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MEN TALK ABOUT EXECUTIVE WOMEN

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

Master of Arts
in
Psychology

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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2006
Abstract

MEN TALK ABOUT EXECUTIVE WOMEN
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Since the 1970's women have steadily gained access to higher levels of corporate
management. Formal mechanisms of discrimination on the basis of gender have long
been consigned to the past, and organisations now promote themselves as family
friendly and valuing work-life balance. However, in spite of women occupying the
lower ranks of organisations in nearly the same numbers as men, women still hold only
a minority of executive-level leadership roles.

This thesis is based on a series of interviews with men in senior management
positions who at the time, reported to women Chief Executive Officers and General
Managers. The ways in which these men talked about gender as a factor in
organisational life were examined for the discursive resources used to explain or
account for the situation. Four key discursive resources were identified: 1) Darwinian
Competition; 2) Gender Differences; 3) Gender War; and 4) Individual Choices. These
resources were used in a variety of often conflicting ways to eliminate or marginalise
gender issues and any concerns warranting action. This rendered the organisation, its
institutions and practices safe from change.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all mothers who are surely the people who contribute the most to society, in terms of producing and raising our most precious and valuable asset, and yet for some perverse reason are rewarded least for their efforts.
Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to this thesis in terms of the ideas expressed in it; not least because at any one point in time, we all stand at the front of an historical body of human thought and achievement, that brings together for us in this moment, the ideas that make whatever we do possible. I therefore acknowledge all of those myriad people who have unknowingly contributed to making this paper possible.

My gratitude also to the men who kindly agreed to participate in the interviews for this research, with little assurance that their time would be well spent or what would be made of their words.

On a more personal note, I would like to acknowledge the support of my family who for the last few years have stoically forgone holidays and weekends, while I have pursued the often seemingly elusive goal of completing my degree.

Many thanks also, to Moira Lynch, who kindly assisted with the proofing.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to Mandy Morgan, who so patiently supported and mentored me through the experience.
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