I'm trying really hard to do is add some, you know, what's the bottom line in terms of cost in dollars. It might not make people feel good, but you know, that's the bottom line. That's what a business partner does, shows what that's all about in a quantifiable way, (Manager)*

The discourse of efficiency can be heard in phrases such as 'pared back', 'bang for buck' and 'showing what that's all about in a quantifiable way'. The extent to which this discourse permeates the manager's responses was surprising and contrasts with the literature that suggest that women managers are more attuned to people than processes and tasks, for example Bale 1950, cited in Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen (2003).

### **Measuring the Performance of Staff**

Linked with the focus on measuring the performance of organisations, was a move in the late 1980s and 1990s to introduce structured performance management systems for staff. Like other public service organisations, the organisation in which participants in this study work has a formal performance management system that includes annual reviews of each individual's performance. For the managers, the focus on performance is an on-going one that is as much an attitude as it is a process. The following quotations relate to one manager's approach to building a high performing team. The first is from one of her staff members quoting her as she describes her approach to managing staff that are perceived to be not performing.

*There's a point at which I actually want a certain percentage of staff to be uncomfortable. I actually want us to be an organisation which actually does what we're paid to do and performs well and still has a good time but it does what it needs to do. If there are 10 or 15 percent of staff that don't want to go on that journey, who actually do want to drag the chain, who are quite happy to sit in a particular team and let their workmates do everything for them, then I'm quite happy for those people to be uncomfortable. (Staff member quoting manager)*

The following quotation is from the manager herself. It reiterates the focus on developing a team of high performers, acknowledges that most of her staff are already performing well while also acknowledging that staff may have different needs and therefore need different levels of input.

*If you're trying to pull together high performers, the poor performers stick out. So the people who are a bit weaker, a bit lazy, or who have particular special needs at a given time probably feel quite threatened. And actually I don't mind about that, because I pay them to do a really good job and I want them to be high performing and I want them to feel under pressure. And some people find that quite harsh, but for others, they know where they stand. And if they shape up, and most of them are in really good shape, well they'll get rewarded for that. I'd like to think that I was seen as quite fair.... I like to think I treat people fairly but differently depending on their needs. Some of them have got really different needs. (Manager)*

In the quotation below the same manager reiterates her focus on addressing any perceived poor performance in order to enhance the effectiveness of the team.

*I run a winning team, I think I'm known for not tolerating fools. I deal with poor performance in members of my team and help them do the same with theirs. (Manager)*

The following quotation shows an interesting mix of managerialism and caring. Her focus is on individual performance in order to achieve the organisational goals. Within that focus, however, there is an understanding that individual staff may be at different

stages and need different types of support in order to be able to perform. This aspect of acknowledging and responding to the needs of staff is an element of the 'ethic of care' that is discussed in Chapter Seven.

*And its really important that everybody's job is valued. And I guess to that end...we certainly have promoted in our plan... 'What's the organisation trying to achieve?' and then 'what is the government trying to achieve?' ... and then how can we actually do that? And then what is our role ...and we have under that, what's your personal performance plan. So that you can see how you add to the big picture, so you're not just coming in and doing a just a job. That you're doing a job for a purpose and that you are really contributing (Manager)*

Another manager also talks about the importance of staff knowing where what they do fits in the bigger picture of organisational goals. She also identifies a need to acknowledge staff who do a good job. This is, however, all done with the aim of improving performance individually and collectively. It is unclear whether this would be done in the absence of powerful organisational drivers around performance that are part of the NPM discourse.

*...I try to focus on providing that environment for my own people, so looking at the things that make engagement possible within my own work area. It is about people having clarity of goals and so... we are releasing the area's first business plan. The plan will give people a little more of an understanding of why we exist and what our key roles are. And then having in place some mechanisms around how people organise their work? How do we get the results focus, the urgency in what we are doing? And overlaying that with recognition and reward processes to make people feel that they are not only clear about what they have to do but if they do a good job that they get reinforcement from the organisation, particularly from the leaders in my team. (Manager)*

The area that this manager works in also has an informal recognition process where managers or peers can send postcards to anyone who is seen to be doing a good job.

Although initially thought of as ‘cheesy’ this has proved to be appreciated by staff and is seen as effective way of reinforcing the high performance culture.

The following quotation is an example of how reporting staff responded to the more informal performance management activities. This staff member was able to articulate very clearly how much she appreciated her manager’s approach to managing performance.

*I think that her clarity and focus make it really easy for me to carry out the role and she gives really really good feedback. She’s good at giving specific feedback about how I’m doing and what she wants from me and things she wants me to do differently. And I feel very very part of the conversation, so that’s really really great. (Staff)*

### **Customers Everywhere**

Another of the effects of NPM was a change in the way public organisations talked about the people they delivered services to. Members of the public who were previously rate-payers, beneficiaries, transport users, tax payers and tenants became ‘customers’.

Another set of ‘customers’ to emerge was the internal customer. Individual business units within organisations that carried out ‘behind the scenes’ roles such as human resource management, finance and administration started to talk about their internal customers and the need to sell the value of what they did to these customers. The participants in this study had a strong focus on customer service. For most, their customers were internal, that is, other business units within the organisation. This is reflected in terms like ‘relationship management’ and ‘business partnership’. This focus took up a significant proportion of time for those managers with internally focused roles.

*I also think it is important that we work in partnership with our internal customers quite closely so that we don’t head off on a tangent and design something that they don’t want. Or that we’re putting our emphasis in one area and they really want us*

*to work in another area. So a key part of my role is to form a bridge between other parts of the business, probably with people who work at about my level. (Manager)*

A team that has internal customers and whose work is often considered 'soft' developed the following metaphor to describe how it relates to its internal 'customers'. It is striking for its use of a very masculine sporting activity as its analogy. It creates an image of very competitive behaviour and pressure to perform against the clock. It could be interpreted in a number of ways. It could be a mechanism to challenge the 'soft' reputation of the area and to appeal to the members of staff who are more likely to respond to its masculine overtones. It could be a case of the area identifying and responding to the needs of its customers by using a metaphor they can relate to. From a feminist standpoint it is an example of the pervasiveness of masculine activities and discourse in providing the language and images available to women to describe their day to day experiences. Collinson and Hearn also note the continuing use of "sporting metaphors...in rationalizing managerial decisions and practices"(2000, p. 264).

*... it started out being a bit of a lets talk about our values and mission statement and how we operate, and it actually ended up being a metaphor for how we work. And we bought into the 'pit crew' metaphor. We are the pit crew, we've got expertise in the team, we all have our various strengths, we have to work as part of a team. We are part of the race team as a whole but we don't play on the race track. Our... managers are on the race track, they are the drivers. They can come in for scheduled, or un-scheduled stops, we'll wipe of the bugs, fix the tyres, whatever. So that's the model we've used to really think about how it is that we relate with our customers because it is slightly different from what it was. (Manager)*

One manager from the service delivery side of the organisation was very clear about her priority being the external customer.

*And I suppose I do have a very strong focus on getting it right for the customer and worrying about how we do it later. So quite a strong customer focus. (Manager)*

## Public Accountability

The participants in this study were acutely aware of the expectations of public accountability that came with being part of the public service. You will remember that Norman (2003) talked about public accountability as one of the foci of the public sector reforms. The participants in this study framed accountability in terms of not bringing their organisation into disrepute. When I asked about what being in the public service meant, the most common response was a direct reference to the organisation's code of conduct as can be seen in the following quotations.

