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HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR:  
Women's leadership  
in New Zealand local government

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

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

Massey University, Palmerston North  
Aotearoa New Zealand

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# DEDICATION

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For my dear friend and colleague, Suzann Clair Olsson, whose passing came far too soon for everyone who loved her and benefited from her creative spirit and her ability to be open to the moment.

# ABSTRACT

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This study began with the premise that looking at leadership in a different setting might generate new understanding of how leadership works. Only four women mayors had held office in New Zealand before the 1980s but when their numbers grew over the next two decades, there were signs of a difference in their approach to leadership. Although the amount of scholarly work published on leadership is vast, the body of academic literature on local government leadership is slender. The possibility of finding new knowledge about leadership by studying women mayors made them an intriguing area to research.

The research sought answers to two questions:

- how do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and explain their own leadership practice; and
- how do women mayors' views of leadership compare with leadership theory?

The information gathered to assist in answering the research questions included:

- interviews with three mayoral candidates in the 1998 elections,
- interviews with 18 of the 19 female mayors in office during the 1998-2001 term, and
- a case study of Jill White, mayor of Palmerston North from 1998-2001.

The case study comprised a series of interviews with Jill White during the three year term, a selection of newspaper stories about the mayor and council gathered during 1998-2001 and interviews with four key informants about Jill White's leadership after she lost the election in 2001.

The findings of the research were that the research participants saw leadership as a process that took place working with the community to achieve mutually desired leadership goals. Leadership was not generated by a single person's abilities, nor was it automatically linked to a position such as being mayor, although being mayor gave a lot of opportunities to participate in and encourage leadership.

Four areas participants considered to be requirements of exemplary mayoral leadership were:

- being at the centre of webs of people rather than at the top of a hierarchy
- having less concern for ego than for working towards change
- being committed to making a difference in the community and/or the council
- being prepared to sacrifice their own interests for the good of the community

Comparing participants' views of leadership with leadership theory showed that their descriptions and examples of leadership were closely related to transforming leadership (Burns, 1979), whereas transactional leadership in the sense of acting in your own self-interest or trading favours with others, met with strong disapproval.

The heroic paradigm of leadership that has been prevalent in the literature, with its focus on the leader, was absent from the participants' accounts. Their achievements came from working with others and they saw the ability to involve others in the leadership process as the strength of their leadership.

The implication of these findings is that the focus in much of the literature on individual attributes of people in leadership positions, as if they had to 'do' all the leadership themselves, is misplaced. Being concerned to make a difference with and through others is at the core of leadership.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Any undertaking that involves more than six years of your life draws on the support, understanding and assistance of others. During this time my friend and colleague of many years, Su Olsson, passed away suddenly. The last time we were together she was urging me to make time to work on my thesis even though it was my busy teaching semester. Her generous spirit and commitment to gender scholarship are a great loss and this thesis is dedicated to her memory.

I would like to acknowledge the encouragement of my parents who were enthusiastic when I told them that I had enrolled for a PhD and although they are no longer alive to see its completion, always had that unswerving and almost unnerving faith in me which does not allow for anything less than success.

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The people I have named here are only a few of the many who have encouraged me and have taken a kind and generous interest in my progress. Thank you all. I could not have done it without you. You helped me to keep moving towards my goal and reminded me of the truth of the saying:

He manga wai koia kia kore e whitikia  
*It is a big river indeed that cannot be crossed.*



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# CHAPTER ONE

## Looking at women mayors to learn about leadership

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As leadership comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs and aspirations of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership style (James Macgregor Burns, 1979, p.50).

### *INTRODUCTION*

Of all of the concepts linked to the world's future and well-being, leadership must be among the most intriguing and the most mysterious. Despite decades of scholarly and populist debate about what leadership is and how it can best be understood, there is still little agreement about the nature of leadership. Yet, notwithstanding a lack of shared understanding about what it is, there is almost universal agreement about the importance of leadership. In other words, *whatever* it is, leadership is seen as having the power to change our lives for the better.

This study explores the leadership beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and practice of women mayors in New Zealand, to see whether investigating leadership in a different context brings new understandings of the nature of leadership. The study is set within local government and makes an original contribution to scholarly debate by examining the mayor's role in relation to leadership, an area that has been overlooked almost entirely by both political science scholars and writers on leadership from other disciplines. Similarly, this study's gender focus on women as political leaders is an area that received very little attention before the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1970s.

## *FOCUS ON WOMEN MAYORS*

To a large extent, writers on leadership have tended to keep looking at the same kinds of people and environments to find out more about leadership. Many studies, through the decades from the 1940s onwards, have examined male corporate and political leadership. This emphasis on high profile leadership has tended to highlight leaders of nations or organisations' chief executives. In such settings, the drama of events, the charisma of the leaders involved and the familiarity of some of the stories surrounding their time in power, can be a distraction from looking at leadership itself. Many studies become somewhat mythic accounts of the heroic exploits of the leader rather than more balanced and detailed accounts of all the interactions involved in particular episodes.

Leadership in the mayoral context is usually less likely to fall prey to the seductive glamourising of leader as superhero, because of the everyday practicality of sewerage and water reticulation and many of the other concerns which are the stuff of local government meeting agendas. Also, women as mayors may be able to be more searching and critical in their assessment of leaders and leadership, since women as mayors are a relatively recent phenomenon and are thus less likely to accept the prevailing norms of the environment uncritically, simply because of familiarity.

If one wishes to find out more that is new about leadership, it makes sense to look in new and different places. Local government in New Zealand has been a male bastion throughout its history. Although the numbers of female councillors began to increase during the 1970s, there were still only one or two female mayors. From being an unthinkable oddity in the nineteenth century, then an extreme rarity even through the earlier decades of the twentieth century; women mayors moved to becoming an accepted minority among civic leaders only in the 1980s. During the 1990s the proportion of women mayors reached over 25 percent and the notion of a woman mayor began to seem less aberrant and more acceptable.

From a researcher's point-of-view then, women mayors could be expected to have a fresh view of leadership. They could be expected to see and say things about leadership that may not have occurred to others who were not newcomers to these

positions of influence. Talking to women mayors might well give a new perspective to the massive weight of research and publishing in the field of leadership. The voluminous mass of leadership research testifies to the importance ascribed to leadership, both in academic circles and in the wider community.

### *NATURE OF LEADERSHIP*

Because it is seen as being able to change unpromising situations into good outcomes, leadership has become a focus for research and discussion about what is needed in organisations, in particular groups, in countries, in communities. In fact, there are few places where leadership is not seen as the missing ingredient which could change frustration and disillusionment into energy and progress.

As well as being considered a positive force which can generate good outcomes, leadership is also seen as necessary in most social settings and as a part of studying many different disciplines. For example - and this is by no means an exhaustive list - leadership is studied in politics, in history, in management, in psychology, in philosophy, in gender studies, in anthropology and in education. In his book, *Leading Minds*, Howard Gardner (1995) demonstrates the ubiquity of leadership's importance by exploring the approaches to leadership of people from fields as widely different as anthropology (Margaret Mead), physics (Oppenheimer), civil rights (Martin Luther King), national and international community work (Eleanor Roosevelt), linking leadership to these individuals' ability to tell stories that gave others a sense of identity and belief in the future.

This central aspect of leadership, being able to give people a sense of direction, is part of the dictionary definitions and is also at the core of much of leadership theory. Isolating the central aspects of the meaning of leadership and maintaining a focus on the core elements is vital, because in much of the work on leadership people have been looking for leadership in the wrong places. There has been a tendency to assume that the defining elements of leadership are contained in peripheral aspects of the leadership situation, such as the gender of leaders or the hierarchical position of leaders in an organisation. These confusions are a reminder that as well as discovering what leadership is, it is also important to be clear about what it is not.

## *LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT*

For example, in research and writing centred on organisational contexts, leadership and management are often conflated into one and the same thing. There is debate in the literature about the nature of the relationship between leadership and management. Some researchers see each as closely allied to the other, while others argue strongly that one is completely different from the other. Without necessarily wishing to join forces with those in either camp, the purely logical point can be made that in order to understand leadership, it is essential to make *some* distinction between leadership and management. If leadership and management was the same thing, it wouldn't be necessary to try to define leadership separately.

In this thesis, leadership is seen as conceptually broader than management and separate from the notion contained within management of having legitimate power to control others or order them to act in a particular way. Followers must be free to choose to be involved in the leadership process. Coercion and command can exist within management, but not within leadership. However, recognising that coercion of followers is incompatible with leadership, does not mean that managers can not be leaders, or that managers are not often involved in leadership. But it does mean that they are not leaders simply by virtue of being managers. The two concepts, leadership and management have discrete meanings. For leadership to *be* leadership there must be freedom of choice for followers.

The notion of freedom of choice as a defining element in leadership is particularly relevant and valuable in the context of this thesis. If the need for freedom of choice for followers is recognised as a defining aspect of leadership, it is clear that the mayor's role within local government in New Zealand can be seen as an ideal site for exploring the concept and practice of leadership. To explore leadership, it makes sense to look for a place where people are expected to lead, but have no management responsibilities to make it easier for them to enforce their will by edict. The position of mayor in New Zealand local government has formal status, but is a figurehead position without any line management responsibility or power to command. Although much is expected of a mayor, it must be achieved through influence or the status of

the position or the mayor's personal abilities, rather than any institutional power linked to the position.

### *MAYORAL LEADERSHIP*

For this reason the mayor's position makes extreme demands on leadership, relying on the mayor solely as leader, rather than both manager and leader. A mayor's achievements depend on an ability to facilitate the leadership process. A mayor's leadership or lack of leadership is much more evident than a manager's leadership. A manager has institutional authority and can overcome leadership deficiencies by giving orders which are likely to be obeyed by subordinates because of their subordinate position. A mayor, by contrast, needs to influence and persuade other people to gain their help in achieving desired goals.

Apart from the problems of the lack of resources and of institutional powerlessness, the local government environment also makes demands on mayors. The last 25 years have brought about extensive change for local government. Responding positively to change from outside that cannot be controlled requires leadership, and it is in the last 25 years of change that the majority of women mayors have come into their positions. They have had to cope with the way the complexity of the mayor's role has increased due to local government restructuring and legislative changes, although many of them have not had the benefit of being involved in local government during the time when the changes were taking place.

Coping creatively with change and gaining the support of others is needed if a mayor is to lead, rather than resort to ineffective tactics such as bullying or becoming resigned to looking on passively. As well as anticipating and responding to change, the position of mayor also involves performing several different roles at once so that a mayor is liable to experience role conflict and role overload. A mayor must be advocate, frontperson, community entrepreneur, change agent and mediator. A mayor must be able to perform politically in council meetings, bureaucratically in following up complaints and locally as community figurehead and resource person.

Having to be 'all things to all people' is one of the stresses of leadership and as it is inherently part of the mayor's role, the multi-faceted nature of the mayoralty is another factor which makes it an interesting and useful place for exploring leadership. The breadth of all that is entailed in being mayor requires leadership – that is the ability to enlist the support of others to achieve goals – as it is not possible to perform all of the tasks required of a mayor without supporters, or followers. Success in enlisting support from a wide variety of areas is an ability which has been typical of successful women mayors in New Zealand. Naturally, the reasons behind their success are inherently interesting to a leadership researcher.

The possibility of a new leadership dynamic in the relationship between mayor and community was an interesting area for me to explore, as it might reveal a new and different aspect in the theoretical understanding of leadership. On the assumption that talking to women mayors about their view of leadership could show whether there was anything in particular about their approach to the mayoralty that was distinctive in leadership terms, this study began.

## *RESEARCH STRATEGY*

The research questions which inform the investigation are:

- how do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and explain their own leadership practice; and
- how do women mayors' views of leadership compare with leadership theory?

The underlying assumption is that women mayors will have views about leadership on which they base their practice and that they will be able to describe their views. The first objective is to explore women's leadership and find out what women as leaders demonstrate which might illuminate the understanding of approaches to leadership and leadership theory. The second objective is to explore whether the findings of this study bear out the claims of other researchers in the field of women and leadership. Previous writers have claimed that women are more likely to be democratic rather than autocratic as leaders and that women are more likely to be transformational leaders rather than transactional (Rosener, 1990; Helgesen, 1990). Transformational

leaders work towards mutually desired goals with followers to transform a situation, while transactional leaders exchange favours with followers to gain goals promoting each party's self-interest.

Exploring these claims is an important enterprise because effective leadership remains one of the few ways to improve the well-being of the community without necessarily costing more in terms of resources. Consequently, understanding leadership better could be an important way of helping to make a difference in people's participation in the leadership process.

### *STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS*

The rest of this chapter outlines the structure and content of the thesis. This introductory chapter has given an overview of why one might look at women mayors to learn more about leadership theory, explaining the reason for the research and for the choice of topic – that is, why one would choose women mayors and local government as a place to explore the nature of leadership. Chapter One has also explained the objectives of the research, as well as introducing and explaining the research question and the reasons why the research matters.

Chapter Two goes more deeply into the concept of leadership, reviewing some of the relevant leadership literature and exploring ways that politics, culture and gender relate to leadership. The third chapter deals with local government as the background of the research, explaining the characteristics and history of local government in New Zealand and the recent changes to the operating environment of local authorities that created the leadership context for the women mayors interviewed in this study.

Chapter Four explains the details of designing and planning the research and gives an overview of the methodology used in the thesis, explaining the rationale behind deciding to use information gained from a case study of one woman mayor alongside material gathered in interviews with three mayoral candidates and all of the women mayors in office during the 1998 to 2001 local government term. The specifics of the methods and the instruments used are discussed and also the advantages and limitations of the choices made by the researcher as part of the research process.

The next three chapters deal with the information gained from carrying out the study. Chapter Five is the first results chapter, reporting on interviews with three mayoral candidates, highlighting aspects of their opinions and experiences of leadership in local government and other arenas. Chapter Six moves on to the results of interviews with all the female mayors in office during the three year term 1998-2001. Then, in Chapter Seven, the results of case study of Jill White as mayor of Palmerston North from 1998 to 2001 are presented, showing one mayor's experiences and attitudes during the three years, as well as key informants' opinions of her leadership after her term of office.

Chapter Eight shifts the focus to a discussion of the implications of the results of the research, in terms of its contribution to an understanding of leadership practice and leadership theory. Chapter Nine, the final chapter, draws conclusions from the discussion in chapter eight and highlights the most significant aspects of the findings of the research.

In this chapter, I have presented the research questions and their focus on women mayors in New Zealand. In order to provide a theoretical context for this study, the next chapter centres on a discussion of the concept of leadership. Although chapter one briefly explored the nature of leadership, a more searching analysis is needed to underpin this study of women mayors. Chapter one pointed to leadership as a process, a means of giving people a sense of direction and an influence relationship entailing freedom of choice for the parties involved. The purpose of chapter two is to explore leadership further, particularly in relation to politics, culture and gender.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Leadership: the case of a concept caught between two paradigms

---

Without responsive followers, there is no leadership, because the concept of leadership is relational. It involves someone who exerts influence and those who are influenced. However, influence can flow both ways (Hollander, 1978, p.4).

### *INTRODUCTION*

Chapter One introduced and explained the purpose of the research. Now the task of Chapter Two is to establish a theoretical context for the project. In this chapter, I will make the case that leadership is a concept caught between two paradigms. The first paradigm is the idea of the leader as hero. Rather than recognising leadership as a relational process of people influencing each other, under this paradigm leadership is directly attributed to the leader and the leader's superior qualities: the leader leads and followers follow. However, exploring the way that leadership works suggests a more complementary role-taking, as leadership happens in the interactions among people rather than as a result of one person's superior powers.

Although, over time, a new paradigm has been introduced and writers now refer to the new leadership and post-heroic leadership, the new paradigm has had difficulty in gaining traction. In spite of referring to aspects of post-heroic leadership, many researchers show, in their explanations and examples, they are still clinging to the paradigm of the leader as hero. To explain the way that leadership research is haunted by the ghost of the hero/leader and needs to abandon the old paradigm, I will examine scholarly writing in the areas of leadership theory, gender and leadership and culture and leadership.

The first part of this survey will deal with leadership itself, the second will investigate the new perspectives that gender theory brought to understanding leadership and the third section will deal with the way that the concept of culture can enhance understandings of both leadership and gender. A Venn diagram with three overlapping circles signifying leadership, gender and culture is shown in Figure 1 as an illustration of the interlinking conceptual relationships. The shaded area in the top circle of the diagram shows the boundaries of the three main concepts in this study overlap.

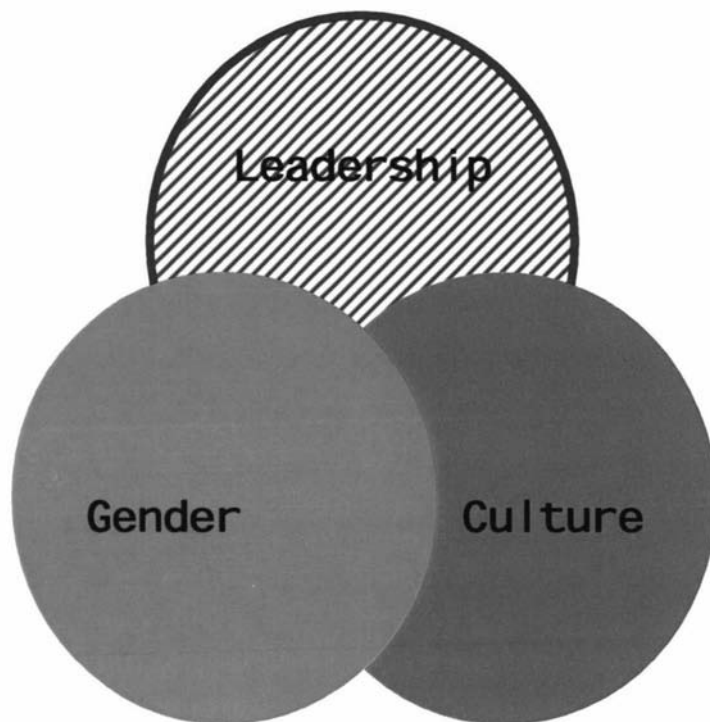
The diagram serves the purpose of making visible the way that gender and culture are an integral part of understanding leadership, as this chapter seeks to include them as critical elements in the leadership story. Although leadership has been studied and researched energetically from the 1880s onwards, only as recently as the 1970s have the perspectives of gender and culture come to be seen as relevant. In earlier times, gender was not considered relevant because of an assumption that only men could be involved in leadership, partly because interest in leadership first developed in very male-dominated environments such as the military and corporate business.

The idea of culture seemed just as irrelevant because it was assumed to be a feature of the lives of different, distant, exotic groups of people, who were studied by anthropologists and photographed for magazines like National Geographic. Culture was not recognised as a ubiquitous and critical factor in explaining social phenomena, until work by social scientists made its hidden yet complex power in shaping all social groups more evident. Although leadership, gender and culture are intertwined, I shall deal with them separately to explain the links each conceptual area has with the others.

Leadership is best explored by looking first at the conventional wisdom of the way theoretical development in leadership research is typically described. The typical way of explaining the development of leadership theory is as 'schools of thought' which developed one after another as one explanation of leadership was abandoned and another tried. I will outline a different way of understanding the schools of thought approach and then consider different definitions of leadership. Both of these approaches show that contemporary preoccupations coloured understandings of

leadership and reveal the assumptions researchers took as their starting-points. Traversing this ground will map the movement from heroic to post-heroic theories and will also show that the transition is in name only for some researchers who include post-heroic aspects in their work but still retain the covert assumption that, even if leadership is a group process, the group is centred around a hero.

**Figure 1: Venn Diagram showing the overlapping areas of leadership, gender and culture which made up the theoretical content of the study**



The shaded area is the area relevant to this study

### *SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT FRAMEWORK*

The schools of thought framework structures the history of ways of explaining leadership into a simplified, serial endeavour of different 'schools of thought', each of which proffered different explanations. So, one particular explanation of leadership is seen as holding sway for a certain period and then, once this explanation is discredited, another theory is adopted. There is no doubt that these different approaches have all existed as part of the story of attempts to understand leadership.

However, the presumed orderliness of the typical account has been questioned (Storey, 2004).

