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**From Security to Opportunity?:
Precarious Employment Among Managers and
Supervisors in New Zealand**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the phenomenon of job security, insecurity and the ability to maintain continuity of employment. Assumptions regarding the nature of work are being altered by globalization, organizational flexibility and increased power for management in relation to labour. Furthermore, the move from welfarism to neo-liberal prescriptions of governance in New Zealand since 1984 has created challenges for individuals who are required to become self-reliant and responsible.

The experiences of eight informants in management and supervisory roles are reviewed here, providing an 'insiders' point of view on change in the workplace in the ethnographic tradition. The research is guided by the governmentality theory of Nikolas Rose, and Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of contemporary insecurity. Contextual influences on the employment environment in New Zealand are outlined.

Findings are discussed in relation to the following themes. It has been argued that *job insecurity* is endemic at all levels within organizations and can no longer be expected as part of the employment relationship. *Employment continuity* requires *reflexivity* of knowledge, as well as the constant questioning of the assumptions upon which the foundations of work are based. The central argument of the thesis is that employability requires an acknowledgement of the rigours associated with increasingly contingent work and an awareness of norms and strategies that are needed to assist all those currently involved in the hazards of working life, those excluded from it, and those who will join it. The development of a semblance of personal autonomy is required in order for 'freedom' to provide opportunities rather than insecurity, fear and exclusion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the transformation of work in the rapidly changing world of globalization. This is especially so regarding the restructuring and reorganization of work that is required to accommodate flexibility in an environment of increasing competition. Work has been intrinsic in the lives of most human beings in industrial societies who have defined themselves in terms of their work. Marx (Abercrombie et al., 1994), for example, held that human labour was the basis of social activity. From early on, children are asked what they want to be when they grow up. My thesis arose out of a concern for myself and for my children that the former bases upon which security in life-planning, as Wallulis (1998) calls it, are fast disappearing.

Two assumptions are made in this thesis about work and work-related foundations: namely that the world of work as we know it has changed, and that this change is irreversible. Given these assumptions, this thesis sets out to explore how these changes have affected perceptions of job security or insecurity and importantly, what strategies, characteristics or traits individuals in the workplace require in order to have some security of future employability. Furthermore, the new millennium will offer challenges to children who ought to be prepared for a very different employment scenario to that of their parents. Wallulis (1998) actually dedicated his book to his daughters and all other adolescents who are having to be 'contemporary planning offices' and he hopes that they will have at least some of the security in life-planning that he managed to have and took for granted.

In spite of the numerous studies that have been conducted into aspects of job insecurity in the last 20 years, many have examined the narrow confines of insecurity in the workplace through the quantitative, positivistic paradigm. Focus has been on the micro-perspective in organizations undergoing change in terms of restructuring, mergers or rationalization where the threat of insecurity was seen as immediate. In the 1980s, despite the increasing importance of job insecurity, many such as Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) and Ashford, Lee and Bobko (1989), suggested that no

adequate theoretical or empirical attention had been paid to job insecurity by organizational researchers. Many other researchers have made similar comments. Klandermans, Van Vuuren, Hartley and Jacobson (1991) and more recently, Ranscombe (1998) among others, suggest that a rigorous attempt to encompass the underlying question of what job insecurity tells us about work and employment is missing. Currently, little research exists on the phenomenon of job insecurity as it pertains to ongoing employability which is the essence of work today. Although Roskies and Louis-Guerin (1990) talk about job insecurity as a '*chronic, ambiguous threat*', they do not examine individual experiences of the employment environment and the capacity of individuals to ensure long-term employability. Dominitz and Manski (1997:262) found that although job insecurity was very much part of the American public discourse, and many studies described the outcomes that individuals actually *experience*, little about the outcomes that individuals actually *expect* has been documented.

The significance of this present study is that it provides a framework for understanding uncertainty in the New Zealand employment environment as articulated by managers and supervisors. They outlined strategies that might be important in an endeavour to ensure ongoing employability not only for themselves, but also for their children as economic security is essential for life-planning. This study aims to fill a void in the current literature in New Zealand on the long-term security of employability, not necessarily in the same organization, but rather in terms of enabling sustained economic security.

As a consequence of the study's focus, an ethnographic methodology has been employed to describe the phenomenon of security or insecurity as lived experience. In addition, a literature review was undertaken to highlight some of the theories that might provide useful tools to interpret the changing social conditions at the end of the twentieth century. Possible contextual influences on the employment environment were also outlined.

The study was *restricted* in scope to the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of Pakeha male managers and supervisors aged between the late 40s and early 50s, who had been part of the work force when full-time employment was still relatively secure and who have lived through some of the enormous changes in the world of work. As this was a qualitative study with a small sample, no generalizations could be made. Rather,

the aim was to produce meaningful results from within a particular context so instead of generalizability, findings might be seen in terms of the '*translatability*' (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993) of results in different contexts or among different groups. This report highlights some of the manifestations of job security or insecurity as experienced or understood by managers and supervisors in the more 'stable' positions in organizations. The interviews were not conducted in response to any particular events. The sample of men were selected from a range of companies that were not government-owned. The aim of this exploratory study was to establish some knowledge of the extent of insecurity amongst the informants, how they viewed security or insecurity in their subordinates and what measures could be taken, or would be desirable, to ensure ongoing employability, not necessarily in the same job or organisation.

This study is not the definitive story on workplace insecurity. Instead, it will provide a framework for understanding some of the dynamics of insecurity and uncertainty in the ongoing quest for some form of economic security.

The thesis is structured as follows: the following chapter provides an outline of important *theoretical debates* that help to illuminate the transformations that are occurring in the working environment. Moreover, they help explain the social conditions that have given rise to perceptions of personal security or insecurity among managers and supervisors as New Zealand society has moved from a welfare-based governance regime to that of neo-liberalism. To provide an additional guide, social psychological literature on job insecurity was examined.

Chapter 3 considers some of the structural changes that have occurred in New Zealand and offers a description of the *contextual characteristics* influencing the employment environment, as I envisaged it. This provides a background to certain structural features that have impacted on the lives of individuals in New Zealand as the twentieth century draws to a close.

The ethnographic *methodology* is outlined in chapter 4. It has been employed here because subjectivity is less commonly studied in the area of work. The quantitative approaches which tend to prevail marginalize the issue of subjectivity. The perceptions of manifestations, consequences and implications of security or insecurity in the life of

informants were explored in the in-depth interviews. The aim was to construct a set of explanations that reflected the participants' subjective experiences within the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 and against the context within which informants might find themselves, as discussed in chapter 3.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the *outcomes* of in-depth interviews and include those issues that informants have constructed as part of their understanding of the employment environment. A brief profile of the eight informants is provided in Chapter 5 before structural influences on the world of work are described. Thereafter, chapter 6 explores more closely the way in which the informants experienced their own working lives, their hopes and strategies for ongoing employability and thoughts on the future employability of their children.

The final chapter contains a *summary* of the issues that were identified as influencing and exacerbating feelings of job security/insecurity and strategies that might enhance ongoing employability. To conclude, I reflect on the theoretical debates employed and on the world of work at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THEORY AND LITERATURE

Introduction

Wide-ranging changes, in all aspects of social and economic life have occurred in recent decades and continue to impact on societies around the world. An important effect of these changes are feelings of insecurity and the study of these occupy an increasingly important position in the social sciences. In this vein, risk, uncertainty and insecurity have been identified by many (for example, Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1995; Handy, 1995 and Hutton, 1995) as defining features of life in the latter part of the twentieth century. This chapter reviews some of the theoretical debates surrounding these changes and literature has been assembled to provide a 'road map' (Block, 1990) to guide the research by contextualizing and explaining the social conditions that give rise to personal security or insecurity amongst managers and supervisors in New Zealand. Certain theorists have been selected to inform the work because of their ability to provide an understanding of human behaviour in an ever-changing society and, more specifically, in the area of employment.

Before focusing on theories that help understand transformations in the working environment at the end of the twentieth century, a brief description of the effects of globalization and some structural changes in capitalist societies will be examined. The process of rapid economic integration has resulted in the reorganization of work. Both the number of jobs as well as the content of many jobs have been affected and this has significantly influenced perceptions of security in the workplace. Security is essential for life-planning (Wallulis, 1998) but with many of the traditional foundations of this security disappearing, a framework was sought to understand the uncertainty accompanying the changes in the world of work. The significance of Bauman's writing on freedom, uncertainty and ambivalence and Rose's assertion that freedom is an integral part of the regulatory practises that govern individuals, will be explored.

As feelings of security or insecurity are typically subjective and influenced by the perceptions individuals have of their freedom and of the perceived power they have to make choices in terms of their working lives, social psychological literature on job insecurity was examined to provide an additional guide to understanding the specific elements of security or insecurity that emerged in the interviews.

Globalization and the Transformation of Capitalist Societies and of Work

All of us are, willy-nilly, by design or default, on the move. We are on the move even if we physically stay put: immobility is not a realistic option in the world of permanent change. (Bauman, 1998a:2)

Although the term 'globalization' is widely used, its meaning is the subject of vigorous debate. The most common understanding and usage is the 'top-down' view and is seen as a one-way street in which the world is increasingly being 'sucked into the vortex of the general global economy based on markets' (Clegg et al., 1996:296). Clegg et al. (1996:296) suggest that globalization should not be viewed solely in economic paradigms, but rather that, as a concept, globalization refers to both the *compression* of the world as well as the *intensification of consciousness* in the world as a whole. They continue that globalization leads to complexity, relativity, compression, collision and 'postmodern' plurality. The global world is therefore simultaneously one of compression of time and space and as a consequence, an exacerbation of relativities between the self, society and the globalizing world (Clegg et al., 1996:302). This presents significant analytical conceptual challenges for management in organizations as the international context of work, or *globalization*, has had a major effect on the organization of work. It has led employers to push for less regulation in industrial relations given the increasing need to be able to adapt to rapidly changing markets.

As a consequence of these broader trends within the process of globalization, the way in which work is organized is changing rapidly in ways that influence the lives of many. Pay, organizational structures, stability and availability of work are often increasingly dependent on forces and dynamics that operate at international levels and the search for cheap labour has a well-established role in the history of globalization (Hodson, 1997:x).

With the successful routinization and flexibility of mass production technologies since World War II, labour has become less important and manufacturing more mobile. In addition, labour militancy in industrialized countries has encouraged employers to search for cheaper, non-unionized, labour in less industrialized countries.

According to commentators such as Kelly (1998) and Hobsbawm (1995), the work force of the late twentieth century is in the throes of a particularly dramatic transformation¹ leading to huge changes in the availability of paid work. Traditional structures that have, in the past, provided the organizational base for societies are being transformed in today's world. This process of *destructuring* affects the traditional nation-state as well as all political and social organizations. These changes in human organization and production see corporations producing larger volumes of goods with a smaller work force - producing increased turnover whilst simultaneously eliminating staff numbers (Rifkin, 1996 and Beck, 1992)². At first this phenomenon was only evident in manufacturing industries but by the 1990s, large sections of white collar and professional workers were also affected. William Rees-Mogg of the *Spectator*, in a foreword in Gray's book on capitalism (1998), notes that

Global capitalism seems to work in much the same way as natural selection; it destroys those who fail to adapt, and rewards, often to an absurd degree, those who adapt successfully.

This gives rise to profound questions about the changes that have occurred in advanced capitalist societies, which in turn, are creating increasing polarization and insecurity.

Hodson (1997:xi) adds the *gender dimension* to this dynamic by demonstrating that the role of women is central to the increased globalization of work. In developing countries, women provide an important link to subsistence economic activity and also provide the bulk of the labour force for mass production facilities - in many cases they also accept lower wages than men. Consequently, it is recognised that the forces of globalization are putting downward pressure on wages and changing skill demands. Simply put,

...for the first time in human history, anything can be made anywhere and sold everywhere (Thurow;1996:114).

1. In his book '*The Age of Extremes*', Hobsbawm (1995) argues that between 1914 and 1991, the world has changed most profoundly and more violently than at any other time in history. There has been a population growth from under 2 billion in 1914 to 6 billion in 1991 despite the large scale purposeful killing.

2. Thurow (1996:250) submits that in western Europe, net employment did not grow by a single job from 1973 to 1994.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the significant impact that change has had in terms of time and space, economy and society and on the nature of employment. Lash and Urry (1987) suggest, for example, that certain societies have come to the end of 'organized' capitalism because there have been considerable transformations which have literally disorganized contemporary societies, albeit in an uneven and sporadic way. They list features of '*disorganized capitalism*' including the growth of world markets; the continued expansion of the white collar worker and with it a system stratified on the basis of education encouraging individualism and mobility; the decline in the size and core of the working class, decline in collectivism; more flexible forms of work; the increased importance of the service industry; the decline in plant size; and the export of labour intensive activities to 'world market factories'.

For Lash and Urry, (1987:7) economic change, most notably in terms of the effects on the occupational structure connected with the accumulation of capital, is seen as the precondition for the 'disorganization' of civil society. Unlike some social theorists who talk about 'post industrial' or 'information' societies, Lash and Urry believe that capitalist social relations continue to exist;

...for us a certain level of capitalist accumulation is a necessary condition of capitalism's disorganized era in which capitalist classes continue to exist (Lash et al, 1987:7).

The shape of these classes however, may be changing.

Robert Reich (1992:174-175) too identifies the *changing occupational structure* which is transforming the structure of the working class. He suggests that three emerging categories of work that correspond to competitive positions people today find themselves in, have emerged. These would replace traditional job categories such as managerial, secretarial and sales which date back to a time when jobs were standardized. Reich's three categories are as follows.

Routine production services which comprise the 'kinds of repetitive tasks performed by the old foot soldiers of American capitalism in the high-volume enterprise'. These not only include traditional blue-collar jobs, but also routine supervisory jobs performed by low- and middle-level managers - foremen, line managers, clerical supervisors - involving *repetitive* checks on subordinates' work and the enforcement of standard operating procedures. The information age has produced huge amounts of raw data which is processed in much the same way that assembly line workers processed raw materials.

Reich says that, by 1990, routine workers made up about one quarter of the jobs performed in America. So, the 'working class' may indeed be expanding rather than contracting if many of the routine supervisory jobs and data operators, that Reich (1992:175) so aptly describes as the 'foot soldiers of the information society', are included.

The second category embraces *in-person-services* which also entail simple, repetitive tasks but these services are provided person-to-person and thus cannot be sold world-wide. Customers are the focus, not data or raw materials, and they include waiters, retail workers, cashiers, hospital attendants, taxi drivers etc. By 1990, he estimates that they accounted for 30 percent of the jobs performed by Americans.

The final category, namely *symbolic analytic services* comprises all problem-solving, problem-identifying and strategic brokering activities which can be traded world-wide and which must compete with foreign providers. People like research scientists, civil engineers, software engineers, investment bankers, lawyers etc. fall into this category and comprise about 20 percent of American jobs. This category is increasing in size and importance.

Beck (1992:2) proposes that this 'disorganization' plus technological developments have consequences of *risks and hazards*, the extent of which have not been faced previously as 'dangers' can no longer be limited in time, or space and no-one can be held accountable for the 'hazards of the risk society'. He argues that the pervasive increase in social risks stems from the advance of competitive market systems and the individual behaviour associated with them (White et al., 1996:59). In the sphere of work, structural changes lead to individualization in two ways; through the decline of the class structure and the demise of the structural order of Taylorist workplaces³ (Beck, 1992:3).

Like Lash and Urry (1987), Beck (1992:3) maintains that the risk society is at the same time still an industrial society wherein industry, in conjunction with science, are involved in the 'risk societies risks'. Whilst industrial societies were structured through classes, risk societies will be structured through new and existing forms of individualization. Societal and organizational processes are currently being freed from the structures and values of a classical industrial society and establishing new forms of (industrial) risk society which

3.F. W. Taylor sought to transform the administration of the workplace so as to increase profitability by introducing a greater division of labour and by creating full managerial control of the workplace (Abercrombie et al., 1994:369-370)

Beck identifies as the delicate balance between continuity and rupture. Like others, such as Bauman (1999), Beck (1992:10) seeks to understand and conceptualise these insecurities 'of the contemporary spirit'. They are in agreement that these insecurities are largely a result of the current rationalisation of work which impacts directly on the ordered pattern of industrial society as the:

...flexibilization of work times and places blur the boundaries between work and non-work (Beck, 1992:13).

Beck suggests that the importance which work has acquired in industrial society has no parallel in history and that *wage labour and an occupation* are the *axis of living*. In childhood, while still completely tied to the family, children experience occupation as the key to the world through their mother or father. Later, education remains related through all stages to the missing 'other' of the occupation (Beck, 1992:139). Even old age is defined as non-occupation. Like Reich, Beck suggests that the employment system which arose over the last century was based on a high degree of *standardization of work* in all its dimensions such as the *site, the contract, working hours* - primarily it was determined in terms of space and time. This standardization, however, is being altered in terms of the 'flexibilizations of its three supporting pillars' - labour law, the work site and working hours (Beck, 1992:142).

In keeping with Beck's argument, modernisation is not only about structural change, but a *changing relationship between social structure and social agents*. When modernisation reaches a certain level, agents tend to be more individualized and increasingly less constrained by structure and

...for modernisation to advance successfully, agents must free themselves from structural constraints and actively shape the modernization process (Beck, 1992:2).

This gives rise to questions about where the gradual disappearance of standardization leaves those in the employment environment who have always worked in a world determined by time, space, predictability and security.

From Security to Opportunity?

Bauman (1997:36), agrees that the whole world of work has changed and that jobs 'for life' are no more. Without them, there is little room for the 'life-lived-as-a-project' and for long-term planning which were features of modernity. Modernity was, among other things, an exercise in abolishing individual responsibility (Bauman, 1992:xxii) and if, according to Bauman, modernity partially called for a surrendering of freedom in

exchange for the security (which was gained from certainty), late capitalism places no restrictions on freedom.

As a result, *endemic instability of the life worlds* (Bauman, 1999:180) becomes the reality for many. The function of livelihood is not just to provide economic security for individuals and their families, but also to offer that existential security without which

...neither freedom nor will of self-assertion is conceivable and is the starting point of all autonomy (Bauman, 1999:180).

Furthermore, he asserts that work in its present shape cannot offer such security even if it offers short-term economic security. 'Knowing' and 'doing' have been separated and the mediating expertise of technology takes the 'life-world' of *all* members of society into a space of permanent and acute ambivalence and uncertainty (Bauman, 1991:212), as the individual is continuously challenged by a variety of behavioural demands that have to be realized. Consequently, employees can no longer solely rely on their own experiences to plan their future.

There is no longer such thing as a 'good organization' that fits all conditions and eventualities, that is solid, cohesive and 'accident-proof,' and which was painstakingly constructed in a 'secure' environment. This becomes a liability in a rapidly changing world and 'in the face of untried challenges' and so he (Bauman, 1996:52) suggests that we have 'entered a time in which formlessness is the fittest of forms'. As a result, flexibility has become one of the only ways for organizations to ensure that they will be able to adapt to changing demands at a moment's notice in an environment of global competition.

Like Beck, who talks about continuity and rupture, Bauman argues that 'postmodernity' draws attention to *continuity* and *discontinuity* as 'two faces' - or, as Rifkin (1996) suggests, two worlds that we straddle at the end of the millennium. The 'enemy' that modernity fought - namely ambivalence, indeterminacy and undecidability has been lost and the disappearance of routine, which could have been an exhilarating experience, has created fear for many (Bauman, 1992:xvi). The variety of sources of authority brought by the 'discoordination' of social powers, has left large sectors of the population without a clear source of guidance and individuals are left to personal discretion and choice. The freedom of the modern individual arises from uncertainty and underdetermination, so maximum freedom is developed out of maximum fragmentation and maximum uncertainty.

But why does this uncertainty and ambivalence exist? Rose (1999:87), provides a compelling answer to this question. He suggests that subjects are not only 'free to choose, but obliged to be free', yet he does not see freedom as the opposite of government, but rather as one of its 'key inventions' and most important resources. Although Rose (1999:66) suggests that Bauman provides a useful discussion on freedom and the uncertainty that accompanies it, he does not agree that organizing reality in terms of freedom was an *unintended consequence* of choices in social and economic relations - rather, it had to be *invented* (Rose, 1999:67). He continues that strategies and techniques of authority have been regulated by ideals of freedom of societies, markets and individuals. Freedom has been an objective of government - an instrument or means of government, the technologies of which had to be invented. This, however, impacts on the conduct of the modern individual.

The Transformation of the Modern Subject

[Has] there has been a transformation in the ontology through which we think ourselves, in the techniques through which we conduct ourselves, in the relations of authority by means of which we divide ourselves and identify ourselves as certain kinds of persons, exercise certain kinds of concern in relation to ourselves, are governed and govern ourselves as human beings of a particular sort? (Rose, 1996a:319-320).

Unlike Bauman and Beck, who see evidence of a unidirectional change in the forms of selfhood across history, Rose (1999:41) cautions against making pure binary comparisons. Instead, he sees a change in the range of authorities that govern relations between different sectors of the population and suggests that at different historical moments, human conduct has been governed and placed under the authority of different discourses or sources of the 'truth'. Therefore, our subjectivity ought to be understood in relation to the current and new technologies of government (Rose, 1996a:312-313). The present way of understanding ourselves is not because of a linear narrative of time and movement from 'fixity to uncertainty' or 'habit to reflexivity' in experience and existence (Rose, 1996a:303-304), but rather because practices influencing individuals are always heterogeneous and have a varied history (Rose, 1996a:16)⁴.

4. Rose does, however, indicate that something akin to a progression has occurred within forms of liberalism. According to Tie (personal communication, 1999), there is an internal contradiction in Rose's work that potentially undermines the strong version of anti-essentialist argument that otherwise characterizes his use of governmentality.

For Rose, It is important to examine the changes that have taken place in the social relations that have produced the transformations in human beings. It has been suggested that governments that have joined in the so-called 'post-welfare' notions of neo-liberalism at the end of the twentieth century, have come to depend on the capacities of the 'subjects of government' and cannot, therefore, be understood without understanding the new ways in which individuals act (Rose, 1996:13). When it comes to governing human beings, therefore, the presupposition is the freedom of the governed. A useful distinction between the exercise of power and simple domination by governments is made. To *dominate is to ignore the capacity for action* of those dominated, whereas, to *govern is to recognise that capacity for action* and to adjust to it (Rose, 1999:4).

The term 'governance' is used as a catchall phrase by Rose (1999:15) when he refers to any strategy, tactic, procedure or programme for the controlling, regulating, shaping or exercising control over others - be it in a nation or an organization. In addition, he suggests that it can be normative and is generally judged to be 'good' when political strategies minimize the role of the state and encourages 'non-state' service with the introduction of 'new public management' (Rose, 1999:16). Programmatically, the construction of self-determining agency translates into the privatization of state corporations, encouraging competition, markets and private enterprise, and downsizing the responsibilities and sphere of activities of political apparatuses.

Neo-liberalism, as a means of government, was systematically linked to the practices of freedom and, in conjunction with this, neo-liberalism abandoned the

...obsessive fantasy of a totally administered society through the fixed ordering of people and activities (Rose, 1996b:43).

Life in many Western societies is organized according to the ethic of '*autonomous selfhood*' and regulatory practises endeavour to govern individuals in a way that is more tied to their selfhood than ever before (Rose, 1996:169). Consequently, political rhetoric has shifted from the discourses of welfarism and the social citizen, to the active and entrepreneurial citizen of today and the shifts in political technology from, for example, the universal provision of social insurance to one where each family or individual provides for their own future (Rose, 1996a:322).

The 'social' and 'economic' are now seen as antagonistic as economic government is to be 'desocialized' in the name of maximizing the entrepreneurial 'comportment' of the individual (Rose, 1999:144). There are two levels of conditions for *entrepreneurship*. Firstly, *organizational conditions* which maximize the freedom of the market and include the de-nationalization of publicly-owned enterprises, the minimization of rigidities of labour markets and the availability of skilled labour. Secondly, the *subjective conditions* for entrepreneurship include restructuring the provisions of security to remove as many impediments to dependence and to make residual social support conditional, where possible, on demonstrating attitudes necessary to become an 'entrepreneur of oneself' (Rose, 1999:144).

Advanced liberal strategies can be observed in many western democracies and are being advocated by both the left and the right (Rose, 1996b). Techniques of government are sought to ensure a distance between the decisions of 'formal' political institutions and other social actors. Whereas in the past, the state managed different practices of authority, this is no longer the way in which societies are governed today. Currently, the state does not seek to govern 'through society' but rather through the regulated choices of individual citizens which are now constructed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and fulfilment (Rose, 1996b:41). Neo-liberal society can no longer be administered by the fixed ordering of people and their activities

Three characteristic *governmental shifts* have taken place in an endeavour to create distance between the decisions of formal political institutions and other social actors and that create a capacity for 'remote control'. Firstly, *a new relation exists between expertise and politics* where regulatory powers from 'above' have been devolved to 'below', that is, to the decision of the consumers. In its ideal form, it would operate as a free market where the relationship between 'citizens and experts' is not organized and regulated through compulsion but through acts of choice (Rose, 1996b:54). Secondly, *a new pluralization of 'social' technologies is encouraged* where the relationship between the responsible individual and the self-governing community substitutes for that between citizens and their common society (Rose, 1996b:56). Whereas before, governments attempted to govern one functioning whole, changes have brought a type of government which shapes the powers of autonomous entities, enterprises, communities, professionals and individuals. This has meant that different networks of accountability have been established. The civil service has been extensively privatized (Rose, 1996b:57). Finally, *the subject of government has been respecified* where the client has

become the 'customer' of, for example, the health service, education etc.. Subjects are thus ruled in a new way as 'active individuals seeking to enterprize themselves' and to maximize their quality of life through acts of choice. The meaning of life would thus be the outcome of the choices made. So the intention is to find the means by which individuals may be made responsible through their individual choices for themselves and those to whom they owe an allegiance (1996b:57-58). Rose suggests that they fulfil themselves through a variety of 'micro-moral' domains or communities, family, workplace, schools, neighbourhoods, etc. as the 'responsible individual'. Lifestyles are regulated through advertising, marketing, and the world of goods and the experts of 'subjectivity'.