*The whole thing about being open to scrutiny and public perception in particular. And in this organisation the whole issue around maintaining integrity and confidentiality. We've had three changes to our code of conduct since I've; well we're on to our third review of our code of conduct now.... Every time its tightening up on internal and external activities that have the potential to bring the Department into disrepute (Manager)*

*Well, the obvious things that spring to mind is the code of conduct thing, you know in terms of being beyond reproach in what I say and do. Very conscious of that. (Manager)*

The Code of Conduct is a powerful text that regulates the behaviour of staff both within their professional and personal lives. It mediates the day to day conduct of staff and drives a number of human resource activities around induction of new staff. This was seen as particularly important for those who had not worked in the public service before and had therefore had not been exposed to this level of control over private lives. The existence of this text allows for large numbers of staff across different locations to be exposed to this central regulatory process (Smith, 2001).

At the time that I interviewed the participants, the organisation had been subject to a select committee review and had approximately five years earlier experienced a significant level of media attention relating to treatment of customers. Managers were very aware of the potential for media attention and consequent risk to the organisation's

reputation. How this affected management decisions was identified by one manager as the 'front page of the Dom' test.

*I guess I do think about risk quite a lot, I do quite often do the front page of the Dom test. So front page of the Dom, how would it look? Holmes, how would it look? That reputational risk is probably something that is more at the forefront than ever before. (Manager)*

One manager described this risk management approach in relation to the organisation of events in a way that would show fiscal responsibility and avoid any accusations of misspending of public money.

*We don't hold things in places that might be misconstrued that we've spent lots of money on it, or if we're having a morning tea making sure that its not an expensive one...Because its all perception, and you're never quite sure what people will read into it. (Manager)*

A staff member, who also holds a management position, described public accountability in relation to the cost of complying with the different pieces of legislation and government processes that are designed to ensure transparency and give the public access to both official and personal information.

*I'm subject to the Official Information act, I can also have an Ombudsman inquiry regarding my decision... Through the OIA stuff can get in the front of the paper, Audit New Zealand can question what I do, the Office of the Auditor General can question what I do. The State Services Commission... all of them can have an impact on what I do. The practicality of that means that the group of people that I manage here does a role that, for similar organisations in size... would do to the same level, if not higher with probably a third of the staff that are here. I think we are at the point where there are so many things to protect the public purse. All these things I'm talking about are, essentially, so the public has some level of assurance that their*

*money is not being wasted. That to me – we waste money to convince the public that we're not wasting money. (Staff)*

This was the only staff member to describe the steps taken to ensure accountability to the public as problematic. For other participants it was accepted as a given within the context of the public service.

## **Mechanisms of Control**

Simons describes control systems as

*The formal, information-based routines and procedures managers use to maintain or alter patterns in organisational activities(1995, p. 5).*

Participants in this study expressed varied views about the control systems that organised their day-to-day work. A common frustration was with the number of levels of approval needed for what were considered basic functions. Both of the following passages were from staff members who had also worked in private sector organisations.

*Because I did this role in the private sector and did it successfully there, it blows me away just how many other hoops and jumps I have to go through to do it in the government sector...I don't look at my whole life in dollars and cents, but sometimes I look at it and think, "what's the energy cost and the spiritual cost of doing this? How much energy does it drain out of me?" almost to continually feel like you have to wade against the rip-tide to get some of the most basic functions done. (Staff)*

*Getting stuff approved to get out the door can be tortuous in this place, absolutely tortuous. It can take a long time, and there's a lot of people you have to consult. All of which is good, but for me that slows me down. (Staff)*

One of the managers, however, considered that there were some areas that had become too loose and staff had been given too much latitude. She uses terms such as 'clean up'

and 'consolidation' that fit within the discourse of managerialism to describe what she believes needs to happen in order to restore a higher level of control.

*What hasn't been happening is that 'infection', the spreading of the good stuff and the cutting out of the not so good stuff. We need to do a clean up operation right about now, and consolidation exercise. We're kind of at that point in time where some attention needs to be paid. Actually getting away from some principles, and saying OK, this is how it will be done, here's the operating latitude that you've got, you know, there's a check that you can do one of six types of things, but don't deviate beyond that, its not a clean slate anymore. (Manager)*

### **Summary**

The extent to which the doctrines of New Public Management had become embedded in the attitudes, language and practices of the participants was an unanticipated finding. Unlike other studies such as that of Strachan (1997) there was little resistance to these doctrines evident in the responses of the participants. Having drawn participants from only one organisation, I am unable to draw any conclusions from this finding other than how prevalent it was in this particular organisation. It is possible that this level of influence would not be found in other organisations. I note the implications of this for future research in my concluding chapter.

Having explored the context of New Public Management, the following chapter looks at management practices of the participants that characterise the positions they take up within this context and relates these to the literature on women in management and leadership positions.

## **Chapter Seven– Management practices**

### ***Introduction***

The key foci of this thesis are management practices and the influences on them. Having discussed the context of New Public Management (NPM) in Chapter Two and investigated how its doctrines impacted on management practice in Chapter Six, I now explore the particular management practices that characterised the way participants manage and link these to the literature on women in management.

The practices explored are those that emerged from the data. In some cases there are clear differences in how individual managers approached different aspects of their role, in others these are differences only in degree. The aspects that are discussed are: sharing power; communicating and building relationships; focussing on achievement; advocating, supporting and enabling; taking a personal interest in staff; and developing staff. Some of the practices as expressed by individuals seem at times to be contradictory, particularly in relation to how the managers manage within the doctrines of NPM as discussed in the previous chapter.

As I noted in Chapter Six, the major impact on management practices was that of NPM. In the second section of this chapter I also discuss the impact of role models and of gender on management practices. The participants identified the impact of managers they had enjoyed working for or with on their own practices. Conversely, the participants did not identify gender as impacting on their pathway into management or their management practices.

### ***Leadership practices and style***

In Chapter Eight I discuss how the participants in this study positioned themselves very much as insiders to the role of management. In this section I will discuss the practices they use as insiders. A number of themes around leadership styles and practices became evident as I interacted with the texts of the transcripts. These were derived from how

the women managers described their own management practices and how staff viewed them.

### **Sharing power**

Rosener noted that “Women leaders don’t covet formal authority. They have learned to lead without it” (1990, p. 123). A number of writers have noted the tendency of women to prefer a more collaborative or democratic style of leadership, avoiding the use of power that comes from a hierarchical position (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). The organisation from which my participants were drawn has a lot of legislative power and is viewed by the public as a powerful organisation. One participant described it as a hierarchical organisation and other participants identified position and the level of delegation as potential sources of internal power.

*There’s a very hierarchical structure in this organisation with people having delegation to do certain things. So the level of your delegation is one source of power. We are viewed as a powerful organisation. (Manager)*

There was a sense that although the structure may have been hierarchical, individual managers took steps to limit some of the impact of the structure by being accessible to staff and involving them in decision-making. The participants also did not conceive of power in a competitive sense, as a limited resource that needed to be won and held onto.

Colville (1995b) describes power in organisations as falling into three categories. *Personal power* is power the individual has through feeling in control, being confident and having a strong sense of self-belief. *Interpersonal power* is the ability to influence others and *organisational power* is the ability to interact with the organisation and mobilise resources to get things done. The extent of organisational power that an individual has depends on their personal and interpersonal power. Interestingly, Colville observed women using more personal than interpersonal power. The staff of the managers in this study also noted this use of personal power. The following comment

describes a manager as non-hierarchical and as using her personal power rather than relying on power inherent in her senior position.

*Well clearly she has a lot of positional power, but the power that she exercises tends to be personal power and expert power. She would not often rely on positional power to be influential. The force of her personality, intellect and experience is really where she derives her influence. And that's a really good way to be. She uses it very constructively. (Staff)*

This use of personal power was also noted by Hall (1996) who described it as a form of power that was developed through a strong sense of self. She found that the women in her study used their strong personalities as the base of their power and were very aware of when they were doing so. In a similar way, Hawk found the chairwomen in her study to exercise power through

*sensitivity, caring, and awareness...building relationships...transparency...stability with flexibility...optimism and quiet determination (1997, p. 168).*

In terms of French and Raven's five sources of power, legitimate, rewards, coercive, expert and referent (Middlehurst, 1997) the power described by most participants in this study would be closer to expert and referent power than the other sources of power.