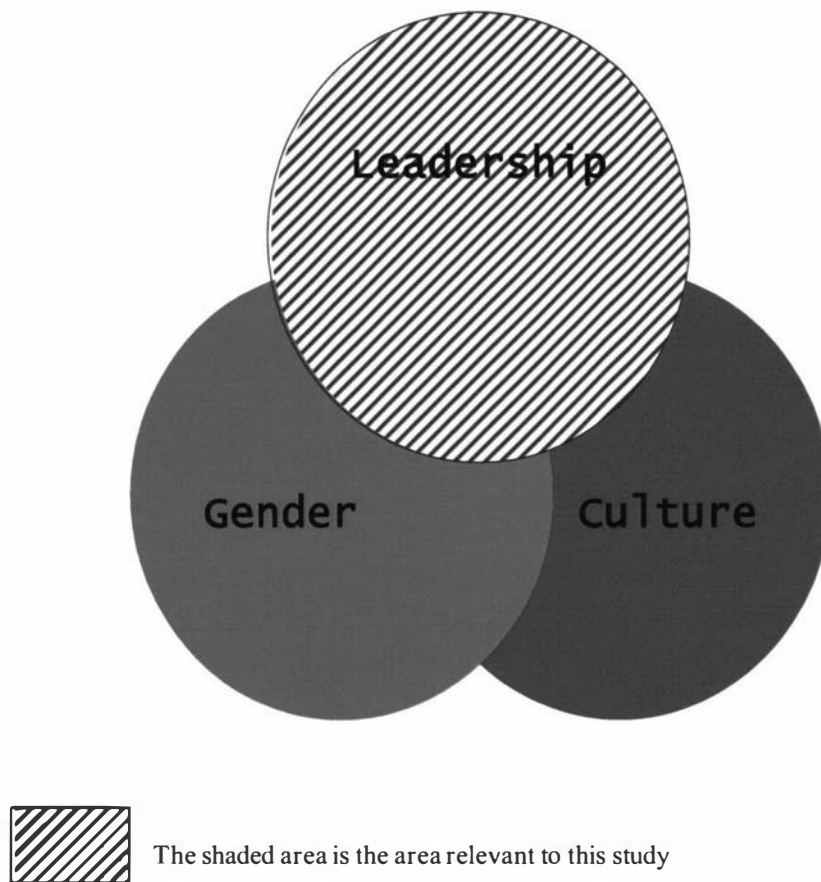
Rost (1993), in particular, criticises the standard account of schools of leadership thought as an oversimplification. He argues that the serial nature of the typical 'schools of thought' narrative creates a misleading impression that scholars followed a particular theory, then seeing the error of their ways, discarded it en masse and moved on to a superior theoretical explanation. Yet, some of the different theories continued to exist side by side, or staged a comeback in a different guise, decades after their first appearance. An example is charismatic leadership which is argued to be trait theory tricked out in appealing new clothes (Rost, 1993).

Rost (1993) is also concerned that the schools of thought narrative implies an illusion of progress, as if each idea of leadership improved on its predecessor. There is a problem with being convinced that previous notions of leadership were mistaken, while the current account is superior. This conviction entails an overly uncritical acceptance of the current theory and the discounting of previous theories too readily - without any attempt to explore the reasons why they seemed effective as explanations at the time and whether they still have anything to tell us. In other words, the attractiveness of the tidy structure of the schools of thought approach has encouraged an unquestioning attitude, particularly in textbooks, but also in journal articles as in the case of Smith, 2006.

However, my concern is that tidying up of previous approaches into the schools of thought framework, seems to have given some commentators the notion that had they been present at the time when trait theory or behavioural theories were the predominant way of explaining leadership, they would have seen readily that everyone else was mistaken. There seems little recognition from leadership researchers looking back at their predecessors, that their understandings of leadership often fitted the contemporary situation. There is also a kind of myopia that prevents leadership researchers from seeing that, in fact, strong traces of earlier theories are still with us.

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However, the presumed orderliness of the typical account has been questioned (Storey, 2004).

Rost (1993), in particular, criticises the standard account of schools of leadership thought as an oversimplification. He argues that the serial nature of the typical 'schools of thought' narrative creates a misleading impression that scholars followed a particular theory, then seeing the error of their ways, discarded it en masse and moved on to a superior theoretical explanation. Yet, some of the different theories continued to exist side by side, or staged a comeback in a different guise, decades after their first appearance. An example is charismatic leadership which is argued to be trait theory tricked out in appealing new clothes (Rost, 1993).

Rost (1993) is also concerned that the schools of thought narrative implies an illusion of progress, as if each idea of leadership improved on its predecessor. There is a problem with being convinced that previous notions of leadership were mistaken, while the current account is superior. This conviction entails an overly uncritical acceptance of the current theory and the discounting of previous theories too readily - without any attempt to explore the reasons why they seemed effective as explanations at the time and whether they still have anything to tell us. In other words, the attractiveness of the tidy structure of the schools of thought approach has encouraged an unquestioning attitude, particularly in textbooks, but also in journal articles as in the case of Smith, 2006.

However, my concern is that tidying up of previous approaches into the schools of thought framework, seems to have given some commentators the notion that had they been present at the time when trait theory or behavioural theories were the predominant way of explaining leadership, they would have seen readily that everyone else was mistaken. There seems little recognition from leadership researchers looking back at their predecessors, that their understandings of leadership often fitted the contemporary situation. There is also a kind of myopia that prevents leadership researchers from seeing that, in fact, strong traces of earlier theories are still with us.

Convincing oneself that researchers of former times should have seen leadership from the same perspective and had the same information as those currently analysing their work is faulty reasoning. This type of logic is closely akin to what Fischer (1971) has called historian's fallacy, which he suggests is analogous to William James's psychologist's fallacy. An example Fischer gives is the argument that the Americans should have been prepared for the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, because there were clear signs that such an attack would take place. What is being overlooked in this kind of argument is that the relevant information, showing that an attack is likely, needs to be selected and examined apart from all the surrounding conflicting and contradictory pieces of information.

This selection process is easily achieved in hindsight, so that historians looking back on events imagine that people at the time were rather foolish not to see something so obvious. But they are selecting information with knowledge of 'Pearl Harbour' having taken place, just as leadership writers are dismissing trait theorists from a position of knowing (as Stogdill, 1974, explained so painstakingly) that in numerous studies researchers were unable to find traits that were common to all leaders. Even so, political analysts looking back on the way information was gathered and scrutinised before Pearl Harbour, might be able to discover better ways of carrying out this kind of process.

Similarly, leadership researchers looking back on the work of trait theorists, might be able to learn from seeing the nature of their assumptions and preconceptions and avoiding the same kinds of mistakes. Trait theorists were convinced that leadership was within the leader. They believed that once the traits responsible for making a leader into a leader were discovered, it would be possible to predict who would be a leader. In other words, a person with x, y, and z traits would be capable of being a leader. Thinking the logic through leads one to think surely it is also important that a potential leader is willing to be a leader and is accepted as a leader by those led. And this thinking leads back to the recognition of leadership as a process of interaction. The leadership is not inside a leader, it exists in the interactions among all the participants in leadership, all of whom may adopt leadership roles at different times. Although traits are not completely irrelevant, because particular qualities such as

persistence or creativity may enable people to play a more effective part in leadership, traits cannot provide the whole answer.

Nevertheless, analysing the nature of a mistake can show how to avoid similar errors in future. Trait theorists were seeing the leader as a hero and kept looking at the leader for explanations of leadership. However, many of those who followed trait theorists continued to fall into a similar trap of assuming that leadership came from within the leader. Looking at the ‘schools of thought’ in a tabular format highlights this continuation of the hero/leader assumption in theories which explored aspects such as; the leader’s behaviour, the leader’s response to the situation or the leader’s style. Table 1 (adapted from Storey, 2004) shows the main theories of leadership and some of the main researchers and dates of their publications. I have added the heroic and post-heroic categories at the left margin to indicate the place where post heroic theories began to enter the debate with the 1978 publication of Burns’ Pulitzer prize-winning book, *Leadership*, which came out in paperback the following year.

**Table 1: Summary of the main theories of leadership – adapted from Storey (2004, p.4)**

	<b>Theory</b>
<b>H E R O I C</b>	<b>Trait theory:</b> innate qualities: ‘great man theories’
	<b>Behavioural theories:</b> task-related and relationship-related: style theory (e.g. autocratic vs democratic)
	<b>Situational and contingency theory:</b> repertoire of styles: expectancy theory
	<b>Exchange and path-goal models</b> (relationship between leader and led as a series of trades)
<b>P O S T H E R O I C</b>	<b>‘New Leadership’:</b> charismatic and visionary leadership: transformational leadership
	<b>Constitutive, constructivist theory</b>
	<b>Leadership within Learning Organisations:</b> leadership as a creative and collective process, distributed leadership
	<b>Post-charismatic and post-transformational leadership theory</b>

Burns (1979) revolutionised people's understanding of leadership by introducing the theory that there were three distinct kinds of leadership. He distinguished laissez-faire leadership from transactional leadership and transforming leadership. As with so many revolutionary ideas, however, several others had prepared the ground for this type of theoretical innovation. All of the theorists who had written about leadership as a transaction, for example, could have taken credit for contributing towards Burns' distinction of transactional leadership. Laissez-faire leadership was also a familiar idea, particularly in political science.

However, Burns' (1979) crucial innovation was the notion of transforming leadership, the idea that a situation could be transformed, not by the efforts of a heroic leader acting alone, but through communicating with others that a desired outcome was possible in a way that engaged their higher values and commitment. Burns considers that values "can be the source of change" (p.41). By appealing to followers' higher values, change can be achieved as all the participants in the leadership process strive to create change, sometimes leading and sometimes following. Burns sees the "leadership-followership process as a totality of interactive roles" (p.53). According to his view, leaders need, "to anticipate responses of followers, and followers and leaders may exchange places" (p.53).

To show the importance of Burns' (1979) theory of transforming leadership in terms of the impact it had in the context of the scholarship which came before and after, I am now going to sketch out some of the main ideas in leadership research which are presented in Table 1. This theoretical background is also necessary for addressing my second research question, 'how do women mayors' views of leadership compare with leadership theory?' This brief overview is not able to do justice to the variety and diversity within particular theories, but will concentrate on showing why each view seemed credible in its contemporary setting. The first of the generally recognised 'schools of thought' is the 'great man' theory which led on to the trait theorists.

### *'Great Man' and trait theories*

The 'great man' theory was considered to have been in vogue during the late 1800s and the early to mid-1900s. This theory held that some men were simply intrinsically great. They had greatness within them and that was why they were able to be

successful leaders. The great man theory, which was the underlying basis of many historians' accounts of particular events and also underpinned many biographies of leaders, saw the right person as being able to change the course of events because he could "capture the imagination of the masses. The hero would contribute somehow no matter where he was found" (Bass, 1981, p.37). The attraction of this way of seeing leadership at this time is obvious.

First of all, the Great Man theory melded in well with stories and historical accounts of kings and other rulers who had had power and dominance, but were also credited with having had leadership in the way they had managed to achieve good outcomes for their countries. Also, at a time when the first and second world wars were giving rise to many stories of war heroes and brilliant military leaders whose life stories were being published in biographies celebrating their exploits, the great man theory was very appropriate. Unfortunately, simply attaching the label 'great man' to people like Napoleon and Churchill did little to explain the reasons for their greatness - and naturally those who were interested in leadership wanted to know why some people in important positions were great men, while others were not.

Bass (1990) documents some interesting attempts to find out the source of greatness. Among them is Galton's attempt in 1869 to uncover reasons for greatness by undertaking a study of the hereditary background of great men, which encouraged other theorists to follow suit and attempt to explain leadership by genetic or inherited characteristics. Also cited in Bass is Woods' 1913 study of rulers in 14 nations whose lifetimes spanned several centuries. Woods came to the conclusion that the man shaped the nation, depending on his personal abilities. In research published in 1931, Wiggam (cited in Bass) posited the existence of a superior aristocratic class, biologically different and different in ability from the lower classes.

Although these attempts at an explanation of greatness: hereditary background, personal abilities and class, did not succeed in finding generalisable reasons for greatness, they show a movement towards 'traits' as explanations for greatness. Nevertheless, the 'great man' theory is very powerful and even now has not vanished from the scene. The 'great man' still underpins the notion of leader as 'hero' which is

often a feature of biographies and is still prominent in leadership literature in business (Jackson and Parry, 2001; Tichy & Devanna, 1986)

Although it is quite difficult to imagine how the intrinsic, unitary greatness of the great man could be analysed into factors responsible for that greatness, nonetheless researchers became interested in identifying the traits or personal characteristics responsible for making the great man great. Methods used included analysing biographical data, observing behaviour, as well as the use of rating and testing mechanisms (Bass, 1990). The research activity seems very impressive in terms of the array of traits explored in different studies. Stogdill (1974) states that 15 of the studies he surveyed gave evidence of support for the average leader's superiority to the average member of the group led, in terms of intelligence, scholarship, dependability, social participation and socioeconomic status. However, Bass (1990) gives details of studies which explored traits as diverse as popularity, optimism, humour, insight, health, talkativeness and emotional control.

Bass (1990) also quotes Ackerson (1942) in pointing out that leaders and followers are not opposites in the measures of relevant traits and it is probably mistaken to think that they should be, as both share an involvement and concern for the task at hand. The more appropriate:

antithesis of "leader" is not "follower", but "indifference", ... Thus it may be that some individuals who under one situation are leaders may under other conditions take the role of follower, while the true "opposite" is represented by the child who neither leads nor follows (Ackerson cited in Bass, 1990, p.77).

This quotation is interesting because it shows an early appreciation of the complexity of the leadership process and the role-swapping which happens among followers and leaders as they work towards their goals. This level of sophistication in understanding the leader-follower relationship has moved far beyond the great man (leadership is what the leader, who has superior inherited abilities, does) or trait (leadership is tied to a specific personality or other characteristic) theories. Ackerson's insight demonstrates the way that throughout the history of leadership research, writers have often had important insights which have not been incorporated into the mainstream

views and have been passed over and gone unrecognised. Although Ackerson realises that both leaders and followers are equally important in leadership, most leadership researchers in the 1940s were still very intent on looking only at the leader as the way to find out about leadership.

In addition, many adherents still remained faithful to the notion of traits or to the great man theory as the answer to 'what is leadership?' However, although it would be foolish to think that traits were completely irrelevant to leadership, it became clear to many researchers that traits alone would be fruitless in the search for a definitive answer to the question of what produces leadership, because of low correlations when particular traits were studied. As a result, the interest of many researchers turned to the behaviour of leaders as a more useful source of empirical evidence that might yield helpful information to explain leadership.

### *Behavioural theories*

Behavioural theories of leadership examined how leaders behaved as a way of gaining an understanding of leadership. In the late 1940s, leadership research programmes were set up at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan concentrating particularly on whether leadership styles were task-focused or people-focused. As part of the behavioural movement, Likert (1961, cited in Bass, 1990) developed four systems of interpersonal relationships in large organisations and categorised them as authoritative autocratic, benevolent autocratic, consultative and democratic. Likert showed, in organisational studies, that moving away from the autocratic approaches and towards consultative and democratic approaches would lead to higher productivity and satisfaction. These studies were carried out in workplaces with managers and their subordinates, so that their findings may not be as relevant to leadership in situations where leaders do not have direct power over those they wish to influence, as with mayors in a local government setting.

In 1958 Tannenbaum and Schmidt proposed a view of leadership in a *Harvard Business Review* article centred on a continuum of possible leadership behaviours available to a manager, from manager-centred options through to subordinate-centred options as a way of helping managers to analyse their own behaviour alongside other alternatives. This framework set the manager's authority against subordinates'

freedom. These behavioural approaches were set against the corporate environment of the industrialisation of the 1940s and 1950s. Leadership researchers were interested in finding out why some leaders of industry were successful and others less so.

Basically, there was a great deal of interest in effectiveness and efficiency and a desire to be able to predict who would be an effective leader in the corporate setting. Behaviour was a very reasonable place to look for this kind of information. The task-focus versus relationship-focus distinction has been valuable in understanding more about several aspects of organisational relationships and it is relevant to leadership. But it is not the whole of the leadership story. Although these and other types of behaviour-centred explanations of leadership remained popular, especially in leadership development courses, a focus on the behaviour of the person who held the position of leader or superior was not sufficient in itself to explain leadership. Disappointed with the failure of behaviour to provide the answer to the question of how leadership works, some researchers began to explore the part the situation plays, as a factor in leadership.

### *Situational theories*

Fiedler was one of the most committed of those who came to believe that concentrating on the situation was the most likely way towards a better understanding of leadership. He devised a least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale, which measured the attitudes of a manager by asking for rankings of the “the person with whom you can work least well” (Fiedler, 1967, p.41), or least preferred co-worker, on a list of bipolar scales e.g. friendly-unfriendly, self-assured-hesitant, cooperative-hostile. Managers with low LPC scores are assumed to be task-oriented, while those with high scores are seen as relationship-oriented.

Another researcher whose work led to developments in situational leadership theory was Reddin (1967). He constructed a taxonomy of management styles, among them the autocrat, the missionary and the deserter, which were linked to the three dimensions of relationship, task and effectiveness. Ideally, the style should be matched to the situation. Two other models of leadership/management use a task versus people approach. One of them is Blake and Mouton’s (1985) managerial grid model (first published in 1964 but refined later) which uses two dimensions; concern

for people and concern for production. The most effective leaders and managers will have a high level of concern for both areas. Hersey and Blanchard's (1972) tri-dimensional leader effectiveness model also includes task and relationship behaviour as well as follower maturity.

However, just as the behaviourists had failed to establish one set of behaviours that would result in leadership, the situationalists - even though they were successful in breaking the long-established notion that there was one best way to lead (Blyde, 1997), left a great deal of ambiguity in their wake about which behaviours to choose in which situations. Many of the committed situationalists such as Fiedler, for example, kept working on this project, but those working in other disciplinary frameworks were able to see the problem from different perspectives and in different contexts. The 1960s and 1970s had been a time when numbers and models were fashionable in analysing leadership. The continuing rise of the corporation and a fascination with the corporate environment encouraged the continued conviction, held by many researchers but hotly contested by others (Kotter, 1990; Rost, 1993; Zaleznik, 1997) of equivalence between leadership and management.

### *Transformational leadership*

Whereas many of the behavioural and situational theorists had been working from a view of leadership in organisations and corporate environments and from a managerial or psychological perspective, in the 1980s the context and disciplinary frames of theoretical work broadened. Naturally, disciplinary frameworks alter a researcher's focus and approach to a problem. In 1978 when political scientist, James Macgregor Burns, published *Leadership*, his book had a dramatic effect on leadership research.

He differentiated three different types of leadership; transforming, transactional and laissez-faire. Laissez-faire leadership was just as one would expect, a 'hands-off' approach, leaving a situation to sort itself out without taking any action. Transactional leadership was an exchange, leader and follower would agree either explicitly or implicitly, to a mutually beneficial arrangement such as support in standing for a position in exchange for preferment once in power. This idea of leadership as a transaction was not new, as it had been part of the analyses of some former leadership

writers e.g. Hollander (1978). However, the notion of transforming leadership went far beyond the exchange of desired benefits. This kind of leadership enabled leader(s) and follower(s) to join together in working towards a goal that would have benefits beyond their own personal desires and they would be transformed through what they found themselves able to achieve and by the psychological rewards gained from doing something so worthwhile.

Unfortunately, when Burns' idea of transforming leadership was taken up by management theorists, it was usually stripped of its ethical content - even though the ethical dimension was all-important to Burns' original concept. Latterly, ethical concerns have begun to return to leadership thinking, with a concern for integrity in leadership (Ciulla, 1998; Storey, 2004). However, partly due to the theoretical simplification desired by leadership developers and consultants, gradually transforming leadership (usually called transformational leadership by management scholars) was itself transformed.

From a concept which explained why leaders and followers could be elevated to a higher moral plane by the possibility of doing something that would have far-reaching benefits, by a cause rather than by a hero/leader, transforming leadership became the lesser idea of particularly successful management of organisational change or simply motivating staff to achieve outstanding results. In other words, as it was moulded to the corporate rather than the political environment, transforming leadership changed its character.

One of the great popularisers of transformational leadership (as it came to be known) was Bass, who developed an instrument called the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ could be used to measure a leader's degree of transformational and transactional leadership. In his research model, Bass breaks down the concept of transformational leadership into four separate aspects (Bass, 1985a, 1985b, 1990). They are: individualised consideration (being aware of the needs of followers and working on their development), intellectual stimulation (encouraging followers' ideas and creativity), inspirational motivation (inspiring followers towards extraordinary achievements), and idealised influence (offering followers a role model to follow).

One of my concerns about this articulation of transformational leadership by Bass in the MLQ, compared with Burns' original conceptualisation of transforming leadership, is that Burns conceived of mutuality in the way that transforming leadership operated. In my interpretation of Burns' words: "The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Burns, 1979, p.4.); both leaders and followers would be exhibiting similar behaviours and having similar effects upon each other. Bass, on the other hand, shifts the source of leadership back to being something that rests within the leader, which tends to limit the power of the original idea. Transforming leadership, as expounded by Burns, has an impact that expands exponentially through its process of involving followers so intensely that their levels of commitment and achievement are beyond what would have seemed possible, far beyond what one person might have achieved, since followers also involve others as leaders in their turn.

