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**CHANGING THE MASTER OR**

**MASTERING THE CHANGE ?**

Women Secondary Principals and Occupational Closure

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines causes of, and reaction to, the under-representation of women as Principals in the secondary teaching service in New Zealand in the 1990`s. The model of occupational closure developed by Witz (1992) is used as a theoretical base to describe the sexual division of labour and the vertical and horizontal segregation of women in the paid labour force.

The concepts of exclusion, inclusion and change are used to analyse work history data derived from interviews with the research participants. It is argued that marked changes in societal and individual attitudes and in workplace practices are contributing to alterations in gender relations. Of particular importance, in contemporary inclusionary processes, is women`s awareness of, and the value they attach to, the positive contribution that women can, and do, make to workplace relations.

The thesis concludes that, despite the gains that some professional women appear to have made, access to positions of real power and equality in the workplace has not yet been achieved.

To my daughters and grandchildren. May they always be able to stand in their own patch of sunshine.

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## ADDENDUM

Following discussions subsequent to the publication of this thesis, I feel it is necessary to include the following addendum.

In both the Introduction and in the Methodology chapter I claim to be doing feminist research. I state on page 54 that " it is implicit in the literature that feminist research is primarily research about women, for women, *by women....*". I then argue that it is possible for a man to do feminist research. While I am still prepared to debate the issues, I accept that this a highly contentious argument and that my discussion in support of my assertion is somewhat perfunctory and does not recognise several important points.

These points should be added to that discussion. First it is acknowledged that a man can do *pro-feminist* research but because a man has not experienced gender discrimination at first hand he cannot do *feminist research* per se. This argument rests on the uniqueness of the relationship between feminist theory, feminist research methodology and gender politics compared to research carried out by members of dominant groups on other disadvantaged or less powerful groups. Thus the second point to be made is that when men carry out research about women and particularly research that claims to be on behalf of women, they should state very clearly their gender politics and values and recognise the problems associated with conducting emancipatory research. These problems include the potential for the dis-empowerment and exploitation of the group under study and for faulty analysis.

Finally it should be recognised that interviewees may well explain their experiences more clearly to a male interviewer (rather than a female one) because they can assume that a man could not know about them because he is male. However a woman may withhold some information from a man that they would readily divulge to a female researcher.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	v
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE; LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	6
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	6
<b>EXCLUSION AND SEGREGATION; HOW WOMEN ARE KEPT OUT</b> .....	9
<b>The Sexual Division of Labour</b> .....	9
<b>Occupational Closure Theory</b> .....	10
<b>Patriarchy, Socialisation and Gendered Work Roles</b> .....	13
<b>Problems, Obstacles and Handicaps</b> .....	16
Negative Sexual Stereotypes At Work .....	17
Systematic Male Bias, EEO and Tokenism .....	18
Individual Discriminatory Experiences .....	20
Seeking a More Balanced Life .....	21
<b>INCLUSION; THE PROCESS OF USURPATION</b> .....	22
<b>Inclusion Theory</b> .....	23
<b>Inclusionary Practices</b> .....	23
<b>Equivalence; The 'Same But Different' Argument</b> .....	25
The Sameness Approach .....	25
Valuing Difference .....	26
A Feminine Management Style or the Style of the Nineties ? .....	26
Haecceity .....	27
Summary .....	30
<b>CHANGE; COSMETIC OR REAL?</b> .....	30
<b>The Socio-Historical Context</b> .....	30
<b>The Extent of Change</b> .....	31
Continuing Patriarchal Constraint and Discrimination .....	33
Other Limiting Factors .....	34
<b>Summary</b> .....	36

<b>CHAPTER TWO; METHODOLOGY</b> .....	38
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	38
<b>METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE</b> .....	39
<b>Personal Preference and Beliefs</b> .....	39
<b>A Feminist Research Perspective</b> .....	39
Relevance of a Feminist Methodological Perspective.....	46
<b>THE RESEARCH</b> .....	48
<b>Overview</b> .....	48
<b>Respondent Selection and Contact</b> .....	48
Respondent/Participant and Interpreter Relationship .....	50
<b>The Interviews</b> .....	51
<b>Transcription and Analysis</b> .....	53
<b>Interviewing Concerns</b> .....	53
<b>CHAPTER THREE; THE BASIS FOR CHANGE; EXPERIENCES OF EXCLUSION</b> .....	56
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	56
<b>FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EXCLUSIONARY EXPERIENCES.</b> 56	
<b>Socialisation and Expectations</b> .....	56
<b>Confidence and Self-Concept</b> .....	59
<b>Limited Career Aspirations</b> .....	60
<b>Initial Career Obstacles</b> .....	62
Systematic Male Bias.....	63
Dual Role Demands.....	64
Seeking a Balance to a Dual Life.....	66
<b>EXCLUSIONS</b> .....	68
<b>Equal Employment Legislation</b> .....	78
<b>Summary</b> .....	79
<b>CHAPTER FOUR. MASTERING THE CHANGE ? THE TRANSITION TO INCLUSION</b> .....	80
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	80
<b>TOWARDS INCLUSION</b> .....	82
<b>Initial Reactions, Personal Decisions</b> .....	82
<b>Mentors and Partners</b> .....	86
<b>Maximising Opportunities; The Right Person, Place and         Time</b> .....	90

<b>THE INGREDIENTS OF INCLUSION</b> .....	91
<b>Choosing Your Ground; The Right School</b> .....	92
<b>Integrity</b> .....	94
<b>Inclusionary Practices and Tactics</b> .....	98
<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	100
<b>CHAPTER FIVE. CHANGING THE MASTER; THE GENERATION OF CHANGE</b> .....	102
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	102
<b>INCLUSION; INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL CHANGE</b> .....	103
<b>Quantitative Change</b> .....	103
<b>Change in Individuals</b> .....	105
<b>Agents of Change</b> .....	108
<b>Societal Change</b> .....	109
Management Style .....	110
Male Attitudes .....	112
<b>Summary</b> .....	114
<b>ONGOING EXCLUSION; CONCERNS AND RESERVATIONS..</b>	115
<b>Patriarchal Control</b> .....	117
<b>The Feminization of Education</b> .....	118
<b>Socio-Economic and Ethnic Factors</b> .....	119
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	121
<b>CHAPTER SIX. CONCLUSION</b> .....	122
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	122
<b>EXCLUSION</b> .....	123
<b>INCLUSION</b> .....	124
<b>CHANGE</b> .....	126
<b>TRANSITIONAL AMBIVALENCE</b> .....	128
<b>UNANSWERED QUESTIONS</b> .....	130
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	132
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	139