One of the managers was also described as sometimes working outside the hierarchical structure of the organisation, sharing her ideas and asking for input directly from junior staff without going through their managers. As they were used to a more hierarchical approach, some staff expressed surprise at this practice. Strachan (1997) characterised this type of sharing of power as a form of resistance to the managerial discourse. Whilst it could be interpreted in this way, it can also be seen as sitting comfortably within the more recent expectations of public service leaders, as articulated by the State Services Commission (2002) to take a more collaborative approach to management.

### *Limits to power sharing*

The organisation has a hierarchical structure and delegates authority to individuals based on their place within that structure. Within this context it is likely that the ability of managers to always involve others in their decision-making will be limited in some way. Both managers and staff alike identified times when less collaborative decision making approaches were used. This was also noted by the women in Rosener's (1990) study where participants acknowledged that they sometimes acted unilaterally and that this was usually associated with limitations on time. For the participants in this study, using unilateral decision-making was framed within contexts where it was either out of their control, deemed to be the most appropriate for the situation and/or more likely to achieve a result.

*Personal power – as a manager you have authority and you can hand some power to others to enact. I involve people, get them to participate. I can be autocratic if I need to be but my staff understand that there are times I need to do that. I only do that when its needed and there really isn't any other choice in terms of what we are going to do and usually that is out of my control. I try to minimise the impact on staff. (Manager)*

*I think that [manager] would make decisions about where she would use different types of power. With her own management group around her she would adjust her style to the person. She would not hesitate to use directive power if that was the right thing to do to achieve a result. But I think her style is that mostly she would discuss, explain, ask people for their buy-in, for their ideas in order to get buy-in, work with people rather than over people. (Staff)*

Sharing power through sharing information, involving staff in decision making and allowing them to make decisions about how they were going to achieve goals were common approaches taken by the managers in this study. This was appreciated, but to a certain extent *expected* by staff. It was unclear whether this expectation arose from the

organisational culture or from the perhaps unconscious application of gender stereotypes.

### **Communicating and building relationships**

A number of the participants talked about the importance of managing relationships and sharing information, both within their own teams and with other parts of the organisation. For some this was tied up with the concept of being accessible. They were accessible to their staff, and were concerned that their team should be accessible to the rest of the organisation. This was particularly so for those who managed internally focused functions such as human resources and business support functions. A number of participants described themselves and their managers as having ‘open door’ and ‘open diary’ policies. The motivations for doing this were varied but were usually linked to carrying out their function effectively and providing efficient customer service. In this sense, this attention to communication can be seen as a way of increasing efficiency, one of the goals of NPM. Ensuring that the functions they managed were understood and appreciated by the rest of the organisation was another key motivation behind this relationship management approach as was a desire to be available to support staff and to involve them in decision making.

The following quotation demonstrates the ‘no secrets’ approach to communication with staff, along with the acknowledgment that there will be some instances where managers are unable to share information with staff.

*I've got no secrets I hold from them. I see them as an extension of me. Obviously there are a few things they don't need to know and I won't talk to them about, but there's usually a really good reason for that. (Manager)*

This access to information was also acknowledged by staff with many commenting on how involved they feel as demonstrated by the following quotation.

*She's very good at sharing information, she keeps me fully informed about what is going on. (Staff)*

One manager described herself as a 'bridge' between her area and the rest of the organisation.

*I think it is important that we work in partnership without internal customers quite closely. So a key part of my role is to form a bridge between other parts of the business, probably with people who work at about my level. To really form the bridge so that we can keep this as close to the business as we can. (Manager)*

This focus on sharing information was noted by Helgesen (1990). She observed that the women in her study set aside time in their day to actively share information seeing it as an important aspect of their role. For these women the sharing of information was a two-way process, with the views of peers, staff, stakeholders and the general public being important to them.

### **Focusing on achievement**

As we saw in Chapter Six, the achievement of goals is an essential part of the doctrines of NPM. For the participants in this study, this achievement focus had become part of how they characterised themselves in the management role. Along with it went high levels of energy and the undertaking of high workloads. This high level of energy and workload was also found by Hawk (1997) in her study of chairwomen of school boards of trustees. However, unlike the women in Hawk's study who tended not to expect others to demonstrate the same level of energy, the women in this study did have high expectations of their staff.

Many of the participants described themselves, and were described by their staff, as very hard working and achievement focused. Staff described their managers as having high levels of energy and managing very high workloads. The managers spoke of wanting to achieve results and of the desire for the functions that they managed to be the very best.

This sense of wanting to achieve at the highest level and be viewed as the best can be seen in the following statement:

*She is very keen to set standards, to lead the way. Very focussed on deliverables and outputs. So its really important for her to be part of a team that absolutely demonstrates that. (Staff)*

One manager expressed this achievement focus in very competitive terms using words such as ‘winning’. She also gives a sense that only ‘winning’ people would be on her team.

*I'd say they'd think that I was really hard working, that I achieve results, quite goal oriented... I run a winning team, I think I'm known for not tolerating fools. (Manager)*

This can be contrasted with the comment below that shows that for this manager being the ‘best’ is about creating a supportive environment for staff.

*There is... I think a genuine desire to make this the best possible place ever. We want to be the best and we want to do the best for our staff. (Manager)*

Others set high standards for themselves in terms of competency and work ethic and expected others to meet them also. The managers all expressed a willingness to invest in staff development so that staff were able to meet the high standards being set. The following comment is an example of the staff perceptions of these expectations.

*She expects a lot of people. She expects a lot of herself and she expects a lot of her staff. She has no compunction about throwing work at people and she expects them to say if they can't manage it. So she sets very high standards, she demonstrates and models them and she expects high output. (Staff)*

Comments about managers working hard and being busy were common with some staff expressing a great deal of admiration for the amount of work that their managers carried out. The following comment from a staff member links the industriousness of the

manager back into the context of organisational expectations and the hierarchy through which those expectations are filtered through the organisation.

*She's industrious, she's busy...I genuinely believe that she does the best that she can to achieve the outcomes that her boss is desiring of her. (Staff)*

Industriousness can be seen as both an organisational expectation as in the quotation above, and an individual characteristic as shown in the statement below.

*So, although I don't work a lot less hours here. I don't feel that I have to work those hours, it's my working style that makes me work those hours. (Manager)*

Within the bounds of this study I was unable to draw any conclusion about the extent to which the organisational culture around effectiveness and efficiency has attracted managers that exhibit this characteristic.

### **Advocating, supporting and enabling**

One of the themes from the literature on women in management is around supporting the achievement of staff. Hall refers to this as “bringing out the best in teachers” (1996, p. 123). In her study women looked for opportunities to praise and acknowledge staff and to allow staff to demonstrate their strengths. Similarly, Rosener (1990) describes women making an effort to acknowledge good work by things like writing personal notes or mentioning the work in front of others. Many of the managers in this study described behaviours that could be termed ‘supporting’, ‘enabling’ or ‘advocating’. Within these themes there was also an overt acknowledgment of the staff as technical and professional experts. Hall (1996) also noted this recognition of the professional expertise of staff. A number of managers were responsible for areas where they did not necessarily have the technical expertise. In these cases they saw their role as providing the conditions or environment where their staff could effectively carry out their work. One manager, responsible for a range of functions, was particularly clear about her role as facilitator of the professional expertise of her staff.

*... I can't be a technical expert in all of these areas. I can hire people who are. And then its really a question of... how can I add value? When each of these managers is hugely competent and able to run their services. And they know their services better than I do... But I'm also quite interested in what we're doing, where we're going, what are the issues, what are the barriers, what do I need to do to assist them, do they need any roads cleared for them in terms of the journey. (Manager)*

The staff were equally aware that they were being given the space to assert their professional judgement and appreciated it as can be seen in the following quotations.