Unfortunately, one of the problems of transformational leadership's attractiveness (in its many derivations and forms including charismatic leadership and visionary leadership) is that the theory's seductive appeal tends to affect commentators' powers of logic. Many theorists write and many decision-makers behave, as if being transformational or charismatic or visionary equates with being successful and vice versa. Yet both logic and examples show that such equivalence does not apply. For example:

When Kodak's performance came under criticism in the 1990s, Wall Street analysts and the media focused blame and criticism on the chief executive, Kay Whitmore. Eventually the board bowed to pressure and Whitmore was sacked and replaced with a high profile recruit from Motorola. The share price rose by nearly \$5 on receipt of this news (Khurana, 2002). Nonetheless despite the appointment of a charismatic leader, the lack of competitiveness continued and by the end of the decade the share price had lost two-thirds of its value. (Storey, 2004, p.19)

What this example and the many other similar instances show, is that charisma and/or instances of transformational leadership do not necessarily lead to accolades or

recognition of success. Context affects judgements and perceptions about the meaning of leadership. Grint (1997, 2005) has drawn attention to the reality that judgements about leadership success are created and revised depending on the surrounding audience of observers and the weight of their opinions. People's opinions about whether you are or are not successful as a leader, constitute leadership success. Acting in a way that meets with the approval of observers and communicating messages which are in accord with their impressions of what a leader should be, will result in social recognition of one's leadership.

### *Constitutive leadership*

The theory of constitutive leadership explains that the results of leadership or leadership success has little to do with facts, but much more to do with the meanings that people construct about leadership. In other words, society is constantly constructing and reconstructing layers of meaning about others, particularly politicians. Stories are repeated, images in the media evoke a response and a politician's term in office is judged in accordance with the winning story - whichever gains most support - in terms of that person having created or contributed to effective leadership. Rather than being an idealised abstract notion that one can seek to discover in real life examples, somewhat like the Platonic theory of the forms, leadership is a social construction. The judgement of the majority constitutes leadership success. The theory of constitutive leadership argues that there are no objective measures of success in leadership.

But constitutive leadership as a theory does highlight the importance of communication in political environments. Judgements about leadership success or failure are influenced by the ability of leaders to communicate about goals and achievements. As Gardener (1995) says, leaders need to be able to tell a story that captures people's imaginations, giving them a sense of self-identity and faith in a better future. But Grint (2005), as well as explicating the significance of constitutive leadership, also clarifies the views of leadership when seen as a person, position, results or a process. He points out that these are different ways of understanding what leadership is and puts the questions to his readers:

- Person: is it WHO 'leaders' are that makes them leaders?

- Result: is it WHAT 'leaders' achieve that makes them leaders?
- Position: is it WHERE 'leaders' operate that makes them leaders?
- Process: is it HOW 'leaders' get things done that makes them leaders?

(Grint, 2005, p.1)

Grint's questions would be better formed in terms of leadership rather than leaders, as in 'is it how leadership gets done that makes it leadership?' Phrasing the questions in terms of 'leaders' rather than leadership encourages confusion and oversimplification. The confusion is that people in high-level positions are often called leaders because of their positions, yet Grint obviously means more than assigning a label by the term leader and is investing 'makes them leaders' with much more significance than simply calling them leaders. More seriously, stating the questions in this way leaves out the followers as an integral part of the leadership story, although followers play a critical role in leadership.

Nevertheless, these four questions serve to alert us to the way that writers on leadership are writing from different perspectives on what leadership is. Even those who have attempted to define leadership often do not keep to their own definitions, but slide from meaning to meaning as they write. In particular, there are many examples of sliding from process or results to person, from leadership to leader (Rost, 1993). In terms of choosing which of the four perspectives is the most accurate, Grint (2005) considers that any attempt to privilege one account over another would be self-defeating as, "some of these definitions overlap and it may be that leadership oftentimes involves all four elements, but sometimes they mean radically different things to different people" (p.1).

However, Grint does feel that the four different approaches help to explain "why we have so much trouble explaining leadership, trying to understand it and trying to teach or reward it" (p.1). Recognising the importance of separating person, position, results and process is a critical contribution to the work of separating heroic and post-heroic approaches. Heroic approaches usually centre on the person or on results or both, while post-heroic approaches see leadership in terms of a process. A position can often give more opportunities to be involved in leadership and others may have

expectations of a person in a particular position, such as a mayor or a council's chief executive officer, but position does not entail involvement in the leadership process. Nevertheless, one of the post-heroic approaches listed in Table 1, which is relevant to organisations, including local authorities, is the idea of a learning organisation (Senge, 1990) or a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

### *Leadership as continuous learning*

This new approach to leadership which does link leader and followers, is the notion that the process of leadership is one of constant learning (Vail, 1996, cited in Antonacopoulou & Bento, 2004). Antonacopoulou and Bento assert that leadership has little to do with being a competent, knowledgeable visionary and following a set path, but more to do with learning – and helping others to learn. They see leadership as “a window to inner learning and leadership as a relational process” (Antonacopoulou & Bento, 2004, p.83) and argue for leadership as “a process in search of questions rather than answers” (p.86) so that leaders could be “defined by the questions they ask rather than the answers they attempt to provide” (p.86). This theory is linked to transformational leadership, but emphasises self-reflection and learning from within as well as the humility to support and acknowledge the learning and insights of followers. Both Grint (2005) and Heifetz (1994) also see leadership as seeking questions and involving followers in finding answers and solving problems. Michael Fullan also writes about a leadership model which centres on embedded learning and devolved leadership with teams learning in an experimental environment formed by a collaborative culture (Fullan, 2001, cited in Storey, 2004). The idea of a collaborative culture is also linked to the concept of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) which explains learning as a social practice rather than an individual activity. In this conception of leadership, the leader learns with and from followers. The hero/leader has disappeared.

### *Post-charismatic, post-heroic leadership*

Linking leadership and learning played a part in the post-charismatic shift in leadership which gathered strength at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Although the concept of transformational leadership seemed to dominate the literature throughout the 1980s and 1990s, nevertheless there have been some robust

critiques of both transformational and charismatic leadership. In a chapter on ‘the leadership mystique’ de Vries (1997) points out the dangers in a self-absorbed, narcissistic leader whose neuroses and paranoia can harm others. Maccoby (2000) wrote an article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled “Narcissistic leaders: the incredible pros, the inevitable cons”, which explained the reason for the corporate love affair with the supremely self-confident, self-absorbed Chief Executive Officer. Maccoby claimed that there was:

no substitute for narcissistic leaders in an age of innovation. Companies need leaders who do not try to anticipate the future so much as create it. But narcissistic leaders – even the most productive of them – can self-destruct and lead their organizations terribly astray. For companies whose narcissistic leaders recognize their limitations, these will be the best of times. For other companies, these could turn out to be the worst (Maccoby, 2000, p.77).

From Maccoby’s (2000) description of the worst extreme of charismatic leaders (if we imagine a continuum from good, well-balanced leader to fiercely self-focussed, narcissistic leader) it is clear that in the shift from transformational to charismatic, the moral aspect of Burns (1979) conception of transforming leadership has been lost. The ‘hero’ has been resurrected but, in Maccoby’s estimation, the charismatic hero may be severely flawed. He would argue for a post-charismatic theory of leadership as charisma is not a prerequisite for leadership and can be harmful.

This brief survey of theories has demonstrated the way that the hero has survived, even under the rubric of post-heroic transformational leadership which was first developed by Burns (1979) as a way of showing what leaders and followers motivated by a higher cause could achieve together. In the next section of this chapter, I look at definitions of leadership to see the way that they reflect heroic and post-heroic attitudes.

### *WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?*

Perhaps one of the least used techniques in leadership research is looking backwards to see where ideas have come from and why they have developed in a particular way. Surprisingly, although Rost (1993) has examined definitions extensively, no one I

have yet read in exploring the voluminous literature on leadership, seems to have spent time wondering why the word leadership was introduced and why the concept of leadership was needed. My own assumption is that in a straightforwardly hierarchical world of king and subjects or lord and vassals where the roles of who should give orders and who should obey them were clear-cut, there was no need for a concept of leadership centred on mutual goals and freedom of choice for followers. These kinds of ideas fit in with belief in the worth of each individual as someone with a right to self-determination. However, that type of belief in individual autonomy best fits relatively individualistic Western societies where leadership has become an almost obsessive preoccupation, despite the fact that it is a quite recent, twentieth century concern.

For example, the medieval conception of the Great Chain of Being where everything in creation, from God to the seraphim and cherubim to priests to kings to males to females to children to animals to plants to earth were ordered in a strict hierarchy with each level owing submissive deference to the level above, provides order, comfort and structure in an otherwise chaotic world. To obey those above you seemed right and proper in this system where it was part of God's plan. Similarly, the world described in Old English literature, in poems such as *The Wanderer's Tale*, assumed that dependence on a lord for protection and sustenance was necessary for survival, and complete obedience was expected and willingly given in return. *The Wanderer's Tale* describes the misery of being lordless and having to wander alone in the hope of finding a new lord and becoming part of a community and having food and shelter again.

Leadership has no place in this setting, except in the unambiguous sense of being the actions of the person who occupies the position of lord or king. Neither do some of the power structures of more recent times such as the industrial revolution, slavery or colonisation offer insights into leadership situations which are beyond obedience and dominance, where power is negotiated and influence flows in both directions between leader and led. The contemporary idea of leadership becomes useful when power relationships are more nebulous and people can choose whether or not to be involved in the leadership process. The relationship between king and subjects and lord and vassals is not at all mysterious or intriguing in the way that leadership is. Leadership,

as it has become in the twentieth century, is an explanation. The work it has done as a concept is to answer the question, why.

For example, why - in the instances when this happened - did soldiers follow a fellow-soldier who rallied them after all their officers had died, to lead an attack on the enemy? In a situation where power positions are equal and there is no ability to command obedience, why do people choose to obey? The answer, of course, is leadership. However, as an answer it is not a very useful in giving us an explanation, because although we know that this phenomenon, the ability to have people agree to a course of action when they are not constrained to do so, is called leadership, - we still do not know what leadership means.

### *LEADERSHIP DEFINITIONS*

Many of the researchers and writers dealing with leadership have preferred to skirt around the complexity of defining the phenomenon of leadership itself. They have chosen to seek refuge in formulaic statements such as claims that there is general agreement about what leadership is, or to define leadership but then ignore their definition in what Rost (1993) calls with his characteristic forcefulness “ a culture of definitional permissiveness and relativity” (p.6). Consequently, many of the people writing about leadership are actually writing about quite different things, which they all choose to call ‘leadership’.

As Rost (1993) says, “neither the scholars nor the practitioners have been able to define leadership with precision, accuracy and conciseness so that people are able to label it accurately when they see it happening or when they engage in it.” (p.6). There are many lamentations in the literature over the years about the lack of any clarity about what leadership is. Stogdill (1974) analysed thousands of leadership studies, only to reach the dispiriting conclusion that “the endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership” (p.vii).

Burns (1979), who introduced the important distinction between transforming and transactional leadership in his book, *Leadership*, began his classic work with the statement that leadership was “one of the most observed and least understood

phenomena on earth” (p.2). He is supported by Bass (1978), who says: “we know far too little about leadership. We fail to grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age” (p.1). Seven years later, Bennis and Nanus (1985) are just as damning about the existing scholarly achievement in this research area. They point out that “thousands of empirical investigations of leadership have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non leaders” (p.4).

Perhaps one of the reasons for the problem of lack of progress in deciding what leadership is has been a concern to do original empirical work on leadership rather than work on the integrative project of finding linkages within the work that has already been done. The field of leadership is one where researchers seem to have wanted to ‘do their own thing’ by going out and examining leadership in action. Very few people have worked to link the ideas of other researchers in the way Stogdill (1974) and Rost (1993) have done or to generate ‘big ideas’ with the explanatory power to move people’s understanding onto another level (Burns, 1979). In the sections that follow, different definitions of leadership will be explored to see links to heroic and post-heroic theories of leadership. In fact, several definitions do have post-heroic elements, but the direction of research seems to constantly swing back to heroic leadership.

### *Leadership as interaction*

Definitions have followed a path from, first of all, seeing leadership as existing within the leader to a more interactive concept of leadership as taking place in the interactions between leaders and followers. For example, at a conference in 1927, leadership was defined in a leader-centred way as “the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty and co-operation” (Moore, 1927, cited in Rost, 1993, p.47). Bogardus (1934, cited in Rost, 1993) was among the earliest writers on leadership to consider that both the leader and the followers were involved in leadership. For him leadership was “a social process, involving a number of persons in mental contact in which one person assumes a dominance over the others ... a process in which at every stage the followers exert an influence, often a changing counter-influence, upon the leader” (p.47). Similarly, Pigors (1935 cited in Rost, 1993) saw both leader and followers as fellow-

participants, when he defined leadership as “a process of mutual stimulation which, by the successful interplay of relevant individual differences, controls human energy in the pursuit of a common cause” (p.47). Pigors’ introduction of the common cause as a motivating factor in the leadership process is an important idea which is elaborated further by later theorists.

Another important thread which emerged in the definitions of this period was the statement that coercion was incompatible with leadership. Schmidt (1933) exemplified this position when he firstly defined leadership as “the relation between an individual and a group built around some common interest” (p.282). He then went on to add the rider that “Strictly speaking, the relation of leadership arises only where a group follows a leader from free choice and not under command or coercion” (Schmidt, 1933, p.282).

Even at this early stage in the 1930s, looking at these theorists shows that some of the critical aspects of leadership were already being identified. For example, the mutuality of the influence of leader and followers upon each other, the uniting of leader and followers in a common cause and the importance of freedom from coercion in leadership, would all be developed further by later writers and suggest post-heroic tendencies. The definitions also show some confusion of person, position, results and process (Grint, 2005) in their wording.

### *Leadership as group facilitation*

Leadership as a group phenomenon began to dominate leadership definitions and conceptual explanations in the 1940s (Whyte, 1955). Knickerbocker (1948 cited in Rost, 1993) took a more pragmatic approach in outlining his view of what he called ‘functional leadership’. He claimed that the leader was followed only “because he promises to get, or actually gets, his followers more nearly what they want than anyone else” (p.7).

In sharp contrast to the clarity and specificity of Knickerbocker’s definition of functional leadership, Hemphill (1949, cited in Rost, 1993) defined leadership from the group perspective in such a general way that it would cover many activities, such as teaching or parenting, which one would not normally think of as leadership. His definition is “the behaviour of an individual while he is involved in directing group

activities” (p.4). Nevertheless, this vague definition was used to guide the work of the Ohio Leadership Studies Program (Rost, 1993).

Leadership definitions in the fifties continued to emphasise groups (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Gibb, 1954). The importance of shared goals also began to feature more often as a significant element in definitions. Halpin and Winter (1952), saw leadership as “the behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal” cited in Rost, (1993, p.51) and the notion of a shared goal was echoed in other definitions (Gibb, 1954; Hemphill & Coons, 1957; cited in Rost, 1993). Another emerging theme in leadership definitions of the fifties was effectiveness. Stogdill (1958) wrote of the definition of leadership as “influencing the activities of an organised group in its efforts towards goal-setting and goal achievement” (cited in Rost, 1993, p.33) although Bennis (1959) emphasised individual compliance when he claimed that leadership could be “defined as the process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner” (Bennis, 1959, cited in Bass, 1990, p.13). In 1956, Campbell (cited in Rost, 1993) proffered a broader group-focussed definition of leadership. Rather than the actions of an individual hero or forceful superior, Campbell considers leadership to be the contribution of a given individual to group effectiveness. The importance of effectiveness or goal achievement in defining leadership was also contained in Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarick’s (1961) definition when they spoke of leadership as directed towards “the attainment of a specific goal” (cited in Rost, 1993, p.56). However, Rost made the point that this definition was little help in distinguishing leadership from a range of other activities.

### *Leadership as an exchange*

Many of the leadership writers of the 1970s continued the effectiveness and goal achievement theme, but related it to organisations and defined leadership in terms of meeting group or organisational goals. However, a distinctive contribution of this period was the development of a social exchange theory of leadership, (Burns, 1979; Hollander, 1978). Hollander emphasised the importance of the followers to the leadership process:

Leadership is a process, not a person. Certainly the leader is the central and often vital part of the leadership process. However, the followers are also

important in the picture. Without responsive followers there is no leadership, because the concept of leadership is relational. It involves someone who exerts influence, and those who are influenced. However, influence can flow both ways (Hollander, 1978, p.4).

Hollander (1978) also writes about the social exchange theory of leadership as being a transactional approach involving the trading of benefits. He defines leadership as “a process of influence which involves an ongoing transaction between a leader and followers” (Hollander, 1978, p.12). Burns (1979) too used the notion of a transaction or exchange to develop his concept of transactional leadership. He explained that “Such leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for an exchange of valued things. The exchange could be economic or political or psychological in nature” (p.19).

Although they did not incorporate Burns’ mutuality between the desires of leaders and followers in their approach, Katz and Kahn (1978) were clear about the distinctions between different meanings of leadership in *The Social Psychology of Organisations*. They isolated three distinctions within leadership; an attribute of a position, a characteristic of a person and a category of behaviour. However, their definition of leadership suggests a unidirectional exertion of influence as they say quite categorically:

Every instance of leadership involves the use, interpolation, or origination of organisational structure to influence others. When people are influenced to engage in organisationally relevant behaviour, leadership has occurred. When no such attempt at influence is made, there has been no leadership (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.309).

The uncompromising strength of this statement seems to rule out unintentional influence such as following someone’s example, but more importantly, it does seem to deprive followers of the possibility of contributing to the exercise of leadership.

### *Leadership as an attribution*

Another view of leadership that gained a following in the 1970s was the notion that leadership was an attribution ascribed by others when they saw an example of leadership. In this view, leadership was merely a socially constructed label which

observers applied to particular behaviours or events happening in their world, to describe them and make sense of them (Calder, 1977, cited in Rost, 1993). By contrast, Burns (1979) in his definition of transforming leadership made it quite clear that leadership was a particular kind of activity, rather than whatever people chose to call leadership. He says that leadership is:

the reciprocal process of mobilising by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers (Burns, 1979, p.425).

The important elements here include the reciprocity of the leadership process between leaders and followers, the goal-directed mobilisation of resources and an external context of competition and conflict. Naturally, as he was writing about political leadership, Burns was particularly aware of the competitive, conflictual environment surrounding leadership in the political setting.

### *Leadership as power*

In the 1980s there was a strong body of writing which returned to a less complex, less sophisticated, hierarchical view of leadership as simply having the power to make others do what you want them to do. Many of the accounts of business leadership espoused this definition either explicitly or implicitly (Kotter 1988; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). Nicoll (1986) criticised the simplistic and wrong-headed nature of this perspective of leadership complaining that “we still see a leader as one person, sitting at the top of a hierarchy, determining for a group of loyal followers, the direction, pace, and outcome of everyone’s efforts (cited in Rost, 1993, p.71).

When Bass, a prolific writer in the leadership area, revised *Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership* in 1981/1990, his definition of leadership showed the impact of the influence of the hierarchical, uni-directional view. He explains that leaders are “persons whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them” (p.16). Other writers of the period also defined leadership as having the power to make others do what you wanted them to do, (Kellerman, 1984).

### *Leadership as goal achievement*

Nevertheless, some leadership publishing in the 1980s firmly centred leadership definitions around the achievement of organisational or group goals, rather than the leader's goals (Montor et al., 1987, cited in Rost, 1993; Segal, 1981, cited in Rost, 1993). The difficulty with this type of definition is both its breadth (leadership becomes any effective group facilitation) and its focus on goal achievement. A definition becomes very limiting if leadership can be said to occur only when goals are achieved. In the local government arena in particular, the context of this thesis, there are many occasions when one might want to say that goals were not achieved for reasons such as lack of funds, even though an issue was handled in a way which demonstrated leadership.

### *Leadership as transformation*

In the 1980s and 1990s one of the more popular ways of defining leadership is having the ability to transform a situation. This type of definition has developed from Burns' (1979) concept of transforming leadership, a phenomenon which happens when "one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p.20). Unfortunately, Burns has been a victim of his own success. The original idea has been trivialised and popularised and the term 'transformational' used to mean almost whatever different authors have wished it to mean, until, in the management literature at least, it has finally become little more than change management within organisations (Tichy & Devanna, 1986) or organisational excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The fate of the exciting and revolutionary concept of transforming leadership merely highlights the fact that in terms of achieving a workable definition, the leadership literature has not followed an orderly progress throughout the decades with writers and researchers building upon each other's ideas. Rost (1993) records his frustration at the general confusion in the field. He complains that many definitions are so vague that they would allow one to call any human interaction, leadership. He highlights the importance of definitions in distinguishing leadership from other social processes: "When every interaction becomes leadership, the definition loses its validity" (Rost, 1993, p.58).