This so-called new citizenship in an active society, where the ethics of personhood have to be constructed and cultivated, is perhaps the most fundamental and most generalizable characteristic of the new rationalities of government (Rose, 1996:60). The result is that individuals need to adapt to these changes in society. The management of the self can be analyzed in terms of the 'values of autonomy, identity, individuality, liberty, and the voice that animates it'. The contemporary self is considered in the historical context, rather than as an individual phenomenon. The self has to change in accordance with the changes in society. For a long time, the image of human beings in the social sciences has been one of the universal subject - stable, unified, totalized, individualized and interiorized. What has emerged is a new self which is socially constructed, decentred, multiple, nomadic and created in 'episodic recognition-seeking practises' in particular times and places (Rose, 1996:169).

Political argument increasingly bases itself on the value of the maximization of individual freedom and choice. Individuals and families are asked to take responsibility for themselves, their own health, future welfare (superannuation) and personal security and are surrounded by a multitude of advisors for the 'self' such as doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, columnists, TV etc. offering advice and guidance on how to achieve personal satisfaction, self-realization and how to cope with anxieties and uncertainties (Rose, 1996a:294-295). The consumer market displays a wide range of 'identities' from which individuals can select their own identity so consumers purchase symbols of self-identity to put together a 'customized self' (Bauman, 1990:102). Or, in the case of organizations, for example, there are experts that are important for managers such as spin doctors, motivational speakers etc. who are becoming increasingly popular. What ought to be considered is where this individualization and requirement of 'capacity for action' has left those individuals in the workplace that were once '*made up as subjects*'.

Different 'Capacities for Action' - A Divided Labour Market?

The weakening of routine was a blessing for the strong and bold but a curse of insecurity for the weak and diffident (Bauman, 1992:xii).

Many, such as Wilkinson et al. (1996) and Castells (1998), have identified a deepening of divisions within the labour market. According to Callister (1997a:6), there has been conflicting evidence as to whether separate labour markets operate. The view that there is a dual labour market, however, is a popular one with the idea that companies are increasingly moving towards keeping a small 'core' staff of permanent, full-time workers with a group of less secure, flexible workers occupying the periphery. This will not be debated at length. I simply want to question whether it is accurate to talk about a secure, permanent 'core' labour force at all at the end of the twentieth century.

Evidence (Wilkinson in Burgess and Campbell, 1996) suggests that the growth in precarious employment is an important component of social exclusion and societal polarization indicating the existence of a secondary or *peripheral* labour market that is unstable and insecure. What is becoming increasingly uncertain, however, is the stability of the primary or 'core' market which raises further questions about whether the 'core' labour market is constantly reducing in size. Perspectives on this are mixed. Reich (1992), and others, argue that some division exists in industrial countries. Burchell (1994) submits that in spite of the controversy over the existence of the segmented labour market, the labour market does remain structured so as to perpetuate the enduring advantages and disadvantages of identifiable groups of workers. He advises caution, however, when deciding how to identify these groups as there are no simple criteria for defining precariousness in the labour market or membership in a particular market segment (Burchell, 1994:199). Increasingly, however, managers who have been seen as 'core' workers are experiencing levels of insecurity that have traditionally been associated with the periphery (Simpson, 1998:20). Many managers might have 'dual status' in that they may be on permanent contracts and have access to promotional opportunities, yet at the same time face redundancy thus becoming part of a reducing core of workers with no guarantees of security.

Aside from the groups affected by insecurity, various commentators have focused on the forms of insecurity that have emerged in the workplace. Standing (1993:425-426), for example, provides a useful distinction between various *dimensions of labour security* which were developed in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s:

- *labour market security* - commitment to full employment;
- *employment security* - preserved/strengthened by regulations such as protection against unfair dismissal;
- *job security* - legitimating practises to ensure the maintenance of career continuity;
- *work security* - regulated protection in terms of occupational health and safety;
- *income security* - minimum wage legislation to protect the vulnerable;
- *labour reproductive security* - a social commitment to underwrite the costs of education and skills development through training etc.; and
- *labour process security* - laws and regulations enhancing the political and economic role of trade unions or other institutions that protect the collective interests of workers.

In many industrialised countries, all seven forms of security have been eroded to varying degrees as standardization of employment has declined. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, this has been accompanied by globalization and a liberalization of the political and economic regulatory and policy environments which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Based on the insights of Bauman and Rose, I would like to add an eighth dimension of insecurity that not only underlies all of the above and impacts on all areas of life, but also significantly on the individual's own belief in his/her capacity for action in the workplace. This has been identified as the *fear of inadequacy* involved in the struggle to preserve employability and an even deeper seated fear of '*personal self-forming ineptitude*' (Bauman, 1995:114). This *existential insecurity* has been brought about by the loss of frames of reference. When life and work was standardized individuals were 'secure' in the knowledge that they were able to predict and plan for a safe future as uniformity of behaviour, replicated by conformity of attitudes, was the most central of societal concerns and the yardstick by which most social institutions were measured (Bauman, 1995:112).

To provide a guide to the psychological dimensions of security/insecurity in the workplace and of perceptions of employability, a number of significant social psychological studies were considered.

Indicators of 'Capacity for Action' in the Workplace

As discussed above, one of the most pervasive aspects in employment is job insecurity (Cappelli, 1997:6) and uncertainty. Considerable efforts have been made to conceptualize job insecurity and its effects on workers (Hallier, 1997:46). Hudson and Wilkinson (1998:50) suggest that in the 1990s, debate has changed the emphasis from concerns on how to achieve a flexible labour market to concerns about the main downside of employment flexibility - namely *job insecurity*. The analysis of job insecurity has been apparent in a range of disciplines but tends to be partial in scope. Economists generally concentrate on 'objective', quantitative measures of insecurity such as job-tenure or layoffs and psychologists are more concerned with the so-called 'subjective' measures of insecurity, concentrating on the impact it has on an individual's sense of well-being (Heery et al., 1998:7). Some of the studies have focused on the reduced commitment to the organization (Ashford et al., 1989), reduced trust in the workplace (McCune, 1998), risk to psychological well-being (Burchell, 1994:188) and the experience of general dissatisfaction with life (Lim, 1996). Psychological studies on job insecurity tend, also, to be dominated by positivistic methodologies (Collin, 1998:10) and are therefore unable to attribute significance to, and conceptualize the experiences apparent in career narratives and the stories individuals relate of their working lives. They do, however, provide useful indications of the adverse outcomes of insecurity on individuals in organizations and help guide an investigation of individual differences in the perception of security or insecurity. For that reason I wish to briefly canvas them here.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) were amongst the early researchers who sought to broaden the scope of studies on job insecurity and they have been influential in widening the debate within social psychology. They constructed and formulated a model of the nature, causes and consequences of job insecurity. Primarily, they see job insecurity as a source of stress involving fear, potential loss and anxiety (Ashford et al., 1989). They have based their proposed model on a review of the literature and their own research on declining organizations. Despite the increasing importance of job insecurity, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt felt that insufficient attention has been paid to this insecurity by organizational researchers⁵.

5. In 1989 Ashford, Bobko and Lee (1989:804) also suggested that no adequate theoretical or empirical attention had been paid to job insecurity. This is a common comment made by researchers. Klandermans, Van Vuuren, Hartley and Jacobson (1991:44) and more recently, Ranscombe (1998:47) among others, suggest that a rigorous attempt to encompass the underlying question of what job insecurity tells us about work and employment is missing.

They have identified four structural phenomena that have made job insecurity an important variable⁶. These were the prolonged economic downturn which began in the mid-1970s in the USA and resulted in the highest rate of job loss since the 1930s; the upsurge of mergers, acquisitions and restructuring; the rapidly changing industrial structure from manufacturing to service industries and with it the rise of high technology industries and; finally, the decline in union representation which meant that workers became increasingly vulnerable to unilateral management decisions (Greenhalgh et al., 1984:438). This is exacerbated by the changing relationship between employers and employees to one of a contractual nature and the increase of non-standard forms of employment.

These changes contributed to feelings of insecurity which Greenhalgh et al. (1984:438) define as the

...perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation.

This potential loss of continuity in a job situation can range from permanent loss to the loss of various aspects of the job, but only refers to *involuntary loss*. Aside from this feeling of *powerlessness*, the other important dimension of job insecurity is the *severity of the threat*. This severity, however, will vary according to different labour markets as the risk of the job loss will be far more threatening in an environment of high unemployment. Greenhalgh et al. (1984) firstly see the '*subjective*' threat as derived from the '*objective*' threat in terms of what the individual perceives, based on the environment around him/her, constituting what they call the 'threat perception'. The severity of this threat depends on the importance of the potential loss to the individual and also on the powerlessness the individual may feel. This can be related to individual differences such as the *locus of control*⁷ and *dependence on the job*. According to Greenhalgh et al. the two dimensions leading to insecurity, namely powerlessness and severity of the threat, have a multiplicative effect as follows:

felt job insecurity = perceived severity of the threat x perceived powerless to resist the threat.

6. These researchers are working within the capitalist paradigm, taking the machinations of the capitalist mode of production as something akin to naturally occurring phenomena (Tie, 1999).

7. The locus of control is a personal factor related to the perceived powerlessness of job insecurity. Those with an internal locus of control generally see environmental events as having less impact and have the potential power to counteract threats their own environment might possess (Ashford et al.;1989:807).

Individuals feel insecure if they feel the threat to be severe *and* they are powerless to counteract it. 'Social support' is seen as a significant aspect to the individual feeling insecure and may affect the way in which he/she reacts to the insecurity - that is, whether the individual leaves or stays, resists change, reduces effort, reduces productivity - all of which adversely affect the organization's effectiveness.

Although the definition of job insecurity refers only to an immediate short-term threat, it has been an influential departure from the narrower studies on job insecurity and has influenced many social psychologists writing about the subject. Greenhalgh et al. (1984) identify four elements that contribute to the potential feelings of powerlessness and these are the *lack of protection* (due to the decline in trade unionism), *unclear expectations*, the *culture of the organization* and finally, *policies of dismissals*. They highlight five personality traits which moderate and influence job security or insecurity experienced and individual reactions to it. Firstly, where the locus of control is internal rather than external, the feelings of powerlessness will be reduced; secondly, conservative individuals will be more likely to see discontinuity as a threat rather than a challenge; thirdly, it will be worse for those that rank work values high in their life interests; fourthly, individuals differ in attribution tendencies, that is, those who place blame external to themselves will cope better than those who blame themselves; and finally, some have a high need for security.

Notwithstanding the insights which this model generates, it is limited as many of its key terms are ambiguous. The concept of the 'locus of control', for example, conceptualizes human agency in the essentialist and diachronic terms that have been debased by Rose (1999:95) who suggests that perceptions of personal power are always socially constructed. He maintains that we do not live in the same 'consensual universe', rather that power acts through practices that make up subjects as free persons. Power differs from domination in that it presupposes the capacity of the subject of power to act. History produces individuals with the capacity to act so they have come to relate to themselves as individuals of self-responsibility and self-mastery with the capacity to effect transformation. In addition, this way of thinking is limited in its ability to connect personal perceptions of insecurity with the global machinations of late -capitalism and neo-liberal politics discussed in this chapter.

Jacobson (1991), on the other hand, suggests that the widespread apprehension about jobs that exists, requires investigation to understand it as a *clear and distinct experience*.

He talks about a three stage sequence, namely: anticipation; the period of impact (ie. termination) and the post-impact period of unemployment or underemployment. Social *role theory* is used to elucidate the distinction between job insecurity and job loss as Jacobson finds this congruent with an essentially psychological perspective. The passage from relative job security into perceived insecurity is seen as a *role transition* which is the period during which the individual is either changing roles or changing the orientation to a role already held. Jacobson sees job loss as an *inter-role* transition whereas job security to relative insecurity is seen as an *intra-role* transition. This shift occurs because of changes in the individual's assumptions concerning him/herself, the surrounding internal and external organizational environment, or the relation between the self and the environment. Congruence could be constructed between this and Rose's position. Given the changing expectations of self-reliance and individuals having to conduct their lives as a kind of enterprise, they are continuously assessing the assumptions upon which they base their conduct. The environment in which the individual operates is constantly changing and becoming more ambiguous, unpredictable and less standardized and consequently, many experience inter-role transition.

One of the main problems with job insecurity (as opposed to job loss) is the lack of *social visibility* and role clarity. Job loss or inter-role transition is more likely to be buffered by institutional or organizational support (Jacobson, 1991:26). As job insecurity is an internal 'event', the repercussions of feelings of insecurity can be subtle. It has been suggested in the literature on stress (Burchell, 1994 and Orpen, 1993, for example) that 'event uncertainty', i.e. the subjective probability of an event's occurrence, may be an even greater source of anxiety and tension than the event itself. Consequently, it is not an event that has a clear onset or termination in terms of time. On the face of it, the formal relationship between the individual and the organization remains structurally unaffected (Jacobson, 1991:27-29). Jacobson (1991:30), however, is still committed to examining job insecurity as an 'intermediate level of experience between full security and job loss', rather than a 'chronic, ambiguous threat' (Roskies et al., 1990) through which governmentality can speak and which is a central tenet of neo-liberalism and the construction of self 'as project' independent of the person's position within the labour market.

Klandermans et al. (1991:42) suggest that such studies permit us to develop a systematic treatment of the factors affecting perceived probability of job insecurity. They define causal attributions not as personality traits like Greenhalgh et al. (1984), but as

socially constructed meanings that employees give to their situation (Klandermans et al., 1991:51). Although they do not deny personality traits, they are more interested in those *influences* that develop in interaction with the organization and wider society. Their causal explanations of job insecurity, largely based on Jacobson's earlier model, classify six sources of difference in causal attribution divided into *controllable* and *uncontrollable* circumstances depending on whether individuals blame themselves, or their conditions, for their feelings of insecurity. Responses to job insecurity differ according to the causal attributions individuals make and those coping strategies chosen which correspond to the explanations given for the situations they are in. For them, three factors exist that may affect perceptions of insecurity. These include: the level of the *organization* in terms of the characteristics of the industrial relations climate; the *individual or positional characteristics* such as health, age, ethnicity, work experience etc.; and *personality characteristics* such as the internal and external locus of control and optimism or pessimism of individuals.

From the perspective of the individual, job insecurity can result from *internal* and/or *external* factors where internal factors are characteristics particular to the individual such as health, age, education etc., some of which are controllable and others which are beyond the control of the individual. The external factors can be within the organization such as management policy, technology etc. or external to it, such as recession, government policy or product demand. Generally, factors external to the organization are beyond the individual's control - even collective action is not necessarily an option as the influence of collective bargaining organizations such as unions is declining.

There are limitations in this genre of psychological literature, primarily because research has been undertaken in a positivistic tradition within narrowly defined parameters. Firstly, job insecurity is seen as an intermediate level of experience between fully secure employment and job loss and most findings have been based on declining organizations. This suggests that the focus is short-term. Feelings of job insecurity are not exclusively linked to organizations undergoing change or restructuring. Rather, it is a 'chronic, ambiguous threat' (Roskies et al., 1990) in the environment of flexibility brought about by the decline in collectivities so that organizations can remain competitive. By way of example, in a study on job insecurity among managers, Roskies et al. (1990) examine the perceptions of reactions to insecurity as a persistent, uncertain threat amongst 1291 managers who were not working in declining organization. Only a small minority of respondents were anxious about imminent job loss, with the substantial number being

more concerned about a deterioration in working conditions and long-term security. In another study on the correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being among white and black employees in a South African manufacturing company (Orpen, 1993:885), 54 white managers in relatively 'safe' jobs and 78 black production workers in relatively 'unsafe' jobs were interviewed. Orpen found that the former felt more secure in their jobs, but were not less anxious or depressed than the black employees. Job insecurity was positively related to anxiety and depression in both groups.

Secondly, assumptions made in these psychological studies are debatable, for example that individuals can control certain aspects of their lives. In the working environment of the twentieth century, flexibility and constant change are increasingly becoming the norm as organizations need to adapt quickly to an ever-changing global environment. These models generally refer to standardised work practices based on modernist organizational features and procedures as well as modernist conceptions of self-hood. They do not use a broader theoretical framework to identify and determine the significance of changing forms of social structures.

As the social psychological findings have indicated, insecurity and uncertainty is subjective in nature depending on perceptions of the severity of the threat and locus of control, but influenced by external characteristics that the individual does not always have control over. Rose (1999), however, points out that under neo-liberal political regimes, individuals are being constructed as self-reliant, having to constantly adapt to the changing environment around them and 'manage the self'. This rather critical commentary qualifies rather than dismisses the social psychological literature. Together with the literature on risk, uncertainty and insecurity in a changing society and the resultant ambivalence, the social psychological literature will provide additional guidelines to make more sense of the 'tapestry of feelings' and experiences that emerged during the interviews conducted for this thesis.

Summary

Globalization has had a significant impact on the flows of money, communication, products, people, ideas and cultures. Rose (1996a:302) suggests that globalization has eroded remaining stabilities by disrupting spatial and temporal reference points. Consequently, the world of work at the end of the twentieth century has changed irrevocably. Given this changing world, individuals are often referred to as 'owning their

own employability' and are having to adapt to the constantly changing environment by being responsible for their own self-actualization and quality of life. According to Capelli et al. (1997:203), the main feature of 'employability' is that it reduces the expectations that employees have about their employer's responsibility to them and employees have to take responsibility for their own futures. In this environment, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) definition of job insecurity (slightly modified here) provides a useful guide as it examines the perceived power of individuals *to maintain career continuity*. Job insecurity is caused by one or more inferential events which are perceived as threatening indicators. The very presence of job security or insecurity depends on the individual's interpretations and evaluations of the diverse signals in the employing organizations, and the external environments.

Theories by Bauman and Rose were examined and found to provide useful tools with which to interpret the interviews conducted. Bauman (1999) suggests that the freedom of the modern individual arises out of uncertainty and a general 'under-determination' of the external reality. Individuals are thus forced to look inwards and believe in their own 'uniqueness'. The fundamental dialectic seen by Bauman in modern society is maximum individualization and freedom developed at the price of uncertainty and fragmentation. Although Rose agrees with Bauman that individualization and freedom are a reality of life today, he suggests that freedom was a key invention of government rather than an unintended consequence of changes in social and economic relations. How 'existentially secure' or adept at personal self-formation individuals are, has an impact on how they see themselves within organizations and influences the extent to which they perceive their ability to control their economic security. This also impacts on their power to maintain career continuity (not necessarily in the same organization).

Against the background of global market pressures and the culture of downsizing, exacerbated by new technologies, take-overs and mergers, the aim of this thesis is to explore the feelings of insecurity that might exist among managers and supervisors in some organizations in New Zealand. The changes in the workplaces have been facilitated by successive governments that have, since the early eighties, encouraged more flexibility in the labour market in a climate of continuous deregulation - all in an endeavour to create a competitive and expanding economy.

The following chapter will examine some of the changes that have taken place in New Zealand with particular reference to the employment relationship in an endeavour to find whether the working environment for managers and supervisors has become saturated or not with insecurity and what strategies are important to ensure ongoing employability.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

Introduction

New Zealand is a country with a paid labour force of just under 1.7 million (Harris, 1998). Paid work has long been regarded as essential to an individual's economic, social and personal well-being. However, these assumptions about work are being tested as contemporary developments undermine the ability of employment to generate the sorts of outcomes that have been traditionally associated with paid work. Auerbach (1998) argues that economic and demographic changes have transformed workplaces and, as a result, conventional workplace relationships do not supply the same elements to the nation's economic and social well-being. Much of contemporary society has been built around stable employment relationships with predictable career advancement and a steady growth in wages and improvements in the conditions of employment. The late twentieth century work force is in the throes of rapid transformation and three sets of conditions in the employment environment contribute to this. These are the state as regulator, 'labour use' strategies and the general condition of the labour market (Burgess et al., 1996:11-12).

Rose (1996) argues that individual perceptions are intimately linked to the context within which individuals live. As the qualitative methodology employed in this study is essentially reflexive, in that meaning is considered to be a reflection of the context in which it was developed (Sarantakos, 1997:50), this chapter will deal with these contextual influences on the employment environment in New Zealand. Many factors influencing feelings of security and insecurity of employment and employability were covered in the interviews, although they did not necessarily relate directly to job security or insecurity, but rather provided some insight into the context within which informants found themselves. Consequently, this chapter considers some of the structural changes that have occurred in New Zealand with particular reference to the current industrial relations scenario and the influence neo-liberalism has had on the employment relationship.

An outline is given of changes in the following areas: New Zealand government and society; employment legislation; the nature of work; workplace governance and management styles and finally, the key traits identified and required by managers to effectively manage companies in an environment of constant change. The gradual demise of the 'welfare state' and resultant move to a society organized politically on neo-liberalist precepts, provided the background against which I interviewed managers and supervisors.

Changes in New Zealand Society

New Zealanders have come into the 1990's shell-shocked from change (James, 1992:5)

Major changes have taken place in the political economy in New Zealand during the twentieth century. The years between 1945 and 1973 were characterized by economic prosperity, societal integration and political stability whereas, from 1973 through to the 1990s, economic stagnation, societal conflict and political instability emerged (Rudd et al., 1997:v). In the last 16 years or so, New Zealand has undertaken the radical and rapid reform of economic policy and government management. This shift in policy from welfarism to neo-liberalism took place in the 1980s and was driven, in part, by the need to overcome years of delayed economic adjustment (Scott, 1996:5). As James (1992:276) observes, New Zealand was approaching an economic catastrophe as earning power had dropped by 30 percent together with a drop in the standard of living for most New Zealanders. Terms of trade were historically low as more was being paid for imports than was being earned by exports and the contracting economy led to an increase in unemployment (Davidson, 1995:99).

Reforms were characterized by deregulation, decentralization and the promotion of the 'free market'. Deregulation has given manufacturers greater freedom in terms of locating production locally or overseas and reduced trade barriers have increased exposure to overseas competition as access to the domestic market has opened up (Davidson, 1995:99). Controls on interest rates were lifted, exchange control was abolished and Harris (1998:2) speaks of the effects of deregulation and privatization which have led to the globalization of the New Zealand economy with the majority of the largest firms now

overseas owned, including those whose origins are local. Overseas capital owns key infrastructure such as banks, railways and telecommunications systems.

The structural changes, which were intended to encourage a competitive environment,

...saw the dawning of the free market over Aotearoa/New Zealand which brought with it the privatisation of power, and the centralisation of the residual state turning the entire political, economic, and social structure on its head (Kelsey, 1993:9).

James (1992) suggests that the emergence of a generation of New Zealanders who were self-reliant and tolerant of diversity, were at the heart of this change. In addition, in 1984, Treasury's Briefing Papers called for a reorientation of policies seen to be restricting economic performance and to remove those impediments inhibiting a more flexible labour market. These 'impediments' were the national award system, occupation rather than enterprise bargaining, centralised arbitration, government wage fixing and compulsory union membership (Kelsey, 1993:96).

When the National Party came to power in 1990, it took over and extended the policy framework it had inherited from the Labour Government. Particularly, it continued with the deregulation of the industrial relations environment with the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA)(1991). The removal of state intervention in the labour market was seen to be crucial for the neo-liberal agenda (Kelsey;1997:96). Benefits were cut at the end of 1990 in an endeavour to reduce social spending and to remove impediments to dependence, which was in line with the commitment to the neo-liberal philosophy of self-reliance.

Neo-liberalism, as a means of government, is systematically linked to endorsing 'freedom' whereby the regulatory frameworks seek to govern individuals in a way that is tied to their perception of selfhood. Consequently, the role of government required redefinition. Specifically, structures such as those regulating employment relationships, were changed in an effort to promote effectiveness. Scott (1996:14-15) identified four basic features of reform in New Zealand which are characteristic of governmental shifts to promote the responsibility of individuals. Firstly, a separation was created between policy advice and the operational units responsible for the administration of these policies. Secondly, there was a separation between funding, purchasing and provision of those services. This scheme was implemented in the provision of health and science services. In education, funding is provided directly to the educational institutions by grants on the basis of student numbers. Thirdly, competition between service providers was promoted to

encourage efficiencies and effectiveness. And finally, responsibility was reallocated between government departments in order to provide more 'effective' management.