*What [manager] tries to do is still seek to support us in our technical areas without actually trying to... in my position she never second-guesses my decisions. That's what I'm paid to do and she's more here to support me as an individual and as a manager. (Staff)*

*I think that she sees me as an expert in my field and if I make a recommendation its obviously got some substance behind it. (Staff)*

*And again [manager] has been a good sounding board and very supportive of what we're doing, she tries to live and talk the values of the organisation... I probably get the right amount of involvement from her that I want. I don't like being dominated by a manager but on the other hand I want to know that the manager is there, so I think [manager] hits that balance really well. (Staff)*

*We talk things over and then she says you make the decision. So I go away and decide. I feel trusted, she goes with my judgement on things. (Staff)*

One staff member described how her manager acknowledged her personal frustration at working in an open plan environment but sometimes leaving her office and working in the open plan setting alongside staff.

Giving credit and acknowledging the efforts of staff is also part of the role of supporter and enabler. One manager described how important it was to acknowledge staff, particularly those whose functions often go unnoticed or unvalued.

*Because some of the jobs people do are really boring, you know you're filling up the tea and coffee machines, delivering the newspapers and the mail. And for us to be able to lead a team and say 'hey, the stuff you are doing is really valuable because you enable our staff to get on and do their jobs. (Manager)*

All of the managers in this study used personal contact to acknowledge the work staff were doing. Sometimes this was done on a one-to-one basis, other times in a more public setting such as a team meeting.

### **Taking a personal interest in staff**

The literature on women in management has a strong theme of 'caring' and talks about women showing a higher level of concern for others than do men, for example Chesterman et al. (2004), Eagly & Johnson (1990), Hare-Mustin & Marecek (1988) and Neville (1988). Strachan (1997) also describes the feminist principals in her study as demonstrating an 'ethic of care' that included affirming others and being accessible. This 'ethic of care' derives from Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on 'relational caring' it is seldom referred to in the management literature, except within that of educational leadership, for example Nodding (1984). Beck (1992) describes this ethic of care as having two dimensions, 'promoting human development' and 'responding to needs'. Both of these elements were identifiable in the responses of the women in this study. Managers took time to hear about the lives of staff and were aware of what was going on in their lives at different times. They acknowledged family commitments and promoted work/life balance. This was experienced by staff as a genuine caring for their well-being.

*She is also very interested in the staff individually. Like she knows about who I am and what I'm interested in and things in my personal life. She is sort of interested without stepping over any lines. That's really nice. (Staff)*

*When we set up my contract [manager] floored me, she asked me the question she said “what about school holidays?” I have never, in twenty years I have never been asked that question before and that absolutely amazed me... she absolutely gets it, absolutely gets the need to keep all these balls in the air. I feel really lucky to be working with someone that absolutely understands how life is. (Staff)*

*She is very supportive of any leave, she encourages holidays, that work hard, play hard type of thing. (Staff)*

The element of responding to needs is demonstrated in the following passage. This manager mentioned the different needs of her staff within a number of contexts in our interview. This seemed to be more of a focus in her management practice than it was for the other participants.

*I also like to treat people fairly but differently depending on their needs. Some of them have got really different needs.... I've got a couple of people right at the end of their careers nearing retirement what they want is quite different from the folks that are up and coming and have 20 years ahead of them in their careers. So you've got to treat people according to their needs. (Manager)*

For the manager who made the following comment, the attention to staff was not necessarily something that came ‘naturally’. It was something that she was aware of as an expectation from her staff but something that she identified as needing effort. Her response challenges the essentialist notion of women being ‘natural’ carers and that this will necessarily transfer to the way they interact with others in the workplace.

*Sometimes I think I should do more of the people stuff with them. And sometimes I know I should! So I think there's probably a number of times when people would say 'I'd like her to care more, I like her to be involved more. (Manager)*

The essentialist notion of women as all-caring and all-sharing creates a dilemma for many women managers or those aspiring to management positions. If they always put the needs of others before their own, they are unlikely to attend to important elements of their own career development, they may also feel guilt as they compare themselves to the caring model (Court, 2001). There is an element of this self-criticism in the quotation above.

Like the women in Hawk's (1997) study, the caring was more than, and sometimes not at all, about making people feel good. It was about doing what, in the manager's view, was the best for the person and the organisation. Sometimes this might mean challenging them, taking them out of their comfort zones so that they had opportunities to develop. Hall described this approach as 'care and control' where the care dimension was demonstrated through supportive actions aimed at developing trust and the control element through "finding ways to shape behaviour to desired ends" (1996, p. 124). This leads into a discussion on the managers' focus on developing their staff, which was a very strong theme in my interviews.

### **Developing staff**

I describe the approaches to developing staff separately in this section, as they were a strong theme in the data. This also allows for discussion of the different ways managers found to provide development opportunities for staff that were outside of formal performance management systems. Paying attention to the development needs of staff is also a common theme in the literature on women in management, for example Chesterman et al.(2004), Hall (1996) and Strachan (1997) report the participants in their studies being concerned with the professional development of staff. They did this by encouraging them to take up study or apply for positions, providing informal coaching and identifying development opportunities. Similarly, the managers in this study described themselves as very interested in the professional development of their staff. They used both formal and informal methods of development from linking staff with training and resources to sitting with them and brainstorming ideas. This focus on development is supported by a strong organisational culture of professional

development. Because of the size of the organisation and the varied roles within it, there are numerous opportunities for secondment or transfer to different functions. The organisation also has a programme of study awards that allow managers to attend training in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Managers were also aware that their staff had different needs and did not try to make everyone fit within a 'one size fits all' development plan as can be seen in the following quotation.

*I'm managing people as old as my mother, which is kind of a weird thing really. If you get to know people as individuals and you get to know what their aspiration are, you can help them with some of that stuff to help them do their job. (Manager)*

An informal approach to development is demonstrated in the following statement from a manager who enjoys seeing her staff grow in their expertise.

*I get a real buzz out of is sitting down around the table and playing around with some ideas about what they could do and how they could do it. Brainstorming some opportunities, trying to motivate, those sorts of things. (Manager)*

The following quotation shows a structural approach to development, acknowledging that the staff member's development had been limited by virtue of where the function was placed in the organisation.

*I had a financial advisor as a direct report but I felt that it was more appropriate he reported through the finance area because his professional development is limited in the area that I lead. My business group doesn't include a finance function and so his ability to meet his CA requirements is limited in my area. So I've transferred him to an area where he can work on a broader range of financial issues. (Manager)*

Staff were equally able to identify their managers' focus on professional development as shown in the following quotation.

*I find she puts a really big emphasis on developing her reports and she is also very trusting, she gives me a lot of latitude....She is investing in our development. She does a lot of coaching, a lot of sharing of her thoughts. She is always linking me, and others, into resources. (Staff)*

The managers interviewed were not threatened by staff developing their technical expertise and did not withhold their own knowledge from staff. This discussion on development was also linked with the theme of being supporters and enablers that is mentioned earlier in this chapter. The activities described above also take place within formal systems of performance management. These are an important part of the accountability systems of NPM. The impact of this on management practices is discussed in Chapter Six.

## ***Impacts on management practices***

### **Role models**

I began my review of the literature on women in management in Chapter Three with a discussion on how much of the early literature on management associated culturally defined male characteristics with successful leadership. I was interested, therefore, to find out what the participants in my study identified as the characteristics of a good manager. In order to answer to this question many of the managers drew on examples from their own experience and described the characteristics and behaviours they had most appreciated in their own present or past managers. In many cases these managers were men. This theme developed into a discussion on the influence of role models on management practices.