## *CLARIFYING THE TERM 'LEADERSHIP'*

Rost sums up the situation from his perspective, doing a stocktake of the situation in scholarly work on leadership. He says firmly:

The facts are that in the 1990s, the concept of leadership does not add up because leadership scholars and practitioners have no definition of leadership to hold on to. The scholars do not know what it is they are studying, and the practitioners do not know what it is that they are doing. A high priority for the 1990s is to reach a consensus on a clear, concise, easily understandable, researchable, practical and persuasive definition of leadership (Rost, 1993, p.8).

Rost also notes that there is a tendency for writers to slide from the notion of 'leader' to the notion of 'leadership' and assume that they are referring to the same thing. He mentions the work of Fiedler (1967) as an example of an influential researcher whose work is limited by the belief that leader and leadership are one and the same.

Rost (1993) points out that, throughout the 1980s, the main strand of leadership writing made the assumption that leadership was management. For example, Tichy and Devanna (1990) have written a book assembling biographical vignettes of chief executives as change managers in organisations, as a means of giving insights into leadership, but their leaders are leaders only in the sense of holding a position. Managers may also be leaders in the other sense of participating in leadership, but not by virtue of being managers.

### *Distinguishing management from leadership*

In other words, people who manage, that is, occupy positions which give them responsibility for particular people or functions, may also be leaders. But being a manager does not automatically make one into a leader. Management means acting in a way that realises an organisation's goals and motivating others to work towards an organisation's goals. As Selznick (1957) says, it is important not to confuse leadership with office-holding or being in a position of authority, because it is important to be able to ascribe leadership to people who do not have a position of authority or point out inadequate leadership in people who do hold positions of authority. Alistair Mant

(1996) argues that when we consider leadership we are dealing with two separate aspects; what he calls the process that goes on between leader and follower as well as the context of the leadership. However, as with most of the definitions surveyed in the previous section, Mant is supporting a particular viewpoint and selecting his points accordingly rather than purposefully trying to create a comprehensive theory and definition.

### *Constructing a definition – two examples*

However, two researchers of the 1990s who have had the courage to attempt a definition intended to encompass all instances of leadership, rather than just suggest necessary elements of a definition, are Bass and Rost. Bass (1990) structures the results of his research into a rather complicated and long-winded definition. His definition reads:

Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions or expectations of the members. Leaders are agents of change – persons whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group (Bass, 1990, pp.19-20).

The problem with this definition is that although the statements linked together here could be true of leadership, they could be true of several other phenomena such as domination or bullying. The points within the definition are not irrelevant to leadership, but they do not define leadership in a way that separates it from other concepts. Also, Bass simply proffers this definition as a summary of the best points in the definitions of others. He does not argue for it or explain its logic in any way. He is attempting to present a comprehensive definition, but fails in the perhaps more important task of isolating the crucial factors which must be present for an event or interaction for it to be labelled as leadership.

The second of the two researchers, Rost (1993), offers a relatively simple definition: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect mutual purposes” (p.102). Obviously, in this definition, the source of the influence can be either leader or follower and is not unidirectional. Also

the change must be sufficiently significant to be recognised as a change and the change must be aimed at reaching a mutually desired outcome rather than something desired only by the leader who might coerce the followers into helping towards achieving the particular outcome.

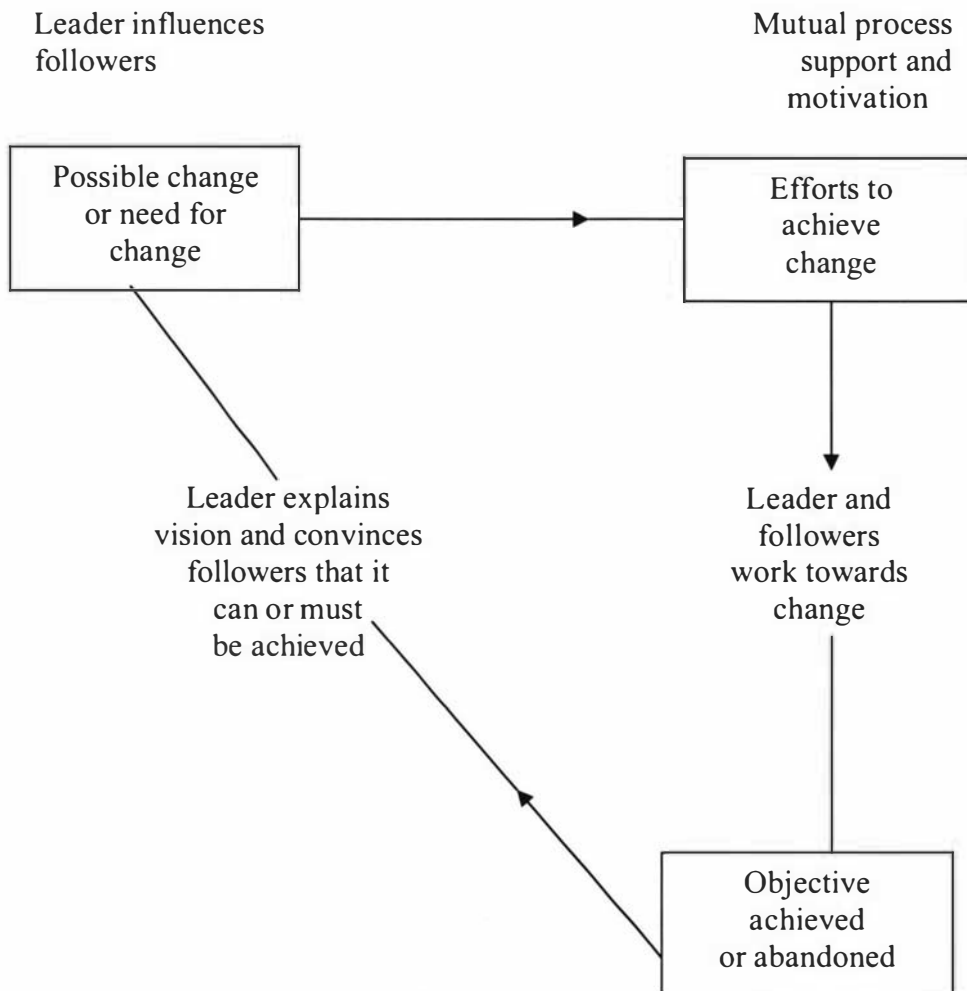
Unlike Bass (1990), Rost (1993) does present an argument explaining the logic of the separate parts of his definition. In setting out his argument, he has done the major part of the intellectual work needed to explain leadership, if one agrees with his view. He insists that “the four essential elements in the definition must be present if leadership exists or is occurring” (p.102). To give a clearer picture of the process of leadership as it would work in practice according to Rost’s definition, I have drawn up a model showing how the elements work together and also showing the cyclic nature of the process which can be deduced from Rost’s account, although this is not made explicit.

From Figure 2, the model showing the leadership process (according to Rost’s definition, 1993), it can be seen that leadership starts with the bringing to bear of influence between the leader and followers. In initiating the leadership process, the leader (not necessarily the person with the leadership position) explains the need or possibility of change and convinces followers that it can or must be achieved. Then leaders and followers create change. The change or changes may lead back into another instance of a leader explaining the vision and convincing followers that it can be achieved. The leadership process may cycle around the change loop several times before finally reaching either the desired objective or acceptance that the desired objective cannot be achieved. Then the influence may begin again in a new cycle of leadership.

In this thesis, Rost’s definition and the model will be used to clarify the idea of leadership as a process. In this model, leadership as a mutual process has moved beyond dependence on a hero/leader to initiate ideas and solve problems. In this discussion of ideas about leadership theory, I have made the case that the reason for the lack of answers to the ‘what is leadership?’ question, is attachment to an old paradigm. The strength of that attachment blinds scholars to their preconceptions about leadership. In other words, unstated assumptions in the way writers and academics are convinced leadership has to be, have prevented them from seeing what

leadership is. The old paradigm of leadership is built into their understanding of the way leadership works and the old paradigm is the leader as hero.

**Figure 2: Model Showing the Leadership Process According to Rost’s Definition**



“Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect mutual purposes”  
(Rost, 1993, p.102).

Even though the ‘new’ leadership has introduced the new paradigm of post-heroic leadership, strong traces of the old heroic assumptions linger which prevent many researchers and writers from recognising or adopting the changed attitudes and understandings that post-heroic leadership should bring. Feminist writers have also argued for a move to a post-heroic approach to leadership arguing that the idea of the

hero who can work long hours, perform near-impossible feats and model extreme toughness is a product of the masculinist environment which has developed in organisational cultures. Masculinism in organisations is seen as fostering an unwholesome, unhelpful environment in terms of accommodating to human needs or recognising the social reality that the organisation needs to respond to in the external world. (Fletcher, 2004; Sinclair, 2005; Sinclair & Wilson, 2002).

### *GENDER AND LEADERSHIP*

Scholars in gender theory have done invaluable work in pointing out that men have a gender as well as women. Before they highlighted the mistaken assumption, there was a tendency to think that 'gender' as an area of study related only to women, which obscured the importance of recognising that men were gendered too. In other words, feminist scholars clarified the point that men were not merely the 'norm' women differed from yet were defined by as 'less than', in a kind of deficit model. Men conformed to the masculine norms of society just as women conformed to the feminine norms. Gender theorists made the argument that unconscious acceptance of the male as the invisible norm meant that masculinism (a valuing of the qualities associated with males) influenced decision-making and marginalised women in public life.

This marginalisation of women is clearly demonstrated in Western leadership studies. Women are seldom mentioned in the leadership literature until the late 1970s and 1980s with the advent of the feminist movement and gender scholarship, even though, as Burns (1979) points out, there had been high profile women leaders long before this time. The problem of the invisibility of women and silencing of women (Marshall, 1995) has meant that the male leader is seen as the norm and leadership writers have tended to write as if women leaders did not exist. Initially, also, the trait theorists tended to describe leaders in terms of characteristics which were more likely to be found in males than females such as tallness, physical strength and having high socio-economic status (Wilson, 1995).

Similarly, the very name of the 'Great Man' theory makes it obvious that during the time this way of explaining leadership was at its most popular, women were not

considered as possible leaders. Unfortunately, this myopia has not been corrected in more recent times. In work on leadership published in the last twenty years, there are still many with male examples and male pronouns predominating. In other words, readers could still be encouraged, even within scholarly, academic writing, to think that leadership was a male preserve.

Nevertheless, although the typical image of a leader or a manager may be male, some writers argue that there is evidence to show females are just as successful as males in most leadership situations (Brown, 1979; Powell, 1988; Rice et al., 1984). Males are visible as leaders in most of the world's political arenas and in the most powerful positions in organisations. Gender, leadership and power seem to be closely related to each other. And, in spite of a well-argued case Bass (1990) put forward for leadership to be seen as separate from power, there is a claim that power and leadership are likely to be connected where women are concerned (Kanter, 1979).

Kanter sees women as structurally powerless in organisations because they have few favours to trade, do not belong to the accepted mainstream support networks and are seen as 'different'. Taking this difference to the ideological level, the notion that gender is inextricably related to power is explained by Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (1995). They point out that:

One important but largely invisible by-product of men's domination of institutional power has been their ability to allocate society values and resources through a self-justifying ideology. Men's position atop social institutions has enabled them to structure institutions, create laws, legitimize particular knowledge, establish moral codes and shape culture in ways that establish their power over women. While few would argue that elite men can fully inculcate all others with a singular ideology, masculine assumptions underpin the norms that become normal in social relations. So, when women enter and act within the realm of leadership and governance, they do so within ideological terms of masculine norms. Therein lies the transformation of gender relations into gender power relations (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995, p.20).

Duerst-Lahti and Kelly go on to say that gender power is the power dynamics that result from people performing gender “within the normative constraints gender modes impose” (1995, p.20). Gender practices include values and evaluative judgements, along with ways of behaving and being. People’s ways of interpreting gender practices depend on the social constructions that create the meaning given to biological sex differences. So gender power has its own dynamic and changes in response to the situation, though there are reasonably predictable patterns within similar contexts.

Thus, “A soldier who risks his life to save a wounded buddy and a mother who gently calms her infant each perform in gendered ways and derive power from their actions,” (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995, p.20). Unfortunately, feminine gender practices tend to be dismissed as simply what a woman ought to do, whereas masculine gender practices are admired. Yet, typically, if a woman behaves in a masculine way she is censured and seen as less of a woman, but when a man behaves in a feminine way he is admired for it and still seen as manly, as well as having tender feelings.

For example, witness the reaction to Bob Hawke, a former Prime Minister of Australia, and his public tears when he admitted infidelity to his wife of 33 years in a television interview. His tears, as he vowed future constancy, were considered to demonstrate his sensitivity and depth of his feeling. He gained more popularity and respect from crying rather than being censured for weakness and self-indulgence. However, Helen Clark (the Prime Minister of New Zealand) did not gain increased respect or much sympathy after her tears at Waitangi when Titewhai Harawira prevented her from speaking on the marae at Waitangi Day. An opposition politician, the National Party’s Marie Hasler, said that Clark’s tears were a “pathetic plea for public sympathy” (Brown, 1998). Vulnerability may well be accorded more kudos when demonstrated by male leaders. In women it may be seen as a proof of the weakness associated with femininity, one of the reasons why women are argued to be ill-equipped for political leadership.

The degree of power and privilege that is accorded to masculine gender practices in Western cultures, including New Zealand, compared with feminine gender practices indicates an ideology of masculinism which rates male values as superior, particularly

in political life where the norms support and reinforce masculine power. Masculinism entails assumptions about the distribution of power and privilege. The invisibility of these assumptions to those who hold them simply increases their hegemonic dominance.

According to Brown:

More than any other kind of human activity, *politics* has historically borne an explicitly masculine identity. It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavour and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices (Brown, 1988, cited in Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995, p.24).

Nevertheless, Halford and Leonard (2001) point out that some feminists would argue that women's power is "a more pluralist and facilitative conception" (p.127) than the paradigm of hierarchical power within a structure. They also point out that a major aim of radical feminist work in organisations is to gain recognition of women's power as different from the norm of gaining and holding on to power because it centres on the "ability to give it to others: to facilitate others to achieve" (Halford & Leonard, 2001, p.217). In explaining this approach, Halford and Leonard quote Calas et al., (1991):

Man-as-agent of control becomes woman-as-connector of the whole, defining a different mode of engagement with other people, the workplace and the wider environment. Her 'relational self' seeks connections and balance with various environmental dimensions, fostering openness and receptivity. There is more interest in ecological balance/harmony than in mastery. Her power is *power with* rather than *power over* [our italics] others (Halford & Leonard, 2001, p.127).

Some researchers see aspects of the difference women bring to leadership or to management as an advantage. Sargent (1981) cited in Wilson (2003) argues that the androgynous manager who combines elements of male and female qualities is the most effective, because androgynous leaders are more flexible and the link between flexibility and effective leadership is well documented in leadership theory (Bass, 1981). Cann and Siegfried (1990) also claim that effective leaders who can cope with

all of the various demands required of leaders, need to be androgynous in their behaviour.

Nevertheless, the traditional view has been that the public sphere is for men and the private sphere is more naturally the domain of women, because women bear and usually rear children and have the major responsibility for home and family (Elshtain, 1981). Leadership, particularly political leadership inhabits the public domain (Cox, 1987; Siltanen and Stanworth, 1984; Wilson, 1995) therefore women are unlikely to be seen as political leaders. Crosby (1991) argues that conceptions of public and private in terms of male and female are in need of rethinking, as inherently, every person exists in both public and private spheres. To reflect reality more accurately, the use of language should be changed to acknowledge that public and private exist together rather than as separate worlds (Crosby, 1991).

Siltanen and Stanworth (1984) are even more explicit in their condemnation of the faulty logic created by linking the binaries of public and private with man and woman and political or apolitical. They point out that the assumptions inferred from the public man and private woman dichotomy can be seen as the equations: “Man = Public, Public = Political, Therefore, Man = Political”, compared with “Woman = Private, Private = Apolitical, Therefore, Woman = Apolitical” (Siltanen & Stanworth, 1984, p.195). However, they argue against the idea that politics is limited to the public sphere, emphasising the private as well as the public dimensions of politics. They also point out that the political character of women as private is nonetheless *publicly* communicated and established and that the public nature of men is formulated by their relationship to the *private*.

Perhaps the most disconcerting of their points is the contention that a failure to see that women should not be limited to the private sphere or that the private sphere is also political, has led many writers to assume all forms of political understanding generated by men can be seen as a universal position. This tendency to overlook the possibility that women might have a range of viewpoints that differ from men’s, has strengthened the conviction that women are apolitical. The myth of the apolitical woman has endured despite high profile female politicians and even though women have been involved in developing new politically relevant institutions e.g. in New

Zealand, the Playcentre movement and Kohanga Reo (literally, language nests) in early childhood education.

### *More women are transformational leaders*

An article by Rosener (1990), published in the *Harvard Business Review*, had a broad influence on writing about women and leadership and has been cited regularly in articles published in this area. Since Burns' (1979) claim that women were more likely to be transforming leaders, whereas men were more likely to lead according to a 'command and control' approach, there had been no published research exploring gender difference alongside transactional and transformational leadership. Rosener (1990) described the traditional leadership style used in organisations, according to the information given to her by her research participants, as male and based on 'command and control'.

She found, on the one hand, that when men were asked to describe their leadership style, they were more likely to describe themselves as transactional leaders who exchanged rewards for valued behaviours or punishment for poor performance. Men were also more focussed on using the power that came from formal, hierarchical authority. On the other hand, Rosener's female respondents described their interactions with others in ways that were akin to Burns' concept of transforming leadership, encouraging subordinates to transform their personal interests into concern for a broader goal.

Women tended to consider that their power or influence came from personal contacts, hard work and interpersonal skills rather than their place in the hierarchy. Rosener (1990) called the women's leadership style 'interactive' because they encouraged participation, shared information, enhanced other people's sense of self-worth and generated excitement about the task at hand. Nevertheless, although Rosener's work has been highly influential and has stimulated debate, there are problems in implying that men and women are essentially different in a deterministic way and in "recreating stereotyped gender categories" (Marshall, 1995, p.28) when attempting to construct an argument for escaping from them.

Two researchers who did find that women seemed to be more transformational than transactional were Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2002) in their article which argues that social contexts affect whether or not gender differences are displayed in leadership behaviour. They explain that “leaders occupy roles defined by their specific position in a hierarchy but also simultaneously function under the constraints of their gender roles (p.783). They suggest that the impact of gender roles on leadership behaviour and the prejudice woman may confront in leadership roles “especially if these roles are male-dominated” (p.795) should be investigated. They also draw attention to the double standard that requires a higher standard from women for them to gain leadership positions which they see as an effect of that prejudice.

Other writers have also explored differences between women and men as leaders. Court (1992) sees the difference as being centred on the image of the ideal organisation. She describes the differences between males and females in their approach to leadership, as being linked to hegemonic views of organisations as entities requiring rational leaders, that is leaders who will follow rules that leave out “the particular and ignore feelings ... claiming to be impartial in the interests of the organisation as a whole” (Court, 1992, p.184). Males are more inclined to be seen as conforming to this perception of the rational leader. Also, studies of the people who are already in leadership positions, primarily males, have encouraged the view that the qualities of forcefulness, independence and competitiveness are requirements for leadership (Blackmore, 1989 cited in Court, 1992). But, as one of the participants quoted in Court’s research says, although traditional authority is seen as power and the ability to have people do things the way you want, “leadership should be doing things the way the group wants them done” (1992, p.196).

### *Leadership as empowerment*

Court (1992) sees her research participants’ views as exemplifying a change from the traditional notion of leadership as having power over others, to having power through and for others. Court explains: “As such, it is a form of empowerment where collective processes confront traditional notions of authority, efficiency and organisational rationality and offer ways of building a sense of group belonging” (p.195).

Marshall (1984) agrees that women see leadership as requiring the ability to act with others and this concept of leadership as sharing responsibility is also supported by Hartsock (1983). However, Alimo-Metcalfe (1995) sounds a warning that the term 'empowerment' has been subverted by organisations as a way of encouraging employees to support organisational change by increasing their sense of responsibility, authority and identity and motivation. Empowerment can be used to increase 'ownership' of jobs in the sense of autonomous self-sufficiency, rather than interconnectedness. She writes:

Empowered individuals are being seen by many proposing modern leadership models as "recipients of power" rather than "sharers in power" ... Not only do the imbalances of power remain, since it is still in the power of the leader to remove the gift, but the individuals empowered become more accountable for the disappointments and failures which were previously regarded as responsibilities of their manager. Empowerment therefore smacks of old-style autocratic management, but "dressed up" in a warm humanitarian model (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995, p.7).