Hacking (in Rose, 1996:13) argues that the growth of the intellectual and practical technologies of individuals is intrinsically linked to the transformation of the 'conduct of conduct' that has arisen in liberal democracies (such as in New Zealand). Rose suggests that the governments that have joined in the so-called 'post-welfare' approach at the end of the twentieth century, have come to depend on the capacities of the 'subjects of government' and cannot, therefore, be understood without understanding the new ways in which individuals are encouraged to act. The changes in employment legislation are a good example of this.

Changes in Employment Legislation

New Zealand has become well known for two styles of governance in industrial relations (Rasmussen, 1995:79). The first was compulsory arbitration which was introduced in the 1890s and was aimed at containing anything regarded as socially damaging, such as industrial conflict. The second was represented in the Employment Contracts Act of 1991.

Style 1: Compulsory Arbitration

New Zealand has a tradition of employment legislation which, until the 1980s, emphasized tripartism between trade unions, employers and the government. The first Department of Labour was established in 1891 to administer legislation covering factories and shops and to control minimum conditions of employment (Hince, 1993:7). *The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894* was a decisive key to social reforms in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century and committed New Zealand to a tripartism enshrining union legitimacy. This Act introduced compulsory conciliation and arbitration with the intention of encouraging collective negotiation and the registration of both employer and employee organizations which were central to the operation of the system of industrial regulation (Hince, 1993:8). William Pember-Reeves (Minister of Labour) saw this as the solution to protect the interests of a weak group of workers and minimize the possibility of social disruption through strike action. In terms of the Act, New Zealand moved from a largely informal labour relations environment to one which strengthened unions. This evolved into the legislative basis of *compulsory unionism*. With only a few modifications, this system continued until 1973 when substantial changes were

incorporated into the new *Industrial Relations Act* which recognized the trend towards *direct bargaining*.

The Act was further amended in 1984 whereby any unresolved disputes of interest had to be submitted to arbitration and, in 1987, parties were given the freedom to decide for themselves, by negotiation or legal action, whether a specific matter was negotiable or not. Self-reliance was further encouraged and strengthened by the removal of any compulsion in the processing of disputes of interest (Hince, 1993:9). This was seen as a radical departure in terms of the bargaining system as it showed a political philosophy which sought to eliminate, or minimize, direct government involvement in disputes and enhanced even further the principle of self-reliance.

Since 1984, three changes have impacted on employment in New Zealand. Firstly, there was the *transformation of the state sector* when 30 government organizations were either privatized or corporatized, heralding the end of secure, long-term employment previously taken for granted by government employees. A number of statistics highlight this impact. According to Kelsey (1997:265), the nine new State Owned Enterprises created in 1986 had employed about 70,000 people but five years later, only half of the original employees still had their jobs as a result of redundancies and contracting out. Secondly, in 1998, the *Community Wage Scheme* was introduced which threatened some jobs in the secondary labour market. The Council of Trade Unions (CTU) submitted that thousands of jobs would be lost as a result of this scheme and information provided to the CTU by the Service Workers Union showed that up to 7,000 of their members' jobs in private health care and community services were vulnerable to being replaced by the Community Work Schemes (CTU Newsletter, July, 1998). Thirdly, and most significantly, *The Employment Contracts Act* was introduced in 1991 and changed the face of industrial relations in New Zealand completely.

Style 2: The Employment Contracts Act (ECA) 1991

The introduction of the ECA in New Zealand heralded the end of centralization and exclusive rights of representation. Both employers and employees had freedom of association, either in terms of individual or collective contracts of employment, through bilateral negotiations. Employment contract law aimed at the incorporation of assumptions of labour market flexibility into a national human resources management policy (Williams, 1992:126). In addition, the process of negotiating wages and conditions of

employment had to be sensitive to the company's problems as well as to trends in the labour market (Boxall, 1993).

The ECA was introduced to '*level the playing field*' of the labour market and was grounded in legal liberalism which assumed that the law provided a *neutral mechanism* to support the exercise of individual freedom of association and representation (Tenet in Sayers, 1993:226). All this involved a radical redefinition of the state's role and that of the individual. According to governmentality theorists like Rose, this occurs through the production of subjectivity amongst individuals that sees the 'self' as a project, the goal of which is the perfection of self-reliance. It also signals a reliance on particular classes of 'expert' for example, in industrial relations (lawyers), discourse (legal theory) and authority (rule of law). This subjectivity ought to be understood in relation to the new technologies of government (Rose, 1996a: 313) which presuppose the freedom of those that are governed, giving them increased agency.

To achieve this, the introduction of the ECA had to have two consequences, namely, the *decollectivization* and *decentralization* of industrial relations. Despite changes in government in the last century, a central principle of industrial relations had always been one of legislative protection for unions, but this was removed by the ECA through its decollectivization ethos, thus deregulating the labour market.

The *employment contract* is at the centre of the Act and covers collective documents as well as individual agreements or contracts of service. Where employment contracts bind more than two employees it becomes 'collective'. Primary parties to the bargaining process are, however, the individual employee and his/her employer. They can choose to be represented by any other person or organization and unions no longer have any automatic or exclusive rights. There is no legislation dealing with ballots, elections and membership. To ensure more '*flexibility*', the disputes settling procedures, i.e.. conciliation, arbitration and the concept of 'award', were abolished by the Act (Hince, 1993:11). Voluntary mediation and adjudication have been retained by the Employment Tribunal and Employment Court.

The supporters of the ECA, generally the business community and in particular, the Business Roundtable, felt that it would have a significant impact on the economic future of New Zealand in terms of facilitating economic growth, increasing employment, reducing unemployment and ultimately increasing standards of living (Hince, 1993:12). In addition,

it was felt that there was a need to move from occupationally based awards towards industry and site specific agreements and that labour markets would be more efficient, and deliver more equitable outcomes, if they were freed from regulatory measures (Walsh and Ryan, 1993:13). Labour market flexibility was seen as the key to New Zealand joining the 'powerhouse economies of the world' (Hince, 1993:16).

The many detractors of the Employment Contracts Act (for example, Ryan, 1996), however, point to the mounting vulnerability of workers in non-standard forms of employment. Critics such as Williams (1992) and Kelsey (1997) claim that changes in labour law and labour market deregulation are a thinly disguised excuse for depressing wages and conditions - what is really being sought is a low wage labour market in order to compete with global markets. The neo-liberal argument for labour market flexibility required structural deregulation for the reform of the labour market as regulation was seen as hampering innovation and competitiveness (Kelsey, 1997:86). This necessitated a return to the traditional practises of common law to regulate the relationship between employers and employees on the assumption that market outcomes possess an inherently logical and just set of consequences and that parties to the common law contract enjoy equality in terms of status and power (Williams;1992:128). Yet legal protection for workers is largely absent as trade union influence has declined.

There have been numerous other criticisms of the ECA, specifically by unionists and academics. Paul Harris (1998:2) points out that over the fourteen year period between 1984 and 1998, while restructuring was aimed at economic growth and development, only in 1993 and 1994 has New Zealand experienced anything like an economic 'boom'. At the end of the millennium the economy experienced a low growth rate, low productivity, rising unemployment and high levels of overseas debt. Although part of the downturn was attributed to the Asian economic crisis in 1998, Harris (1998:2) suggests that it is more generally as a result of the pursuit of policies which have meant that 'consumption, speculation and debt have driven our economy'. He observes that interest in the experimental model is now fading and 'no other country has followed our radical path'. Gray (1998:39-42) agrees that the neo-liberal experiment in New Zealand is the most ambitious attempt at constructing a free market anywhere this century and that the sudden growth of the unemployed, and underemployed, underclass is a text book example of the manufacture of poverty by the neo-liberal state.

Furthermore, according to Harris (1998:2),

...the final chapter on the New Zealand experiment has not been written. It is precisely because the model has such a short-term focus and such a cost-cutting obsession that the effects will be faced by generations unborn. They will write the final chapter'. What restructuring has done is left whole communities locked in a state of 'job poverty'.

Class and racial divisions have increased along with social indicators such as violence and crime (Harris, 1998). In a paper presented to the Conference on Work, Employment and Society (1998), Paul Harris too, suggested that labour in New Zealand (those dependent on a wage, salary or a state provided benefit) currently finds itself in a weak and vulnerable position, partly as a result of the marginalization of trade unions, and partly due to increasing social inequality and rising levels of poverty. According to Anderson and Walsh (1993:3), the Act has undermined a fundamental premise of post-war industrial relations in developed countries, namely, the right of workers to associate in independent unions and to bargain collectively with employers. The bargaining structure has shifted decisively to company level and 75 percent of employees are now employed on individual contracts (Boxall;1997:26).

The future of the ECA has itself become uncertain in recent times. Whilst writing this thesis, the Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley, announced the date for the 1999 election. The Labour Party, amongst others, intend to change labour law if elected into office, suggesting that they would replace the 'failed Act with balanced, fair legislation' (Hodgson, *NZ Herald*, 4th October, 1999). It is useful to highlight one of the shortcomings in the Act, as envisaged by Labour. This is the lack of checks to ensure that bargaining is undertaken in *good faith*. The ECA is predicated on consenting parties freely contracting but there is no provision for good faith bargaining, although parties can elect third party mediation. Labour recommends that there ought to be some recourse for either party to go to court if there is no integrity in bargaining. Under current legislation, parties are under no obligation to bargain.

Given the continuing erosion of job security and the importance of remaining competitive in the global environment, a good relationship in the workplace is desirable. Legislative rules and procedures ought to be incorporated into the Act to maximize the potential for parties to agree. Free contracting does not provide security for workers in an environment that discourages an ongoing relationship. That the employment environment has irrevocably changed is undoubted, and the philosophy of individuality is inevitably part of that change, but this should not be at the expense of good relationships in the workplace.

Bargaining in good faith is becoming increasingly pertinent in the environment of declining union influence.

Decline in Unionization

A significant consequence of structural deregulation and of the repeal of statutory protection for unions, has been the sustained decline in trade union membership. In the UK, for example, it has been found that individualized contracts have consistently formed part of a process to dismantle employee rights and is accompanied by the marginalization of trade unions (McDonald et al., 1995:83). According to statistics on union membership in New Zealand, compiled by Crawford et al. (1998), in the period between December 1996 and December 1997, union membership fell by 11,000 (about three percent). Union membership has declined across all sectors, although the drop was greater in some industries than in others. For example, between 1991 and 1997, membership of unions in the agriculture, fishing, hunting and forestry industries declined by 93 percent, whereas membership in public and community service industry unions declined by 21 percent (Crawford et al., 1998:5).

Density¹ is declining faster than the absolute membership level as the employed labour force has increased by 6,000 in the year to December, 1997. Union density has fallen below 20 percent from a level of 43.5 percent in 1985 (Crawford et al., 1998:4). According to Hutton (1997:67), trade unions were one of the most important 'intermediate institutions' protecting workers against potential exploitation and this is one of the changes in the structure of the workplace that has had a significant impact on some employees in New Zealand, particularly those in less advantageous, peripheral employment.

The destruction of the ethic of collectivity and mutuality, which occurred as unions have lost their influence, has left many without the protection of an intermediate 'institution'. Bauman (1997:205) asserts that individual freedom needs collective protection and this may well apply to the growing number of workers in the non-standard forms of employment. They should have the choice of some form of collective protection which, given the figures above, is becoming increasingly thwarted. The unilateral introduction of individual contracts in many companies has undermined the choice of collective

1. Density is the measure of the number of union members as a proportion of the total employed work force.

protection and the lack of provision to bargain in good faith has further eroded employee choice. In addition, the changes in the structure of work has made union organization increasingly difficult.

Changes in the Nature of Work

Given the move to neo-liberal forms of governance and the resultant growth in flexibility in the working environment, the world of work has been transformed. Individual expectations and desires have changed, organizations themselves are transforming and the environment within which business functions has undergone dramatic shifts (More,1998:xii). As elsewhere, the post-1984 period in New Zealand has seen transformations such as deindustrialization and the decline of the state as a source of employment, the rise of employment in small scale private sector service industry companies, a growth in part-time (and involuntary part-time) work² and persistent levels of unemployment (Harris, 1998:2). At the start of 1999, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.2 percent (*Statistics New Zealand*, 1999).

Reflecting these trends, Harris (1998) suggests that the relationship with the paid labour market is one of intermittence and insecurity for an increasing number of New Zealanders. He cites the example of 17.4 percent of those unemployed at the end of 1997 who gave their reason for unemployment as redundancy or dismissal whereas for 28 percent, the job had ended due to its seasonal nature or the expiry of a contract.

One of the consequences of globalization and decentralized bargaining (and the decline of unionization) has been the growth in *flexible work practises*. For example, this was demonstrated in a survey undertaken by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (Savage,1996) which found that in over 58 percent of the 1300 companies surveyed³, flexible practises had increased. Furthermore, flexible work practises had increased by 71 percent in companies that reported a decline in unionization. In addition, 32 percent of companies reported an increase in the number of part-time staff and a net increase of 29 percent in casual employment. Three quarters of the companies reported that the ECA had a positive influence on the performance of their organization (Savage;1996:18).

2. According to the Department of Statistics, New Zealand (1995), the percentage of people in part-time work and who were looking for full-time work rose from 5.5 % in 1985 to 24.1 % in 1994 (Harris;1998).

3. The sample was divided into four categories: Architects, Manufacturers and Builders, Merchants and Services. The survey excluded any enterprises owned by local or central government.

Easton (1997:173-174) quotes the OECD which has defined five types of 'flexibility':

- *external numerical flexibility* - where the number of employees is adjusted to needs;
- *externalisation* - part of the work is subcontracted out;
- *internal numerical flexibility* - working hours are adjusted to the needs of the company but the number of employees stays the same;
- *functional flexibility* - workers' jobs are modified according to needs; and
- *wage flexibility* - labour costs, and thus wages are adjusted.

He asserts that as unemployment became more persistent, particularly in the late 1980s, the importance of these forms of flexibility changed and externalisation or outsourcing has become more common as employers lay off workers as depressed demand continues.

Brosnan and Walsh (1996:165), however, in two studies (1991 and 1995) found that a pronounced shift to non-standard employment should be viewed with some scepticism. They found that the bulk of employees remained in permanent full-time employment and employers expected this to continue. Kelsey (1997:376) counters this by suggesting that the *quality of jobs* has deteriorated as the shift from full-time employment in the tradable sector to part-time work in the services sector continued. It seems inevitable that the number of part-time workers is growing and an article in the *NZ Herald* (20th May, 1999:A13) suggests that part-time workers now account for almost one in every four members of the permanent work force. At the end of 1998, an average of 1, 327, 100 New Zealanders were employed full-time and 397 900 part-time (*Statistics NZ*, 1999). Compared with five years ago, full-time employment has grown by 11.2 percent and part-time work by 24.5 percent. Whereas, over the last decade, full-time employment has grown by 7.9 percent, part-time employment grew by a massive 42.8 percent (*Statistics NZ*, 1999).

In New Zealand, the rise of *permanent part-timers* has been significant - the proportion of permanent part-timers in the total work force has risen steadily from 10.8 percent in 1973 to 16.8 percent in 1986 to 24.08 percent in March, 1998 (*NZ Herald*, 20th May, 1999, A13). Part-timers tend to be predominantly female, young and more mobile. Carol Beaumont, National Retail Secretary of the National Distribution Union, believes that the growth in part-time work disguises significant underemployment. The Household Labour Force Survey figures seem to support this claim. Between March 1987 and March 1999, the proportion of part-time workers wanting increased hours of employment increased

from 11.6 percent to 29.8 percent (*NZ Herald*, 20th May, 1999, A:13). The significance of these issues increases as we come to look at the changes in the employment relationship, or as Rose would put it, the techniques of work place governance.

Changes in Workplace Governance

Given the changes in the structure of working arrangements, management policy choice and practise have important implications for managing human resources. How the workforce is governed can vary from an *authoritarian* style on one hand, to a highly *participative* one on the other hand. Very broadly, Geare (1994:120) outlines three management styles that appear in management, human resources and industrial relations literature. Firstly, the *unitarist* or *team* approach (also called 'hard' human resource management, Stanworth et al., 1991:222) considers the organization as a team with common objectives. There is a general acceptance of managerial authority and conflict is seen as pathological. Secondly, the *pluralist* approach sees organizations comprising various groups with objectives that can either coincide or conflict. Conflict is seen as inevitable and unions achieve more equal bargaining power and finally, the *radical* ideology which sees class conflict as paramount and capital as the superior power. Williams (1992:127) argues that what currently passes for the rise of human resources management in New Zealand is a 'unitarist renaissance' at the expense of the pluralism of conjoint regulation that was evident in the past.

In the radical tradition of management theory, Hyman (1975) suggests that there has always been an *unequal distribution of power* in the workplace as this is an inevitable feature of capitalism. Together with the 'new' industrial legislation, sustained unemployment, increasing non-standard work and flexibility of employment (for employers), it seems that management has become the *dominant party* in the employment relationship. Furthermore, Hyman says that a more subtle, and perhaps more significant form of power, is the ability to prevent any form of opposition from arising. Individuals seem to have less power than a collectivity. According to Cowen (1993:78), the Labour Relations Act and its predecessors were based on the view that workplace relationships centred on the inequality of bargaining power, exploitation of employees and the inevitable, albeit necessary, industrial conflict. The philosophy underlying the ECA, however, rejects this view and workplace relationships are treated as essentially co-operative, relying primarily on the so-called freedom of the contract.

In contrast to the radical tradition, Walsh (1990:105) asserts that a key aspect of today's employment environment is the move to a *unitary management style* as management appeals to workers as individuals with the promise of individual satisfaction. This, it should be noted, is the effect of neo-liberal logic, as outlined by Rose. Underpinning 'unitary' human resource management is the belief that

...getting the deployment of correct numbers and skills at the right price is more important than a patronizing involvement with people's personal affairs (Stanworth et al., 1991:222).

Employees are treated in a similar way to financial resources and are encouraged to believe that their interests coincide with those of the organization and any form of collective organization is undermined. Larner (1998:273) gives a good example of what she calls 'a neo-liberal approach to employment' when she quotes Newton (CEO of Clear Communications) who said;

...in order to compete against that giant corporation [Telecom] we needed to be more flexible in our approach to staffing and create a structure which encourages an entrepreneurial spirit, tempered with teamwork, commitment and affinity with the company.

In the same vein, Ryan (1996:167), in a study on the impact of the ECA on labour relations in hotels and restaurants, concludes that the prevailing pattern of labour relations in the industry should not be characterised as exploitative, but rather as 'benevolent paternalism'.

Changes in the employment relationship, as a result of strategies and discourses whose origins lie beyond the labour market, will influence the way in which managers are able to manage. Given the unitary renaissance identified, management has emerged as a strategic site of governance in the employment relationship. This influences management styles which in turn impact significantly on feelings of security or insecurity as well as perceptions of the capacity to act as individuals endeavour to ensure ongoing employability (albeit not always in the same organization). What appears to be emerging is a scenario where managers handle change, make decisions and the rest simply 'do their jobs' around management agendas.

From Management to Leadership?

Changes in the management strategy outlined above have significantly impacted on the employment relationship. The move from pluralism to unitarism has promoted an array of

employment practises which restructure employment relations around management agendas (Haworth et al., 1996:194). Theorists (for example Gebhardt et al., 1996) suggest that managing organizations today bears little resemblance to management twenty years ago. The world of work is not neatly organized according to principles, but is full of contradictions, uncertainties and ambiguities. Gebhardt et al. (1996:363) continue that, whereas modernist organizational theory sought a single or 'best model' of effectiveness based in positivism⁴, organizations today seek ways to be effective that incorporate the ability to be adaptable in an ever-changing competitive market. Moreover, the survival of organizations requires a deconstruction of the modernist organizational features (such as management by objectives), and a reconceptualization to incorporate a perspective more suited to late capitalism. Consequently, a large amount of restructuring has occurred to eliminate so called modernist structures that were unable to adapt quickly enough to the ever-changing environment.

At the same time, there appears to be a change in labelling practice underway with the increasing reference to 'leaders' of organizations. Shtogren (1999:2-3) suggests that the function of 'leadership' did not have any real meaning in the marketplace until recently when radical change became the norm. He differentiates between 'management' and 'leadership' and suggests that the function of 'management' is to cope with complexity and to keep things under control, to plan, budget and organize staff. 'Leaders', however, need to develop and proactively change 'products, systems, and people'. In a similar vein, White et al. (1996) have connected the role of 'leadership' to the state of change which has been exacerbated by globalization. More (1998) too, suggests that reference ought to be made to the 'leadership' of, rather than the 'management' of, organizations as they are no longer seen as static structures but as complex, ongoing processes. The definitions of 'leadership' suggest that it might be increasingly equated with unitary management styles thus leaving little scope for more plural management/employee relationships based on consultation. Moreover, the imbalance of power, brought about partly by the introduction of the ECA and the resultant increased flexibility, has ensured that the rights of management or 'leadership'⁵ are entrenched.

4. An example of this is 'scientific management' introduced by Frederick Taylor which was based on the assumption that there was a 'single best way'. This was followed by Management by Objectives in the 1950s and 1960s.

5. The definition of the game 'follow the leader' is apt 'a game in which each player must do what the leader does, or pay forfeit' (*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 1978).

White et al. (1996) identify key skills that are essential to this so-called 'leadership' and these reflect some of the methodologies used in management recruitment in New Zealand. Amongst others, they include: the ability to handle ambiguity⁶ which requires energy as 'the masters of uncertainty seem to have energy to spare' (White et al., 1996:6); the ability to channel their own and the energy of others effectively; creativity without which organizations would grind to a halt (White et al., 1996:94); absorbing stimuli which is the ability to move from one activity to another (White et al., 1996:95); adaptability and the ability to take risks in order to learn and achieve; to trust instinct and to ensure simplicity in the technological age where clear and effective communication is vital given continuous change (White et al., 1996:175).

To gain some understanding of the leadership and management traits that were sought by companies in New Zealand, I interviewed a recruitment consultant specializing in management recruitment. The skills essential to 'leadership' as identified by White et al. (1996) were similar to those seen to be important to the management of New Zealand companies. These include traits requiring *high learning agility* such as the ability to deal with ambiguity and ambivalence, creativity, compassion, integrity, honesty and entrepreneurship. All these are seen as contributing to successful team building and the ability to manage diversity and change. Technical learning skills, for example, require *lower levels of learning agility*. This provides challenges for individuals who are continuously reinventing themselves as fixed traditions and established habits are being eroded. The requirement is to move from 'habit' to 'reflexivity' (Rose, 1996a:304) across all domains of experience. The traits mentioned above require constant redefinition.

Consequently, individuals can no longer solely rely on their 'own experiences' to plan a future in the working environment. Other skills and attributes become important. What has emerged, according to Bauman and Rose, is that individuals are socially constructed, decentred, multiple and nomadic, created at particular moments and places depending on the requirements of the situation. This suggests that there is the clear need for managers and 'leaders' (as well as all other employees) in New Zealand to desire to have a strong 'capacity for action' which includes the ability to embrace uncertainty and ambivalence as neo-liberalism, and increasing globalism, requires the construction of this type of subjectivity. In addition, to maintain career continuity, the 'self' has constantly to be redefined to ensure effectiveness and for this, creativity is crucial. Sowerby (*NZ Herald*,

6. 'Ambiguity' in this context means to effectively cope with change, to act without having the total picture and to comfortably handle risk and uncertainty.

24th August, 1999:A9) agrees that economic success does not only depend on knowledge but on the ability to apply it creatively. She agrees with White et al. that 'soft assets are more important than hard assets' as ideas, energy and feelings among people count. The more formal 'hard assets' such as technical knowledge are no longer enough to ensure long-term employability. Flexibility and the changing environment defined in terms of uncertainty and ambiguity, means that for employees, the old strategy of investing time and effort in specialist skills to obtain a life of employment security can no longer provide guarantees or certainty (Bauman, 1999:189).

This might make for greater job insecurity for many. Uncertainty must now be overcome by a capacity for adaptation in the never-ending battle of self- (re)formation (Bauman, 1995:113). Indications are that individuals in management, supervisory or any other roles in organizations will have to increase their capacities for adaptation in order to fit with the ever-changing requirements in the world of work. This signals the significance of neo-liberal governance within globalization processes as they impact on the world of work. It would also highlight them as being important sites of resistance and contestation.

Summary

Transformations in New Zealand in the last 16 years or so, which Kelsey (1997) calls the 'New Zealand Experiment', have been driven by the neo-liberal economic theory which was implemented by the Labour Government in 1984, and continued by the National Government from 1990. The lives of many have changed irrevocably. New Right theorists and organisations such as the Business Roundtable have used economic restructuring to promote a culture of individualism and contractualism. Neo-liberalism, as a means of government, has meant that a new relationship exists between political government and the active citizen and nowhere is this more evident than with the introduction of the ECA which changed the face of employment relations from a collectivity-based system to one based on common law. Neo-liberalism axiomatically assumes that individuals who become parties to the common law contract of employment enjoy a fundamental equality in terms of both status and power (Williams, 1992:128). Many academic analysts, such as Larner and Kelsey, however, disagree. Larner (1998:266) comments that the changes that followed the reintroduction of the market into the realm of employment have compromised collective bargaining arrangements, often accompanied by 'wage-rollbacks' and increased insecurity of employment.