When describing the characteristics of a good manager, the participants placed importance on supporting, developing, enabling and coaching staff and providing the environment for staff to excel as can be seen in the following passage.

*A good manager identifies strengths and focuses on supporting the staff to use them, is clear about expectations, gives freedom, a clear communicator, is people-aware, politically savvy and understands the environment. I had a manager who shared his focus with me, he said that you need to attend to the people, the process and the focus and if you do that you will always get it right. I try to model that. I also think a good manager is enabling, coaches their staff and I mean to challenge them as well. And they recognise that people are different. They need to focus at the right level, if they don't they can take away the opportunity for their staff to excel in their jobs and to expand. (Manager)*

Setting the goals and giving staff the room to get on with the job without 'micro managing' was another management practice that was valued.

*... being quite tight in terms of objectives, really loose about how you get there, and really tight in terms of evaluating .. I really like that. It gives me enough latitude to design and develop things as I want them to be but it gives me a really clear direction of where I want to go and I also feel very, I feel recognised and appreciated when we do something well. And he'll point out things to me when its not going so well. And I really like that as well. So I feel very supported from him personally. (Manager)*

*...being really fair, giving you enough latitude, setting the direction but not constraining you, and then letting you go out and make your own mistakes. Empowering you to, that sort of empowerment to do your own thing, and also being confident enough so that when you make a mistake or when you've done something that was not so great actually saying 'well that wasn't so great was it?' And being*

*really open about it. And if I think about the best managers that I've worked for I've always learned something from them. (Manager)*

Supporting the career pathways of staff and giving honest feedback about where they were heading was also seen as important.

*And when I think about two or three managers that have been quite, had quite and influence on my career and been very encouraging and supportive, that's really what I was looking for. Not someone who would put you down. I wouldn't chose to work for someone like that either. (Manager)*

*What I like from a manager is the ability to do my own thing, be responsible and accountable for my own thing. To be accessible, that's really important to me, and to be interested in how they might grow and develop me. Or if that's not possible to turn around and say 'we don't think you're very good at that, so lets look at something else.' So some of that honesty. I guess those are things that I look for. (Manager)*

In summary, the women managers who participated in this study identified a 'good' manager as someone who was open and accessible, interested in them as a person but more importantly interested in their professional development. In their view a good manager sets goals and lets staff make their own decisions about how they will achieve those goals without getting involved in 'micro-management'. They considered that a good manager acknowledges a job well done, gives honest feedback and supports staff in their career development, sometimes pushing them beyond their comfort zones. They also described a good manager as being fair and taking into account the different needs of the people they manage. These were all characteristics they had observed in managers they had worked for, or with, in the past and they largely modelled their behaviour on these managers. Two of the participants also specifically noted that they also learnt as much from people they considered 'bad' managers in terms of behaviours that they would seek to avoid in their own management practice.

The participants did not link these characteristics to gender or sex-role stereotypes. Indeed, the characteristics they associated with a good manager would appear to include a mix of the characteristics that have traditionally been associated with feminine and masculine styles. This would suggest that the activities and styles that the managers in this study valued do not fit the dichotomous characterisation of management styles that has been prevalent in much of the literature. The literature that discusses these dichotomies such as autocratic vs democratic, instrumental vs expressive, transactional vs transformational was outlined in Chapter Three. There was also no distinction made between how much they would value particular approaches based on whether the manager were a woman or man. The discussion above points to managers valuing something closer to an androgynous style with elements from both sides of the dichotomies.

### **The impact of gender**

You will recall that in Chapter One I outlined my two research questions as being about the management practices of women in the public service in Aotearoa/New Zealand the things that impacted on those practices. Coming from a feminist standpoint that identifies gender as one of the key dimensions along which society is organised, I anticipated that gender relations would impact on management practices. I asked participants what they thought the impact of gender relations was on women in management in their organisation. Most focused on the level of participation of women in management, and barriers to them achieving management positions. Women in management positions did not perceive any barriers to them getting there either within the public service generally or in this organisation specifically. They did note, however, that they may not as individuals be particularly attuned to noticing gender.

*Statistics tell you that women find it more difficult to get into management and that's never been my experience. And I don't know if that's just because I haven't noticed, perhaps I've been a bit insensitive to some of that stuff (Manager)*

*But quite often I've been in an environment where I'm the only woman on the team. And that's never an issue for me. To be quite honest I've never noticed until someone has pointed it out, but I've also kept myself quite distant and professional. I don't want to go out drinking with the boys, and I don't want to be like one of them. I have to kind of do it my own way. I think it has made an impact, and probably over time as well about the way that I've held back on getting too close to people.*

*(Manager)*

The quotation above makes mention of the generally male (fratriarchal) practice of socialising with other male staff outside of work. This is often referred to as the 'old boys club' and has been considered one of the institutions that deny women access to networks of decision making and power. One of Helgesen's (1990) participants describes an extreme example of this behaviour where the networking occurred in 'gentlemen's' clubs that excluded women. Therefore she could not have taken part even if she had wanted to. Where the managers in this study identified the existence of an 'old boys' club, they did not feel the need to be part of an equivalent women's network. They preferred to develop professional relationships with a range of people and felt that gender was irrelevant in that context.

It is difficult to say whether the managers not noticing the impact or potential impact of gender relations within the organisation is a comment on the organisation having successfully eliminated any form of gender discrimination. It is equally possible that it is a comment on the organisation attracting a particular sub-set of women managers who were less likely to perceive gender as a barrier.

### ***Critical mass***

Reference to having two women in second tier positions was made by a number of staff in the context that it demonstrated that there were no barriers to women achieving senior positions within the organisation. This could also be interpreted as a reference to the

concept of 'critical mass'. Chesterman et al. (2004) found that having a critical mass of women in management, particularly in senior management was likely to attract other women into management positions and to have an impact on the culture of the organisation as they encouraged collaboration and collegiality. One staff member noted that having two women in the second tier of management seemed to signal a change but also pointed out the lack of representation of women in senior positions more generally.

*There are some difficulties for women in management. While across the organisation we have a reasonable amount of women in senior management positions, they do tend to be at the lower end of the senior management positions. Its still quite male orientated as far as the top jobs go. We're lucky enough to have a couple of the second tier now who are female and things are changing. (Staff)*

### ***Being judged as a woman***

There was acknowledgment that social constructions of gender did impact on how the behaviours of women managers were judged. Three of the participants, two managers and one reporting staff member had experienced incidents where what they said or how they interacted with others was judged against stereotypical constructs of what was acceptable behaviour for a woman.

*I think it probably does, it certainly would have something to do with what people's expectations might be of you. And I think that was around the female stuff... they [participants at a business school course] thought I was quite cold on first meeting me, and quite aloof, and kind of held myself at a distance and didn't engage...some of it was around 'we would expect most women to be a bit more warm and friendly than you are'. (Manager)*

A number of authors have noted that women in management positions are subject to judgement on the extent to which they engage in stereotypically feminine or masculine behaviour. As I noted in Chapter Two, this historically created a catch-22 situation, in

order to be successful women needed to act like men which would invite criticisms of their unfeminine behaviour (Hull & Umansky, 1997). If they exhibited the more 'acceptable' feminine characteristics their chances of making it into leadership positions, or being judged as successful leaders should they get there, were diminished (Strachan, 1997). The comments made by participants indicate that this phenomenon cannot yet be consigned to the 'history' of gender relations.