As this discussion of 'empowerment' shows, it is important to be alert to the shifts of meaning that can underlie the use of a fashionable and seemingly benign concept. Attempts to clarify women's approach to leadership can facilitate the capture and use of terms like 'empowerment', to support paternalistic or even Machiavellian initiatives. Therefore, detailed descriptions of women's approaches to leadership are needed to exemplify the meaning of terms like empowerment when used of their leadership. Fortunately there are several detailed descriptions of women's perception of leadership in the literature as one of the most commonly-used ways of discovering women's views of leadership among female researchers is by interviewing women in leadership positions (Court, 1992; Drage, 1997; Helgesen, 1990; Maddock, 1999). For example, Helgesen (1990) interviewed, observed and conducted diary studies with four women leaders in America and compared and contrasted their explanations of leadership with Mintzberg's studies of men as organisational leaders. She acknowledges that some of the differences she finds will be related to the different environments of America in the 1960s (the time when Mintzberg carried out his research) which valued conformity and narrow expertise, compared with the more innovative and diverse values of American organisations in the 1980s.

However, Helgesen's picture of the female leader is in stark contrast to Mintzberg's harried executives who rigidly separate their public selves from their private selves and do not allow family life to intrude on their working day. As Helgesen reports:

The integration of home and work was reflected in the diary studies by the women's mental involvement with their families during the workday. They called home, talked to children, housekeepers, and caretakers, occasionally they even noted chores relating to family on their office calendars. By contrast, none of Mintzberg's men appeared to spend a *single moment* dealing with family issues. The men seemed to exist solely as managers when they were on the job; it was as if their fatherhood and husbandhood existed in a vacuum. Their identities had been tightly compartmentalized (1990, pp.32-33).

Helgesen's women felt that they had more energy and creativity because they felt free to be the same person at home and at work, whereas Mintzberg's men became less rounded individuals, alienated from the rest of their lives and seeing their identities as limited to their roles at work.

Two other aspects of women's leadership that Helgesen (1990) highlights in her work, are the energy her women leaders devoted to listening and being accessible, and also the way they saw themselves as being at the centre of a web of interrelationships rather than at the top of a hierarchy. She states that "Women value listening as a way of making others feel comfortable and important, and as a means of encouraging others to find their own voices and grow" (Helgesen, 1990, pp.244-245). Women were also able to use their web of relationships to try out ideas and seek feedback from their associates before reaching their decisions.

Another point made by Helgesen (1990), which is strongly supported by informants in Drage's (1997) study, is the value of motherhood as a preparation for leadership because both require many of the same skills. As one of the New Zealand women mayors interviewed by Drage said on the relevance of the skills involved in running a family to the task of being mayor: "we [mothers] have management skills, team building skills and we acknowledge the value of every part of an organisation" (Drage, 1997, p.61).

One of the reasons why the value of skills related to being a mother have not been recognised as relevant background for leadership is what Wajcman (1999) calls the 'gender stereotypical oppositions' which permeate the leadership literature. She sees no great advance in simply devaluing those leadership qualities which are seen as typically male qualities such as aggressiveness and rationality, in favour of qualities associated with feminine traits such as inclusiveness and intuition. Wajcman argues against continuing to link what it is to be a man or a woman to "polarities like culture versus nature, mind versus body, reason versus emotion, objectivity versus subjectivity, the public realm versus the private realm" (Wajcman, 1999, p.59).

Wajcman continues by pointing out that feminist philosophers have exposed the way that this:

Symbolic dualism feeds into essentialism, or the assertion of fixed, unitary and opposed female and male natures (Harding, 1986; Lloyd, 1984). These writers point to the historical specificity of such gender metaphors, in that there is no behaviour or meaning which is universally and cross-culturally associated with for example either rationality or intuition. Both 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are socially constructed and are in fact constantly under reconstruction. (pp.59-60)

Nevertheless, while recognising that attaching particular qualities to women as opposed to men or to 'leaders' as opposed to others, is to fall prey to the danger of essentialism, many writers still wish to make points about women as a group and differentiate some aspects of women's socialisation and cultural norms from those more commonly associated with men. One way of discussing these kinds of differences, without assuming that differences more typically linked to women are inextricably bound up with what it means to be a woman, is the understanding of gender differences within culture. To take this relationship of gender and culture further, the next section explores culture and leadership.

## *CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP*

Culture is the third area to be discussed in relation to leadership. In this section culture will be discussed in relation to national culture as well as organisational subcultures. Culture can be defined as a design for living adopted by members of a particular culture or subculture and taught to children or new members, so that they will understand how to behave and what to value. Hofstede talks of culture as 'mental software' and 'collective programming' although he is careful to point out that a person's behaviour is "only partially predetermined by her or his mental programs" and everyone has the ability to deviate from them (1997, p.4). Metge and Kinloch (1978) write of culture as "a system of shared understandings" (p.8) common to members of a cultural group.

Naturally, understandings of leadership exist within and are influenced by their cultural settings. For example, in Māori and Polynesian settings, although all abilities are recognised and used for the well-being of the group, age would be a barrier to recognition of a young leader in terms of having authority in a tribal setting. The wisdom, experience and mana of many of those who were older would need to be respected (Pitt & McPherson, 1974).

The explanatory power of the concept of culture has been applied to the way that organisations have norms, values and beliefs that those joining them or working with them need to learn (Schein, 1992). In terms of the way that culture can differ across organisations as well as ethnic groups, local government is typically a conservative environment where change happens slowly and incrementally. Slowness in adapting to change is built into the very nature of local authorities, as decisions have to cycle through a succession of monthly meetings before they are finally implemented.

One could argue that leadership is even more important in local government simply because it is difficult to effect change and easy to be overwhelmed and paralysed by the weight of conservatism and opposition. Local government has been slow to accept the changing position of women in society and recognise women as leaders. Culture operates at several levels for women mayors. These levels include the nature of the country's cultural values, the city or district's cultural character and values of the

particular local authority as well as the gender level of culture. Women can find it difficult to adapt to a very masculine organisational culture.

There are many accounts in the literature of women entering and attempting to exist within male-dominated environments (Marshall, 1995). In Marshall's study, she interviewed women at very senior levels in their organisations all of whom had chosen to leave because they found the masculinist culture at the top of the hierarchy too damaging and exhausting. Doing their jobs was very demanding, but fighting the culture was even more so. Choosing to leave was motivated by the desire for self-preservation and a better way of life. Marshall's interviewees had decided to leave their high profile positions because they no longer saw the point in attempting to achieve goals in an obstructive environment that denied their values. Their choice was a positive statement about the way a work culture should be, rather than a negative proof that women did not have the strength to cope with the culture. Most of the women saw the cultures they had tried to battle as toxic environments that were not productive or supportive of either males or females.

Similarly Su Maddock, writing about women's attempts as local government employees to introduce policy change in Britain quoted one of her respondents as saying:

After a while you get disillusioned. I've been working on decentralization for four years – and still believe in it – but they won't recognize that it won't work without a change in management practice and culture. I spend more time with my children now and work part-time because I've sort of given up (1999, p.173).

Hofstede explains that some of these experiences of environments that women find stifling, restrictive and even toxic can be explained by culture. He says that although gender differences are not normally described in cultural terms, it can be revealing to do so. He claims that "within each society there is a men's culture which differs from a women's culture" and:

this helps to explain why it is so difficult to change traditional gender roles. Women are not considered suitable for jobs traditionally filled by men, not because they are technically unable to perform these jobs, but because women

do not carry the symbols, do not correspond to the hero images, do not participate in the rituals or foster the values dominant in the men's culture; or vice versa (Hofstede, 1997, p.16).

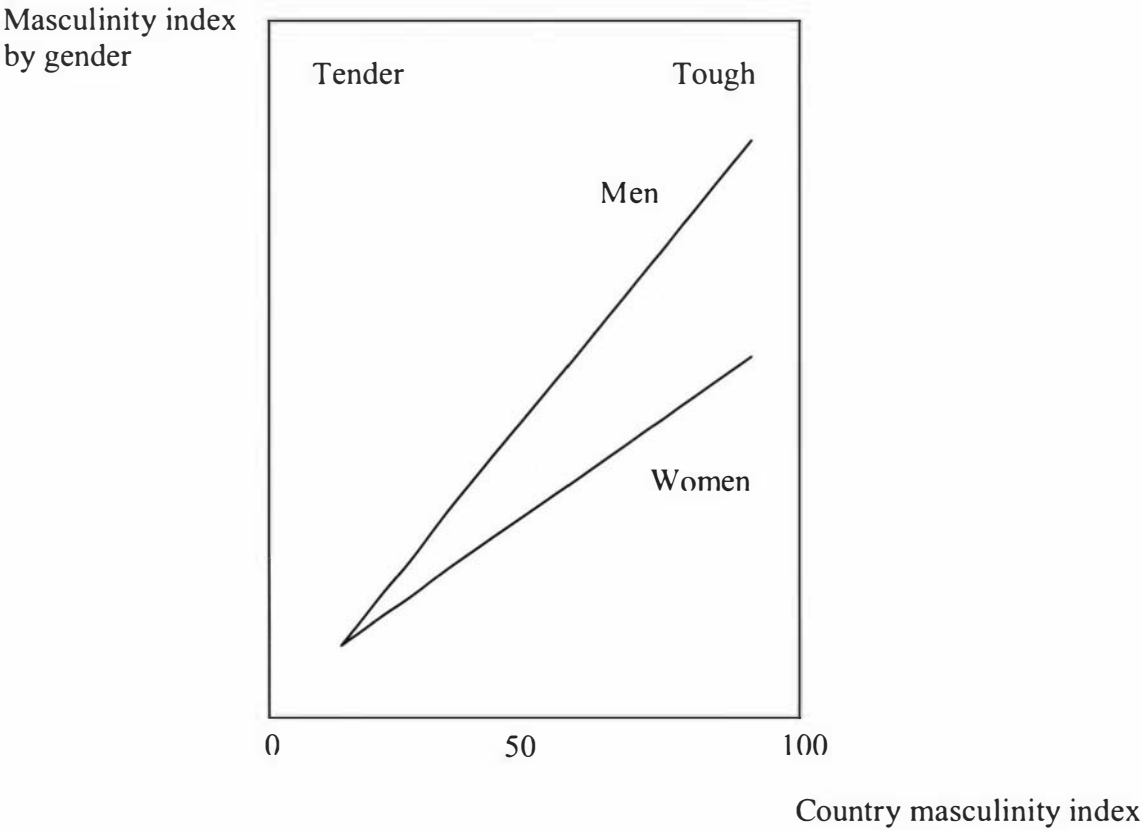
Hofstede also makes the telling point that fears about behaviours by the opposite sex are of the same order of intensity as the reactions of people exposed to foreign cultures. In other words, reactions to women moving into a male cultural environment would be similar to culture shock or stress in terms of fear, disorientation and denial as typical reactions. His research on national cultures in 60 countries shows that culture in New Zealand can be considered to be relatively masculine in the sense of being a culture that values assertive, aggressive, masculine values rather than a more feminine culture in the sense of being more concerned with maintaining nurturing, co-operative values.

Hofstede explains that in feminine cultures, values expressed by both males and females tend to be feminine values, but that in masculine cultures the differences between males and females will be more obvious. Both males and females in masculine cultures will tend to express masculine values more than their counterparts in feminine cultures, but the gap between males and females will be much greater. The reason for the distance between genders in masculine (or 'tough') cultures is that females will still tend more towards feminine values by comparison with males, opening a gap in a graph showing the relationship between 'tender' and 'tough' cultures and the masculinity index scores by gender of respondents. Figure 3 shows that the higher a country's score on the masculinity index, the greater the difference between males and females (adapted from Hofstede, 1997). As Hofstede explains, "Women's values differ less between countries than men's values do" (Hofstede, 1997, p.83).

Interestingly, although Hofstede (1997) notes that a tradition of male dominance, "resists the advance of women in more than token numbers to leading political positions" (p.101), he also notes that women are more likely to achieve positions in politics than in business. The reason is that politics responds more quickly to changes in society because business relies more on processes of 'co-optation' which depend on waiting for "aged gentlemen to retire or die" (Hofstede, 1997, p.101).

Hofstede’s point about politics responding more swiftly to social changes than business – unless the political processes are similarly limited by a dependence on ‘co-optation’ (being co-opted by those already in power) – is interesting in the context of this thesis. Because mayors are directly elected in New Zealand, the changing role of women in society may have been reflected in more women standing for mayoral positions and more voters voting for women. By contrast, regional councils, who appoint their own chairpersons from within their ranks, have very few women chairs and, in the private sector, companies’ Boards of Directors who invite potential directors to join their boards, have an extremely modest proportion of women serving as directors, 7.13 percent in the top 100 companies on the New Zealand stock exchange, according to the *New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation 2006* (McGregor and Fountaine, 2006, p.5).

**Figure 3: The Relationship between Masculinity Index Scores and Gender of the Respondents (Hofstede, 1997)**



If the rise in the number of women mayors has been caused more by a change in society than a change within councils, many of the women mayors who have been elected will have had to cope with very male-dominated organisational cultures within their councils. Local government has been dominated politically by white, middle-aged males (Bush, 1995) and the majority of senior staff working for councils are also male. Because these organisations have always been very conservative in their outlook, accommodating a female in the position of mayor would be challenging, requiring entrenched views to change quickly.

Organisational cultures are hierarchies where power operates on several levels. According to French and Raven's (1959) taxonomy of five different kinds of power (cited in Wilson, 2003), power can be seen as expert power (having valuable expertise to share), referent power (making others feel valued), reward power (ability to give others rewards or benefits), coercive power (ability to punish others or make things unpleasant for them) or legitimate power (ability to make others recognise that they have responsibilities to fulfil). The kind of power that women are often seen as having is referent power, the ability to make others feel valued. However, all five kinds of power are relevant to the position of mayor.

### *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

In Chapter Two, the argument has been presented that leadership is a concept caught between two paradigms, the paradigms of heroic and post-heroic leadership. The power of heroic leadership comes from the conflation of leader with hero. Even when the post-heroic theory of transforming leadership was introduced by Burns (1979) and gained wide acceptance, several researchers, including Bass, used the term transformational - but included heroic elements and assumptions in their approach to their work. The sections on gender and culture has broadened the understanding of the relationship among the three concepts of leadership, gender and culture in preparation for applying all three theoretical areas in discussing the results of the research.

Chapter Three moves on to look at local government in New Zealand, to explain the way that its history and recent development created a particular context that affected the women mayors who took up office in 1998. In some ways local government

reform and other changes enhanced women mayors access to mayoral positions, but in other ways these changes established or reinforced barriers for women wishing to become mayors.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Setting the context of leadership in local government

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In the New Zealand context the mayoral office is both powerful and powerless. Powerful in the sense that the mayor is the recognized community leader, but powerless in the sense that the mayor cannot commit a council to a particular course of action or the allocation of resources without majority support (Sir Brian Elwood, 1991, p.10).

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter traces changes in local government which broadened the leadership roles of councils and mayors. There had been examples of visionary mayors who were activists for change and community improvement well before this time, such as Parr (Auckland's mayor 1912-1917) and Gunson (Auckland's mayor 1917-27), but their activities were aimed at improving infrastructure rather than social well-being. Parr experimented to find the best construction material for roads and was passionately farsighted in establishing parks, while Gunson was instrumental in improving systems for electricity reticulation and public transport in the city (Bush, 1971). However, from the late 1970s onwards, a change of direction in the scope of councils' activities gained momentum (Bush, 1995). The Government had used subsidies to encourage early initiatives such as pensioner housing, which took councils beyond their narrow, accustomed role of providing basic services and into the arena of social services.

At first these social initiatives tended to focus on the 'bricks and mortar' setting up of physical facilities, for example helping to find sites for early childhood centres or establishing community centres. But gradually, there was also movement into areas that some condemned as social engineering, outside the brief of councils who

collected their income from property taxes and should properly see their role as concentrating on providing benefits for ratepayers. As Mulgan (1994) notes:

... most local councils have been very cautious about embarking on the extensive provision of social welfare services or housing (beyond a modicum of relatively uncontroversial pensioner housing). Such services are prohibitively expensive, given the restricted basis of local government revenue. Moreover, they involve a politically contestable degree of income distribution from some classes or sections of the community to others (p.191).

Nevertheless, initiatives such as job creation programmes and community development programmes were introduced by some urban councils in the 1970s and 1980s. County councils continued to take a more narrow view of their role and maintain a focus on roading and basic infrastructural services, but slowly more city and borough councils began to incorporate social and economic goals into the way they saw their role. The move was encouraged by central government's devolution of functions it considered could be handled better at the local level. However, as councils constantly complained, central government did not devolve any of the financial resources needed to undertake new functions.

Despite complaints, taking responsibility for the social needs of the community as well as roads and drains began to happen, at first in the larger cities such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. In areas with larger, expanding populations, social service needs were more obvious and more pressing. But by the 1980s, many more councils had moved from a narrow focus on 'roads, rates and rubbish' (collecting property taxes and providing services for residents and ratepayers) to the much wider brief of community problem-solving. Along with these changes in organisational focus, mayors also began to move from the limitations of a role centred on ceremonial speechmaking and chairing council meetings, to become strategists involved in policy development and negotiation. In Christchurch City, Vicki Buck's involvement in employment initiatives and in Waitakere City, Bob Harvey's promotion of the eco-city environmental sustainability concept are examples of policy directions initiated and supported by mayors.

This shift from figurehead to community change agent was a huge departure from the previous fifty or more years, when most mayors had operated within a narrowly-defined role. The change took place in a gradual, patchy way throughout the 1980s and 1990s and is probably easier to observe in hindsight; than it may have been at the time it was taking place. A change in the operating environment like this one and the demands it placed upon mayors can not be seen as a universal change at a specific point in time. In order to put these changes and their implications for local government leadership into perspective, it is useful to have some background in four areas: the history of local government in New Zealand, an awareness of a mayor's role, a knowledge of the processes which changed the environment of local government and continue to impact on local government, and finally the implications of these changes for local government leadership. In the sections that follow, these four areas, local government history, the role of a mayor, the changed environment and role of local government and also the implications of the changes for local government leadership, will each be dealt with in turn.

### *LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S EVOLUTION*

Before colonisation, each Māori tribe lived within a tribal area bounded by sea, rivers, mountains and other natural features of the landscape. Leadership came from chiefs who gained their chiefly status by right of birth. Issues were discussed in tribal meetings and decisions reached by consensus. The advent of settlement brought with it a British system of government strongly influenced by contemporary events in England where the Municipal Corporations Act had been passed in 1835. Governor Hobson's instructions from the Colonial Secretary were informed by the principles of frugality and self-reliance, which were those underlying the parallel British legislation. Hobson, the governor, was instructed to set up local bodies to oversee drainage, roads, prisons, etc. (Bush 1995). Unfortunately, the financial resources and sophistication of communities in England were not matched by the primitive conditions of New Zealand, where survival was the main concern and where the sources of funds for developing infrastructure in the tiny settlements of a fledgling colony were very limited.

In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Māori iwi (tribes) and the British Crown. The Treaty gave the Crown the right to govern the colony and set up systems to maintain law and order. By the same token, Māori were guaranteed full self-determination and continuing unrestricted use of all of their own forests, fisheries and lands. However, as local government systems began to develop, they were based on British models. Little thought was given to the need to acknowledge differences between settlers and Māori by setting up mechanisms that would suit both.

In 1846 a constitution for the colony was passed in the British parliament to set up two provinces, New Ulster and New Munster, but the cost of running two expensive entities operating at a level between parliament and the makeshift systems for governing localities seemed extravagant and pointless. The pragmatic needs were for basic services and local law and order. Eventually, the provincial governments were abolished and replaced in the 1852 Constitution with six (later 10) smaller, more localised provinces. However, these provinces too were later abolished in favour of the municipalities which had grown up within their boundaries and a legislative framework for counties in rural areas was also established. So, the local government system in New Zealand was left to develop without a federal layer of states or other entities (as exists in Australia and in America) between central and local government. The lack of an intermediate tier between central and local government remains one of the main differentiating factors in the way local government operates in New Zealand compared with other countries.

As the population and the local government system grew, the purpose of councils centred on the provision of basic services. When requirements for other activities arose such as hospitals and harbours, the government usually chose to set up single purpose authorities as the most expedient way of dealing with a need, without facing criticism or conflict from the existing local government units. Local government has always been labelled a 'creature of statute' because territorial authorities are created and their functions are limited by central government legislation. Nevertheless, once created, local authorities have tended to jealously guard their independence that has made it difficult to adapt the local government system in a changing environment and explains the government's enthusiasm for the option of creating single function boards to cater for new needs. Some special purpose boards were able to support

themselves from their own income, e.g. harbour boards from port charges and harbour rates, but others were supported by government grants.