The nature of work has changed in New Zealand largely in response to increased globalization which has eroded the remaining stabilites thus disrupting spatial and temporal reference points (Rose, 1996a:302). The structure of organizations too has changed as employees were shed in an endeavour to become 'lean and mean' and they moved from being static structures to complex and ongoing *processes*. Bauman (1996:52) aptly describes this as 'formlessness [being] the fittest of forms'. Consequently, employment conditions have been adjusted to accommodate this 'formlessness'. The response has been increased flexibility, casualization, part-time employment and outsourcing with the result that there has been an increase in job insecurity and the uncertainty of long-term employability for many. This has inevitably created significant changes in the expectations of managers in organizations, often referred to as 'leaders' in a growing environment of uncompromising management prerogative indicating that a change in labelling practise may be underway.

More (1998:28) suggests that 'leaders' are called upon to be 'genetic architects of the biological corporation' as the organizational world is no longer neatly organized. Managers are increasingly expected to be creative, adaptable, self aware, reflexive and entrepreneurial, which are traits or skills that are difficult to learn, but essential for career continuity. As Rose (1996) suggests, individuals are being encouraged to reinvent the techniques through which they construct self-reliance to ensure that they are able to adapt to changing demands at a moment's notice.

The following Chapter will outline the qualitative methodology of the ethnographic enquiry employed to investigate the working experiences of managers and supervisors in organizations, against the backdrop of the contextual influences outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis explores job security and insecurity and the way in which men in various management and supervisory roles perceived their current and future employment opportunities. More specifically, it investigates whether there is an underlying perception of job insecurity among senior managers on the one hand, and supervisors on the other and what action was considered important in ensuring the ongoing 'capacity to act' both in their current jobs and in terms of future employment opportunities. To date, most studies concentrate on the effects of insecurity on personal well-being and on a change in behaviour at work as well as attitudes to it. Rather than focusing on localized and thematically narrow (positivist) accounts of insecurity, this study examines job insecurity as a 'chronic, ambiguous threat' (Roskies et al., 1990:345) within a global context and in an environment of thoroughgoing and pervasive neo-liberalism.

Several assumptions underpin this study. Firstly, the nature of work has changed profoundly as this century draws to a close. Secondly, this change is irreversible. It was therefore of interest to investigate how managers and supervisors experienced work under the changing social conditions that have been evident in New Zealand.

To further the aims of investigating insecurity and attempting to expand the knowledge base in the area of work in New Zealand in 1999, a qualitative approach was adopted and four informants¹ in senior management roles and four in supervisory roles were interviewed. The review of literature and theory pertinent to the transformations in the world of work (outlined in Chapter 2) influenced the way in which the research was approached. This thesis explores the perceptions or manifestations, consequences and implications of job security or insecurity in the lives of *two groups* of informants in the

1. 'Informant' and 'participant' will be used interchangeably when referring to the men interviewed as they were sources of information and agreed to participate in my research. According to Spradley (1979:32), a 'respondent' generally responds to a survey questionnaire or queries posed by the researcher so I have avoided using that term.

employment environment in New Zealand and interprets various attempts made by these employees to negotiate their way through those manifestations.

In his outline of the interpretivist approach used in this study, Herbert Blumer (1980:38) suggests that

...exploration and inspection, representing respectively depiction and analysis, constitute the necessary procedure in direct examination of the empirical social world.

As discussion was centred around the increasing individualization of the world and changes in the employment arena in New Zealand from collective to individual responsibility, it followed that the qualitative paradigm using the interview method would be a useful approach. The implications of insecurity as well as an explanation of the devices through which individualization of the self was being achieved (or not), was investigated.

Theory ought to guide research so as to avoid research merely becoming an exercise in fact gathering (Homans, 1970:64). The aim was to construct a set of explanations that reflected the participants' subjective experiences of security or insecurity and the perceived implications and consequences. Rose (1999) provides a useful analysis of the mechanisms through which self-reliance is being constructed and suggests that as the contours of social life change, individuals have to adapt to that change. To this end he presents an insightful analysis of the management of self and the 'power of personhood' that is required if individuals are to ensure 'continuous economic capitalization'. In addition, Bauman's (1999) views such as those on the loss of existential security given the endemic instability of the 'life worlds' and the resultant ambivalence and uncertainty, provided an interesting insight into the changes in social conditions. These theories form the basis for interpreting the interviews as they furnish the reader with a 'road map' to the social environment (Block, 1990). In addition, possible contextual influences on the employment environment (as I saw them) were explored, as experiences are intimately linked to the context within which they occur. Concepts that are used to describe and explain human activity ought to be drawn, at least in part, from the social life being studied.

The identification and articulation of central analytical values is the first essential step in any research process, because every researcher makes ontological and epistemological assumptions on research issues and has to operate within a given set of assumptions about the nature of society, nature of human beings and the relationship between them

(Ackroyd et al., 1992:11). Furthermore, Ackroyd et al., (1992:9) state that the relevance of philosophical issues arise from the fact that every research tool or procedure is inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and of knowing that world - research methods cannot, therefore, be divorced from theory. According to Sarantakos (1997:30), a distinction needs to be made between '*paradigm*', '*methodology*' and '*method*' to better understand the complexity of social research.

Firstly, a *paradigm* is a set of propositions which explains how the world is perceived and thus contains a world view. Sarantakos (1997) suggests that there are three paradigms or philosophical assumptions, namely *positivist*, *interpretive* and *critical*, although these are not mutually exclusive.

This study is *partly* undertaken from an *interpretive perspective* in that an understanding of the world of work from the perspective of the informants is sought. But, because social phenomena are not just abstract structures of meaning but are also events which occur in the world, it is suggested that understanding requires more than just knowing *what* social phenomenon mean, but also *why* they occurred (Fay, 1996:119). Different explanatory modes in social science pose and answer different questions. For this reason, I included a contextual chapter in an endeavour to understand why experiences might have manifested themselves in the way they did. Fay (1996.:119) asserts that an account of causal questions and answers are necessary in the social sciences.

Secondly, *methodology* refers to a framework and entails theoretical principles which provide guidelines about how research is done within a particular paradigm. A methodology, then, translates the principles of a paradigm into a research language and shows how the world can be explained, handled, approached or studied' (Sarantakos, 1997:30). In this instance, the methodology employed will be a qualitative one as the main principles of qualitative methodology are based on fundamental concepts such as communication, '*verstehen*'², subjectivity and everyday life (Sarantakos, 1997:49) and interpretivism aids the understanding of what individuals experience. In addition, there is a need to develop a scenario outside that of the agents' experiences to attempt an explanation of causes which enables the incorporation of understanding as well as meaning and a multicultural social analysis is therefore employed.

2. 'Verstehen' is usually translated as 'understanding' and consists of placing oneself in the position of other people to see what meaning they give to their actions (Abercrombie et al., 1994:447).

Finally, *methods* are the tools or instruments employed by researchers to gather data. This study was 'subject-directed' whereby significance was placed on the informant in the process of data collection and one of the three well accepted methodologies identified by Sarantkos (1997:54-55), namely phenomenology and within that, ethnography (which is the understanding of everyday life), was applied in this study. The other two are hermeneutics which is the process of text interpretation and ethnomethodology which studies structures of the world which are taken for granted in an attempt to make sense of these. In addition, a literature review was undertaken to inform the theoretical and contextual influences.

Multicultural Social Analysis

As the social world cannot be *exclusively* understood reductively in terms of *causal relationships* or exclusively in the descriptive terms of *behaviour*, a *combination* of description and explanation of social phenomena was undertaken in this study. Fay's (1996) notion of multicultural social analysis exemplifies the position and has provided a methodological guide.

Fay agrees that in explaining the activities of others, social scientists ought to understand them in their own terms but that they must also use categories beyond those employed by the participants in a study. Even in using ethnographic techniques there are social interactions and the researcher is not merely an observer or recorder of totally independent informants, but also an active shaper of what is studied. Consequently, social scientists must be '*reflexive*' (Fay, 1996:230) and be aware of what they bring to the social analysis. As the theories that informed this study, and the contextual influences identified, are purely my own interpretations, this study has become an interpretive, yet multicultural one, as outlined by Fay (1996).

The *interpretative* paradigm in the social sciences is an important dimension of multicultural social analysis. It emerged as a reaction to functionalism and focused on meaningful micro-interaction, rejecting the prevailing dominance of structural sociology (Holland, 1999:473). In the 1930s, members of the Chicago School were one of the first groups of researchers to do work in the interpretivist paradigm, particularly in participant observation studies (Silverman, 1985:16). A major contribution of the Chicago School was

the development of a variety of research methods such as the use of personal documents, fieldwork, documentary sources and ecological analyses (Ackroyd et al, 1992).

Silverman (1985) was one of the first to challenge organizational theory which had been characterized by the dominant orthodoxy of the functionalist (positivist) paradigm. The phenomenology of Schutz³ influenced Silverman's theory of organizations and he critiqued the conventional theories of organizations which were modelled on various systems' analogies (for example, Dunlop, 1958) and Silverman developed the action frame of reference as a critique of positivism (Clegg, 1983:115). Silverman suggested that sociology, as a social science, should not only observe behaviour, but also *understand* action. He distinguished between the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaft) and cultural sciences (Geisteswissenschaft) and suggested that the latter becomes a crucial concern of sociological analysis (Clegg, 1983:115). This is because explanations of human actions must take account of the meanings which those concerned assign to their acts and the manner in which the everyday world is socially constructed. Informants construct the meaning of the social world by past history and their interaction with the present structures of society (Silverman, 1997:132). As Clegg (1983:119) suggests,

...the central subject matter of phenomenological sociology becomes an account of 'members' accounts and common sense.

This was then combined with an analysis of potential reasons for the meanings as outlined.

Ethnography was used in the present study as the research method to elicit the meanings which the informants attached to their realities. These meanings were then interpreted and explained using theories that are, to varying extents, exterior to the respondents' views.

Ethnography as Research Method

Ethnography was used as the methodological approach to this study to try to avoid prescriptions generally associated with the positivist methods of research³. The

3. It should be noted that interpretivism is not the only tradition which counters classical positivism; for example, Post-positivism (Alexander), Realism (Benton) and Post-structuralism (Game).

ethnographic approach was useful for describing and analyzing complex, context-bound phenomenon on a person-to-person basis.

As a set of methods, ethnography is not far removed from the sort of approach that we all use in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings (Hammersley, 1990:2).

Silverman (1985:115) shares Hammersley and Atkinson's enthusiasm for the non-sectarian research practises which ethnography allows for. Also appealing, is the fact that ethnography is not the single study method of positivism, which has so commercialised research (Hammersley et al., 1991), rather it allows for triangulation where different kinds of data can be compared, .

The essential core of ethnography is to understand another way of life so rather than studying people, we are learning from them. The ethnographic tradition, however, considers it possible to integrate sequences of ethnographic observations by relating them to a cultural whole: a global reference which encompasses these observations (Baszanger et al., 1997:11). An ethnographer seeks out 'ordinary' people with 'ordinary' knowledge and builds on their common experience (Baszanger et al., 1997:25). Consequently, everyone can act as an informant, and the concepts that informants use to classify their experiences will give some indication about the contexts they see themselves in.

The purpose of ethnography is to describe what things mean, or the processes through which meaning is constructed. As a qualitative method it includes the following features that were useful to this research: data is gathered from a *range of sources* in an unstructured way that is neither predetermined nor fixed (Hammersley, 1990:1-2); in addition, the research problem undergoes several '*respecifications*' during the period of study (Silverman, 1985:22). The changing scope of this study was influenced by the reading, ongoing discussions and each interview which introduced a diverse range of issues or subjects. Finally, the analysis of the data involves the *interpretation* of meanings and takes the form of description, interpretation and evaluation bringing the role of theory more closely to the fore. Quantification and statistical analysis played no role in this research. What began purely as an interpretive methodology, changed shape as the social psychological theory used suggested causality, and I felt that my perceptions of contextual influences on the working environment in New Zealand required inclusion.

One of the strengths of ethnography is that the researcher *remains open to elements* that cannot be coded at the time of study, which means that the researcher ought to be alert

to emerging issues and information. Theoretical frameworks have the capacity to keep the researcher intellectually alert as they can be powerful in their explanatory abilities of any issues that may be of relevance or of significance to the study⁴. This is not generally possible when individual activities are studied according to strict schedules and on the basis of previously defined concepts.

In addition, ethnography enables a *grounding of the phenomena* observed in the field and a study becomes ethnographic when the researcher connects the facts that have been observed with the specific features of the context within which these facts occur. They are then linked to historical and cultural contingencies as people behave differently according to context (Deutscher in Hammersley et al., 1991:10). This process becomes the crucial one and eternally contestable as the researcher decides those particular facts that are of specific theoretical relevance. Social scientists may use concepts that are 'imperceptive' of the agents involved (Fay, 1996:117). It is important to identify those contexts as envisaged by the researcher, and it is for this reason that a significant portion of this thesis has been devoted to the very task.

The success of any ethnographic study (and one that is the key to any research), is the role of the *researcher* and this can take four forms (Ackroyd et al., 1992:135): *complete participation* where the researcher poses as a member of the group under investigation; *participant as observer* where the intent of researcher is not concealed and interviews are openly conducted; *observer as participant* where involvement is kept to a minimum, a typical example being a 'one-visit-interview'; and the *complete observer* where no social contact takes place, for example, observing behaviour in public places. As informants from different organizations were interviewed, my role was one of 'observer as participant' on a one-visit basis only although there was some telephonic follow-up.

Weaknesses of the ethnographic approach that have been identified generally reflect the positivistic prejudice of assessment (Sarantakos, 1997:51). Three weaknesses are commonly noted. Firstly, researchers can become too involved with their subjects so that they lose sight of the goals of the study. Secondly, it is often debated whether ethnography is scientific research and thirdly, whether results can be generalized. In this study, a single interview with acquaintances and strangers did not lead to close association with participants. Because the method was not based on standardization, it should not correspondingly be assumed that it was not scientific. As Tolich et al. (1999)

4. But they can also shut us off from possibilities and blind us from them.

observe, the strength is not in the sample size but rather with rigorous and systematic data collection. Unlike quantitative research where *generalizations* are based on measures of representativeness, this is not a significant issue in qualitative research. Cox (1987:95-96) notes that generalizability is a concept dependent on methodological assumptions of logical positivism and that ethnographers are less concerned with the generalizability of the results than with the *validity* and meaningfulness of information discovered *within particular contexts*. According to Tolich et al. (1999:33-34) the strength of quantitative research is its reliability, but the strength of qualitative research is validity.

Le Compte et al. (1993:47) however, add that ethnographers are concerned with *comparability* and *translatability* which are significant to the legitimacy of ethnographic research. As my thesis is a description of what participants experienced in their working lives, I hope to present an interpretation of the experiences of the participants I have interviewed as they have seen the world, against a backdrop of those theories that I have used as 'road maps' to guide the research, and within the context of the labour market in New Zealand as I envisaged it to be.

Reflexivity

It is acknowledged that any interpretive act is influenced consciously or not by the tradition in which the interpreter belongs (Silverman, 1997:12)

As mentioned throughout this chapter, reflexivity is the basis of any social scientific research. Research can never be neutral and objective because society is made up of many social realities and the social world impacts on each person's subjectivity differently. As such, reflexivity serves as the researcher's attempt to eliminate the effects of researcher bias by making his/her assumptions and beliefs about the data explicit (Hammersley et al., 1991). Compounding the problem which gives rise to the importance of reflexivity as a key methodological concept, is that every meaning in qualitative research is considered to be a reflection of the context in which it is developed (Sarantakos, 1997:50). Consequently, the issue of *reflexivity* is central to all social science research. In addition, the researcher's interpretations and insight are the key instruments for analysis.

In my search for foundations upon which to develop a reflexive social science practice, I find myself drawn to the concept of ambivalence. As Bauman (1990:184) observes, ambivalence is all pervasive as the institutions of modern life are being decentred. Ambivalence excludes or undermines the trust in exclusivity and completeness of any interpretation (Bauman, 1990:231) and he suggests that the attempt to handle elements of reality as if they were separate and distinct becomes problematic. The search for unambiguous knowledge, and the effort to make reality orderly, is not possible.

One of my core assumptions is that processes of individualization are growing as individuals are required to become self-responsible because of neo-liberal forms of change in social and economic life. This brings about the persistent freeing of agency from structure, or, as Rose (1999), Bauman (1999) and Beck (1992) have suggested: structure 'forces' agency to be free.

Although I have used governmentality theory and the rise of neo-liberalism to guide the interpretation, I have not provided a critique of neo-liberalism in this thesis. Suffice to say, there are elements of neo-liberalism that I warm to personally whilst at the same time recognizing that there are sites of tension. Neo-liberalism does not free us from government. Instead, it is a different way of governing individuals. One of the advantages I see in neo-liberalism is the rise in individual responsibility which has an ethical element. Foucault's use of the term 'ethics' (in Rose, 1996a:297) sought to direct attention away from morality as a set of ideals towards the more practical goals, judgements and precepts by means of which individuals relate to their own worldly conduct. It is this reading of ethics that I wish to invoke in my positive orientation toward governmentality theory.

There are aspects within neo-liberal construction, however, that I have difficulties with. The ECA, for example, is one site of tension where individuality is valued yet also acts as a disciplining device on individuals. Given the current economic climate and restructuring of work, the assumption of an equal contractual relationship between employers and employees that underlies the ECA has not been realized. Employers have increased their power base and at the same time feelings of insecurity are heightened for many employees. A bright, as well as a darker side, are played out with outcomes yet to be determined.

To the extent that the reader might sense some prevarication on my part in the interpretation of informant's responses and the contexts within which they function, this could be read as a dimension of the ambivalence that I gesture towards above. Stated more positively, the ambivalent attitude enables me to position myself in a self-consciously flexible position that avoids either total scepticism or total acceptance of the neo-liberalism that pervades much of my field of enquiry.

Ethics

The guidelines of Massey University's *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching involving Human Subjects* were followed in this study. There are five core principles outlined in the Code, and these are informed consent; confidentiality or anonymity; minimising of harm; truthfulness and social sensitivity.

Given the methodology, extreme caution ought to be taken to ensure that power inequality is minimized as its existence cannot be denied in any researcher/informant interaction. To guard against potential conflict and an imbalance of power, ethical principles have to be adopted and Spradley (1979:34-39) suggests that informants must be considered first: their rights, interests and sensitivities must be safeguarded; research objectives must be communicated; privacy must be protected; participants must not be exploited; and reports should be made available to informants (if they request to see the information).

That brings me to the primary research procedure adopted in this study, namely, the in-depth interview, where ethical considerations are essential.

Research Procedure

In-depth Interviews

The most important experience of others takes place in the face-to-face situation which is the prototypical case of social interaction. All other cases are derivatives of it....In the face-to-face situation, the other is appresented to me in a vivid present shared by both of us my and his [sic] 'here' and 'now' continuously impinge on each other as long as the face-to-face situation continues. As a result there is a continuous interchange of my expressivity and his [sic]....In the face-to-face situation the other's subjectivity is available to me through a maximum of symptoms....Only here is the other's subjectivity emphatically close (Berger and Luckman, 1975:43)

Although the above quote does not relate directly to ethnography, it does embody the strengths of the in-depth interview which is one of the two major methods of ethnographic enquiry (the other being participant observation).

Silverman (1997:113) observes that the interview is one of the most widely applied techniques for conducting systematic social enquiry and many social scientists treat interviews as their 'windows on the world' (Hyman in Silverman, 1997:121). Consequently, interviews produce meaning. There are, generally, three types of interviews: the *informal conversation*; the *standardized interview* following a predetermined set of questions to be asked in the same way for every interview; and the *in-depth interview* using the interview guide. As the interview is an interactional sequence, in-depth interviewing provides the greatest opportunity to find out what the informant thinks and feels I have endeavoured to present the opinions expressed by the informants as accurately as possible. As qualitative studies emphasize the phenomenological view whereby reality is in the perceptions of individuals, it is important to focus on meaning and understanding and the unstructured, flexible interview closely fits this naturalistic method of research.

Although tape recorders can be part of the interview etiquette, in prior interviews I found that the tape recorder could inhibit conversation. Furthermore, they might constitute an intrusion. I took notes throughout the interviews and transcribed them as soon as possible thereafter.

Seven of the interviews were conducted in the participants' own homes at times most convenient to them. Two informants were interviewed on a Sunday morning, two on a weekday morning (one man had a day's leave in lieu of weekend work and the other started his working day in the afternoon) and three interviews were conducted in the evening. Only one interview took place in the workplace as the informant worked on a construction site and suggested that a rainy day would suit him as little work could be done then.

Interview Guide

As interviews were more like conversations, the interview guide was used to ensure that similar questions were asked, when appropriate, at various stages during the interview. According to Spradley (1979:59-60), three important ethnographic elements ought to be

included in ethnographic interviews and these are: *explicit purpose* when interviewer and informant get together and both realize that the conversation is supposed to have a purpose and go somewhere; *ethnographic explanations* which include general statements of what the project is about; and *ethnographic questions* of which there are three types. Firstly, *descriptive questions* such as 'what did you do in the office today'; secondly, *structural questions* to discover the basic units of an informant's life such as activities undertaken, education attained; and finally, *contrast questions* asking about differences between certain issues such as how the workplace had changed.

Tolich et al. (1999:108), on the other hand, suggest that an interview guide is best divided into three sections: *introductory questions* to get the informant talking; a list of recurrent *themes* that represent the project's research interests; and a set of generic *prompts* such as 'how?', 'tell me more', 'why?' etc. all generated from the researcher's general knowledge, from what (previous) informants have told them and from a literature search. Although the interview guide was structured this way (without ignoring Spradley's ethnographic elements), I found that I did not need to introduce questions to get the informant talking - once the subject was introduced, they needed no prompting. Consequently, the introductory questions were covered during the course of the interview (see Appendix 1 for the interview guide).

The Interview Guide explored the experiences of the participants in the following broad areas: work history and qualifications; changes seen by the informant throughout his work life; changes in society; the present working environment and issues associated with it such as organizational climate, job security, independence to do the job etc.; the Employment Contracts Act; the future working scenario; and finally the informants' views on the future for their children in terms of education and employment as well as the skills they considered important in ensuring long-term employability.

Key Informants

Key informants are individuals who are in possession of special knowledge, or status and are willing to share that knowledge with the researcher (Le Compte et al., 1996:166). These informants are generally chosen because they have access to observations which are often denied the researcher and should thus be chosen with care so as to ensure that certain homogeneity among a group of informants is achieved.

The eight participants were chosen for this study as they represented incumbents of management and supervisory roles in various types of organizations in New Zealand. To foster some homogeneity, Pakeha men aged between the mid-forties and early fifties, having similar years of working experiences in a changing employment environment, were interviewed. Coincidentally, all of the informants had two children except for one, who had four - two living at home and two older children from a previous marriage.

To increase the degree to which the experiences reflected similar contexts, I interviewed Pakeha men only and did not include Maori or Pacific Islanders in my sample as my ability to attempt to draw conclusions is inevitably linked to an understanding of the cultural perspectives of the participants. As Tolich et al. (1999:43) suggest, if one wants to understand some aspect of being Maori, we would first have to understand their world as well as their way of knowing about it. Reinhartz (in Tolich et al.:54) suggests that it is possible for men to research women (and vice versa), as long as the researcher identifies him/herself as an outsider and is 'reflexively' aware of how values can influence every phase of the research process. Consequently, the observations will not be presented as if they can be generalized and thus applicable to both sexes, rather, they will be presented as the experiences of Pakeha, 'middle-aged' men only.

Some of the participants were known to me before I interviewed them and others were referred to me by friends. They were chosen as they represented a diversity of experiences in a range of companies in New Zealand. None of the men were self-employed and the companies were all private organizations with no government affiliations. The interviews were not conducted as a response to any particular event in the environments within which the men were working.

Before the interviews started, participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 2) (based on one in Tolich et al., 1999:99) outlining the aims of my study and giving them the right to refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and informants could request a copy of the interview transcripts for possible amendment and would be given access to the thesis if so required.

Because New Zealand is a small country, it would be easy to identify some of the participants even though they have pseudonyms. Consequently, any description of the

organizations they worked for had to be vague. Even though pseudonyms are good ethical practise, they do not necessarily protect the informant. As Tolich et al. (1999:77,79) caution, New Zealand should be seen as a small town. This makes giving a description of the participants rather difficult but I will provide an outline of their backgrounds and provide a 'window on the world' of the workplace experiences of these men in Chapters 5 and 6.

In addition to the eight participants, I interviewed an employment consultant to gain a clearer understanding of the labour market dynamics in the current employment environment. The consultant interviewed, specialised in management recruitment and was working with companies and applicants looking for management roles. This provided an insight into the recruitment process and the 'leadership' and management traits that were seen to be important in the current employment environment.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous process. Although it is not uniform, three broad phases have been identified by Sarantakos (1997:300-310). The first phase is *data reduction* which is the process of 'manipulating, integrating, transforming and highlighting' data to identify emerging patterns. Secondly, the information is arranged according to certain *themes* to present the data in some form and finally, the data is *interpreted*. Data reconstruction as outlined by Heath (1997:4) was followed where, once categories had been developed, the findings were connected to existing literature and concepts integrated. Discovering and establishing units of analysis constitute one of the main tasks in processing ethnographic data and to provide a focus for investigation.