### ***Recruitment***

The recruitment of women into the organisation and their promotion within it generated some responses that contradicted the assertion that there were no barriers to women becoming successful managers in the organisation. As part of the core public service, the organisation has a legislated requirement to have, and report on, an EEO strategy. EEO is intended to eliminate workplace discrimination on the basis of " age..., colour, disability, employment status..., ethical belief..., ethnic or national origins..., family status (having dependants, not having dependants...) marital status..., political opinion..., race, religious belief, sex (includes childbirth and pregnancy) and sexual orientation ..." (Mintrom & True, 2004, p. 7). Considering whether a person has, or is likely to have children in an employment decision would clearly contradict this definition of EEO. Despite the existence of EEO strategies and a stated commitment to employing the best person for the job, participants noted that some managers considered the parental status of women in recruitment decisions. One of the managers admitted to having those thoughts herself.

*... and I'm guilty of it myself too. If I employ somebody, and six months later you find out they are pregnant, I get really hacked off about that. And so it's a discussion that I've had with colleagues. And I think we all do. Its kind of the investment of time, the investment of money, the uncertainty of whether somebody is going to come back. All those business reasons rather than the 'well, that's perfectly normal and good luck to you and of course we will help you through it.' There's a discussion that goes around about that. Now that there's more guys taking parental leave as*

*well, its as much of an issue with them. Its not peculiar to the women, but it tends to still be the women who still take the leave. (Manager)*

Clearly legislation and internal policies have not yet eradicated this practice of considering the potential for a woman to become a mother as a 'business cost'. Mintrom & True note this tendency for individuals to do the minimum necessary to demonstrate compliance with EEO policies and "do little to change their day to day practices and habits of mind" (2004, p. 16). They call this practice 'EEO cynicism'. Pockets of this would appear to exist within the organisation from which the participants in this study were drawn.

### ***Remuneration***

Three participants in this study identified remuneration as the one area where they felt they were treated significantly differently, and negatively, because they were women. This observation is supported by the data presented in Chapter Two. As Mintrom and True (2004) point out, despite legislation requiring equal pay, women in management positions in the public service continue to be paid less than their male counterparts.

### **The future of gender relations**

A number of participants considered that gender relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand had improved to the extent that there were few barriers left to women taking part in all aspects of society. They were very up-beat about the future of women in their organisation. One participant comments that his children have very different views to his generation and that of his parents.

*I think younger people, and I look at my kids, who are probably on the border between Generation X and Y, are much more open in their views of the world. They don't want to be type cast or stereo-cast. People of my generation are kind of a change generation. We are also open, but we come with preconceived ideas from our parent's upbringing. If I go back a generation, to my parents' generation, I think there are very hard and fast rules on what men and women should do. I think*

*my own generation is a change generation because we've come from that upbringing but we've also opened our expectations out to 'almost anything is possible'. But my kids don't come with those constraints, they just accept the world as it is....they accept women as equals in every role that they want to do. (Staff)*

This generational difference was also noted by Chesterman et al. (2004) who noted that the older participants in their study had struggled against discrimination but the younger participants believed it to be a thing of the past. Knight (2003) also commented that her participants noted this difference in their younger colleagues.

Hawk (1997) refers to the ways that women put up internal barriers to putting themselves forward. Four of the participants in this study talked about elements of this. These included women fearing failure and therefore only putting themselves forward for things they were very sure they would be good at, the guilt factor in balancing family and work responsibilities, and focusing on what they couldn't do rather than what they could do. One added an additional external barrier, that of having adequate childcare.

The managers in this study very much positioned themselves as managers first, and as women second. The participants did not see gender as a prominent organising feature of their work lives. The following statement is an example of how gender was not a reference point for most of the participants. This participant describes herself as a 'package' with a certain set of skills and aspirations that she does not reference to gender at all.

*but I don't think we need to play on being a minority. I struggle with being a female as a reason why I can't...it's not a reason why I can't. Nor is it a reason why I can do something. Its just this is the package, this is what I can do, this is what I enjoy doing, this is what I want to do, lets do it or lets not do it. (Manager)*

The final comment on gender goes to a manager who considers women in this organisation to be truly reaping the rewards of the work of feminists over the past few decades.

*I've been through early days of feminism that kind of thing and I feel coming to this organisation that we've won quite a few battles over the years and that this is the fruit of it. And I feel it more working here than anywhere else I've been. I feel like yep, I'm not seeing barriers... well not on the gender front. We've got heaps of really competent amazing women doing really great stuff and providing great leadership and no-one makes a big deal about it. (Manager)*

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have presented the management practice themes that arose from the transcripts of my interviews with five women public service managers and six of their staff. Through starting from the participants' experiences I was able to identify the women managers as both valuing and engaging in practices such as sharing power and information, building relationships and communicating, supporting staff on a personal and professional level and acknowledging good work and addressing work that was less so. The women managers who took part in this study were also high-energy achievers who were focused on results. Within these themes differences in approaches of individual managers were evident. This supports my own observations, and much of the literature on women in management that suggests there are many differences between women in the way they enact their positions as managers. In this way the management practice themes that emerged can be seen as areas for exploration rather than a description of 'women's ways' of management.

In the second part of this chapter I looked at two aspects of influence on the management practices of the participants. The first aspect, the influence of role models, was a theme that emerged from the data. Four of the five managers that participated identified role models that had shaped their views of management and influenced how they enacted their management practice. The second, the influence of gender is a

question that is essential to any study carried out within a feminist approach. That the participants did not identify gender as having an impact on their management practices was another unexpected finding of the study.

In the following chapter I discuss the responses of the participants in relation to whether they position themselves as insiders or outsiders to the role of management.

## Chapter Eight – Outsiders or Insiders?

In Chapter Three I began my review of the literature on women in management with a discussion on how the traits that became associated with successful leadership reflected culturally defined male characteristics. I also noted that in management texts women were characterised as emotional, soft, dependent and intuitive rather than aggressive, dominant, objective and independent (Orser, 1994; Wajcman, 1996). They were therefore by definition not managers. Against this definition it may have been expected that the women in my study would at times feel alienated in the role of manager.

In Chapter Two I discussed the effect of the public sector reforms and the doctrines of New Public Management (NPM) on the context of public service management. In this new context managers were called on to be bold, risk-taking, competitive and entrepreneurial like their private sector counterparts (Boston, 2001). Similarly to the concept of the role of manager, I expected that the participants in my study may have at times considered themselves to be outsiders in this competitive environment. In terms of the representation of women in management in the organisation from which my participants were drawn, they are a significant minority with only about a third of senior (second and third tier) managers being women despite women making up over 50% of all staff. It is interesting to consider then, the extent to which participants identified any feelings of outsider-ness in relation to being managers within this organisation.

Nancy Naples (2003) alerts us to the permeable boundaries between the positions of insider and outsider that are experienced differently by people within the same community and differently by individuals over time and in relation to different sections of the community. I expected therefore, to find text within the transcripts of my interviews that would indicate the participants positioning themselves as both insiders and outsiders. I was surprised at the level of insider-ness that was evident through the use of the language of managerialism and of masculine metaphors such as the pit crew. For most of the participants there was no indication that they positioned themselves as outsiders in relation to their roles, gender, the organisation or any groups within the organisation.

The discourses of managerialism have been so successfully embedded in the organisation, and perhaps across the wider public sector, that the participants had wholly immersed themselves in them and did not see them as alienating or problematic. One manager overtly expressed her feeling as an insider among her peers.

*Around the peers, I think I'm quite comfortable that I am one of the group rather than an outsider in there. And I'm happy about that. (4)*

In relation to gender, participants identified the existence of strong, competent women in the senior management team as sending strong messages throughout the organisation about the valuing of women as equal participants in the leadership of the organisation. A number of staff commented on the fact that there were two women in the senior management team (second tier) as evidence that there were no barriers to women's participation and that this had changed the way the organisation viewed women's participation in management. Some were able to contrast this with the low representation of women in senior position across the organisation but were unable to identify any specific barriers.