In terms of financial income, territorial local government survived by raising rates on property and by gaining government subsidies. But these sources of finance were insufficient for many small local authorities with modest populations and a tiny rating base, when there were local needs for substantial expenditure in areas such as roading or construction. Throughout the twentieth century, the number of ad hoc boards continued to increase. The multiplicity of authorities, both territorial local authorities and ad hoc authorities was seen as inefficient and there were successive attempts by central government to reform the structure of local government. Reducing the large number of small territorial local authorities with tiny populations that could barely sustain themselves, to a more workable number of larger authorities with bigger populations and a more substantial rating base was logical from the Government's point-of-view. However, local authorities saw the issues differently as both parochialism and political ambitions were involved.

Nevertheless, political ambitions were usually limited to the local setting. Over the years, relatively few mayors or councillors have aspired to enter Parliament with some notable exceptions such as Georgina Beyer, one of the mayors interviewed in this study, who later left the mayoralty after becoming an electorate MP for the Wairarapa. Historically, national political parties have had little impact on local government elections. The majority of local government politicians stand as independents. Nevertheless, the Citizens' and Progressive Association' tickets in local elections are seen as conservative or moderate right in their approach and aligned more towards the National party than the Labour party. In some councils too, the Labour Party and the Green Party have been important as political lobby groups and in helping councillors with their election campaigns. But these examples of national politics in local government are the exception rather than the rule. Most 'tickets' in local government revolve around local issues and are set up just for a specific election. This lack of politicisation is another factor which distinguishes local politics in New Zealand from other countries, notably Britain where council politicians operate on party lines with a full political party structure.

Although their political systems are separate from each other, there have been other causes of tension in the relationship between central and local government. Local government has resented the 'big brother' role of central government and felt envious of central government's ability to raise money through taxes. Local government has had to survive on income from rates and, while they were available, on government subsidies tagged for specific purposes such as sewerage schemes. Central government on the other hand, has regarded local government as being hopelessly fragmented, operating at the 'parish pump' level in terms of political sophistication and mired in parochial concerns rather than the big issues and lacking the financial ability to employ managerial and technical staff of the calibre required to get the important work done in local areas.

Having acknowledged the problem of fragmentation at the local level, central government had long recognised the need to bring some rationality to the large and constantly proliferating number of local authorities in existence. The problem was not what to do but how to achieve it. A succession of local government commissions was set up to produce schemes for restructuring local government, but the enabling legislation contained a clause allowing residents and ratepayers to demand a poll, which could then overturn any proposal that would eliminate an existing local authority. This provision weakened the power of the first commission, which achieved very little apart from minor boundary changes. Successive commissions were similarly frustrated. Although theoretically councils could have chosen to work together, the energies and loyalties of individual local authorities tended to remain focused within their own boundaries. Setting up regional government was seen as one way of gaining a coordinated approach to issues that needed a broader treatment across a larger area.

In 1963 the Auckland Regional Authority was established to deal with the region-wide needs of Auckland, the country's largest city. The existing patchwork of small local authorities and their boundaries did not make sense in terms of planning for the city's future needs with its overloaded and uncoordinated systems of drainage, rubbish collection and urban development. Auckland's Regional Authority (renamed the Auckland Regional Council in 1989) was set up with the agreement of the city's territorial local authorities. The problems of Auckland's urbanisation were so great

that territorial local authorities and ad hoc authorities were persuaded out of their usual parochialism by the powerful argument that the Auckland Regional Authority would save them from potential - and probably inevitable - disasters as systems broke down (Bush, 1995). The new Auckland Regional Authority would work to establish region-wide services such as transport, planning and parks, on a scale that was beyond the capacity of the small local councils to provide.

Although councils were set up at the regional level in the 1970s, new legislation provided the option of either regional councils [with elected members] or united councils. Members of united councils were drawn from constituent territorial authorities and so their loyalties lay with their local councils, which made it difficult to gain a commitment to a regional viewpoint on these councils. United councils could be seen as a 'watered down' version of the regional councils provided for in the 1974 Local Government Act. The Act "strengthened the Local Government Commission, established regional government by 1980, fashioned a hybrid district council [incorporating both rural and urban areas within its boundaries] and facilitated citizen involvement through two types of community councils" (Bush, 1995, p.54).

Despite efforts by six Local Government Commissions, and the changes introduced by the 1974 Local Government Act, the degree of restructuring achieved in local government throughout the 1970s and early 1980s was still relatively modest. Only after the election of the Labour Government in 1984, did serious change begin to seem imminent. Michael Bassett, who became the Minister of Local Government, was knowledgeable, experienced (as an Auckland City Councillor) and determined. The new government began to reform the public service in a way that demonstrated a taste for radical change. A new language began to develop to communicate the principles of the changes as they would affect the public sector and the economy, which demonstrated a new approach to the role of government.

Treasury papers spelt out the new attitude to economic reform in briefing papers to the incoming government (Treasury, 1984) and in a later publication called *Economic Management* (Treasury, 1987). Business enterprises were best left to the private sector and the market. Government departments had to be accountable and their activities transparent. There should be a 'level playing-field', in other words there

should be a separation between policy development and service delivery, particularly when the service earned income. Otherwise Government-run businesses would be unfairly advantaged as they could make the rules that business had to observe and also run a business in competition with others. By and large, government should get out of business and concentrate on government.

There was also a serious concern that outputs from the public sector were not monitored except by the Audit Office, which just carried out a basic check that the accounts were in order. The lack of an audit in the full sense meant that while the resources that flowed into government departments were visible, what was gained from these resources – in other words, the level of success achieved by departments in meeting their objectives - was not at all clear. The buzz words efficiency and effectiveness were freely used in explaining the desired changes in the way the public service should be run. Accountability was required at every level of a public organisation that was funded by the taxpayer and so Department Heads were to become Chief Executive Officers on performance-based contracts, responsible for their staff as their employer and responsible for setting the Department's objectives and measuring success in achieving them.

The speed of change and its completeness could not be ignored. Large numbers of public servants were made redundant as chief executive officers heading departments restructured in search of efficiency gains. The economic base of several local authorities was affected as regional offices of government departments were closed or downsized. A flow-on of the central government restructuring, applying similar principles to local government was predictable. The Minister of Local Government, Michael Bassett, had appointed Brian Elwood, previously a mayor of Palmerston North City, ex-president of the Municipal Association and a lawyer by training, to head the seventh Local Government Commission. Elwood was an advocate of strong local government and the previous stumbling-block to amalgamation, the poll provisions, had been changed to require a much higher proportion of ratepayers than the usual low percentage of electors who participated in local government elections, to request a poll to overturn any scheme for amalgamation. This change cleared the way for schemes that proposed a merger of separate authorities to be carried out successfully.

When the Labour government was returned to office for a second term, the inevitability of local government reform was apparent. Labour's election manifesto explicitly mentioned plans for rationalising the number of local government units into fewer larger authorities and reviewing local government's functions (Bush, 1995). The changes to come would affect every aspect of local government, including the internal structures of councils and the role of the mayor. The next section of this chapter examines the complexities involved in being a mayor.

### *THE ROLE OF MAYOR*

At the turn of the twenty-first century, being a mayor has become quite different in scope and intensity from being an ordinary member of a council. Although councillors can certainly be seen as having leadership responsibilities and as taking part in the leadership process, particularly those who chair council committees, only the mayor can be expected to have a concern for every part of a council's activities. If anything goes wrong in a council from the voter's point-of-view, the mayor is particularly vulnerable to blame and is likely to be called to account as the person most identified with the council and the person who is most identifiable. The mayor also carries a much higher workload along with the higher level of responsibility. Councillors attend council meetings and the meetings of the committees they belong to, but usually their responsibilities are seen as limited to particular areas. Expectations of them as representatives are relatively finite. A councillor can claim with impunity to have little knowledge of the work being done by say, the Council's Economic Development Group, or explain that a particular query is better answered by another person, but ordinary citizens' expectations of the mayor are often boundless. One way of appreciating the enormity of the level of commitment routinely expected of a mayor is to imagine a job advertisement for the position as shown in Figure 4, Situations Vacant – Profile, Have you ever considered becoming a mayor? If one were to read such an advertisement in the situations vacant it would seem not just unattractive, but so demanding as to be outrageous compared with ordinary employment conditions. The reason for the disparity is the size of a mayor's job.

## **Figure 4: Hypothetical position description for a Mayor of a District or City**

### **HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED BECOMING A MAYOR?**

#### **Job Specifications**

##### **Hours of Work**

Must be available and accessible 9a.m. to 11p.m. weekdays (longer hours may be necessary for some night meetings).

Attendance at functions required evening and weekends (normal working week approximately 80 hours).

High standard of dress required (no clothing allowance available).

##### **Other Requirements**

- Knowledge of policy-making processes required, or a willingness to learn
- Understanding of governance and the distinction between policy and administration.
- Must be able to chair meetings competently even when disruptive elements are present.
- Good public speaker (able to write own speeches).
- Able to cope with criticism without taking offence.
- Good knowledge of all legislation relating to local authorities (or willingness to learn).
- Able to read and assimilate large quantities of information and be able to explain it to others.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Able to conduct an election campaign, willing to invest at least \$5000 of in election expenses.
- Comfort with and knowledge of tikanga Māori highly valued.
- Familiarity with local government an asset.
- Interest and competence in understanding sewerage, drainage, water schemes and technical infrastructure as well as financial planning and resource management.
- Able to answer large quantities of correspondence in a timely manner.
- Good skills in dealing with the media and the public.
- Keen interest in national and global developments and their impact on the community,
- Able to manage and interact with bureaucratic systems.

##### **Personal Qualities Required**

- Able to remain calm in a crisis e.g. civil defence emergency. Determination, persistence, optimism, courage, energy.
- Strong constitution, excellent health a necessity.
- Able to persuade others to work with you and share information with you.
- Prepared to take risks.
- Flexibility, adaptability.
- High tolerance for stress.
- Able to be completely impartial and unbiased.

##### **Remuneration**

Set amount depending on population of local authority (no negotiation possible).

Contract, three year term at the end of which a further three years may be gained by means of winning a election.

##### **Benefits**

Use of a vehicle, use of an office, some secretarial support may be provided.

Nomination forms available from council. A \$500 deposit is required which will be forfeited if 15% of vote is not gained by candidate.

The mayor is seen as the representative of the city or district as a whole and is the mayor 24 hours a day, able to be asked to explain all the actions of the council, even when there has been very little personal involvement in an issue on the mayor's part. Some of the complexity of mayoral leadership comes from the nature of the local government system in New Zealand where mayors have multiple accountabilities and responsibilities to voters, to councillors and to council staff, who they must work with to achieve their objectives. The multiple accountabilities come from the fact that in New Zealand mayors are directly elected by public vote, unlike the system that has been in force until recently in the United Kingdom, where mayors have been selected by council members from among their own ranks. A similar system of appointment from within the ranks operates in appointing council chairpersons in regional government in New Zealand, while in Australia and America - although different territorial areas use different systems - the majority of mayors are appointed. One of the major distinguishing features of New Zealand's local government system is having mayors who are directly elected.

Despite being reliant on voters for election to office, a mayor's role is far more complex than winning elections and chairing meetings of the council. There are a multiplicity of relationships to manage – relationships with the community and voters, with other elected members of the council, with the CEO and other council staff, with local iwi and community organisations and interest groups as well as neighbouring local authorities and national bodies involved with local government. And, as if the challenges of the multi-faceted nature of the position alone were not sufficiently taxing, being a mayor at the beginning of the twenty-first century also demands an intelligent awareness of the requirements of the changes in local government during the last three decades and ways the council can respond positively to those changes.

In other words, competence in the mayoral field requires an understanding of the role of mayor, an awareness of statutory responsibilities and organisational boundaries, the ability to adapt to the changing role of local government, a commitment to the demands of recent legislation for increasing public participation and accountability, as well as the ability to model leadership and encourage leadership in others. Even more surprisingly, these needs have to be met by an individual who has little more organisational power within the council as mayor, than any other ordinary council

member. The demands on the mayor are not matched by the powers of a mayor. In this situation, leadership is required if a mayor is to achieve desired goals. The central focus of this thesis is to explore whether leadership theory can play a part in understanding how a mayor can influence outcomes in spite of a lack of organisational power. Leading effectively without formal power is a far greater test of leadership than merely having power and wielding it.

### *PARADOX OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT POWER*

So, the paradox of being a mayor rests in the lack of formal power the mayor has in real terms, despite the importance of the mayor's contribution for a council to run smoothly and achieve its goals. Elwood (1991) who is an ex-mayor and chaired the Local Government Commission before joining the Ombudsman's office writes that:

In the New Zealand context the mayoral office is both powerful and powerless. Powerful in the sense that the mayor is the recognized community leader, but powerless in the sense that the mayor cannot commit a council to a particular course of action or the allocation of resources without majority support on each issue which comes before the council for a resolution or a decision (Elwood, 1991, p.10).

These limitations are set out in the legislation that defines the boundaries of local government's jurisdiction. Kenneth Palmer in *Local Government Law in New Zealand* (1993) outlines the limited powers of a mayor as contained in the Local Government Act 1974 with this succinct explanation:

The electors of the whole area of every city, and district council, elect a mayor at each triennial election. The mayor is ex officio a member of the council and comes into office on the date of the election. ... The mayoral office does not by statute have any comprehensive prescribed functions or powers, other than the procedural powers given to the mayors to chair meetings, exercise a casting vote, and to requisition for special or emergency meetings (Palmer, 1993, p.160).

After delineating how little the statute confers in terms of the statutory powers of a mayor, Palmer goes on to discuss the empirical realities of the way the mayoral role

has developed in practice. He explains that the leadership a mayor exhibits depends partly on personal qualities and partly on the context created by the idiosyncrasies of the local authority concerned, particularly its size:

By more recent convention the functions performed by the mayors of the larger cities have transformed the office into a full-time position. However, the time devoted to the office and functions may well reflect the degree of leadership undertaken, the individual personality, the council committee structure, and the relationship with the chief administrative officer employed by the authority. The scale of salaries and remuneration payable to mayors is related to population and reflects the full-time nature of the office in the large urban areas (Palmer, 1993, pp.160-161).

As Palmer explains, the brief for a mayor is a very open one and will differ markedly depending on the nature of the local authority. A small rural district will have different issues from a large urban city, although both require appropriate leadership in terms of the mayor's commitment of time and focus, as Palmer (1993) indicates. Bush (1995) also mentions leadership as the quality that is expected and required of every mayor as designated head of the council, despite the fact that the statute does not mention leadership when defining the mayoral office.

Margaret Evans, who was previously a mayor of Hamilton City, argues in her thesis on leadership and the role of the mayor in New Zealand (2003) that the duties of a mayor as leader should be spelled out in the Local Government Act 2002 in much the same way as the duties and obligations of a chief executive are detailed in the legislation. She thinks that having the weight of legislation to strengthen the mayor's position would help to prevent the situations that have arisen in some local authorities where mayors are at loggerheads with their councils or unable to influence dysfunctional factionalism within councils. At present the mayor's power is very limited yet the expectations surrounding the position of mayor are almost boundless.

Although the mayor, like the other members of council, has only one vote on any issue considered by the council, the mayor has the responsibility for maintaining an overview of all the council's activities. Ordinary councillors are able to specialise in their particular interest areas, but the mayor does not have this luxury. However, the

mayor enjoys several advantages over the majority of councillors (Bush, 1995). The mayor is usually full-time and because of attendance at meetings and community events is able to keep up with issues right across the council and out in the community. Bush points out also, that being primary spokesperson for the local body gives mayors “a high identification rating” and that there are “a wealth of opportunities for them to steer policymaking by wheeling and dealing. But to do this rather than concentrate on ceremonial and social duties, they have to be so driven and permitted” (Bush, 1995, p.201).

What Bush’s comments illustrate is that the approach each individual mayor chooses to take to the mayoral duties and the operating environment of the individual local authority will be the two main factors in shaping differences among mayors and their leadership. However, these differences can be examined and analysed by researchers. For example, Kotter and Lawrence (1974) developed a taxonomy of mayoral approaches to the leadership role, based on research carried out with American mayors, but applicable to the New Zealand context. They named their five different types of mayors as ceremonial, caretaker, personality/individualist, executive and program entrepreneur. These types range from a mayoral approach which is very limited in scope with only short-run agendas [ceremonial] through to an approach which is very broad in scope with short, medium and long-range agendas [program entrepreneur]. This taxonomy underscores the obvious but crucial point, that as leaders mayors are capable only of doing the job they perceive as being there to be done and that the council allows them to do.

International comparisons of mayors are useful in highlighting the contingency of the conventional wisdom in New Zealand and the way that the external environment shapes the mayoral role. As Elwood (1991) explains, “In many respects the mayoral office [in New Zealand] is unlike most mayoral offices anywhere else in the world. The two key characteristics are that the mayor is not elected by the council and the mayor has no executive authority except as delegated by the council.” In America, the role of mayor differs much more from place to place than is the case in New Zealand. As Svava (1990) points out, more than half of the municipalities with populations of over 2,500 in the U.S.A. use a mayor-council system. Over a third of cities use the council-manager form of local government while the remaining cities

are run either by a commission or by holding town meetings to make decisions. Svvara's comments on the mayor's role in the different versions of the mayor-council system in America provide an interesting basis for contrast and comparison with New Zealand's version of the mayor-council system in local government.

Svvara (1990) distinguishes between the *weak* mayor and *strong* mayor forms of government. The weak mayor form of local government is much more closely related to the system that is typical in New Zealand. The powers of a mayor are far more limited in a weak mayor local government structure, whereas the mayor in a strong mayor council has much more unilateral administrative and executive power. The weak mayor has very limited powers to appoint staff, some of whom may be elected, some appointed by the council or by the mayor, but only with the consent of the council. Similarly, the weak mayor is not able to develop a budget to translate an overview of policy into a financial plan, without the involvement of the council and elected officials. Svvara (1990) sees the mayor in a weak mayor council as having to expend tremendous energy to overcome the inherent fragmentation of authority in the system by encouraging and influencing power-holders to work together.

The strong mayor-council structure, on the other hand, has a mayor with extensive powers and control over staff, who is separate from the elected council. The mayor prepares the budget and is able to appoint and to dismiss department heads. The mayor can veto council's proposals but the council is able to override mayoral vetoes and must approve policy proposals, so that there are checks and balances within the strong mayor system. The mayor has more access to information and more power over staff, so that when there is conflict between mayor and council, the council may be limited to obstructive tactics, blocking the mayor's initiatives rather than introducing alternatives.

Svvara (1990) comments that much of the literature concentrates on the strong mayor and is somewhat dismissive of the weak mayor, but he sees the weak mayor as having more power to influence others without political suspicions being aroused, so that 'weakness' or rather lack of institutional power and control can be used as a strength. Svvara considers that the weak mayor can achieve a great deal as a co-coordinator or facilitator, influencing other key players and gaining a larger degree of trust and

influence precisely because of not having executive power. These points highlight the importance of the mayor and the kind of overview and influence that a mayor can have in a changing environment. The mayor's powers as stipulated in the legislation have not changed but the introduction of a mayoral salary in the 1980s has increased the pool of potential mayors beyond those of independent means and the changing local government environment has created a vacuum which requires an innovator and a co-coordinator in communities, both roles which mayors are well situated to accept and develop. In the next section the changes to the local government environment, which have had such an impact on the role of the mayor, will be explored.

### *CHANGING ENVIRONMENT, CHANGING ROLES*

This section of the chapter examines the changes within and without local government that followed reform and restructuring. The traditional, organisational structure of local authorities before restructuring followed the pattern of mayor and council with typically four or five committees reporting to council on areas such as finance, works, planning and culture, recreation and welfare. Bush (1976, p.27) lists the words used most frequently in committee titles [taken from a postal survey of local bodies with populations of over 30,000] as finance - 100 percent, planning - 100 percent, works - 96 percent, parks - 80 percent, staff - 52 percent, traffic - 36 percent, policy - 32 percent, social services - 32 percent, cultural - 28 percent, health - 28 percent. The titles included in the analysis were those used by more than 25 percent of councils.

In terms of council staffing structures, there were usually two senior management positions that headed two separate hierarchical empires of council staff and resources. The two positions, which were of equal status in the organisation, were those of town or county clerk and engineer. The importance of the engineer highlights the continuing importance of roading, construction and services as the most significant activities of a council, just as in the earliest beginnings of local government. While the engineer was in charge of all engineering-related services and resources, the town or county clerk was the main point of contact between council and the public and was responsible for the administrative machinery of the council. Beneath the clerk and the engineer were departmental heads reporting to them, for example the treasurer reporting to the clerk or the planner reporting to the engineer. The amount of

delegated authority given to departmental heads by their managers differed from council to council.