...[Ethnographers] having hacked and chopped their holistically gathered data into bits, then reassemble it into an intact cultural scene (Le Compte et al., 1993:263).

Ethnographic analysis, therefore, refers to the systematic examination of something in order to determine its parts as well as their relationship to the whole and analysis becomes a search for patterns (Spradley, 1979:85). As researcher, to understand that 'whole' better, the chapter on contextual influences was included and this outlines my understanding of the world in which the informants are to be found.

Summary

The method of ethnographic inquiry has been used to explore issues of security or insecurity in the working lives of eight informants against the context of changes that have taken place in New Zealand over the last two decades. The interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner and were treated as free flowing conversations. Consequently, questions were not asked in any order as the interviews took on a momentum of their own. The informants gave freely of their time and many subjects were covered.

The approach that I used in this investigation was based on a study of in-depth interviews and the subsequent commonalities and divergences between them. I wanted to undertake the widest possible exploration of all the issues that may surround the phenomenon of job security or insecurity. Various theories outlined in Chapter 2 were taken as a guide to inform the research, and the possible structural influences on the agency of the informants were identified in Chapter 3. Consequently this study was conducted in the way that Fay (1996) calls a 'multicultural philosophy'. Some of the central theses he outlined were relevant to this study. Firstly, he suggested that the *agency* of those being studied was essential, hence ethnography was used as a methodology in this study. Secondly, it was important to recognize that agents were only agents because they were situated *within systems* which simultaneously empowered and limited them. Thirdly, to accept that *meaning changes* over time, and fourthly, to acknowledge the *past* because the present contains in it the past and the future; and finally to acknowledge *reflexivity*.

This study will only provide an exploratory identification of the components seen as comprising the real-life manifestations of security or insecurity and elements required for ongoing employability. The in-depth interview method was chosen as it assisted in achieving an extended commentary on the experiences of everyday life (Bauman, 1990:231). In this way, an attempt was made to understand the construction of the subjectivity in the area of work as opposed to the more common quantitative research methodologies which tend to marginalize subjectivity. In addition, Fay's (1996) assertion that, together with this understanding of *what* social phenomena mean to informants, an understanding of *why* they occurred, is also important.

The following two chapters will explore the experiences of the eight participants and will provide a 'window on the world' of employment in 1999 as seen by these men against the background of theoretical understanding and contextual influences.

CHAPTER 5

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD OF WORK: STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES

Introduction

The following two chapters report on those issues that informants raised as part of their understanding of the employment situation. Key informants who were individuals possessing special knowledge and status, and who were prepared to share that knowledge with me, were chosen as they had privileged access to experiences (Le Compte et al. 1993:166). The research began with general questions about changes in social conditions and the workplace in New Zealand. These questions were prompted by the need to identify events, issues or outcomes that the informants saw as constituting or influencing the environments they were living in. There appeared to be an absence of qualitative research on job security and insecurity in New Zealand. This coincided with my aim to identify and analyse the changes in the employment environment that have brought about the assumption that job security can no longer be expected. There is a great deal more dependence on the individual's ability to make him/herself as employable as possible, in line with Rose and Bauman's theories on 'privatized individuality'.

The informants were in the age group that experienced, at least for half of its working life, so-called standard, secure, full-time employment and were now not only employed, but also managing or supervising in an environment of flexibility and change. White et al. (1992:52) suggest that those in this age group have moved in one generation from clarity to uncertainty. Consequently, many of the issues surrounding insecurity were discussed in this chapter. Globalization, changes in social conditions and government and changes in the working environment were outlined. Beck (1992) suggests that 'agents' must free themselves from structural constraints and actively shape the modernizing process. To find out how the dissolution of standardization in the employment environment has affected the agency of informants, various contextual issues were examined.

Informants

This research has sought to understand and identify those dynamics involved in job insecurity and ongoing employability in New Zealand. To keep the focus narrow, eight men in management or supervisory roles were interviewed. Some were known to me and others were referred by friends. The interviews were most enjoyable and the informants friendly, helpful and co-operative. 'Gaining entry' presented no problems and some men interviewed were happy to refer me to others who matched the sample. The key informants were chosen because they worked for a range of medium to large companies that were not owned by government. To keep the sample reasonably homogenous, Pakeha men in their mid-forties to early-fifties were interviewed.

Four of the men were in senior management roles which included managing organizations or special functions within those organizations. Those in lower management or supervisory roles included men with some departmental responsibility and who were engaged in supervising other employees. They were employed in the 'core' segment of the labour market and, except for one participant, were full-time, permanent employees. One informant was on a fixed-term employment contract but this made no difference to him as he claimed any form of employment was as precarious as the next. This was borne out when two of the senior managers were no longer employed shortly after the interviews were conducted. Retrenchment affected one informant and another resigned following restructuring. What started out as an assumption on my part that the informants were in stable, full-time employment, was proved incorrect. These 'secure', 'core' senior management jobs are, perhaps, as insecure as any others and made the question in Chapter 2 whether there were, in fact, distinct categories in a segmented labour market, more relevant. It underlines the comment made by Simpson (1998) that many managers may have a 'dual status' in that they could be on permanent contracts and have access to promotional opportunities, yet at the same time face redundancy. Indications are that the 'core' of employees in the primary labour market is reducing.

There are many issues external to organizations that can, at times in obscure ways, influence and exacerbate (or help minimize) perceptions of insecurity. This chapter outlines some of these aspects as discussed in interviews and focuses on comments about broader structural issues in New Zealand. Chapter 6 will then concentrate on personal employment experiences as they related to job security/insecurity and employability.

The following précis of informants' work history is, of necessity, vague and brief to ensure anonymity. The names are all pseudonyms. Reich (1992), outlining new patterns of employment, would categorize the four senior managers interviewed as *symbolic analysts* as they are involved in problem-identifying, problem-solving and strategic brokering activities which could be traded world-wide and compete with foreign providers.

Gary is employed as Managing Director of a contracting company that has over 1000 employees in New Zealand. The organization, as part of a multinational enterprise (MNE), has its headquarters in Europe. Gary qualified with a degree in engineering and subsequently gained his Master's Degree in England. He has also worked in America. Gary started his career in New Zealand in a large private company working his way from Operations Manager to General Manager before he was offered his current position five years ago. Aside from contracting, the New Zealand organization has bought businesses in Australia and is in partnership with another associated enterprise in New Zealand.

Mark's career began in selling and merchandising and progressed through the traditional route of sales and marketing to general management. He has always worked in the food industry. Mark has no formal qualifications. At the time of the interview, he was employed by a large manufacturer and distributor of food in a national management role. The company was Australian-owned and various departments were merging with those in Australia. As a result of restructuring and job reorganization, Mark decided to leave the company shortly after the interview was conducted. Rather than seeking re-employment, he has bought his own business.

Alan started his career in accountancy whilst studying part-time. Thereafter he worked overseas for a while before returning to New Zealand when he began employment as a cost accountant. He spent time in sales and production planning functions and Alan joined the current enterprise as company secretary from where he moved to production and then general management. When the company went into receivership, Alan and four colleagues bought the company and it began to thrive. They subsequently sold the organization and it merged with an Australian enterprise that was part of a MNE. Alan stayed on as Managing Director.

James has always worked in human resources management. He began his career in South Africa but emigrated to New Zealand a few years ago when he joined a large manufacturing company as Human Resources Manager. The manufacturing company has many smaller enterprises affiliated to it. James has since been retrenched and is currently lecturing part-time whilst seeking full-time- or self-employment. He has an MBA.

Two of the informants in lower management or supervisory roles (*Dan* and *Grant*) fulfil the criteria for *routine production services* as defined by Reich (1992), as their supervisory tasks involve repetitive checks on the work of subordinates and they enforce standard operating procedures. *Dan* is a technical supervisor employed by a MNE based in Switzerland. He started his career as an aircraft fitter in the airforce and, like Gary and Alan, spent time working in England. He has many technical qualifications including a Trade Certificate as Fitter and Turner, an Advanced Trade Certificate and Electrician's Service Certificate as well as 'lots of other bits and pieces'. He has been in his current job for nine years.

Grant has worked for the same bank since the early 1970s. He started in the processing department and went through the ranks until he became supervisor and then manager.

Peter provides *in-person-services* (Reich, 1992) which also entail simple repetitive tasks but as they are provided person-to-person, they cannot be sold world-wide. He has worked in retail all his life and is currently a departmental manager in a New Zealand-owned company. Peter left school at the age of 16 and has no other training.

Tom, as construction foreman, also works for a wholly New Zealand-owned company. He fulfils dual functions of *routine production services* as well as elements of *symbolic analytic* functions as his job includes problem-identifying and solving. Tom almost got his NZCE but never completed it. He is currently gaining his unit standards for civil construction.

As part of the open, exploratory interviewing style, many subjects were covered that might not necessarily relate directly to job security or insecurity, but were important as they gave an indication of the context as experienced by informants. These will be discussed below.

Globalization

Globalization is the intractable fate of the world, an irreversible process; it is also a process which affects us all in the same measure and in the same way (Bauman,1998a:1)

Globalization has directly affected all but one of the informants as the world is *compressed* and there is an *intensification of consciousness* of the world as a whole. Although the term 'globalization' is widely used, it is not always entirely clear what it means. The most common understanding seems to be the 'top-down' view. One report on the social dimensions of international trade (ILO, 1999), defines it as a process of *rapid economic integration* among countries driven by the liberalization of trade, investment and capital flows as well as technological change. In many cases, national policies are dictated by international constraints. Employers in New Zealand have pushed for less regulation and the de-standardization of the employment environment so that they can adapt rapidly to changing markets.

Most of the consequences of globalization discussed by the informants were negative. Flexible economic relations were established in particular localities to adapt to a globalizing environment and significant challenges were presented to the management of organizations. James suggested that

...in the environment of global competition it is hard for companies to manage. It is a case of managing uncertainty and change whilst maintaining continuity of business.

Furthermore, he observed that whilst managers themselves have much to relearn, they also have to direct the change which in turn is driven by globalization and increased competition from all sources.

There is no such thing as a local company and competition is faced from everywhere, by everyone.

The so called 'compression' of the world or rapid economic integration among countries affected enterprises operating in New Zealand and applied to all but two organizations in this study. According to Dan, New Zealand and Australia are seen as one market and consequently companies are rationalizing and doing away with duplicate functions on either side of the Tasman. Six of the companies had contacts with Australia, although three were owned by MNEs in Sweden, France and Switzerland. Two managers reported directly to Australia. The company Mark worked for was restructuring and

...suggestions are made that sales and marketing be managed from Australia as Australia and New Zealand are merging in terms of the company. The two countries are different though and you can't have altogether common Trans-Tasman brands and marketing as tastes and everything differ.

Alan's company too had been restructured when it merged with an Australian company and production moved to Australia. The company, however, is French-owned.

James saw the 'attraction' of Australia, on New Zealand's doorstep, as problematic, exacerbating the ongoing 'brain drain'. Australia has a bigger market, and the customer base was six times larger than New Zealand's. The 'brain drain' was seen as creating a challenge to the government. The company James worked for has 40 percent of its employees in Australia as opposed to between seven and 10 percent four years ago. Mark, too, suggested that Australia was a big attraction as it has the population, resources, minerals and entrepreneurs both in local and state government, who 'have the foresight to predict what to do next'. Dan works for a Swiss MNE with enterprises in New Zealand and Australia. These had also started merging. In one instance, an operation moved from Auckland to Sydney although, in another, a unit in Sydney closed and moved to New Zealand - the moves were a reflection of excess capacity.

Many of the functions in the bank that Grant works for have been transferred to Australia. In addition,

...although Aussies own the bank, they now have a succession of CEOs such as American and Scottish people in for short-term contracts. Their mandate is to cut costs and they don't care how it is done.

Business units too are run by foreign managers and there are international banking executives who move around the world rationalizing banks. As Grant suggested, Americans, for example who manage for a period in New Zealand have no perception of how things are done 'down under'. Having a transient globalized management structure was seen as taking the local focus away from an organization and had negative consequences in terms of morale and commitment.

They sometimes walk around and wave the flag - we should take a photo as they may not be around next week.

Grant outlined another negative impact that globalization has had on his organization. All data is transmitted from Auckland to Australia after which it is redirected to Auckland. This inhibited efficiency. Problems arose when errors occurred because time zones differed and staff had to revert to the manual system until the problem was solved in Australia.

This might point to the existence of increasing localized practices that function in a mutually constitutive manner with the far-reaching features of globalization.

Globalization has had a different impact on the industry that Peter works in. As import restrictions have been removed so 'the clothing industry has been decimated from a manufacturer's point of view.' He continued that manufacturing has become more mobile as employers seek cheaper labour in less industrialized countries so, for example, manufacturers have moved offshore to places like China to have clothes made. Peter suggested that consumers were the only ones to benefit in that they had greater choice in range and price yet ninety-five percent of his customers preferred New Zealand-made items. Peter continued that there was a mind-set that Chinese goods, for example, were 'cheap and nasty', but this was a misconception as the same specifications of quality had to be fulfilled. They had the machinery to cope with production for the world market that New Zealanders could not compete with. Furthermore, he did suggest that retail had not been as affected as the manufacturing side where labour intensive activities are exported to the 'world market factories' (Lash and Urry, 1987).

Peter outlined what he saw as the effects of the intensification of awareness on a world-wide scale. He observed a change in attitude:

...people are not as nice to each other as they used to be. The prevailing mentality is that it is good to get ahead - but this should not be at all costs....perhaps it is caused by communication where everyone knows what is going on in the world and everyone is more aware because of the media in the country and the world. This has changed the behaviour of people who aren't prepared to accept their lot and are questioning 'why?'. Before it was 'that's the way things are'.

This influenced the 'dog-eat-dog' mentality and general lack of sympathy for the underclasses. Peter felt uncomfortable with the neo-liberal precepts of the detachment of individuals from collectivities which has occurred as the site of government has moved from the state to individuals. This individuality has come about at the expense of a general empathy and understanding of others which Peter suggested had been part of New Zealand society about 20 years ago.

For Gary and Alan, two of the senior managers, globalization had provided opportunities and challenges that were positive for them personally. Gary envisaged enormous potential and saw the new freedom and choice as liberating. Alan too, had choices that had been offered by globalization. For the other senior managers, Mark and James,

amalgamations and the move of certain functions to Australia had negatively impacted on their jobs and directly affected their long-term security.

Globalization has had significant implications for New Zealand's social conditions. Neo-liberal policy was adopted, in part, to sustain economic growth and to ensure that industry could compete internationally. Whereas in the past, industrial workers were most affected by international competition, employees at all levels in organizations are at risk of losing their jobs. Not only has the integration of markets rationalized functions and located many across the Tasman, but competition from low-wage economies has impacted on manufacturing in New Zealand.

Furthermore, globalization has reduced job security as there is an ever-present threat to move plants or departments out of the country, even if that threat remains unspoken. *Event uncertainty* could be as great a source of anxiety as the event itself. Bauman (1999:170) is in agreement and suggests that the concept of global institutions captures the emerging, 'but already tough, resilient and apparently inevitable reality'. Informants indicated that rationalization reverberates beyond those who are directly affected and carries a message for all those who have been 'spared'. Globalization has exacerbated insecurity by bringing with it a '*political economy of uncertainty*' (Bauman, 1999) which essentially does away with any guaranteed rules and regulations thus making precarious stable employment condition and relations.

Changes in Society

New Zealanders have woken up to the realization that you have to look after yourself (Mark).

The move from welfarism to neo-liberal prescriptions of governance in New Zealand since 1984 has created challenges for individuals who are required to become self-reliant and responsible. Rose suggests that the ability to deal with change and the maximization of the entrepreneurial demeanour of the individual applies to everyone where social life is constructed according to the discourse of 'autonomous selfhood'. Bauman also suggests that the self is being encouraged to subject itself to a new regime of calibration, in which it is being called upon to dissociate itself from former authorities and discourses and to reassemble itself in the light of a decentred conception of moral responsibility.

Informants articulated their feelings on the changes in society, and for some such as Dan and Peter, the past was remembered with some nostalgia. Although they all, to a certain extent, agreed that change was necessary, the scope and speed with which that change occurred was questioned.

Mark suggested that people were no longer expecting handouts mirroring the shift from a totally administered society with a 'fixed ordering of people and activities' (Rose, 1996b:43) to one of remote control where the 'active, entrepreneurial citizen' provides for his/her own future. On this same topic of government intervention, Alan saw the biggest change in society in New Zealand as the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit which replaced the Universal Family Benefit. He too mentioned the introduction of user pays such as paying for university education which came with the change in 'government ideology' and the replacement of the 'cradle to the grave' philosophy by one of free market economics.

Gary, who is a member of the Business Roundtable, was most in favour of the move to neo-liberalist forms of social regulation.

The businesses community has responded to the changed environment and New Zealand businesses are good at competing in small areas. They understand the 'lean and mean' but my parents can't understand why they have to pay if they want to go to hospital as they are already paying taxes. Businesses have adapted substantially to the real world and global competition but New Zealand society, by and large, long for the 'good old days' - but they probably weren't.

Dan and Peter, on the other hand, suggested that 'this used to be a good country to live in'. Although they commented that there were few things to buy and international travel was unaffordable for most, crime was low and they felt that those days were gone and New Zealand was 'catching up with the world'.

James, in further contrast, viewed changes in society more broadly, notably in terms of the changing family structure. Predictability in terms of family life had gone and set times for dinner, for example, were no longer possible. Furthermore, he observed that people were travelling a lot more for their jobs and spent more time away from home. In addition, there were greater choices for the family in terms of consumerism and as globalization has increased, so have product choices. Prices to travel have decreased and everyone in the family has access to all sorts of information on the Internet. James felt that the changes had been both good and bad. On the one hand, many families could choose where they wanted to live rather than living where the job was as outsourcing became

more prevalent, but on the other hand, family values had changed and more families were breaking up.

Grant suggested that as society became more 'liberal', people did not want to work and there was too much leisure. Everything was more easygoing and formalities and respect were declining. According to Grant, one of the consequences of liberalization might be (although he hoped not) to bring society down 'much like Bosnia as one (group) gets ascendancy it crushes the rest'. He commented that he listened to his staff talk and that the 'Asians are fair game'. He works with a cross section of nationalities

...for example, Samoans, Raratongans, Fijians, New Zealanders etc. but the groups stick together and do not mix....If a social function does not suit a particular group they don't attend it. They bring up culture all the time. We are in New Zealand and should use New Zealand culture. New Zealanders are frustrated with other races trying to import philosophies here. It is fine to keep one's heritage - but integrate. The Asians are guests here and should treat the country as such.

When I remarked that I was an immigrant, Grant expressed surprise and felt that South Africans and 'Kiwis' had things such as rugby in common and he suggested that South Africans integrated. It was difficult to analyze these sentiments. Bauman (1999:194) gives one explanation when he suggests that 'ethnic cleansing' or 'tribal purity' are extreme cases of 'a bid for security going haywire'. Often a threat to collective identity can be experienced as individual insecurity.

Peter, was, perhaps the most unhappy with the changes in society. He saw the emergence of a general 'dog eat dog' mentality, particularly in Auckland.

There is a lack of sympathy and general feeling for the under classes and I feel that we should be more sympathetic to other members of society....there is a chasm being created between the haves and have-nots and getting worse....there is a general malaise of negativity.

He alluded to the growing polarization that has been identified by many (for example, Castells, 1998, Bauman, 1998 and Wilkinson et al., 1996) as global capitalism 'destroys those who fail to adapt' and rewards those who adapt successfully to the ethic of 'autonomous selfhood'. Peter felt that the changes had happened too quickly without much thought having gone into it. As labour intensive jobs were declining, Peter questioned where the reduction in employment opportunities would end and observed that there should not be a stigma attached to unemployment as in most cases unemployment was not a choice. He asserted that the changes had created an environment of 'sink or swim' and had caused great social upheaval. Moreover, according to Peter, sport on television had a lot to answer for in New Zealand as it highlighted the

'macho' image of men and anyone not 'into' rugby was labelled a 'wimp'. The so-called freedom that neo-liberal governance brought with it, whilst enabling autonomy for some, was seen by Peter as the essence of inequality for others, as different people have vastly differing degrees of freedom, and hence power to counteract decisions made by others.

Although Mark criticized aspects of neo-liberalism, he was not completely against it but rather shared Alan's reservation that, looking back, replacing the 'cradle to the grave' philosophy by free market economics, had been too extreme. Alan felt that the move to neo-liberalism was done for ideological reasons and has not always been rational. For example, whereas the privatization of telecommunications and the airport were logical, privatizing power distribution made no sense.

James felt strongly that the Government ought to start stabilizing the economy and begin by looking at developing core strengths and trying a bit harder to protect certain industries.

No-one will reward them having the most open economy in the world if they have increasing unemployment. Other countries look after their people first. It is better to have employment than ideological puritanism.

Like Mark, Grant and Allan, James suggested that the 'brain drain' would create a challenge to the government. A similar thought was articulated by the employment consultant I interviewed. According to the owner of the company, New Zealand could become a country of sales and marketing functions as symbolic analysts move offshore.

Dan, like James, suggested that he was not relying on the government to look after him and did not expect to be paid any of the money that he had contributed during his years of working. 'The problem is that New Zealand has looked to emulate the largest economy in the world' - health and education were a problem in the States as they are here now. The country was selling assets and the credit rating had dropped. Grant too observed that the Government should step in and watch foreign ownership. Many multinationals had closed down and moved to Australia.

Other more general comments were made about a variety of government changes. Gary suggested that problems in health, for example, were not about spending more money, but about managing that money better and getting results. Mark reiterated that 'you have to look after yourself' but that health, education and crime were the biggest problems

today and fed off each other. Neo-liberalism had gone too far - 'we have been conned' and the 'liberals have sent out the wrong signals'.

New Zealand has a small population and needs more of the right people - about twice as many i.e. seven to 10 million. The danger is that the infrastructure can't cope and the intelligence in the government is not there to handle that. Politicians aren't commercial and couldn't run a business or large corporation. There are no disciplines, structures or performance criteria that companies would insist on. We will suffer from people who are moving elsewhere and [who] do better in doing so.

Of great concern to Mark was whether there would be enough people to support all the beneficiaries in five to 10 years time. Consequently, Mark saw potential problems arising and observed that there could be a 'blow-up' between the 'haves and have nots'. It could get out of control. Mark felt that the Treaty of Waitangi claims required resolution and that 'we must get passed it' although some of the claims were legitimate, there should be a cut-off point.

Although the informants recognized that the shift in policy from welfarism to neo-liberalism in the last 16 years or so were driven in part by the need to overcome delayed economic adjustment to globalizing markets, most questioned the unimpeded imposition of this ideological model, regardless of the consequences. For some, the introduction of neo-liberalism was not seen as the only option to economic adjustment. Aside from economic consequences such as a reduction in tariffs and unemployment, the change in behaviour was also mentioned. Peter observed that individualization had changed the general attitude of people in New Zealand towards one another and there appeared to be less tolerance and understanding. The informants' perceptions about consequences of changes in society ranged along the spectrum from Gary, on the one hand, who regarded the changes as positive, providing the basis for enhanced freedom in business as well in society. He suggested that

...we have so many more opportunities, not less.

Alternatively Peter, was concerned that as manufacturing jobs were declining, unemployment was inevitable and individuals were not always able to make choices regarding employment. Their lack of, or paucity of power, was as a result of having their freedom of choice limited by the decisions of others - thus increasing inequality.

These divergent comments underscore Bauman's assertion that increasing freedom might be liberating for some but a great cause of anxiety and insecurity for others.

Education

People want free education rather than better education (Gary)

Bauman (1999:73) notes that education is an institutionalized effort to instruct and train individuals on how to use their freedom of choice within legislatively set agendas. In keeping with the shift to neo-liberal forms of governance, some informants suggested that educational institutions ought to function within the remit of explicit economic discourses and provide individuals with the skills that will equip them for a future of ongoing employability and security in the face of economic insecurity. In a similar vein, Rose (1999:65) comments that the 'previously unfree subjects '

...cannot merely be 'freed' - they have to be *made* free in a process that entails the transformation of educational practices to inculcate certain attitudes and values of enterprise.

Furthermore, Rose (1999: 160-161) observes that the once disciplinary normalization that schools sought to instil were tailored to 'social citizenship'. A new set of educational obligations are emerging, however, that are not confined in space and time in the same ways.

Informants expressed various opinions about education in New Zealand. Gary was disappointed with the school system and submitted that bulk funding and Tomorrow's Schools were introduced for schools to move ahead and ensure better performances. Unfortunately, bulk funding was often squashed by the Teachers' Union. He continued that the school his daughter had attended suggested that each parent pay \$500 a year for excellent education - more teachers, computers etc. but parents refused.

Businesses don't succeed by being equal, but by being better.

Consequently, Gary sent his children to a private school.

Gary felt that society in New Zealand was lagging behind business and, in the main, the education system was

...miles behind where it needs to be....Teachers need to be measured and accountable as the teaching profession is one of the most unionized and they don't want to be measured and they don't want the kids to be measured as it will reflect on them.