*There's certainly a strong women's management voice in this organisation. In the HR world there's a very strong predominance of women in management. There's two very strong second tier managers. They are very competent. Although our statistics show that we would need to be improving, in terms of women in leadership and that kind of thing it doesn't feel like there are a lot of evident barriers in the organisation. (Manager)*

*This organisation is 66% female... At a management level, of the five second-tier managers, two are female. If I look at the next level down, there's around about 30 third-tier managers, probably about a third of whom are women. So we still have those disconnects between the general population and the management representation of women. I don't yet understand what the inhibitors are around that in this particular organisation. (Manager)*

## **Alienation**

Only two participants identified management experiences that could be interpreted as alienating. The following quotation shows how a manager felt that she was sometimes misunderstood in meetings because she did not necessarily speak the organisational language and because she brought a different point of view to the table. She also felt that her contribution was judged because she was a woman.

*I do sometimes think that its ' oh, the woman is going to moan about it'... And also because I probably think about the impact on the staff and the customer and not just the actual work. So I probably bring a people component to things....Because I'd been to meetings and felt that, sometimes I don't talk in the organisation's language, so sometimes what I'm trying to say doesn't quite come across in the right way.*  
(Manager)

Another manager positioned herself as an outsider in relation to those who had been in the organisation longer. This comment was in response to a question about the role gender played in the organisation.

*Within this organisation, I think it's been pretty neutral, I don't think it has held me back. That said, there are still old boys networks, which include some old girls as well. I think it is more a tenure than a gender thing. Here in the organisation, there are some people with some phenomenal organisational histories, and knowing how to tap into them, there is a lot of politics employed... Rather than gender, it's the function and then tenure as well. Probably in rank order, tenure is the big one.*  
(Manager)

In contrast to these responses, the participants in Knight's study did take up positions as outsiders within public service organisations. However, they found it difficult to identify the particular aspects of organisational culture that made them feel like outsiders. One

was quoted as saying “you just get a sense that somehow you are an alien” (2003, p. 192).

### ***Summary***

In general the participants did not identify themselves as outsiders to the role of management, the organisation or the discourses of public management despite women’s history in relation to management positions and being under-represented in management positions within this organisation. This was the most significant, if somewhat unexpected finding of the study.

## **Chapter Nine - Conclusion**

### ***Introduction***

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the management practices of women in the public sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand and to identify the key contextual elements that impact on those practices. I also sought to comment on whether women managers took up positions of insiders or outsiders in relation to the management role. The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings in relation to these three foci and to explore implications for future research.

### ***Women as managers***

A review of the literature on women as managers as outlined in Chapter Two, showed that after a period of ignoring women in management (Kanter, 1977) research had been focused on comparing them to men. Because most of the people holding management positions were men, research aimed at identifying the characteristics of successful managers inevitably identified male characteristics as those of successful managers. With this as the starting point, women were regarded as 'other'. The discourses of management that dominated the literature were the discourses of men. Many feminist theorists such as Rosener (1990) sought to balance this by focusing on the ways women lead differently but equally effectively and in some cases more effectively. This focus essentialised the ways women lead and continued to limit them. The women in this study did not describe their management as being linked in any way to gender or sex roles. In fact, the only comment to be made about women being 'different' and 'better' as managers came from one of the male direct reports.

This study sought to challenge the ways leadership has traditionally been studied by starting from the experience of the women themselves and using a methodology that kept them at the centre of the study. By starting from their experiences, the extent of the influence of New Public Management (NPM) on their management practices could be identified and explored.

## **Similarities in practices and styles**

The women in this study did show some similarities in their management practices and styles. They were all very much achievement oriented, they were concerned about achieving outcomes and deadlines and wanted the areas that they managed to be viewed as the best. In some ways their management practices fall from this achievement orientation. There was an underpinning belief that if you engage staff they will work more productively and thus assist in achieving the desired targets. The engagement of staff included a number of activities, managers shared information and decision making with their staff whenever they could, but were equally able to make the 'hard decisions'. The managers all sought to provide development opportunities for their staff and took an interest in their career progression. They were also clear about the need to recognise staff as contributing to organisational and government goals and either introduced or participated in practices of acknowledgment and reward.

## **Differences in approaches**

A number of writers have called for more attention to be paid to within-group difference, for example Fuchs Epstein (1991), Court (1994). Whilst in Chapter Six I have presented the management practices of the participant under themes that might suggest a homogeneity of responses, there were differences between the managers in the way they took up their management positions. Within each of the themes I was able to identify, there were differences in degrees of self-awareness, in the speed the participants worked at, how they approached their relationships with staff and how they interacted with organisational texts. Some of this difference may be due to internal contextual features such as the nature of the function(s) they managed, the number and professional level of their staff and their own position in terms of the tiers of management. It was also clear that the participants exhibited different approaches in different situations.

## **Is it gendered?**

One of the interesting findings of this study is that neither the women managers nor their staff (with one exception) considered their management practice to be gendered. The manager's responses indicated that they thought the practices they employed were equally available to men. They did not link their practices to gendered socialisation. When the impact of gendered socialisation was raised at all it was in the context of history and seen as something with limited impact in 2005 and with even less relevance for the future. When describing the characteristics of a 'good' manager, participants drew on roughly equal numbers of women and men that they had admired and learnt from to develop descriptions. In contrast to this overall perception that gender did not impact on their management practice, participants were able to identify events that suggested that gender continues to impact on recruitment practices, remuneration and how women are judged as managers, although to a lesser extent than has happened in the past.

## ***The context of New Public Management (NPM)***

In Chapter Six I explored the influence of NPM on the management practices of the participants. As Norman (Court, 1994; 2003) notes, the doctrines of NPM form a cycle of planning and reporting that is the basis of all activities of the public sector. Although some of the more prescriptive elements of the reform have lost favour in the first five years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the underlying doctrines of effectiveness, efficiency and public accountability remain the organising premises of the public sector. These doctrines have a direct impact on the management practices of the participants, the things they prioritise, what they value and how they measure success. It also gave them the language through which they expressed their management practice. This impact was much stronger than I anticipated. It seems that the discourses of NPM have been so embedded in the organisation that they have become a form of hegemonic truth. The managers were very much a part of the discourse of NPM.

### ***Insiders or outsiders?***

In general the participants did not identify themselves as outsiders to the role of management, the organisation or the discourses of public management despite women's history in relation to management positions and being under-represented in management positions within this organisation. The extent to which the participants took up positions as insiders was the most significant, and unexpected finding of this study. Contrary to Naples (2003) formulation of the position of outsider as fluid, with individuals taking up positions of insider and outsider-ness to different degrees over time and situation, the participants in this clearly considered themselves insiders to the role of management and the doctrines of NPM.

### ***Limitations***

Like all research projects, this thesis necessarily has its limitations. I have described the project throughout as a feminist research project. On reflecting on the process and the outcomes of this project, however, I question the extent to which I have achieved all of the goals of feminist research. In particular I am unsure whether this project has had any emancipatory effect on the participants. Further dialogue with them would perhaps answer this question.

The original intent of this research was to compare the practices of women managers in two different public service organisations. Due to one organisation not providing access (despite agreeing to do so), I was forced at a late stage to limit this to just one organisation. This has significantly limited what I was able to say, particularly in relation to the extent that NPM had become the dominant managerial discourse within different public service organisations. Having another organisation to compare this with would have been a useful comment on the extent to which NPM had embedded itself in other organisational contexts and the extent of resistance to this discourse that might occur.

It would also have allowed more to be said about whether the management practices of the women in this study were different from those of women working in a different organisational context.

### ***Potential for future research***

Like many research projects, this thesis has possibly signposted more questions than answers. The questions that arise are around whether the practices identified within this organisation are apparent in other public service organisations, in the wider public sector or in the private sector. Colwill (1995b) notes that individuals with similar characteristics may seek similar sorts of workplaces. Whether this organisation attracts women with similar characteristics and approaches that another organisation may not attract is a question that could not be answered in this study. Similarly, whether the impact of the discourses of NPM on the management practices of the women in this study is evident in other public sector organisations is another question raised. Such a study would be a valuable addition to the literature on public management within the changing political environment.