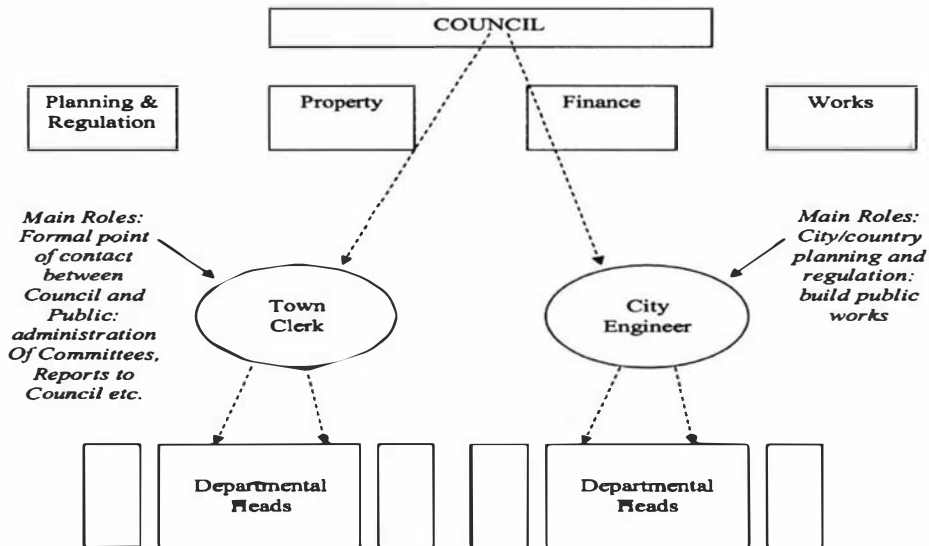
There were several local authorities where all reports to council, including those written by other staff, would be signed by the engineer or the clerk. The ownership and control by these two senior managers of all the work carried out in their departments, was almost feudal in its completeness. There could be problems also with a lack of horizontal communication between departments, as well as between the two centres of power. Each department had a different, somewhat introverted focus and saw its own needs and objectives as paramount. The diagrams in Figure 4 adapted from Anderson and Norgrove (1997) show the organisational structure of councils before and after reform, respectively. As Anderson and Norgrove point out, the model shown in Figure 5 was not universal, as some councils had restructured earlier during the 1970s, but most municipal and county councils will have had a structure very similar to that in the diagram at an earlier stage in their evolution.

After legislative changes were introduced in 1989 as part of local government reform, requiring local authorities to have a chief executive officer as the employer of all staff, the dual hierarchy model changed. As Howell, McDermott and Forgie (1995) explain, the implication of this change was that the Chief Executive Officer or CEO would be responsible for outputs and actions designed to achieve the council's political objectives as decided by the mayor and council. Just as in central government reform, policy was to be separate from regulation and service delivery. Councils were to stop running businesses such as electricity reticulation and absorbing the income into the collective coffers. In the interests of transparency and accountability, any business interest should operate as a business unit (within council but with a separate budget and organisational structure) or a LATE (local authority trading activity) reporting to the council but separately run as a stand-alone organisation (Boston et al., 1996).

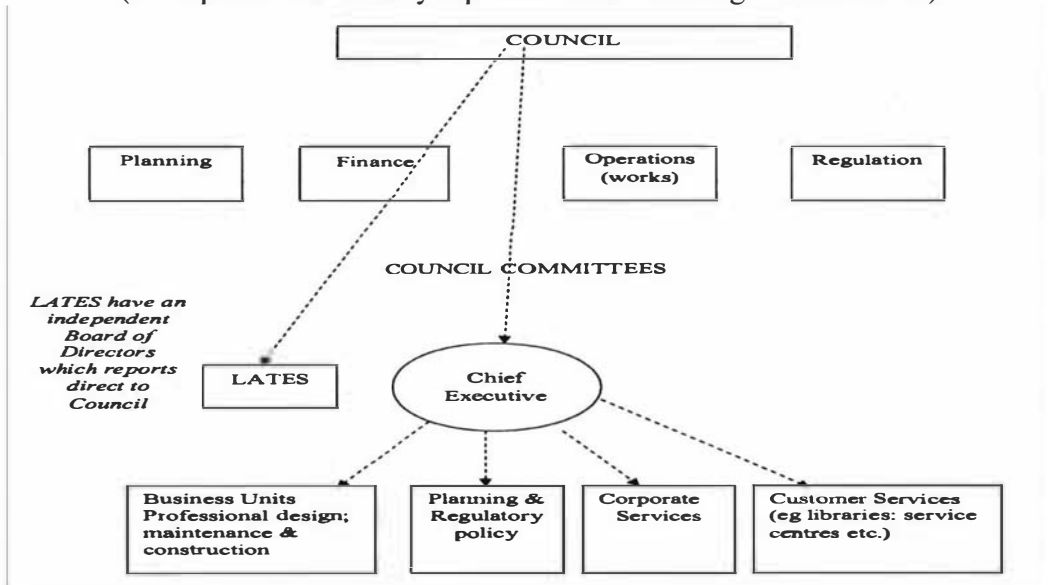
Looking at the differences between the two diagrams in Figure 5 may lead to the illusion that the change was just a matter of changing a diagram, but of course the changes within each council were traumatic for both staff and politicians. Recognising that change must come is quite different from experiencing the turmoil of change,

**Figure 5: Organisational Structure of Local Authorities Pre- and Post-1989**  
 Adapted from Anderson and Norgrove (1997, p.155)

*A common model of local authority structure pre-1989*  
 (built around the pair of senior management roles of the “Town Clerk” and “City Engineer”)



*Model of local authority structure post-1989*  
 (example below broadly representative of a range of structures)



particularly in an organisation where there has been very little change at more than a superficial level for many decades, as was the case in most local authorities.

Nevertheless, very few councils remained untouched by the changes. After the Local Government Commission had completed the process of producing schemes for amalgamations, the number of local government units was reduced from more than 200 to 88 (Harris & Levine et al., 1994; Howell, McDermott & Forgie, 1995). As some ad hoc authorities had the same membership and functioned as say, both the pest destruction board and the water board, this reduction was not quite as draconian as the figure suggests but it was still a dramatic change.

The new structures of councils with their CEOs, their flatter structures, their LATEs and/or business units became similar to that shown in Figure 5 (Anderson & Norgrove, 1997). Obviously, the relationship between the CEO and the mayor became all-important. The mayor had an overview of all of the aspects of the council's political dimension both internally and externally, while the CEO was responsible for all of the administration and implementation of the council's decisions. For the mayor to achieve anything in terms of policy implementation, the co-operation of the CEO would be needed. Although it had always been a truism that the role of the mayor and council was to make policy and the complementary role of the managers and staff was administration, in reality there had always been an important and substantial overlap. As Leach and Wilson (2000) suggest, speaking of the British context, the catchphrase 'members make policy; officers implement it' is difficult to apply in a rigid fashion to the division of labour between the staff and politicians within a council. In New Zealand, council managers would advise on the practicalities or possible difficulties in implementing a particular policy if adopted and councillors would give feedback on the way council departments were carrying out their work.

In some councils pre-reform, the more worrying situation had developed of policy formulation being little more than an ad hoc listing by the clerk of council decisions which had some policy content in a reference manual. Deciding policy was not a process of conscious deliberation, since policy as policy was seldom debated or fully considered. Policy was developed in an ad hoc way by precedent. Stories were also told of mayors and councillors (particularly heads of council committees) who were eager to have a 'hands-on' role and open the mail or become involved in the service delivery aspect of the council's work in some of the departments. After reform, councils had to try to conform to a new, more rigorous understanding of the

separation between policy and administration as well as managing the effects of post-reform trauma.

For most authorities, the changes meant learning how to be a new entity composed of local government units which had previously been separate councils and attempting to establish an identity, coping with the disenchantment of staff who had been demoted or lost power within the organisation as a result of restructuring and also implementing complex new ways of carrying out their functions as required by changes to the Local Government Act (Local Government Amendment Act No. 2) introduced in 1989. Councils had to introduce accrual accounting and depreciate assets and plant and allow for replacement and a return on capital in their financial budgeting and annual accounts. They had to draft an annual plan of activities and spending in consultation with the public. The level of accountability to the public and the stringent financial requirements were a huge shock to the many councils who were more used to deciding on rates increases using a 'think of a number that the market will bear' approach, followed by a flurry of frenzied horse-trading in meetings conducted in private where the strongest departments would tend to win. The change was so unpalatable that mayors had to deal with councils who did not see why they should comply and wanted to flout the legislation. Many mayors and councils had to grapple with the problem that asset depreciation would leave them technically insolvent, or the fear that assorted community malcontents would subvert the annual planning process, or just the inability to assimilate such a complete upheaval in the status quo.

In some cases, mayors were bemused and reluctant to accept the new, unpalatable reality. In others, where mayors recognised that there was little point in resisting, they had to lead the way in encouraging recalcitrant councillors to accept that the changes were mandatory and that compliance was essential. However, there were more legislative changes to come. The Resource Management Act 1991 took the place of the Town and Country Planning Act and substituted a far more taxing, open-ended way of assessing developments which was labour-intensive for councils to manage compared with the more straightforward, 'Does the proposal fit the template or not?' approach taken under the Town and Country Planning Act. The legislative changes were costly, both in terms of time and financial resources.

Both the annual planning process and the Resource Management Act required consultation and the Resource Management Act specified that wahi tapu (sacred places) should be preserved and that Māori iwi should be consulted on resource management issues affecting them. Being required to consult with Māori entailed a huge learning curve for most councils. By and large councils were unsure who to consult and how to consult when it came to local iwi. Some councils had developed good links with local iwi, had well-developed bicultural policies and had worked interactively with Māori on issues such as sewerage schemes (discharge of effluent into water mixing body wastes with sources of food such as eels is unacceptable to Māori) and protecting urupā (cemeteries) from development or desecration. For most Māori the whole local authority system was alien. The boundaries made little sense in terms of tribal boundaries, so that a river marking the tribal boundary might be within the territory of three or more local authorities. To stand for office in a local authority would mean putting oneself forward, whereas typically, in Māoridom, leaders are selected and supported by the people. Because councils were run along Pākehā lines with Pākehā values, to have a lone Māori on a council could still mean little change in respecting Māori attitudes.

The changes in the legislation meant that local government leaders had to become knowledgeable very quickly about Māori, about concepts in the Resource Management Act such as sustainability, about accrual accounting and about community participation. The size, scope and complexity of the work involved in being a mayor had suddenly increased exponentially.

### *POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AFTER REFORM*

After reform of local government, several aspects of being a mayor changed considerably both within the council organisation and in relation to the external environment. Before reform, the major proportion of time spent in the role of mayor had been committed to ceremonial speechmaking, attending meetings and events as the figurehead of the city or district, and chairing council meetings. After reform the complexity of a role that had always been busy and stressful, (rushing from appointment to appointment, reading an enormous amount of paperwork, coping with

the tension generated by trying to reconcile competing demands) became much more complicated. Within the council organisation, the mayor's relationship with the chief executive officer became increasingly important. The council employed the CEO and the CEO employed all other staff. As the employer of all council staff, the CEO controlled the council's resources and the way policy was implemented. To achieve political objectives, the mayor needed to be able to communicate and work with the CEO in linking the way the organisation was run with the political dimension, the aspirations of the councillors and the community. The ideal relationship between mayor and CEO is one of mutual respect and co-operation. However, clearly there have been examples of several councils where the mayor and the CEO have not been successful in building such a relationship. Some of the tensions are immediately obvious.

Typically, mayors and councils have had limited experience in staff selection and in managing the employment relationship, particularly at the level of a senior executive such as a CEO. Just as there had been limited turnover in political positions, there had also been limited turnover in staffing positions at senior level in councils. Now CEOs would be appointed on renewable contracts. The changed legislation meant that many mayors had to carry out an executive appointment process for the first time and there is a good deal of confusion possible between the roles of employer and politician. Some mayors and councils expect complete 'loyalty' from a CEO or senior manager in supporting and implementing a council decision, even if that decision is ultra vires (outside the law) or is in conflict with the manager's technical knowledge or would entail a lack of support owed to other staff. Also, although mayors are now paid a salary, (based on their territorial local authority's population) most CEO's salaries are at least double that of their mayoral counterparts. No doubt, some mayors who consider that they are working harder than the CEO, wonder whether the CEO deserves the salary package the top position commands. In times of disagreement and friction between CEO and mayor, any tension in the relationship may lead a mayor to judge that the CEO is being treated far too generously in terms of financial rewards.

There is empirical evidence of a high level of dissatisfaction that mayors and councils felt towards CEOs in the early days of the new legislative changes. The report of the Auditor-General on local government chief executives in 1994, five years after

reform, commented on the disturbing figure of 28 instances in the previous five years of CEOs whose contracts had been terminated “for perceived poor performance, or the council’s desire for a new top administrator, or because of a breakdown in the relationship between the chief executive and the council” (Audit Office cited in Boston et al., 1996, p.191). This situation has not improved. The 2002 Report of the Controller and Auditor-General on managing the relationship between a local authority’s elected members and its chief executive states that in the “last three years alone, turnover has been even higher [than that reported in 1994] with over half of all councils of all councils replacing their chief executives since the local authority elections in 1998” (p.3).

CEOs’ contracts are for five years. Their performance is assessed by the council against agreed performance indicators. Performance assessment encourages a task focus which can work against CEOs developing a sympathetic awareness of the political realities of council members’ three year terms and their need to satisfy electors in order to be re-elected. Some sensitivity to the complexity of each other’s role is essential for a CEO and a mayor to work constructively as a team for the well-being of the community. Some of the most important aspects of the chief executive’s job in terms of complementing the political dimension of the council’s work probably remain unstated, yet need to be understood for the CEO to be successful. A lack of empathy for each other’s roles can cause tension between the chief political leader and the chief administrative leader. Each needs the other’s support to achieve their goals.

A mayor who is not successful in building a relationship with the CEO will be distanced from the person who controls all the council’s resources and will not readily be able to consult informally with the one other person who has an overview of the council as a whole. To give effect to the mayor’s political objectives requires the CEO’s support and understanding. Nevertheless, it is quite understandable that the two leaders of a local authority, the political leader and the administrative leader, do sometimes find it difficult to understand each other’s position. Professional staff members have to meet the standards they have learned in gaining their technical expertise, so planners, engineers and accountants cannot always tell the council what they would like to hear, if the council has followed a course of action which may lead

them into difficulties. Although the issue of conflict between the administrative and political arms of local government was addressed in local government reform in 1989, more recent legislation has continued the process of trying to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clarified.

For example, the provisions of the Local Government Bill introduced in December 2001, which was open for submissions at the time this research was being carried out, insisted on each local authority clarifying the separate responsibilities of the management and elected members. The need to prepare statements on processes of governance, and principles of management and governance were no doubt expected to help make explicit to both CEOs and mayors the important differences in each other's roles. In Part Three of the Bill, Subpart 1, Section 24 on Governance Principles read:

A local authority must endeavour to ensure that the following principles apply to the governance of that local authority: ...

- b) the governance role and expected conduct of elected members is clear and understood by elected members and the community; and
- c) the governance structures and processes are effective, open and transparent; and ... .
- f) the relationship between elected members and management of the local authority is effective and understood.

The Bill also made it mandatory for local authorities to prepare a local governance statement which specifies, in clause (h) that information must be included in the statement on "the management structure and the relationship between management and elected members".

These provisions of the Bill which passed into law as the Local Government Act 2002, were aimed at ensuring that local authorities debated their governance procedures and clarified their understandings of the roles of elected members and management explicitly, codifying these understandings into a public statement of local governance. This process of debate and clarification and the preparation of a governance statement, has meant that local authorities have a much higher level of awareness of the specific differences between the roles of elected members and officers through having to make their understandings of the differences, in terms of

their council, explicit. Although the 1989 reforms introduced procedures intended to ensure that the policy/administration separation was observed, the Local Government Act 2002 insists that council should engage in spelling out exactly what governance means for them in their particular council. The mayor needs to lead this process of making abstract ideas clear and accessible to members of council and, of course, to the public.

### *FROM GOVERNING TO GOVERNANCE*

Before reform a narrowly bounded concept of the local authority's role as 'governing' in its own area, was adequate. A mayor could fulfill the basic requirements of the position without thinking beyond the boundaries of the council's territory. To be a mayor was to be a local figurehead, to make speeches when necessary and to chair council meetings competently. Having an internalized focus as mayor that looked inward in a parochial way to one's own council was expected. Concentrating on service delivery and regulation was expected. The mayor was involved with process at least as much, if not more than policy.

However, after reform, the situation of operating as a local government leader became far more complex. Many different organisations affected the future well-being of the council. The legislative requirements now spelt out the need to involve the community in an annual planning process. The mayor needed to understand the aspirations of the community and recognise that a large number of other interests affected the community. The council could not operate as a small island within the country. The impact of national trends, international events, business organisations, central government, regional government, neighbouring councils - all had an impact on the council's ability to help the community identify and reach its goals.

Since the council had no power to govern or control many of the interests that were important to the community, the skills of governance became essential. The relevant abilities included anticipating and identifying the likely future actions of significant organisations. A mayor's role as the identifiable front person for the council expanded to incorporate communicating, negotiating, networking, strategising, co-operating.

Because of the fragmentation of all of the players in the governance equation, the quality of political leadership became all-important for the success of policy.

As John and Cole (2000) explain writing about local governance in the United Kingdom:

There needs to be a political mechanism able to bring together the fragmented institutions and the array of private actors in a way which leads to better and more responsive policy-making. There is only one individual who can perform this task – the elected leader. The question becomes, do leaders have enough powers, legitimacy, capacity and personal qualities to carry out the job of managing complexity? Whereas local government leadership was always difficult, local governance leadership requires almost superhuman skills (p.86).

Perhaps the most superhuman skill required is the skill of environmental scanning and prediction. Mayors, along with their ‘think tanks’ and advisors, need to be able to anticipate effects of other organisations’ actions on their communities and prepare for them well in advance. They need to be able to link together different pieces of information from the vast quantity of information that is relevant to their work. Mayors also need to be able to gain agreement and commitment from their communities to work towards medium and long-term goals. Gaining consensus in the community is a huge task, as communities become more and more diverse and pluralism makes it difficult to find any unity in a vision for the future.

The complexity of the task facing mayors in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, makes it clear that this role requires the ability to create an environment where transforming leadership will flourish. The breadth and complexity of being mayor is such that there are many areas where the task requires the support of others for a vision and in creating a vision. Through the influence of the leadership process and the way a mayor involves others within that process, a goal which may have seemed out of reach, can come to be seen as achievable and worth the commitment of others over time. Even through setbacks and trials, those working towards the goals, inspired by the vision of the endpoint, may achieve far more than would have ordinarily seemed possible. This chapter asserts that for a mayor to achieve many of

the complex tasks now required by the role, an understanding of leadership is needed. According to Reid (1994):

Leadership is the activity which most clearly articulates the “governance” function in action, ... In the local context” leadership is about establishing collective goals, providing the process by which those goals are formulated and promoting their achievement (p.4).

Reid analyses the four constituent elements in governance. He sees the first as “the guardianship of difference”, recognition of the diversity of society and managing the rights to expression and recognition of different views e.g. the perspectives of conservationists compared with developers (1994, p.4).

Reid also highlights the importance in governance of ‘the protection of future selves’. In other words, local government has the role of anticipating the needs of the community, not just as it is, but as it could be, or will be. He sees strategic planning and stewardship as contributing towards this aspect of governance. He also mentions the advancement of positive rights and the provision of civic leadership as parts of the unpacking of the governance concept. Positive rights include the rights of citizens to participate in decision-making and civic leadership is taking the lead in helping the community to determine and achieve its aspirations. Reid’s overview makes it clear that governance is multi-faceted and requires much more creativity and imagination than governing by overseeing the provision of services and enforcing compliance with regulations. To envision future needs and possibilities as well as overcome present obstacles and problems, requires leadership.

## *CONCLUSION*

Local government in New Zealand began with a pragmatic need to organise basic local services with minimal resources. Over time, local government mayors and councillors maintained the focus on services along with an inward-looking, parochial approach resistant to change. While the outside world changed, conservative councils remained the same. Central government dealt with new requirements in local government by setting up ad hoc authorities to administer specific functions such as energy reticulation and managing ports.

In Auckland, when the need for co-ordination and a ‘big picture’ approach to the region became obvious, a regional council was established by government and later a nation-wide regional tier of government was introduced as a way of dealing with the inability of councils to work together across their boundaries. Just as local councils found it difficult to think regionally and co-operatively, they also found it difficult to respond to their community’s needs and tended to continue functioning much as they had always done. Most of the leadership functions of mayors and councils were predictable and repetitive. However, communities and their needs were changing and some councils began to take responsibility for broader social and economic goals beyond the provision of services.

With local government amalgamation and a whole new environment of change, mayors became increasingly important. Although ‘governing’ could be carried out at a distance from the community, governance required close involvement with the multiple groups and interests within the community both to give them a voice and also to work together with them in envisioning and creating the future.