Moreover, he indicated that whereas business had adapted to the neo-liberal environment, society was lagging behind and intimated that the education system was an

example of a collectivity impeding progress. For different reasons, Mark agreed with Gary that education (as other areas) had not kept pace with the expectations in the working environment. In business, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were used to measure performance and if people did not measure up, they moved on.

Education was taken over by the liberals and we are starting to pay the penalty. Things are too soft - we have to be a lot tougher. Take it back to employment - KPIs to individual areas - people have to perform or move on - we are required to be a lot more ruthless in business and this hasn't flowed through to other areas in the community.

Mark suggested that the education system was letting children down as it has not kept up with technology. Furthermore, he noted that children have to be self-motivated and are often left to their own devices which concerns Mark. Gary and Mark felt that neo-liberal principles were expected, but that the guidance and infrastructure to support this form of societal expectation was absent.

Alan, however, indicated that, to some extent, education was preparing his children for the future as they learnt skills such as goal setting and were increasingly expected to be self-reliant. He submitted that children should learn to be adaptable but he did not know whether they were taught this skill. Peter was happy with the schooling his son was getting but felt that there ought to be more about

...understanding and being more tolerant of one's fellow man.

Terry too, was happy with the education system but ensured that his daughters went to the best school in the area. His philosophy was that 'life is what you make of it' - the truly autonomous individual making choices.

As neo-liberalism reduces or dismantles the welfarist agenda set by previous government regimes, it was suggested by some informants that the education system too, should supply the 'choosers' with orientation points. According to Bauman (1999), education is aimed at encouraging individuals to internalize norms that guide their practice. Similarly, Rose (1999) suggests that educational practices need to instil certain attitudes and values of enterprise given prevailing neo-liberal forms of governance. Gary and Mark agreed with these assertions by observing that education and training are not responding flexibly enough to labour market and technological changes. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the issue, it is a view held by some organizations. For example, the World Competitiveness Report (in Elkin et al., 1995:156-157) suggests that businesses in New Zealand believe, to a lesser extent than most of their OECD and Asian competitors,

that the education system meets the needs of a competitive economy. Conversely, Peter indicated that the business communities operated according to a particular value-orientation that does not necessarily accord with the perceptions of other interest groups. As he observed, schools no longer seem to emphasize understanding and tolerance of others in society, consequently, the 'dog-eat-dog' mentality prevailed.

The Changing Work Environment

The ECA only works because of unemployment (Tom)

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and the contextual influences in Chapter 3, all indicated that the world of work has changed. The industrial relations system that was based on a high degree of standardization in terms of site, working hours and the employment contract has been altered because of the international context of work which has 'forced' companies to become flexible to remain competitive. To enable companies to maximize flexibility, deregulation was introduced. Although deregulation curbed the state's regulating role, it did not spell the demise of regulation as such (Bauman, 1999:74). The introduction of the *Employment Contracts Act (ECA)* in 1991 and with it the resultant flexibility of labour in all its forms as articulated by Easton in Chapter 3, changed the nature of regulation from tripartite relationships based on collectivity to 'privatized individuality'. On the one hand, this transformation merely signalled a change in the mode of disciplining. On the other, it represented a strengthening of power inequalities within capitalist enterprises.

The introduction of the ECA heralded the end of legal centralization and employment law incorporated labour market flexibility. It was introduced to 'level the playing field' and the Act was grounded in legal liberalism based on the law of contract. It was interesting to find out how managers and supervisors saw the impact of the ECA. The managers were generally in agreement that, as Gary suggested, the introduction of the ECA was a 'positive and fundamental change'. The previous arrangements of collectivity where

...companies belonged to industry groupings and employees to unions that met once a year....ignored what the company needed and what local requirements were.

Alan agreed that the

...main benefit [of the ECA] was that it allowed individual businesses to tailor contracts to their requirements....flexibility has advantages and it is win-win.

He gave an example of this 'internal numerical flexibility' (Easton, 1997) where the hours of work were adjusted to the needs of the company but the number of employees usually stayed the same. For example, shifts could be negotiated to produce four, 10-hour days, instead of five, eight-hour days. Although this flexibility obviously suits employers, the impact of flexibility on employees made precarious the position of those affected and ensured that it was kept precarious. According to Bauman (1999:179), flexibility for the employer meant the denial of security for employees and work has become 'a daily rehearsal for redundancy'. Dan, Tom and Grant indicated that they were resigned to the possibility that they could be retrenched. For Dan and Tom, retrenchment had happened before and for James it had happened recently.

It was also generally agreed that the ECA was weighted in favour of employers and that individual contracts were preferred by companies. One of the supervisors, Dan, suggested that the advantage to employees was that they could now choose whether to belong to a union or not but the disadvantage was that power was taken away from employees. The only power employees have, is the 'skills they sell'. Gary made a similar assertion that there was full-employment in the skilled occupations. Tom, however, suggested that, where previously employees could sell their skills to the highest bidder, unemployment made this impossible. Furthermore, Tom observed that the advantage of the ECA to employers was that rates of pay could be cut and, as an example, cited his pay which had dropped from between \$75 000 - \$100 000 per annum to between \$40 000 and \$45 000 when the Act was first introduced. The company he worked for then changed contracts unilaterally - employees were given no choice. Wage flexibility (Easton, 1997) becomes possible as labour costs and therefore wages, are adjusted by the removal of penal rates and overtime.

The reduced influence of intermediate institutions, like trade unions, has further exacerbated employee insecurity. Bauman (1999:120) suggests that insecurity of livelihood is compounded by the absence of a reliable agency to make work-life less insecure. Dan and Grant confirmed this as they were members of a union although both suggested that they did not like unions. They only saw the union as an 'insurance' yet Dan, as member of the Engineers' Union, felt that he was being looked after and his collective contract was annually re-negotiated. Grant was represented by Finsec.

Although not happy with the union, as the dues were high, he wanted to protect himself against redundancy. Members were, however, consistently resigning from the union and when I interviewed Grant, about seven members had resigned that week. The company preferred to have supervisors on individual contracts as the collective contract cost them too much. Grant was still paid overtime, penal rates and mileage.

There was general consensus that the ECA had weakened unions. Peter suggested that unions had no clout since the introduction of the ECA and they have been 'decimated.' Tom too observed that prior to the introduction of the ECA things were 'slanted' to the union - then with the ECA, the 'slant' was towards management. It has now evened out and employees could negotiate more desirable contracts. Tom was able to negotiate a more advantageous contract as his skills were in demand. Others like Peter, however, had no such power in the workplace and he indicated that if his pay and conditions did not suit him, the company would suggest that he left.

According to Gary, the ECA removed unions from the work environment or 'employers got the union out'. This emphasizes Hyman's (1975) assertion that one aspect of management power is the ability to stop any opposition from arising. Gary continued that the unions were

...snapping around our heels looking for ways in but they will only get members if they create a gap between employers and staff.

In all but one instance, however, they have been unsuccessful. He felt that 'staff are generally happy with what they have' as all contracts, irrespective of level in the organization, were the same. Alan's company too was not unionized. He felt that unions were steeped in the 'old time-and-a-half' and these 'archaic views do not work today'. Alan could not remember when last his company had had a strike and suggested that the ECA has brought a reduction in strikes. James agreed with Alan that unions would like to keep the status quo and were resisting change. He observed that the role of unions had changed and they were battling to find a role for themselves - 'it's like the finger in the dike' and as companies have to change to remain internationally competitive, so too were unions trying to change their power base and become political organizations.

Other transformations in the working environment in New Zealand were identified. James and Grant personalized the experiences and Gary, Dan and Peter described the changes in terms of a company or industry. For James,

...changes in the work environment from more structured, more predictable, defined career paths where doing well was important but not pushed as hard as it is today. Hours of work have increased and focus is on performance all the way down to the shop floor.

Furthermore, employees had to align their career interests with company interests. Grant too observed that when he started working,

...40 years of career were guaranteed and employees were aware of the progression and scale up but this doesn't happen anymore.

The pressure to perform was mentioned by most informants including Dan who thought that those most affected were the 'ones at the bottom' as they had to be aware of quality, wastage and 'lose as little money as possible'. Accountability was expected from all levels.

Another change identified by James was that

...careers today are more functional rather than traditional and there has been a move from jobs to roles - that is projects and roles rather than job descriptions so job evaluation is moving and changing.

This observation was supported by the management consultant I interviewed who suggested that the personality traits required to do a job might be as important as the requisite qualification. For example, a civil engineer could be employed to manage a hospital if he/she has the management traits required for the job. Generally, the requirements for 'jobs' were first and foremost applicable qualifications, whereas for 'roles', the 'soft assets' such as the ability to handle ambiguity, adaptability and creativity, to name a few, were identified.

Apart from Alan, Gary was the most positive about the transformations and suggested that companies have responded to changes in the environment in terms of neo-liberal expectations and the ECA had allowed for the flexibility required to remain competitive. New Zealand businesses were good at competing in certain areas and understood the 'lean and mean' motto required to achieve the competitive advantage. Gary observed that this advantage was not based on what others were already doing well, but rather on what others could not do as well and suggested that companies have been

...slimmed down to make sure that they get their pound of flesh.

Alan too, saw downsizing and flexibility as significant in New Zealand particularly as it had impacted on administrative staff. Larger companies were operating with fewer people; secretarial and administrative positions hardly existed in the new environment. The

increased casualization and downsizing does have a downside and Alan asserted that it has impacted on students as they no longer find employment as easily as they used to.

According to Mark, Dan and Grant, when they started their working lives in the late sixties and early seventies, there was little or no unemployment. When Mark left school without any qualifications, there were '20 jobs to choose from' and now, even with a university qualification, there was no guarantee of finding the preferred employment. Dan observed that today 'you need to find a job before you resign'. Bauman (1999:19) suggests that

Twenty years ago in Britain 80 percent of jobs were - in principle, if not in fact - of the '40/40' kind (a forty-hour-long-working week for 40 years of life), and of a kind protected by a dense network of union, pension and compensation rights.

At the time of writing his book (Bauman, 1999), no more than 30 percent of jobs fell into that category. It is suggested that the global quantity of available work is shrinking for structural reasons related directly to the passing of control over crucial economic factors from institutions of government to the free play of market forces (Fitoussi in Bauman, 1999:19). In New Zealand, the removal of tariffs has impacted on many industries and Peter cited the example of the clothing industry when Bendon retrenched 200-300 employees with little warning¹.

The change in the retail environment was of most significance to Peter. What used to be a 5-day working week was now seven days. Furthermore, the industry has been rationalized by moving into malls with the decline in 'strip' shopping. Individually owned stores were almost non-existent as chain stores had taken over. A further significant change was the expertise that was now required in retail. Whereas in the past 'you just sold' it has become harder to sell an item as the customer has more choice and people expected service.

The informants in this study have seen the gradual demise of standardization and with it a world determined by predictability and security. Late capitalism, which included the growth of world markets and a system stratified on the basis of individualism and mobility - together with the decline in collectivism - has changed the working environment in New Zealand. In an endeavour to remain flexible, companies have made precarious the position of more and more of their employees and this insecurity of employability is destined to be permanent. The responses from informants indicate that the principal

1. Subsequent to the interview, Bendon announced that it was closing its factory in Te Aroha.

conditions of the free market have been met in New Zealand whereby flexibility has allowed employers

...to parcel up bits of labour time as a commodity like any other, so it can be bought as part-time labour, contract labour, temporary labour and so on (Hutton, 1997:67).

This reduces the choice and agency of many employees in an environment where so-called 'freedom of choice' is seen as permanent. Even the choice when to terminate employment might no longer belong to employees - even those in senior management roles.

Summary

Informants commented on the negative impact that *globalization* has had on the working environment. In general, they construed economic relations as globalized with the arrangements of flexibility seen as the localized responses to the globalizing markets. Aside from rationalization, often to achieve flexibility, the assumption that marketing functions, for example, could be amalgamated into one, serving both Australia and New Zealand was rendered problematic as the bases for such amalgamations were simply not there to be found. There was always the possibility they could be created but that there was nothing to suggest that this outcome could be assumed.

Another aspect of compression versus relativization outlined by informants was that management staff were brought in from other countries to do the restructuring with little or no knowledge and regard for local conditions. Whereas in the past, it would seem that 'local knowledge' was the foundation upon which decisions were made, this no longer seemed to be taken into account. In addition, 'international' managers had a limited tenure in the companies or departments that they were managing, making the constant changes exacerbate a situation of growing insecurity.

Globalization has affected the way in which the work was organized in all but two of the companies. Organizational structures were changing as was the stability and availability of work. Restructuring had occurred as a direct result of rationalization due to amalgamation with companies in other countries. One informant had left the company he was working for shortly after the interview as restructuring had negatively affected his job whilst another had been retrenched as a result of rationalization.

Another impact of globalization, namely the *intensification of consciousness of the world* as a whole was outlined and it was suggested that communication had exacerbated the 'dog eat dog' mentality as everyone knew what was going on in the world and that this had changed the behaviour of people as they were less likely to accept their 'lot in life'. Bauman (1990) observes that the *consumer market* displays a wide range of '*identities*' from which individuals can select their own, and international commercial advertisements show the commodity that they are selling in the social context, as part of a particular lifestyle, so consumers purchased symbols of their own identities. The market offered identity making tools to put together a 'customized self'.

The advantage of the market-promoted identities is that they come complete with their social approval, and so the agony of seeking confirmation is spared (Bauman, 1990:102).

This further increased polarization in society as enticing identities were displayed in advertisements and many people were unable to fulfil their desire to possess these but were constantly made aware of their existence.

Furthermore, those consumers that were able to afford the acquisition of goods and services globally advertised, were seen as the winners in the global environment. The move of many manufacturers such as those in the clothing industry to 'world market factories', made prices competitive and quality standards were generally maintained. Choice of consumer goods had dramatically increased in New Zealand. Indications are that, given increasing choice and growing competition, the focus of many companies is solely on the *customer*, often to the detriment of employees. As Alan suggested,

...most important is customer focus.

To allow for the flexibility required to ensure customer focus and to be competitive, the work environment has changed and the informants identified various significant transformations in their lives. It was accepted that the *40/40 working environment*, as outlined by Bauman (1999), was no longer a reality. In addition, it was not always the decision of employees when to move on. Both the structure and actual content of jobs was changing. The ECA had enabled employers to tailor their needs to the market and, as one of the informants observed, managers now have the

...flexibility to do whatever we want.

This comment negates the assumption that the individual employment contract evenly balances the power between employers and employees and that the outcomes of market

forces are inherently just. As a consequence of structural deregulation, trade union membership has declined and the managers and supervisors interviewed saw the unions' role as diminishing, particularly in terms of influence in the employment environment. The underlying philosophy of neo-liberalism, Rose suggests, is to recognise the 'capacity for action', moreover, it constructs this *capacity for action* and presupposes the freedom of those governed. Generally, the informants acknowledged this but one went further to suggest that he was 'irritated' by those who could not adjust to the new way in which society was managed and perhaps did not recognize this as potential resistance to neo-liberalism. Another informant however, was unhappy with the lack of understanding that this form of governance brought with it. Most of the informants, although in agreement that the economy needed attention, felt that neo-liberalism, which had been introduced so vigorously, was not the only way in which to govern New Zealand.

The neo-liberal environment inaugurates a new relationship between government and knowledge. Moreover, it respecifies subjects who are increasingly seen as active in their own government, creating their own futures through choice. This de-emphasizing of the government's role and the transfer of greater responsibility to individuals has produced a new regulatory and policy environment and impacts on structures such as education. According to Bauman (1999), the aim of *education* is to instruct individuals on how to manage their choices and to produce 'positive knowledge'. Consequently, education was discussed with the informants and the extent to which this 'positive knowledge' was being produced and encouraged in New Zealand's children. Two informants were concerned that the education system might not be preparing children for the business environment they would become part of. They observed that businesses had adapted well to the neo-liberal environment but education had not adjusted accordingly. Another informant, however, felt that some schools were no longer employing an understanding and tolerance of others.

Many theorists, such as Hutton (1997) have outlined some of the principal shortcomings of the free market such as the major shift in power to employers, a sharp rise in inequality and a disproportionate risk being borne by those least able to counter it. The key issue that appears to be emerging is that responsibility for security is being passed on to the individual subject. The following chapter explores more closely the way in which the informants perceived the growing insecurity as the expectation of agency is increasing in the face of diminishing structural constraints in the employment environment.

CHAPTER 6

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD OF WORK: 'A TAPESTRY OF FEELINGS'

Introduction

According to Simpson et al. (1995), sociologists have paid particular attention to some of the changes in the employment environment such as gender roles, but they have been less attentive to the broad nature of the transformations which have made today's world of work very different to that a generation ago. Simpson et al. (1995) suggest that we know too little about how employees experience work under the fast changing conditions evident today. Consequently, this chapter explores some of the concerns raised by the managers and supervisors interviewed about their experiences in organizations at the end of the millennium. Their own employment experiences were discussed as well as feelings about job security, or insecurity, and the way in which workplace governance styles could affect perceptions of insecurity. The men spoke about the need, or otherwise, for continuous learning which included education and training¹ and the advice they were likely to give their children, in terms of work choices to ensure that they could take responsibility for their own conduct to maximize their quality of life.

Personal Employment Experiences

We live with insecurity....we live with choice (Grant)

All the men interviewed had stories to tell about restructuring, either as a personal experience, as the experience of friends or colleagues or as those instigating and managing rationalization. During the interview, Mark commented that friends had been retrenched and that he was working for a company that was restructuring. Mark has been involved in two take-overs which were 'well-communicated, well-organized' reallocation of operations where every endeavour was made to re-employ staff. Those that were not re-employed were given redundancy payments and counselling. At the time of the

1. Education is a learning experience that is person rather than job orientated and *training* refers to learning activities specific to the job (Elkin et al., 1995:154).

interview, Mark indicated that his employment might be uncertain as reporting lines had changed and the suggestion was made that sales and marketing be managed from Australia. He continued that the whole issue was surrounded by conjecture and had not been 'honestly' approached. There were conflicts in personality and management style. A few weeks after the interview, Mark's perceptions of insecurity were realized. His job content had changed as a result of restructuring and he had chosen to leave the company with a financial package. Rather than seek re-employment, Mark bought a business.

James too was working for a company that had been restructuring for a while and he lost his job unexpectedly. In his interview, James indicated that one always tried to 'achieve control of one's own life' but reality was different. His retrenchment felt like a bereavement and he was trying to regain control of his life. Bauman's comment (1999:172) is apt.

The message is simple: everyone is *potentially* redundant or replaceable, so everyone is vulnerable and any social position, however elevated and powerful it may seem now, is in the longer run precarious; even the privileges are fragile and under threat.

For James, the 'severity' of the loss, or *inter-role transition* (Jacobson, 1991) was, perhaps, more evident than for Mark who had an established network and reputation in the industry and had been 'head-hunted' for his previous two jobs. The field of human resources that James was seeking employment in was shrinking as companies were increasingly outsourcing their human resource functions. The enterprise that Gary was managing was an example of this as all legal, human resource and industrial relations functions were contracted out.

Restructuring started in the bank that Grant works for about eight years ago when employees were told that they could no longer expect long-term career prospects. Staff numbers in the bank had almost halved. Rationalization was primarily undertaken to save costs. Senior management were employed on short-term contracts and were often not New Zealanders. Their mandate was to cut costs and they 'don't care how it is done'. If targets are achieved, they receive bonuses and move on.

Things did need tidying up, but this is drastic.

As with Mark and Grant, the companies that James and Dan work/ed for have been affected by the rationalization of functions and consequent amalgamations with companies in Australia. Grant and Dan felt fairly secure in the medium term but were aware that they could lose their jobs at any time. Alan and Gary, on the other hand,

perceived no threat to career continuity and both had autonomy to manage their companies as they saw fit. Alan, however, submitted that the company in Australia, could be a 'case study in insecurity' and about 30 managers had been fired. The political infighting together with a lack of strong leadership made the organization dysfunctional. Alan was offered a senior management role in Australia but turned it down - 'why change when you live in paradise'. Alan and Gary, given autonomy to manage their organizations, seemed to have strong perceptions of personal 'freedom' or 'capacity to act' as they could influence their employment futures and both men seemed to have management skills that were desirable in New Zealand. Consequently, both might see discontinuity as a challenge rather than as a threat although involuntary discontinuity seemed unlikely.

James, on the other hand, indicated that although he would like to see discontinuity as a challenge and had hoped to prepare himself for the job after his current one, the reality was different. James was lecturing part-time whilst seeking employment. When Mark told me about his 'sabbatical', he seemed very positive and was looking at all sorts of options. He has subsequently decided to go into self-employment and has bought a manufacturing business.

Dan and Grant were resigned to the fact that they were powerless to maintain desired job continuity but did not see the severity of that threat as significant in the medium term. In the span of their working lives, most informants had moved from relative job security to insecurity which Jacobson (1991) has identified as *intra-role transition*. They were required to assess the assumptions upon which they based their conduct and had to accept the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of work. Dan, however, commented that he was fairly optimistic about the stability of his job in the next five years, but in saying so, observed that

...some company gnome in a suit in Switzerland could decide that I should go.

Grant, who was happy in his job and 'wouldn't trade it', suggested that the general feeling of insecurity was often based on a 'whisper' which resulted in feelings of 'doom and gloom'. Although he had found this stressful initially, he was no longer concerned and observed that he would be lucky if he still had a job in the next three years. If he lost his job, he would start his own business. When asked what would make him feel secure, he said a 10-year contract but that was unrealistic. 'We live with insecurity'.

As a construction foreman, Tom was resigned to the fact that his job might terminate at the end of the contract yet he was confident of immediate re-employment.

The company Peter was working for was wholly New Zealand-owned and has been established for over 100 years. Peter enjoyed his job and felt secure about long-term employment. There was no restructuring or rationalization in the pipeline as staff numbers had already been reduced. The company was, however,

...frugal with money....if, for example I went and asked them for \$5000 more I don't think that they would come to the party. The mentality is 'there's a job - do it, if you don't like it, leave.

The men interviewed had various employment experiences and two were no longer in their jobs because of restructuring and rationalization. This underscores the assertion that those in the 'core', more 'secure' labour market might no longer have long-term career prospects. Managers and supervisors might be experiencing levels of insecurity traditionally associated with the periphery and may indeed, as Simpson et al. (1998) suggest, have dual status in that they have permanent contracts and access to promotional opportunities yet at the same time face redundancy. Only two of the key informants seemed to have security of employment, three were not necessarily secure in the short to medium-term but, because of their skills, were confident of long-term employability and one felt secure provided that he did not question any of his employment conditions. The following section examines aspects of security or insecurity of long-term employability as envisaged by informants.

On security

We have to manage life to get as much control as we can (James)

Change, and the uncertainty, ambiguity and loss of security that accompany it, is all-pervasive. The German word *Sicherheit* describes the condition well, and incorporates three terms that convey its meaning (Bauman, 1999:17-18). Firstly, *security* refers to whatever has been gained and will stay in our possession, and retain its value, as a source of pride. Secondly, *certainty* which, according to Bauman, is knowing the symptoms, omens and the warning signs which indicate what to expect and to tell a 'good move from a bad one'. And finally, there is *safety* where no dangers threaten 'one's body

and its extensions'. These are conditions that affect self-confidence and self-reliance upon which the ability to think and act rationally depends.

The absence or diminution of any of these dissipates self-assurance and the reduced trust in one's own ability. This impacts on the capacity to act, resulting in feelings of powerless. To many, the job provides the 'source of pride' and value in life and loss thereof produces symptoms of 'existential mistrust' (Bauman, 1999:18) in the new daily routines that have been disrupted and learned responses can lose their validity. The three elements of *Sicherheit* suffer 'continuous blows' as the twentieth century draws to a close. As the informants intimated above, 'existential orientation-points' are elusive and living with uncertainty has become a way of life.

Mark acknowledged that it was important that employees felt secure as any business counted on people. If two companies were selling the same product, the 'powerful company' with good people skills would be the successful one. He suggested that

...the one with the right people attitude will win fifty machines can replace one ordinary person, but 50 machines cannot replace one creative person.

Although insecurity existed, and it was a concern, Mark felt that the food industry had not been affected as much as the primary industries had. People would always buy food. They might change their preference according to their pocket, like buying a plain biscuit instead of a chocolate one. In saying that, however, he personally did not feel all that secure as there were indications that the sales and marketing functions of his company might merge with those in Australia.

Two senior managers and two supervisors mentioned *age*, which is a *positional* characteristic as outlined by Klandermans et al. (1991), as pertinent to their own employment situation. Mark and James suggested that age was a factor in increasing their insecurity of ongoing employability but in Mark's case, he did not perceive the threat as being particularly severe as he had built up a reputation in the industry. Tom too felt that age might be an issue but he was not disadvantaged as the construction industry had not trained anyone for the last 20 years and was now realizing it. There had been what he referred to as 'psuedo-training' but nothing else. 'Older men' like himself were in demand. The nature of the industry was such that employees were

...recruited, badly paid, half-trained and when the wet season [winter] started, were laid off until summer.