When 'gender' is raised in research, it is often assumed that the subjects of the study will be women. Studies on the management practices of men in the public and private contexts in Aotearoa/New Zealand would fill one of the gaps in the New Zealand literature.

Different methodologies used within these contexts would also add significantly to our understanding. The use of case studies, where the data is collected over an extended period of time, such as those of Court (2001), Hawk (1997) and Strachan (1997) in education, would add a richer description of management and the organising structures in which it takes place than I was able to offer in this thesis.

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## **Appendices**

### ***Appendix One – Interview Schedule***

*These questions will form the basis of the interviews which will be conducted in a semi-structured manner.*

#### **Questions for Managers**

What is important to you in your management practice?

What actions do you take to support these priorities?

What factors within your organisation support or constrain you in carrying out your management practice?

What external factors support or constrain...?

What is the impact, if any, of gender relationships on your management practices?

What are the important issues for you as a manager in the public service?

How do you think others (peers, staff, external) view your management?

How would you like to be perceived?

How would you describe a good manager?

#### **Questions for Staff**

How would you describe \_\_\_\_ leadership?

What do you think is most important to \_\_\_\_\_ in her leadership role?

How do you know this?

How does \_\_\_\_\_ leadership support/constrain you in carrying out your role?

What helps/hinders \_\_\_\_\_ in carrying out her role (internal/external)? – Prompt on gender if necessary.

## **Appendix Two – Request for access to staff**

Chief Executive  
XXXXXXXXXX

Dear Chief Executive

### **Outsiders Within**

Women in Management in the Public Sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand

#### **Researcher Introduction**

My name is Jo Doyle and I work in the Policy/Strategy team of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. I am a part-time student at Massey University, currently undertaking a thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Management. I am conducting research into the management practices of women in the public sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand and am requesting permission to undertake interviews of women managers and their staff in your organisation.

I am particularly interested in finding out about the range of management practices employed by women in the public sector and the factors that impact on those practices.

#### **Participant Recruitment**

Should you agree to this request, I propose that staff be made aware of this project through your internal staff communication systems. I will then make contact with staff that express an interest to discuss their potential participation.

I would like to interview two or three women managers within your organisation and at least three staff members who report to each manager. This will allow for a range of perspectives on the management styles to inform the project. Should more than this number of staff express an interest in being involved in the research, I will select participants on the basis of the following dimensions:

- Length of time in position
- Length of time in public sector
- Ethnic identity

The goal will be to reflect the diversity of women managers rather than to make any claims to representation.

#### **Project Procedures**

##### **Collection, use and storage of data**

The data collection method I have chosen is that of ethnographic interview. This will involve an interview of between 1 and 1 ½ hours with each staff member who agrees to take part. The interview will be taped with the permission of the participant and will be transcribed by myself. The data generated will be kept secure through the period of the research and will be destroyed after five years in accordance with the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human participants. Care will be taken to avoid identifying individual staff members in the research report through the use of pseudonyms.

### **Identification of your organisation**

I believe that the identification of the organisations from which the participants for this study are drawn would enhance the research project. This would allow for the context in which management practices of women in the public sector take place to be better appreciated by the reader. I understand, however that this may not sit comfortably with your organisation. I would like the opportunity to discuss this with you, including consideration of options for disguising the identity of your organisation.

### **Participant involvement**

As noted above, the initial interview with participants is likely to be approximately 1 – 1 ½ hours duration. Participants will receive a copy of the interview transcript which they will be able to edit. Participants will also be given the opportunity to meet with me to discuss any material that they do not wish to be used.

A copy of the proposed interview schedules for managers and for staff is enclosed for your information.

Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Project Contacts**

This research project is being jointly supervised by Dr Craig Prichard, Senior Lecturer, Department of Management and Dr Marian Court, Senior Lecturer, College of Education Massey University. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you may contact either of my supervisors at the following e-mail addresses:

Dr Craig Prichard      [C.Prichard@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.Prichard@massey.ac.nz)  
Dr Marian Court      [M.R.Court@massey.ac.nz](mailto:M.R.Court@massey.ac.nz)

Or you may contact me at:

████████████████████  
telephone ██████████

### **Massey University Human Ethics Committee**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Application 04/146. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz).

I hope that you will agree to grant me permission to recruit participants for this study from your staff.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Jo Doyle

## ***Appendix Three – Information sheet for participants***

### **Outsiders Within**

Women in Management in the Public Sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

##### **Introduction**

My name is Jo Doyle and I work in the Policy team of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. I am a part-time student at Massey University, currently undertaking a thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Management. I am conducting research into the management practices of women in the public sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I am particularly interested in exploring the range of management practices employed by women in the public sector and the factors that influence those practices.

If you are a women manager, or the staff member of a women manager in the public sector, I am interested in interviewing you as part of this research.

##### **Participant Recruitment**

Your organisation has agreed for staff to take part in this research. I hope to interview 2 or 3 women managers in your organisation and up to 3 staff members of each of these managers. This will allow for a range of perspectives to be gathered.

Should more than three women managers express an interest in being involved in the research, I will select participants on the basis of the following dimensions:

- Length of time in position
- Length of time in public sector
- Ethnic identity

The goal will be to reflect the diversity of women managers rather than to make any claims to representation.

I am also carrying out this research in another organisation.

##### **Project Procedures**

I have chosen semi-structured interviews as my data collection method. This means that I will have some general topics that I would like to hear your views about, but I do not have a set schedule of questions. Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time.

I anticipate that the interviews will take approximately 1 and 1 ¼ hours. The interview will be taped with your permission and will be transcribed by myself. The content of the interview will then be analysed.

The data generated will be kept secure through the period of the research. A unique identifier will be used in the transcripts and these will be kept separately from consent forms. Transcripts and tapes will be destroyed after five years in accordance with the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human participants. Care will be taken to avoid identifying individual staff members in the research report through the use of pseudonyms. Your organisation will not be named in the report, but it is likely that a reasonably informed reader may be able to identify the organisations involved.

##### **Participant involvement**

As noted above, the initial interview with participants is likely to be approximately 1 – 1 ¼ hours duration. Participants will receive a copy of the interview transcript which they will be

able to edit. Participants will also be given the opportunity to meet with me to discuss any material that they do not wish to be used.

### Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- you will also have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

### Project Contacts

This research project is being jointly supervised by Dr Craig Prichard, Senior Lecturer, Department of Management and Dr Marian Court, Senior Lecturer, College of Education Massey University. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you may contact either of my supervisors at the following e-mail addresses:

Dr Craig Prichard      [C.Prichard@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.Prichard@massey.ac.nz)  
Dr Marian Court      [M.R.Court@massey.ac.nz](mailto:M.R.Court@massey.ac.nz)

Or you may contact me at:

██████████  
telephone ██████████

### Massey University Human Ethics Committee

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Application **04/146**. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz).

### Still interested?

If you are willing to be interviewed, please fill in the attached form and email it to me at ██████████. I will contact you to arrange an interview at a time and place that is suitable to you.

I look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely

Jo Doyle

**Appendix Four-Consent form**

**Outsiders Within**

Women in Management in the Public Sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand

**This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped. *(You will still be able to take part in the study even if you do not wish to have the interview taped.)*

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me.

I understand that my permission will be sought before I am quoted in the research report.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

.....

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

**Appendix Five – Tape transcript release**

**Outsiders Within**

Women in Management in the Public Sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand

**AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TAPE TRANSCRIPTS**

**This form will be held for a period of five (5) years**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview/s conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher, Jo Doyle in reports and publications arising from the research.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....