He continued that, in the meantime, they found other jobs and were lost to the construction industry. Consequently he felt that the company should target people and make plans to keep them. Age as a criteria for recruitment at senior levels in his organization was not really an issue for Gary, but he preferred his supervisory positions to be filled by younger people as he was building a company and younger people had longer periods of work ahead. In saying that, however, *attitude* remained the most important criteria.

He continued that security was often dependent on certain *personality traits*.

To be successful in many pursuits, [is to] be well presented, confident, present ideas well and be able to socialize comfortably. The socially confident person, who has some charm, will be more successful than those with years of slog behind them.

As Managing Director of a contracting business, Gary submitted that there were no 'redundancies' - only 'layoffs' and the business was expanding and shrinking at any time and employees knew this from the outset.

Gary, Peter and Alan observed that employment security for employees meant a *thriving company* with new work and the assurance that there would be more jobs the following month. In addition, Peter suggested that a *well-established* company provided security. Gary amplified this suggesting that

...the worst crime against staff is a company that fails to make a profit - cutting costs and cutting staff.

Profit was reinvested into the company he was managing. Although he acknowledged that there were some who felt insecure i.e. about 20 percent (because 80 percent of their business was in maintenance), he made the assumption that the other 80 percent did not feel insecure because it was 'easier to get work than to retrench staff', consequently, the company was continuously seeking to expand its business.

Most important though, is the business. If a manager is not performing, we fix him or get rid of him as he is putting other jobs at risk.

Where individuals *lived* and worked, and the *skills* that they possessed, also influenced job insecurity according to informants. Gary asserted that there was full-employment for skilled labour in New Zealand which implied security for these employees. Tom and Dan agreed. Although these skills did not ensure job continuity in the same organization, the severity of the threat was not as apparent for them. They both indicated that, previously, when they had been made redundant, it took them no more than two days to find other employment. According to Dan, '*skills ensure security*' and there is a lack of skills in New

Zealand which is increasing all the time as the 'old ones retire'. He continued that the apprenticeship laws had changed and companies were no longer offered incentives to run apprenticeship programmes.

James submitted that the insecurity of workers manifested itself in terms of the consultation and personal grievance processes, particularly in unfair dismissals. Furthermore,

...the concept of lifetime security has changed and, whereas in the past, employees could decide when to move on, today it is often the decision of management. Overall, there is a sense of individuals feeling really challenged, pushed hard without support and recognition being given easily. This applies to every level from management down. It is like being on a treadmill running flat out because of the pace of change.

According to James, worker insecurity was a big consideration in the change management process and management attempted to communicate continuously and tried to anticipate problems by making sure the whole process was well-planned but there were no guarantees of security. Grant thought that the younger staff members might perhaps feel more insecure because they did not have as many qualifications but

...everyone in the bank was hoping to stay as long as they can from the Managing Director down.

All the informants acknowledged that job insecurity existed but the senior managers commented that the threat could be minimized if communication to employees was open, honest and ongoing. Both Gary and Alan suggested that *management communication* provided security, but as discussed later in the chapter, communication merely asserts the prerogative of management to disseminate selective information. It seems that managers have come to terms with managing these uncertain employees by doing little except 'communicate', the degree of openness varying from organization to organization. Management's assertion of good communication was a subjective observation. Their submission that information about the company, and how it was succeeding, was one of the few things that could make employees feel secure, accentuated the significance that management attributed to so-called 'good communication'.

Employees in this research seemed to be resigned to the inevitability of insecurity as ongoing employment could not be relied on. Even the certainty of warning signs could no longer be assumed as the job loss experienced by James indicated. The loss of this security and certainty can lead to a dissipation of self-assurance as existential orientation points become increasingly elusive (Bauman, 1999). The longer insecurity is experienced, the greater existential uncertainty can become. James was experiencing the dissipation of

self-assurance as his search for re-employment was unsuccessful. The severity of the potential loss was less threatening to some of the more skilled informants than it was to others, like Grant, who stated that 'we live with uncertainty'. They did not expect, yet hoped for, security. Rose's assertion that the individual is being constructed to remain active by 'enterprizing' him/herself was acknowledged by informants who were trying to come to terms with increasing powerlessness to maintain continuity in their current employment. Yet, having the capacity to act did not always guarantee desired outcomes.

In terms of the three factors that might affect perceptions of insecurity identified by Klandermans et al. (1991), *individual* or *positional* characteristics such as age were not seen to be as important as *personality characteristics* which influence the 'internal locus of control' of individuals. In addition, *organizational characteristics* like a well-established, thriving company or workplace governance styles significantly impacted on the feelings of security or insecurity of employees.

Workplace governance

I put effort into showing the way, in leadership you have to (Gary)

'Governance' as outlined by Rose (1999:15) refers to any strategy, tactic, procedure or programme for controlling, regulating or shaping command in an organization. Given the changes in working arrangements, it became evident when talking to senior managers that they did not prescribe to any one governance plan. Rather, a range of strategies, tactics and procedures are in place at any one time. Handy (1995:193) corroborates this and expressed his surprise that he ever thought that there could be a universal management theory. He suggests that everyone needs a starter kit of knowledge and skills but that after that we have to work on solutions to 'our own predicaments'. Bauman (1996:52) agrees that there is no such thing as a 'good organization' which is good for all conditions and eventualities. This becomes a liability in a rapidly changing environment and 'in the face of untried challenges'. Businesses today are typically 'relativized' as each company tailors its requirements to local conditions whilst trying to remain competitive in the global economy. What appears to have emerged, however, is a style of governance based largely on *management prerogative*.

Williams (1992:127) suggests that there is a 'unitarist renaissance' in New Zealand at the expense of the pluralism of conjoint regulation that was evident prior to the introduction of the ECA. Underpinning human 'resources' management today, however, is the belief that getting the correct number of employees and skills, at the right price is of primary importance and employees are often treated in a similar way to financial resources (Stanworth et al., 1991:222). External numerical flexibility, where the number of employees is adjusted to needs, is an indication of this. Most of the informants worked for companies that subscribed to flexibility and it seems that a unitary management approach is becoming increasingly prevalent in New Zealand as managers feel that they can assert their 'right to manage' - particularly in an environment of relatively weak trade unions. Three of the managers spoke about the way in which they managed their organizations whilst the remainder of the informants commented on management styles.

Gary, as Managing Director of a growing and increasingly successful enterprise employing over 1000 people, acknowledged that he managed his company in an *authoritarian* way. He suggested that he used to think that he was 'non-authoritarian' until he spent time on a school's PTA and realized that he could not spend hours debating what colour a wall should be painted. He was used to taking decisions and could only operate in an 'authoritarian' way. Gary submitted that he spent a lot of time showing his employees the way which, as 'leader', was required².

It is not to issue directives in terms of ordering people to do things, but rather to get them engaged in the process so that they do what they want to do. If they don't fit - they leave. It's not consensus but engaging senior managers in the direction you want to take business. Co-operation.

To ensure ongoing co-operation and commitment to the same objective which was to become the best service company in his field, the managers of his business units went on a three-day seminar. They indicated that they felt 'strongly' that they were part of a team and identified with the company's direction. Of concern to Gary, however, was that other staff felt less included in the company. His frustration was getting managers to understand the importance of the 'leadership of their staff' and the importance of ongoing communication. Each manager was required to hold a certain number of meetings with staff and there was a bonus if these meetings were held, but some managers refused thus forfeiting their bonuses. The company held a one-day training seminar for all those with staff working for them but 'getting communication going is frustrating'. Gary believed that these problems stemmed from the introduction of the ECA (although he was strongly

2 'Leadership' was defined by Bennis (1997) as the ability to develop a sense of the mission of the organization and take action to influence others to work towards the accomplishment of the mission.

in favour of the Act). Whereas previously, much of the communication with staff was through the union, management now communicated directly and there were still 'old school supervisors' who believed that 'knowledge is power' and refused to communicate with their subordinates.

Alan too seemed to subscribe to a unitary style of workplace governance as he saw that his task as manager required the 'driving and co-ordinating of strategic direction'. He had a 'stable, experienced' management team working for him and believed in ensuring a 'happy working environment' as staff who enjoyed working, worked better.

As a hands on manager....there is no function that I am scared to take on.

Alan suggested that his views on how organizations should be managed and the environment he wished to create, 'were fixed from early on'. Mintzberg (in Cox, 1985:199) suggests that the CEO or Managing Director of an organization is inevitably the most powerful person in the organization and embodies an organization's ideology as he/she is looked up to as representing and reflecting the company's ideas. This confirmed the management styles of both Gary and Alan who subscribed to one of 'management prerogative'. Given recent radical change in the marketplace, a new distinction seems to be emerging between the terms 'management' and 'leadership'. Gary and Alan might fit the criteria of 'leadership' as defined by Shtogren (1999:2-3) who suggests that good 'leadership' is required to proactively change products, systems and people and that the test of good leadership is achieving intended changes in systems and people. Gary, in particular, indicated that he saw his role as one of leadership. The rest of the informants seemed to fit the definition of 'manager' which Shtogren (1999) identified as achieving results according to plan.

Mark was recruited into a management role to change the culture of the organization from an autocratic one. The company was made up of individual units with no national cohesion. Whereas before, Head Office had 'ruled by fear', Mark worked at improving communication by encouraging Head Office staff to become more visible and approachable. Staff were kept better informed about what was going on in the company. He felt that he had achieved his objective, but recently, the reporting structure had changed and his new boss, with a production background, had no people skills. Consequently, Mark was disillusioned with the structure.

The management style in the manufacturing company James worked for

...varies according to the last change made. In one business unit, a third of the staff were reduced and the technical modernization was not successful. There was an overwhelming sense of individual responsibility to solve problems but no management support. There are, however, good climates.....[but] there is a move towards a more unitary management style....The style is one of not fully understanding the dynamics of 'gain, gain' leadership.

James continued that the management style was purely *performance-focused* and, in doing so, was ignoring the importance of personal relationships. Furthermore, management seemed to have a bad name because, on the one hand, they claimed that they believed in people, yet on the other, they were retrenching them. This was in line with Stanworth et al.'s (1991) assertion that the deployment of the correct number of employees and skills are more important than personal relationships in many organizations.

When the supervisors who were interviewed were asked about management style, they commented on the ability and willingness of the company to *communicate* with its employees. They seemed to equate 'good' or 'bad' management style with a concomitant commitment to communication. The use of communication is one way that management reasserts its authority over the work force. Management prerogative has increased since flexible work structures have emerged and union bargaining structures undermined, the aim being to inculcate employee loyalty, commitment and dependency (Rasmussen, 1995:56). In general, communication can be a one-way process used to convey management discourse to employees and not vice versa. Dan, however, suggested that the management style in his organization was fairly open and communication meetings were held once a month. Senior managers were present at the meetings and Dan felt that, for a large company, discussion was fairly frank. The meetings were site-based as each site stood alone.

Grant found the organizational climate poor with no consultation as management were autocratic and employees were told what to do. Moreover, he suggested that the bank worked on the premise that 'if they don't like it, they can leave'. A similar comment was made by Peter who suggested that the mentality of management was 'there's a job - do it, if you don't like it, leave'. Grant found that

...whereas before it was more friendly, it is now business driven. All goals are to meet targets and if not, employees are dragged over the coals and are lucky to have a job. A lot of people fall by the wayside and their jobs are suddenly restructured away from them. The jobs are often split up and parts given to someone else. Today employees expect change whereas before no-one had heard of it [insecurity].

Insecurity was not only about losing the job but also having job content changed. Grant observed that there were banking executives who moved from bank to bank restructuring and rationalizing. This was not always successful as they were not New Zealanders and had no perception of how things were done 'down under'. 'Axe-men hack what they can'. He recognised the use of communication as one-way and issued as directives. It was ...drivel that ends up in the bin - it's do this, do that.

In the case of the construction company that Tom works for, there was no discernible management style. Many decisions were made 'at the top' about things that they knew little about, and on other issues, they were undecided. It was a large company being run as if it were a small one. Management at Head Office were constantly interfering and he had more contact with them than with his immediate boss.

All of the informants expressed the view that there was a distinct change in attitude towards so-called 'human resources' or employees. Some of the management styles suggested that the 'unitary renaissance' in New Zealand, specifically after the introduction of the ECA in 1991, was evident. Two managers commented that few employees were able to deal with the extent of ambiguity required to lead a business. Furthermore, big business initiatives were undertaken by a small number of people and New Zealand required more people who were able to create opportunities for companies and to find additional ways to provide services to customers. These assertions suggest that 'management' and 'leadership' can no longer be used interchangeably as 'leadership' seems to be synonymous with autocracy and aims to achieve change in 'systems and people'. Flexibility appears to be well suited to this pursuit. As informants indicated, if they were not satisfied, or 'did not fit in', they were expected to leave the organization. The focus on performance ignores the importance of interpersonal relationships. Individuality is seen as advantageous to the so-called 'leaders' as the contract model of the labour market has allowed employers to parcel up bits of labour time as commodities making the words 'human resources' aptly descriptive of the emerging workplace scenario.

As part of the endeavour to be an effective manager, supervisor or any other employee, continuous learning was essential to enhance feelings of job security or ongoing employability by ensuring that skills were up-to-date and transferable as flexibility became the norm.

Continuous Learning

[The other great change] is the ongoing acquisition of skills and reflecting on the knowledge you have (James)

Given the accelerating obsolescence of skills, continuous learning is being seen as essential to career continuity. In an OECD study (1993 in Elkin et al, 1995:151), it was suggested that as technological change accelerates, the nature of skills required changes more and more quickly. The difficulty is that the 'useful half-life' of the knowledge people have is contracting so fast that it increasingly tends to equal the time taken to acquire it. The report cites the example of engineers training for five years who will find that in five years, 50 percent of their knowledge would be obsolete. The eight informants had various experiences and views on development. Gary and James suggested that employees were increasingly responsible for 'developing' themselves. For Dan and Tom, in technical roles, continuous upskilling was expected, yet for Mark, Alan, Grant and Peter, it was not a requirement and was left to the individual's discretion.

Gary, quoting Tiger Woods, asserted that it was important to 'keep working at your game', and that managers had to remain current and be an asset to employers. Skills required 'refreshment and new ones gained'. Employees in his enterprise did not use company time to pursue qualifications as using their own time showed *commitment to learning*. The company might pay them for their studies on successful completion. In-house training was ongoing and the company spent \$1.5 million on company-related training. James too, was of the view that adapting through life, by continuous learning, was a personal responsibility and suggested that one great change was the

...ongoing acquisition of skills and reflecting on the knowledge you have - understand and develop that...Often employees have to align their career interests with the company interests.

The company James worked for regarded upskilling as ongoing and if it was company-related, the company paid. Furthermore, as employees entering the organization were more educated than before and the shop-floor was more skilled, upskilling for those in the organization becomes imperative as new incumbents could be more educated than longer serving employees.

This applied most specifically to employees involved in technical roles. Tom and Dan were expected to learn continuously. Tom did some learning himself and was gaining his unit standards for civil construction. In addition, some upskilling was enforced by the company. 'You only get what you put in'. In Dan's line of work, continuous learning is essential and encouraged. If he refused to upskill, incoming apprentices would be more qualified than he was. Employees had to pay for their own courses, but they were reimbursed by the company on successful completion. Dan's biggest challenge was to keep up with technology.

Upskilling was not a requirement in Mark's field of marketing provided that he was up-to-date on computer technology and was computer literate. It was expected of entrants into the field of marketing to have good qualifications but there was no need to take ongoing courses. In his experience, Alan found that qualifications were not as important as a positive attitude. He did not run a

...government department with self improvement programmes.

His company had in-house training courses and if employees wanted to go on 'self-help or do-it-yourself courses', the company might consider reimbursement. Grant suggested that courses were no longer emphasized as much as they used to be by the bank. There were in-house training courses but staff could choose whether they wanted to do them or not. Obviously the person with more qualifications would be given preference for promotion. 'We live with choice'. In Peter's job in retail, upskilling was not required but the company was introducing in-house refresher courses for staff although these were not compulsory.

All eight informants had some form of in-house training in the companies they worked for in order to improve the performance of individuals on a particular job. This was a *specific* rather than general form of learning. Most companies, although not overtly encouraging education leading to an individual's overall competence, did reimburse some employees on successful completion of courses. These courses were individual, rather than job-orientated. Gary and James outlined the importance of the acquisition of *multiple* and *transferable* skills and *personal flexibility* as the onus was on the individual to take responsibility for him/herself in an endeavour to remain employable.

Rose (1999:161) too emphasizes that

The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of incessant job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self.

Given the rapid obsolescence of skills, continuous learning was identified by some informants as essential to ensure ongoing employability. This has further exacerbated insecurity as even vocational training, which used to provide a strong base from which to proceed, no longer has the same legitimacy and guarantee of career continuity, suggesting that one of the basic elements of security has been eroded. This scenario does not only apply to those in employment, but to children making choices about future work opportunities.

On the Future and Advice to Children

There are endless possibilities but not too many of the traditional ones (Gary)

The world of work has altered irrevocably as individual expectations and desires have changed, organizations are transforming and the environment within which businesses function has undergone dramatic shifts given trends of globalization and the move to neo-liberalism in New Zealand. As permanence of employment can no longer be assumed, life-planning is affected. Employment criteria are changing constantly. Given this scenario, the informants spoke about the future of employment and the advice they would, or have given their children in an endeavour to prepare them for the world of work.

The informants suggested that changes in employment would continue and, according to Gary, there would still be people managing businesses but outsourcing would increase. 'Portfolio workers' (Handy, 1995) would become more common as people are hired in the *short-term* for their expertise. He continued that this has been especially useful for the 'older' worker who could tailor his/her working hours around lifestyle. As *continuous education* is essential in terms of future security, James suggested that skills should always be up-to-date and educational requirements understood. Well-managed *functional* and *business* skills, together with *good service*, were essential to re-employment or self-employment. James felt ambivalent about the future and did not know where all the hype would end and he thought that contracting out might be more expensive than

managing internally and that the theories of leading management thinkers were untested. As work was a social institution that required social interaction, outsourcing contributed to an increase in *alienation*. James observed that not everything could be done by e-mail and it had to end somewhere. Alan too felt that, although a skills shortage existed in the technical fields, part of the problem with these jobs was that they lacked social interaction.

Grant saw rationalization and retrenchment as *ongoing* and anticipated that by the year 2010, no branches would be left as the bank envisaged people doing virtual banking from home. One bank was setting up a new flagship branch that would only cater for the more affluent customer and this '*niche*' marketing seemed to be the way of the future. Peter also mentioned the importance of niche marketing in retail in order to remain competitive.

As many of the so-called 'existential orientation-points' (Bauman, 1999) were fast disappearing, not only in the working environment but also in other areas of life, and given the uncertainty and lack of predictability identified by the informants, they were asked what advice they would give their children so that they could maximize their ability to adjust to the future. The informants had lived through a period of stability and long-term career opportunity and were having to come to terms with fundamental insecurity, or increased freedom, depending on their perception.

Mark advised his daughters, who were both at secondary school, to

...try and target what are going to be the futuristic industries such as tourism and hospitality.....A and T should target and anticipate growth industries that might have some longevity.

He continued that roles in these industries were growing as more people had time on their hands and wanted to be entertained at both ends of the spectrum. This could be a chocolate and video on the one hand, to overseas travel, on the other. Furthermore, Accountants would always be in demand and logically, technology was gaining ground at a frightening rate. He felt that the young had to strive to ensure that they did well in terms of education but they had to do it themselves and acquiesce to a self-motivational ethos.

For Gary, possibilities were endless although not many were the traditional ones.

Kids have a more exciting future than we had and we must make them start to understand what the possibilities are.

His son wanted to become a ski instructor, 'that's fine, but he must get a degree first'. The type of degree was irrelevant, but 'he is learning to think and present ideas'. The best

education too was important to maximize the possibilities ahead and both his children attend/ed private schools. Gary was certain that those with a Bachelor of Arts degree, for example, would do a better job. Jobs that had, in the past, been 'looked down on' such as hospitality, tourism or horticulture were the growth areas.

People with confidence and ability will have fantastic opportunities.

James too, focused on *traits*, rather than on specific career options, and he encouraged his children to use technology and be aware of the 'coming trends'. Ideally, this should be followed by management qualifications so that they could be *self-employed* if required. The movement today was 'in and out of companies and the setting up of one's own business'. *Selling* in combination with *management* was important. Gary agreed that as most companies were involved in selling ideas, products or image, *selling skills* were vital. These skills required a good *attitude*, *personality* and *presentation*. As every job required these traits, he hoped that his children would have acquired them.

Like Gary, Alan was not concerned about specific career choices as much as the skills that his sons acquired, provided that they were *marketable*. According to Alan, one of the essential criteria a company looks for in people is a positive attitude with the desire to learn - qualifications were not that important, '*you can always mould people*'. It was, however, advisable to do an assessment of the job market to ascertain what was in short supply. That is why Alan studied accountancy. He also felt that *blue collar jobs*, such as fitters and turners would probably be marketable in the future. Moreover, as children required the 'nouse' for potential self-employment so *adaptability* was important. Although there was a skills shortage in the technological fields, part of the problem with those jobs was the lack of social interaction.

Peter advised his children to get tertiary training and to strive to fulfil their potential. His daughter was studying to enter the hospitality industry and his son was still at school. He was concerned about the future for his children and questioned whether they would have jobs and be able to maintain a reasonable standard of living.

We had it easy, mortgage and home and although we weren't paid a lot, money went further. Now it is a constant battle.

Although Grant advised his children to get 'a good education, a good steady job and keep respect', both his sons left school at 16. One started a trade as cabinet maker but never completed it, and the other worked with his father.

Dan's children were told that *'pieces of paper'* were as important as *experience* and that the *'best education'* was essential. His older daughter was studying to become a nurse and the younger wanted to become a doctor so she would be going to a private school for years 12 and 13. Dan was confident that the future for his daughters was secure if they followed their chosen careers providing *service*. He believed that New Zealand's top industries were tourism and farming and as long as his daughters looked after people, they would be secure.

Tom ensured that his children went to the best schools in the area, and after that *'life is what you make of it'*. He was not concerned about the future job market for his children. There were opportunities as long as personality and attitude were right.

The New Zealand environment, characterized by rapid change, unemployment, underemployment and instability significantly affects the future scenario of children at school and in tertiary education. Generally, the informants were of the opinion that the *'best'* education available was essential and two of the informants felt that private school education would give their children the edge. Four of the men interviewed suggested that *hospitality* and *tourism* were the growing areas of employment in New Zealand. Only one informant spoke about the so-called *'traditional'* careers, namely nursing and medicine, although he suggested that these occupations would be secure as they provided a *service* to people in a country where tourism is growing. Most informants emphasized the need to look at the industries of the future and those roles that would be marketable, before making career choices. Furthermore, certain *personality traits* would ensure work continuity and success. These included adaptability, self-motivation, confidence, personality and the *'right attitude'*. Two informants commented that ultimately, *'life was what you make of it'* and that there were exciting options in the future.

Summary

...man is condemned to be free... (Sophie's World)

In spite of the knowledge that, as Rose (1999:87) suggests, modern individuals are not only 'free to choose', but obliged to be free and to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice, this freedom was not always possible. Although most informants chose to maintain continuity in their present jobs, two managers were no longer employed and two of the supervisors suggested that, although they were happy in their jobs, they were resigned to the inevitability of job insecurity. In spite of a potentially successful capacity for action, there were always external conditions that might challenge career continuity. One informant amplified this suggesting that although individuals continuously reinvent themselves to maintain some control of their lives, many decisions were taken in the workplace that individuals have no authority over. Employees, at all levels, were continuously confronted with '*untried challenges*' so the acquisition of multiple and transferable skills were seen to be essential in an endeavour to maintain long-term work options.

With the increasing influence of neo-liberalist precepts in society and the move from collectivism to individualism, some forms of power have shifted to employers allowing for a resurgence of a unitary style of workplace governance based on the 'manager's right to manage'. The rise of *autocratic management styles*, and with it so-called '*leaders*' of organizations attempting to 'mould people', job insecurity is even more pronounced. Statements were made by informants that if they did not like, or fit into, the organization, they could leave thus preventing any form of conflict from arising. Moreover, it was suggested that *focus on performance* ignored the importance of interpersonal relationships and employees were seen as 'human resources' so concomitantly, job insecurity is no longer addressed. The *contractual nature* of employment assumes a *short-term relationship* dependent on the employment requirements at the time.

Attempts at *communication* from management to employees was often seen as one way of addressing the insecurity of employment but this suggests a contradiction. Communication generally means disseminating management discourse to staff so in some organizations communication could be honest and open, but conversely, it could

enhance suspicion and fear in others. Whether it actually alleviates perceptions of insecurity is debatable.

As the onus is increasingly put on individuals to be responsible for what Elkin (1995:175) calls the '*personal accumulation of capital*', they could no longer rely on employers to provide aspects of ongoing learning. Stanworth et al. (1991:238) speak about 'shorttermism' pervading the employment environment. This manifests itself in the low-level investment in education and training in 'human capital' by employers. Increasing job insecurity can result as a lack of development tends to suggest short-term work tenure. Employees are, however, required to invest in their own long-term future to ensure ongoing employability. The interviews confirmed this as the employers in the sample tended to provide in-house training that was job specific, rather than encouraging education that would enhance the long-term skills of employees. Employers did, however, generally reimburse those employees who had successfully completed courses.

In talking about learning and education, informants spoke about the advice they had, or would, give their *children* to ensure that they stood a better chance of some security of employability and the 'capacity to act' in the work environment. The importance of traits required by individuals in the workplace were emphasized and informants expressed the hope that their children would acquire some of these. Qualities such as *adaptability*, *self-motivation*, '*personality*', '*attitude*' and *confidence* were mentioned.

In short, from my interviews, six of the eight informants saw job insecurity as a 'chronic ambiguous threat', but the threat was not viewed with a great deal of anxiety by most men. The supervisors in the technical jobs were confident that they would find immediate employment. The informants indicated that they had come to terms with the notion that they could no longer assume that their jobs were for life or that it was their decision when to move on. As most of the informants had lived with the threat of retrenchment for so long, they had resigned themselves to it.

This particular sample was chosen because these men started their working lives in a stable employment environment where there were 'more jobs than people' and, in some cases such as the airforce, for example, employment contracts could be for life. They have since been confronted by the changing world of work and have had to cope with these changes whilst trying to remain economically secure. According to Rose (1996:169) what has emerged is a new self which is socially constructed, decentred, multiple,

nomadic and 'created in episodic recognition-seeking practises of self-display in particular times and places'. The so-called 'selves' of two of the informants had to be recreated on termination of their jobs (irrespective of the reasons for this termination). From one day to the next, they had moved from the status of relatively high income earners to the ranks of the unemployed and had to cope sufficiently and confidently to ensure that chances of employability (or self-employment) remained good. Rose (1996:197) sums it up well when he suggests that, although we are

...neither at the dawn of a new age, nor at the ending of the old one, we can, perhaps, begin to discern the cracking of this once secure space of interiority, the disconnecting of some of the lines that have made up this diagram, the possibility that, if we cannot disinvent ourselves, we might at least enhance the contestability of the forms of being that have been invented for us, and begin to invent ourselves differently.

Most of the informants were experiencing the 'cracking of the once secure space' and were aware of the importance of inventing themselves differently by acquiring or enhancing their skills of adaptability, creativity and ability to deal with paradox and ambiguity. In addition, continuous learning was becoming increasingly relevant to the enhancement of security. Furthermore, one informant highlighted the need for ongoing reflection on the knowledge required if potential employability and capacity for action was to be maintained.

The organizational world is no longer neatly ordered according to easily identifiable principles, but rather, is full of contradictions and uncertainties that all employees, irrespective of their level within the organization, have to come to terms with. Informants suggested that the ability to be reflexive and critical of the assumptions made regarding the world of employment are important - as those foundations upon which assumptions may have been based - are changing continuously. This made for increased feelings of existential insecurity and, more specifically, job insecurity.

The individual must plan smarter in changing circumstances of discontinuous change, uncertain future employability, and diminished organizational support (Wallulis, 1998:115).

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

The sole equality which the market promotes is an equal or near-equal plight of existential uncertainty, shared by the victors (always, by definition, the 'until-further-notice' victors) and the defeated alike....The insecure life is lived in the company of insecure people (Bauman, 1999:31,23)

The ideas of Bauman and Rose have proven to be valuable guides for exploring job security - or insecurity - as well as for understanding the life-planning strategies which might enhance long-term employability in New Zealand. This enabled me to interpret the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of a small sample of managers and supervisors in organizations in New Zealand in a manner that illuminates a range of issues that have been identified as contributing to, or exacerbating, feelings of chronic and ambiguous insecurity brought about by continuous changes in the social conditions in society. Although numerous studies on job insecurity have been conducted over the last 20 years or so, Heery et al. (1998:3) assert that academic debate and research has become increasingly dominated by a management agenda pursuing topics that are of primary interest to employers. The aim of this research on insecurity was, instead, to provide a contrast to this tendency and it puts employees, albeit in management and supervisory roles, at the centre and considers workplace change from the perspective of those that might be at the 'receiving end'.

Summary of Findings

Social theorists such as Beck (1992), Bauman (1999), Lash and Urry (1987) have sought to understand and conceptualize the *insecurities of the 'contemporary spirit'* and they are in agreement that these insecurities are largely a result of the current rationalization of work in advanced capitalist societies. The functions of employment are not only to provide economic security, but also existential certainty without which neither freedom nor the will of self-assertion is imaginable as this is the starting point of 'autonomy' (Bauman, 1999), as the 'capacity of action' as Rose calls it, or as the 'locus of control', as conceptualized by social psychologists.

What is indisputable is that individuals are increasingly left to exercise *personal discretion and choice* without much guidance. Rose (1999) suggests that this has been because of the fundamental *change in the technologies of government* as governments have shifted from welfarism to neo-liberalism and citizens have had to become entrepreneurial, moving from 'habit' to 'reflexivity'. Subjects are now ruled in a way that assumes that they are active individuals seeking to enterprize themselves to maximize their own quality of life. Tom put it in a nutshell by saying that

...life is what you make of it.

This form of governance has had far reaching implications. As much as individuals have had to come to terms with the degree of choice that they are now confronted with, so too have organizations changed to remain viable in the market economy. This has significantly impacted on security or insecurity in the workplace and the factors that have contributed to this were outlined by the informants. *Globalization* has provided challenges to management and organizations as the mobility of capital and competitive conditions have led to the changing nature of jobs, both in terms of the number, and the content, of those jobs. Organizations have sought to *reduce regulation* in industrial relations as well as to *destandardize* organizational procedures to ensure maximum *flexibility*. Emphasizing this, Alan asserted that the main benefit of the ECA has been to allow employers to tailor contracts to their requirements. In turn, however, this flexibility has exacerbated the *precariousness of employment* and ensured that these patterns of insecurity remain or become an even more important feature in employment. Globalization has further reduced job security by the ever-present threat to relocate plants or organizational functions offshore, even if this threat remains unspoken. Grant and Dan indicated that '*event uncertainty*' could be as unsettling as the knowledge of rationalization itself.

On the other hand, globalization has increased *product choices*, prices have become more competitive and all sorts of new information can be accessed. This '*intensification of consciousness of the world*' as a whole has brought with it conflicting responses. One informant intimated that consumers have more options from which to select 'self-forming' identities as they are widely advertized as part of a particular lifestyle. These identities could only be attained if economic security and some form of permanence of employability existed. For those excluded or experiencing 'inter-role' transition from a once secure job to one of potential insecurity, these choices are becoming less attainable resulting in increased existential insecurity. James intimated that feelings of *economic*

irrelevance were very real and unlikely to diminish unless individuals gained some 'control' over their lives and attempted to acquire those traits and skills that were seen as important in maintaining employment. Furthermore, Peter commented that this increased awareness brought about by globalization had led to a *change in the behaviour* of people as they were no longer prepared to accept their own 'lot in life'.

Occupying a supervisory or management role in an organization, and a permanent contract, were no longer guarantees for ongoing employability. Tom's observation that whether jobs were fixed-term or permanent made no difference to the degree of security, is emblematic of this. The existence of some form of *market segmentation* that perpetuates enduring advantages and disadvantages of identifiable groups was, however, still seen as relevant by some theorists (for example Burchell, 1994) although Burchell suggests that there are problems in deciding how to form these groups. The nature and composition of those groups are changing and managers are now experiencing levels of job insecurity and job loss traditionally associated with those in peripheral, non-standard jobs. According to Rifkin (1996 :170), managers are the latest victims of re-engineering.

Structural changes have altered the basic features of industry and will have lasting effects. Most significantly, rationalization, which aimed at eliminating modernist structures so that organizations could adapt quickly to ever-changing market conditions, has brought about an industrial relations environment based on the *assumption of an equal power relationship* where individuals are responsible for negotiating their own conditions. As the ethos of collectivity has been removed from the employment environment, so too has the influence of trade unions. This was exemplified by Gary and Alan who experienced positive outcomes as a result of the introduction of the ECA. Under it, they could manage as they 'saw fit'.

All social relations have a *power dimension* and under current conditions in New Zealand indications are that power has shifted decisively to the employer (in all but selected skilled roles). Hyman (1975) asserts that management can *prevent any form of opposition from arising*, given the power imbalance between employers and employees. In a similar vein, Gary and Alan observed that workplaces were no longer sites for conflict between employers and employees, in that they had seen a decrease in strike activity in their organizations. Furthermore, on the so-called 'receiving end', Peter and Grant mentioned the ease with which employers could 'get rid' of employees who were not suitable or

satisfied. In addition, perhaps, in an endeavour to hold onto their jobs in an environment of constant disequilibrium, employees are becoming less militant and 'get by' as best they can.

This *reassertion of management power* appears to have undermined any attempts at addressing job insecurity in the workplace as the focus has moved towards the customer and profitability. James' comment that *interpersonal relationships* are ignored at the expense of ongoing flexibility and adaptability of organizations epitomizes this scenario. As Beck (1992) amongst others has observed, *risk* is now transferred to employees in an environment of flexibility. This has many implications and has exacerbated perceptions of economic impermanence as many 'career' changes are unplanned when management make decisions on behalf of their employees. This was the situation confronting James when he was unexpectedly retrenched. As a result of that retrenchment he indicated that employees at all levels have to ensure that they possess multiple skills to enhance future employability. The acquisition of skills at the start of a 'career' was no longer sufficient. As technical skills inevitably become obsolescent, a lifetime of learning is essential. This is particularly relevant in the skilled occupations. Dan typified this by saying that unless he upskilled on an ongoing basis, apprentices would be more skilled than he was.

Responsibility for this *lifetime of learning* is passed on to the individual. This has partly been attributed to the new employment environment which is characterized by '*short-termism*' as employment relations are no longer based on long-term interdependence. *Individual contracts* are one manifestation of this and another is the *low-level of investment* in the education and training of 'human capital' which has largely been left to employees (Stanworth et al., 1991:238). Alan put this in a nutshell when he suggested that his company was not being run like a 'government department' in terms of providing self-improvement courses. Some informants, however, observed that, in certain circumstances, organizations were prepared to reimburse employees on the successful completion of courses. The lack of, or reluctance to invest in human capital, however, suggests a potential short-term work tenure. Organizations in the survey did, however, invest in their staff in terms of *in-house training* that was *job* and *workplace* specific.

According to some of the informants and the management consultant I interviewed, *non-job specific* variables might take a high priority in selection decisions. Alan exemplified this view suggesting that he did not

...care about qualifications, you can always mould people....the most important criteria is positive people with the desire to learn.

Qualities to ensure employability in workplaces of the new millennium were identified by the employment consultant and informants. These were: *adaptability, creativity, dealing with ambiguity* and *confidence*. They also highlighted the *shift in emphasis* from criteria based largely on *qualifications* to do the job to the importance of *personal attributes* - often related to personality and self-confidence. This adds another dimension to the possible *increased polarization and exclusion* in the labour market. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine these, suffice to say that differences between Pakeha and Maori, men and women, for example, could create difficulties (Dakin et al., 1995:137) when conventional selection criteria are used in recruitment practices. The recognition of the importance of these personal characteristics might create the feeling of powerlessness to attain these traits and enhance the fear of irrelevance amongst many in the employment environment, irrespective of their position in an organization.

Behind the expanding insecurity of many 'dependent on selling their labour', there lurks the absence of a potent and effective agency which could with will and resolve, make their plight less insecure' (Bauman, 1999:20).

From the preceding chapters, it is evident that: given increasing globalization; employment flexibility; the decentralization and decollectivization of labour law and decreased influence of unions - the *deliberate construction of agency* in employees is becoming more and more central to issues of governance. Individuals are encouraged to become self-reliant as the relationship between the structure and agency changes in an increasingly neo-liberal environment. As forms of governance change, so too are structures required to adequately adapt in line with the ideologies or discourses of government. Mark and Gary suggested that *education*, which Bauman (1999) identifies as an institutional effort aimed at encouraging individuals to internalize norms to guide their practice, was one of the key structures that ought to change in response to the escalation of technological requirements as well as the competitiveness evidenced in business. They intimated that most schools were not responding flexibly enough to the labour market and so-called 'choosers' were not being supplied with those reference points that were required - not only to be successful but, on a basic level, to ensure ongoing employability either within an organization or in self-employment. Peter, however, observed that he did not support the value-orientation of business and that schools were no longer emphasizing a more tolerant understanding of others.

The informants identified various *strategies* to ensure employability and thus reduce feelings of insecurity. These emerged both in discussions on their own security or insecurity as well as when talking about the *future* for their children. It was generally acknowledged that displaying the '*right attitude*' together with certain *personality traits* were important for a successful working life. Confidence, adaptability, creativity, self-motivation, self-presentation, and being 'positive' were some of these mentioned. In addition, as most companies (irrespective of their business) were involved with selling, appropriate *selling skills* were essential. Well-managed *functional* and *business skills* together with good *service* were seen as vital in ongoing employment. Some informants advised their children to target the '*futuristic*' industries such as hospitality and tourism. From the interviews it seems that employment choices are considered to be highly significant as the world of work is changing and contingent work is fast becoming the norm. It is more difficult to prepare children for a future of uncertainty than it was when jobs were standardized.

This study has only explored changing workplace relationships, insecurity and ongoing employability in a preliminary manner. It suggests a number of *avenues for future research* to complete the fuller picture. These areas of research could include an investigation into the way in which secondary schools, for example, are preparing pupils for a future of potential employment insecurity and uncertainty and what *strategies*, if any, are being provided for the acquisition of skills required in preparation for the inevitability of new ways of working. Furthermore, an investigation could be undertaken into the *recruitment criteria* used in New Zealand and how these could reconcile the differences between Maori and Pakeha and between males and females, as it seems that current criteria are tailored to groups with a 'capacity to act' in the current labour market that is already well developed (relative to others) and that might exclude large sections of the population. A change in labelling practice seems to be underway in New Zealand organizations with the move from '*manager*' to '*leader*'. This could be of concern as it indicates a decisive move towards autonomous management practices. A study could explore the extent of this and whether the change in labelling is as a result of a change in management style or whether it is simply a change in labelling practice.

Reflections on Methodology

The *combination of theoretical debates* across various levels provided me with an understanding of the growing impact of insecurity in light of changes to capitalism and as economies evolve through to new forms of globalism. As many of the foundations upon which security in life-planning was based are being eroded, a framework was sought to understand the uncertainty and insecurity accompanying the changes in the world of work. In a rapidly globalizing environment, industrial relations in New Zealand has been deregulated to allow employers maximum flexibility, thus irreversibly changing the character of employment. Bauman (1996) suggests that as social conditions are changing and we observe the '*two faces*' of '*continuity and discontinuity*', ambivalence, indeterminacy and undecidability are replacing routine, standardization and a certain sense of predictability. This was brought about by the *decreasing constraint of structure on agency*, giving rise to increased *individualization* and *self-responsibility*. Rose (1996) goes further to suggest that this '*cracking of the once secure space*' is as a result of *different techniques of governing* individuals whereby authority has been regulated by ideals of the '*freedom*' of society, markets and individuals. Rather than being the opposite of government, freedom is the objective of government.

Interviews with the informants indicated that globalization and the quest for flexibility has significantly impacted on the working and social lives of these individuals and that, in line with Bauman's assertions, certainty and security are no longer assumptions upon which the foundations of life can be built. The '*rupture*' of once secure spaces in New Zealand have occurred partly as a result of the rise in neo-liberal technologies of governance in line with trends evident in many Western societies. Successful government is seen as recognizing and encouraging the *capacity of action* of those governed. The introduction of the Employment Contracts Act was identified as an example of governing from a distance whereby the entrenched tripartite relationship between the state, employers and employees was abolished and replaced by an Act founded on *legal liberalism* and the *individual contract*.

As job insecurity is also a *subjective experience* that is based on perceptions of '*autonomous selfhood*' and the '*internal locus of control*', social psychological models were used to analyze the *perceptions and consequences* of insecurity. Although this literature primarily examined organizations in decline and did not always take into account

the broader influences of social change, aspects of the theory proved useful in understanding some of the factors affecting the *perceived probability* of job insecurity and the *perceived powerlessness* to maintain ongoing employment. Jacobson (1991) provides a useful discussion on insecurity as a clear and distinct experience using role theory to elucidate the distinction between *inter-role* and *intra-role* transition. Two informants experienced job loss, or inter-role transition, whilst three identified intra-role transition and articulated the possibility of internal and external conditions that could influence the continuity of employment. In saying that, however, the *severity of the threat* (Greenhalgh et al., 1984) was not considered significant as they were confident of almost immediate re-employment because of the skills that they possessed.

The theories informing this thesis are varied as I was attempting to paint a broad picture of the *multiple influences* on job security and insecurity as well as the *perceptions* of insecurity. Whilst Rose and Bauman explore uncertainty and insecurity in neo-liberal governance and late capitalism, the social psychological literature clarified perceptions of insecurity. Because of the breadth and focus of the theories covered, I am conscious of how much more could be done to explore, and understand, the uncertain and irreversibly transforming world of work.

General Reflections

I believe that we are experiencing *fractures* in the once ordered society and that these changes are *significant* and *irreversible*. This brings with it the inevitability of *ambivalence* as rules have changed and there is no longer an obligatory moral order. Rather, self-responsibility, autonomy and so-called freedom, brought about because of the different rationalities of government prevailing in many Western countries, manifest as the potential basis of a new moral order. This has brought with it a vast range of choices but not always the ability, or capacity, to act upon those choices.

Different people have *differing degrees of freedom*. Bauman (1990) suggests that the difference in the freedom of choice and range of actions taken are the essence of social inequality. This difference in the degree of freedom is often referred to as the difference in power which can be understood in terms of the ability to act and is thus an enabling capacity. As much as I personally prefer the ethos of self-responsibility advanced by neo-liberalism, I realize that this so-called freedom of self-reliability is unattainable for

many and that the change in site of governance from the state to the individual is likely to *increase inequality* as the lack, or paucity, of power means having one's own freedom of choice limited by the decisions of others. This scenario is increasingly evident in the *workplace* in New Zealand and was one experienced, to differing degrees, by many of the informants. As Bauman (1990:114) suggests

My bosses can choose their actions from a much wider range of alternatives than the scope of my choice. It is because our degrees of freedom are so sharply different that I will probably do exactly what the bosses want, so they may therefore count on my obedience to their rules; planning their actions, they may therefore count my actions among the resources they have at their disposal.

The deregulation of the industrial relations environment in New Zealand together with *rising management authority* have exacerbated insecurity in the workplace and, at the same time, have altered expectations. Three of the informants in supervisory roles had *diminished expectations* - keeping their jobs was the most that they hoped for.

What is certain is that, irrespective of the modes of disciplining incumbent governments employ, individuals can no longer construct a lifelong identity on the foundation of work. This implies that the '*monism of continuity thinking*' (Beck, 1992:141) requires re-evaluation as Rose (1999), Bauman (1999) and Beck (1992) have alerted us to. The detachment of the individual from the collectivity in neo-liberal society has ruptured '*continuity thinking*' in the world of work and points to the *inevitability of change*, particularly in the employment relationship. Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of life today is that Western tradition almost *triumphs in this detachment* of individuals from collectivities giving rise to extreme uncertainty and insecurity for many.

This thesis has highlighted the *endemic insecurity of employment*. What needs to be addressed, however, and at all levels in society, is *preparation* for new ways of working. Irrespective of which government is in power and the modes of discipline that are functioning, the world of work has changed irrevocably. Not being prepared is, perhaps, one of the most common reasons for anxiety and heartache at the end of the millennium. A lifestyle is set up around the money that our jobs have provided. When jobs are terminated, aside from a 'downshift' in lifestyle (albeit often temporarily) which, in itself, is not critical, what could become a tragedy is when *inner resources* too are impoverished and 'autonomy' or 'capacity for action' is paralyzed. What is required is a *shift of awareness* that acknowledges the hardships associated with contingent work and that advocates *supportive norms* and life strategies that aid the transformation of the inner self

of all those currently involved in the hazards of working life, of those excluded from it, and of those who will join it.

The remedy to the hazards of less-secure work environments will not be found in a new 'contract' to replace the old one. We cannot render arms-length and transactional that which is ultimately personal and emotional. Knowledge-based competition will demand more of us, not less; the requirements of committed involvement in work will increase in parallel with the insecurity associated with it....Rather than teach ourselves to care less, imagining that we can somehow shield ourselves from the bonding and self-identification that committed work inevitably entails, we must face a harder and more demanding truth: namely, that healthy resolution lies in inner wisdom, not external arrangements (Pascale, 1996).

APPENDIX 1

INFORMATION SHEET

The aim of this study is to explore the growing feelings of job security and insecurity among managers and supervisors in New Zealand businesses against the backdrop of globalization and neo-liberal policies. It is widely recognised that the nature of work and employment in terms of job content and structure has changed significantly in the last 20 years or so. Paid work has been seen as a means to the economic, social and personal well-being of individuals but these assumptions about work are being tested in the work place today where legislative and economic developments combined with the changing nature of management and employment seem to be undermining the ability of employers to generate well-being. Consequently, I would like to examine what perceptions of job security and insecurity exist, how they manifest themselves and what the implications or consequences are. I want to ask questions about the changes that managers and supervisors have experienced over recent decades, and the degree to which job security and insecurity has changed.

If you agree to participate in the study, I would like to meet you for one interview that will last for about an hour at a time and place that is convenient for you.

At any time during the study, you have the right to:

- refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study completely;
- provide information on the understanding that this interview is completely confidential and you will not be identified in my study;
- if you so request it, you can receive a copy of the interview transcript and examine and amend any part of the transcript you do not agree with; and
- be given access to the thesis when it is completed.

Consent Statement

Iconsent to participate in the research project '*From Security to Opportunity?: Precarious Employment Among Managers and Supervisors in New Zealand*' and give permission for Eva McLaren to use the information gained during research for her thesis presented for the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology at Massey University.

Signed.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

GENERAL

Changes in work life

- I would like to talk about your *career and work history* (fairly in depth probing here)
- What has/does work mean to you and have you experienced a change in:
 - *expectations of you*;
 - *your own expectations* of the organization; and
 - have your *aspirations* changed?
(possible prompt - over what time?)

Changes in society

- What changes in *social life* do you consider to have had a significant impact on your life and that of your family in New Zealand (prompts e.g.. globalization, neo-liberalism, decentralization etc.)
- What are the consequences of these changes?

Education

- Could you please tell me a little about your educational *background and training* (and *expectations* of training/upskilling).
- For managers - own expectations and also expectations of staff
- Perhaps also educational expectations of *children* -what would you advise your children to work towards in terms of a future career or employment?

PRESENT

- Perhaps start with asking what is important in making people feel secure in their current job?
- What makes you feel secure?

Describe the organizational climate

- What changes have occurred in that climate since you began there
- What has brought about these changes

Freedom in the Job

- What aspects of your job do you have a lot of say over (how much 'freedom'/say do you have in your own job).
- Are there aspects in your work that you would like more say in, which ones?
How would such change assist you?
- *Power* or feelings of *powerlessness* to control events that may affect your job or control over working conditions. (Possible prompts based on Greenhalgh's subjective threat -lack of protection; unclear expectations; organizational climate and employees' belief of dismissal procedure).

- Perceived severity of threat (if relevant) (probe)
- If feelings of *empowerment*, why?

Employment contract

- Could we talk about the advantages and disadvantages of the fixed term contract (advantages and disadvantages to individual - if relevant).
- Has the outcome been desirable in terms of career progress/advancement; level of commitment; relationships in the organization with manager/employees.

FUTURE

- In terms of the future, what do you anticipate are going to be the significant changes to the nature of employment?
- What are your employment *expectations of the future* - (probability that changes will occur - positive - why? negative - why?)
- What would ensure *security* for you in your employment - are you likely to achieve this?
- Where do you hope to be in terms of a *career* in the future and what challenges stand in the way of your achieving this?
- How would you rate your chances of succeeding with these challenges?
- How would you account for this (success/failure)

FOR MANAGERS

- Why have you adopted the management style that you have? What are the major challenges facing managers today (uncertainty/flexibility)
- What particular skills do you think are required to manage employees as we approach the new millennium? Do you think that they are different to the past? (prompt - do you see yourself as *managing uncertainty*?)
- Have the changes in the work environment affected the way that you manage people?
- What does it mean to manage a flexible work environment (how are you managing a more *flexible work environment*)
- What does this mean for employees? (look for clues about possible changes to the meaning of 'security')
- What role does management play in assisting employees with 'flexibility'? (Do you see yourself as contributing to feelings of security/insecurity in your staff. Have you seen it as being an issue)

FOR SUPERVISORS

- *Managers/company's management style*
- What does labour market flexibility mean for you?
- What challenges does it pose?
- To what extent does the company/management assist you with negotiating 'flexibility'?
- To what extent is 'labour market flexibility' creating opportunities for you?
- How does the company address issues of *insecurity* (if they exist)

GENERAL WRAP UP

- What particular concerns do you have for the employment of your children (if appropriate) in the future? What issues or problems do you think they are likely to encounter?
- Informants *outlook* for the future in terms of implications/consequences for their children/families and how they view insecurity - is it from security to opportunity? or security to fear and exclusion etc. (lots of probing).

(Obviously questions not to be asked in any particular order)

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