This chapter has outlined changes in local government which expanded leadership roles and responsibilities of councils and mayors. In the next chapter, the research design of this study, which was developed to explore the way that women mayoral candidates and women mayors saw and responded to this need for leadership, will be explained.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Research design and methodology

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Social facts are embedded in social action, just as social meaning is constituted by what people do in everyday life. These meanings are most often discovered, “by hanging around and watching people carefully and asking them why they do what they do” (Erickson, 1977 cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.4).

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter maps the research method, plan and process. My task in this chapter is to explain how the research was done and why it was done in that way. First of all I will explain the genesis of the research, then the research design including the information sources, data collection, interview schedule, ethics procedures, data analysis and the researcher’s orientation.

### *GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH*

The beginning of a research project is usually considered to be the day when a researcher commits to undertaking a project on a particular topic. In reality my connections with the topic began in the 1970s in Auckland when I became the editor of the New Zealand Local Government journal and began to observe the arcane world of local government at close quarters. My observations included attending local government conferences which in those days, when the national bodies of rural authorities and urban authorities were separate, meant the Counties’ Conference and the Municipal Conference as well as the Town Clerks’ Conference and the County Clerks’ conference. Typically, I would be the only woman present apart from Doris Nicholson, Mayor of Upper Hutt City (who was only the fourth female mayor to hold office in New Zealand) at the Municipal Conference or the female town clerk of Glen

Eden Borough, Miss Ambler, at the Town Clerks' Conference. Speakers at the Town Clerks' Conference would address the audience as "Miss Ambler and Gentlemen".

In those days, it was difficult to imagine that local government could be otherwise. I observed Ministers of Local Government such as Henry May in their valiant attempts to reform local government, which met with determined resistance. Just as the local government system seemed destined to change only superficially, the names of the representatives elected to local councils often reflected very few changes. The electors' attitude towards local government seemed to be very apathetic. Political scientists documented the low voter turnout in local government elections and a high proportion of uncontested elections (Halligan and Harris, 1978, Bush, 1995). In many cases, whole councils were returned to office without an election, since no one stood against them. In such a conservative and male-dominated environment, the notion that there might ever be a significant number of women mayors seemed unthinkable.

However, during the 1980s, the number of women mayors increased gradually until, by 1986, it had reached 16, 12.6 percent (Drage, 1997). At this level of representation, it was more evident that women mayors seemed to make a difference in their communities. When there had been only one female mayor in the country, any differences in her way of working or relationship with her community were readily ascribed to her abilities as an individual, rather than any differences related to being a woman. But by the 1990s, women mayors were gaining considerable media coverage and they were being credited with having changed their communities for the better. However, media coverage can be discounted as possibly being overblown. In the early days in particular, women mayors were always liable to attract media coverage as oddities, since one of the highly-rated news values centres on the unusual as newsworthy (Gatlung & Ruge, 1965) for example, a woman in an unusual occupation or role.

As well as being alert to coverage of women mayors by the media, my perceptions were also influenced by the way ordinary people talked to me about their female mayors. Their feeling of fondness and sense of connection with the mayor was something quite different from anything that I had encountered in the 1970s. My parents were living in Dunedin city at this time and the genuine warmth they

expressed towards their mayor, Sukhi Turner, was quite different from their attitude towards any previous mayors. The mayor had been someone whose name they would know, whose photo they would recognise in the local newspaper, but would still be a distant figure – the mayor. To my parents, Sukhi Turner (the first female mayor of Dunedin City) was our mayor. They trusted her and believed that she was doing her very best for them. In their words, she was “on the side of the people”.

As someone who works in communication, I was fascinated by this relationship. I was interested in knowing whether other women mayors established this kind of connection with their communities and if so, how they achieved it. When I decided to study towards a PhD and had to choose a topic, I chose to explore the leadership of women as mayors in New Zealand local government. Although I considered carrying out a comparison of women and men, I decided against this course of action for several reasons.

Comparison studies seemed to me to become too narrowly focussed on comparing. I wanted to look as broadly and deeply as possible at the information I would gain in the study, without the restriction of comparing which almost inevitably shapes research and encourages analysis in terms of comparison and contrast along gender lines. Staying within one gender allowed a stronger focus on the difference and similarity among this particular group in terms of leadership. There are many confounding variables involved in making causal assertions about gender difference. Looking deeply at the views this particular group of woman had about leadership seemed likely to be more productive than looking at elements of comparison between men and women and drawing dubious conclusions.

### *CONSTRUCTING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS*

The process of constructing a research question begins with framing the research topic as a question. In this case, the initial question I began with was, ‘What do women mayors bring to leadership in local government?’ As meanings are in people rather than in words themselves, the work of making meaning in the research would lie with the women mayors as the people with the information about their experience of leadership, and with me as researcher in interpreting their meanings. Kvale (1996)

talks of interviews as leading to outcomes which are “a co-production of the interviewer and the subject” (p.xvii).

In the co-production involved in this research, much of the work of sense-making - selecting and explaining their experiences - would lie with the women mayors, so the research question was refined by relating it to the perceptions of women mayors. The next concern was leadership and how leadership theory dealt with the differences among people in leadership positions, since leaders cover a spectrum from those who merely occupy their positions to those who create change; some for better, others for worse. As explained in chapter two, Burns’ (1979) concept of the distinction between transforming and transactional leadership was one of the theoretical attempts to encompass this difference and even at the very beginning of the research I was interested in seeing how this distinction related to the experience of women mayors. Thus the research questions became:

- How do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice? and
- How do women mayors’ views of leadership compare with leadership theory?

Obviously, the first question would be answered by gaining information about the lived experience of women mayors. The second question would be answered through analysis of the information gained about the women mayors’ experience and perceptions of leadership. The next task was to develop the research design and decide which sources to use in gathering the data needed to answer the research questions.

## *RESEARCH DESIGN*

### *Choice of qualitative research strategy*

Although quantitative research methods have been favoured in leadership studies, because this was an exploratory study, qualitative research methods were more appropriate. One of the strengths of qualitative methodologies is that they facilitate the gathering of in-depth information in a way that leaves open the possibility for the information gained to show the nature of the research problem is quite different from

what the researcher imagined to be the case. Quantitative methods usually rely on beginning with a clear idea of the nature of the problem so that a particular type of information based on specific assumptions is gathered.

For example, a survey instrument measuring degree and types of stress might be appropriate if a teacher union wished to find out the degree of stress experienced by Māori teachers in secondary schools. But if the union wished to find out the coping strategies Māori teachers used to deal with their stress, a qualitative study would be more helpful. When, as in the present study, a researcher wishes to be open to a range of possibilities that might be revealed through the research, qualitative research is often more suitable than quantitative research which tends to pre-structure the expected outcomes of research.

### *Phenomenological approach*

As chapter two has shown, many of the researchers who have applied themselves to attempting to understand the construct of leadership have fared badly in attempting to gain any definitive understandings. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) have criticised the reification of leadership as misguided, characterising many leadership researchers as seeking a thing, an entity. Obviously such a search would be as doomed as a quest for the unicorn, because leadership does not have a concrete existence apart from the lived experience of those engaging in leadership processes.

To gain access to the lived experience of women mayors, I needed to interview them and study the phenomenon of leadership as it was present for them in their lives. Although much of the writing on phenomenology is abstruse and difficult to understand, its essential features are that it is based “on a world that is: (1) ‘constructed’ – people are creative agents in building a social world; and (2) ‘intersubjective’ – we experience the world with and through others” (O’Leary, 2004, p.122).

Given the nature of phenomenological research, it is necessary to approach the phenomenon being studied in a very open way, with as few assumptions as possible about what it ought to be, so that you can immerse yourself in what it is. In this study, interviews were to be used to find out how women mayors made sense of their

experience of leadership. So - as the interviewer in phenomenological research - I needed to concentrate on understanding what my interviewees were saying to me. There was no place for indulging in the usual human activity of judging and evaluating what was being said in terms of how relevant I thought it was to leadership, as I understood leadership to be. As researcher, I had to be absorbed in concentrating on the way women mayors made sense of their lived experience of leadership.

As O’Leary (2004) explains, “In phenomenological studies, ...the ‘reality’ of the construct is not of concern and should, in fact be ‘bracketed’ i.e. they should be explored as free as possible from what the world says they are supposed to be, or supposed to mean.” (p.123). Choosing this approach seemed the best way to gain access to the direct experience of leadership necessary for this investigation. Also, as very few previous researchers had used phenomenology to study the phenomenon of leadership, there was an encouraging possibility of finding out new information by using a different approach.

## *SOURCES OF INFORMATION*

The main source of information was to be interviews with female mayors, but as the research design became more clearly delineated, three different types of interviewees were identified. They were mayoral candidates standing for election, female mayors in office and also a case study comprising a longitudinal series of interviews over a three year term with a single mayor. To expand on the perspectives included in the longitudinal case study of a single mayor, four key informants were also interviewed about the mayor’s three year term and newspaper stories published about the mayor were collected and used to give a contextual frame to the interview material.

### *Interviews with female mayors*

Early on in the process of conceptualising of the research, it seemed clear that all the female mayors in office during a particular term should be interviewed. Although it would have been possible to include former mayors as interviewees, I did not seriously consider this option. Circumstances in the external environment of local

government can change greatly from term to term and I preferred to select mayors who were all in office at the same time.

Ideally, also, the mayors interviewed should be immersed in the lived experience of leadership, rather than looking back on it in retrospect after standing down or losing an election. Distance from events can change one's perceptions, so it was preferable to have all the mayors interviewed facing similar situations as contemporary mayors. Nevertheless, those who had been mayor for more than one term among the interviewees would be able to give a perspective on the way that things had changed for them over time.

Being able to have a complete census of all members of the research population was one of the virtues of the research design of this study. Selecting a sample entails the risk of possibly missing important information through excluding a potential participant left outside the sample. In this instance, the relatively small number of sitting mayors made it possible to interview all of them. So, one of the main sources of information would be from interviews with all of the female mayors in office. An interview schedule would be compiled covering areas that would help gain information needed to answer the research question.

However, because of the exploratory nature of the research, as very little previous research had been carried out on women mayors, it was important to be able to corroborate or contradict results gained from this source by setting the findings alongside information gained from other sources. Some writers discussing the process of qualitative research refer to the practice of using different data sources or methods to increase the trustworthiness of the findings as triangulation (Maxwell, 1996), a metaphor taken from land surveying where information about two sides of a triangle is used to calculate the measurement of the third side. Metaphorically then the more information points used to understand a research question, the smaller the unknown area of the research problem should become. As Maxwell explains, "This reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop" (pp.75-76). For this reason, female

mayoral candidates and a longitudinal case study of one mayor's experience of leadership during the whole term were also included in the information sources.

### *Interviews with female mayoral candidates*

In this study, as well as interviewing all the mayors in office, the other areas used to explore the research questions were firstly, interviews with three female mayoral candidates and secondly a case study involving one mayor's experiences during the three-year term.

The three female mayoral candidates were all standing for the mayoralty of the Palmerston North City Council in 1998. The face-to-face interviews conducted with the candidates enabled data to be gathered on whether or not they had similar perspectives of leadership compared with those of the mayors who were in office. This comparison might enable me to see whether there were any appreciable differences in the expectations of leadership through the lived experience of being a candidate compared with the lived experience of being mayor. As well as giving another source of information on leadership, interviewing the candidates also provided an opportunity to try out and refine the interview schedule used in the study.

At the time of selecting the topic and drafting a research proposal, the 1998 local government election campaign was under way. In Palmerston North, three female candidates were standing for the mayoralty and it seemed sensible to draft the questions that I would use to interview sitting mayors and use them to interview the candidates. Interviewing the candidates would show whether the questionnaire worked in terms of the comprehensibility of the questions, the length of time interviews would take and the quality of the information gained. Also, if one or more of the three candidates showed through their explanation of the meanings they gave to leadership that they were aware of transforming leadership that would show that the questionnaire could elicit information that would help relate the research results to the theoretical work surrounding transforming leadership. Evidence of transforming leadership as the way the candidates viewed and practised leadership would also give support to the findings of previous researchers that women were likely to use transformational leadership.

### *Longitudinal case study*

The purpose of the case study of one mayor throughout the three-year term was to enable data to be gathered at different times to see whether perspectives of leadership might change over time or in particular circumstances. Although the data gained from interviewing all the female mayors in office would enable their views to be compared with each other, the interviews would give only their points of view at that particular time. A different kind of information could be gained by using one mayor's experiences during the whole three-year term as a case study to show concerns and perspectives changing over time with changing circumstances. An in-depth exploration of the way a particular mayor coped with challenges during three years from election to election would be another way of looking at her lived experience of leadership. As well as conducting periodic interviews with the mayor about current events and leadership, the case study also involved collecting newspaper stories about the mayor and interviewing key informants about the mayor's leadership.

### *Collecting newspaper stories*

Newspaper stories for the period under study (the three year term and the preceding and following election periods) were collected from the internet site of INL the publisher at that time of the Manawatu Evening Standard and the Dominion newspapers (the two papers which carry news about Palmerston North) by keying in the mayor's name for one search and the word 'council' for the other. The newspaper stories were grouped in date order and those most relevant to the events in the case study were selected, read carefully and quoted in the case study whenever they gave a useful contextual framework for the study or expanded on information included in the study.

For example, a newspaper story on an independent research organisation's poll of Palmerston North residents' and ratepayers' levels of satisfaction with their council, showed that respondents were satisfied with the council and satisfied with the level of consultation on projects and decision-making. Satisfaction with consultation on plans to sell the Civic Administration building were of particular interest, as this became a very controversial issue soon after the poll and was widely considered to be a major

factor in the result of the election. So, this story on the poll results was included in those quoted in the case study.

### *Interviewing key informants*

Although I had considered interviewing key informants as a possible part in the research strategy at an early stage in my research design, I was undecided about the part such informants might play. However, as the case study progressed it seemed valuable to have other perspectives on the leadership involved during the three year term. I could see that my view of the mayor in the case study as transformational rather than transactional was not sufficient to explain why she lost the election. I needed to be able to view her accounts of her experiences alongside others' perspectives to help find a way through the confusion.

Four key informants, a senior council staff member, a councillor, a businessperson and a journalist - all of whom had been close to the events as they unfolded during the mayor's term of office - were interviewed about aspects of the case study to give four more different but informed perspectives on the leadership process. Each of the key informants was interviewed once, had the opportunity to add to or change a transcript of the interview and the four accounts were included as part of the case study.

## *CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHODS*

### *Using interviews*

The rationale for choosing interviewing as the method for gaining information in this research was its inherent flexibility. In an interview the interviewer and interviewee are able to clarify, expand or change the direction of the meaning that they are constructing at any time within the interview. The interviewees were able to give me much more information about their context within their particular local authority than it would have been reasonable to expect in a written self-completed questionnaire. Within an interview it is also possible to create a trusting environment because two people are interacting with each other. The quality of the information gained and the level of self-disclosure from participants is increased by the trust created within the immediacy and intimacy of the interview.

### *Telephone interviewing*

The face-to-face interviews with the mayoral candidates were carried out within the anticipated fifty-minute time frame. Knowing that the interview could be conducted in a fifty-minute time slot was important as, in all but two instances, the interviews with mayors in office would be carried out by telephone. Maintaining one's concentration during a long telephone conversation can be difficult and fifty minutes seemed the length of time that was appropriate to give the depth of information required without impinging too intrusively into a mayor's busy day and other time commitments. On telephone interviewing, Gilham (2005) notes that:

Because interviewer and respondent have only vocal communication to go on, it requires, if anything, even more concentration than a normal interview. And related to that ... an endurable length of time is less, usually much less, than with a face-to-face interview (p.103).

Despite the disadvantages, one reason for using telephone interviews was the ease of communication with people in distant locations. The women mayors were located in areas from the far north of the country to the deep south. They could not be expected to give priority to an interviewer who had travelled to talk with them if an emergency demanded attention. Most mayors are used to telephone interviews as they are widely used by the media. Although the research interview would be much longer than a media interview, the other advantages of using the telephone offset the concern that a long telephone interview might be tiring for interviewees. One advantage was the flexibility to re-schedule when needed and feasibility of interviewing all mayors by telephone, rather than have to rely on sampling a smaller proportion of mayors as would have been the case if travel costs had been a consideration.

Interview appointments were arranged with the mayors' secretaries after sending a letter of introduction explaining my background and interest in the research. Once appointments were made a confirmation of the interview time, an overview of the question areas to be covered, an information sheet and a consent form were mailed or faxed to the mayor. Most of the mayors were interviewed in their council offices, though two chose to carry out the interview at home. Some telephone interviews went beyond the fifty minutes when the interviewees gave me a lot of information particularly when I needed more background information from them to understand a

particular aspect of their local authority or their leadership experience. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed and I also took notes of the interview as well.

### *Carrying out the case study*

The case study of one mayor's term as mayor involved periodic interviews with the mayor about her leadership and events taking place at the time. These interviews took place in the mayor's office. A newspaper database search was also carried out using the years of the term, the mayor's name and the word 'council' to select published stories. The stories were printed off and filed in date order if they had relevance to leadership. Finally, choices were made about which issues and events of the term to examine in depth within the case study. These choices helped form some of the questions used in brief interviews with key informants who had observed the mayor during her term about their opinions of the leadership processes during the term. The Key Informant Questionnaire is attached as an appendix.

## *RESEARCH ETHICS*

Massey University's human ethics protocols for researchers require that participants are able to consider the commitment they will be making in taking part in research in order for them to knowingly decide whether or not to take part. In this way if they do consent to take part, they do so knowing what their participation will involve. Thus the researcher has to demonstrate to the university's ethics committee in advance the procedures for informing the interviewees about the research including the consent form (to be signed by participants before being interviewed), the information sheet, a confidentiality statement (for transcribers typing up the tapes into transcripts to sign), and details concerning anonymity of participants in published research and secure storage of interview tapes and transcripts.

In this research, anonymity was a concern as in a small country like New Zealand it is difficult to ensure the anonymity of public figures such as mayors. There was no possibility that Jill White, the mayor involved in the case study could remain anonymous and this meant that her understanding and approval of what would be published had to be sought at every stage. The key informants were assured of

anonymity and were referred to as Informants A, B, C and D, although when Jill White read the final account of the case study she felt that it was not difficult to guess the identities of some key informants. In this case, when you have been interacting with people for some years and know their opinions and their particular turn of phrase and forms of expression, it is not difficult when reading direct quotes to identify an interviewee.

With the accounts given by the sitting mayors, anonymity did not seem desirable. They were used to being quoted as public figures. They understood that their comments would be used in a thesis and in articles published in academic journals. Also their comments were so perceptive and intelligent, that I wanted them to be linked to their names. Their contribution to the research should be transparent and acknowledged. Although I had originally intended to return their interview transcripts to them for their scrutiny I felt that this was not a sufficient acknowledgment of their role in contributing to the research findings. Finally, I decided to send them a copy of the chapter which presented information from their interviews so that they would be able to see their words as they appeared in the final thesis. I would also send a summary of the conclusions, so that they could give me feedback if they wished to do so and so that they knew the final outcome of their involvement in the research. The information sheet and consent form used in conducting research with the sitting mayors are attached as appendices.

### *DESIGNING THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE*

The interview schedule was designed with several concerns in mind. First of all, the questions needed to be in a logical sequence to help the participants gather their thoughts easily - so questions on similar topics were grouped together and demographic questions on education, age and background experience were left until the end. The questionnaire began with the reason why the interviewee had decided to contest the mayoralty. This question provided a logical starting point and took the interview back to the very beginning stage of becoming a mayor. Going back to the beginning of a time sequence at the start of an interview rather than jumping into the middle, helps the interview participants (both interviewer and interviewee) to come forward in time from that point in an organised way. An organised time sequence for

the questions can help the interviewee to remember relevant points about past experiences and help the interviewer to order the information coherently.

Obviously, given the purpose of the research, the questions relevant to transforming and transactional leadership were particularly important. The questionnaire contained several attempts to gain information about whether the women mayors saw leadership as transactional, transformational, a combination of both or something completely different. I tried to capture the distinction inherent in the concepts of transforming and transactional leadership by framing a question about what one would have to do to be a competent mayor (transactional) compared with an outstanding mayor (transformational). However, participants would understand competent and outstanding in different ways and I could not rely on this single interview question alone to provide the information needed to answer the research questions.

So, other question areas also dealt with key variables of the research such as transformational and transactional leadership, the perceived effect of gender on leadership, beliefs about leadership, beliefs about being mayor, experiences of leadership, and demographic information. In particular, questions relating to mayors who they admired and a time as mayor when they had had to show leadership were also opportunities to see whether the incidents or mayors described could be described as transforming or transactional. A copy of the interview schedule is attached as an appendix.

### *DATA ANALYSIS - INTERPRETING FINDINGS*

Interpreting the research findings in this investigation is a two-stage process. This two stage process of analysis and synthesis is typically used in qualitative research projects, including those based on a phenomenological approach like this one. In fact, interpretation takes place throughout the research right from the beginning in framing relevant concepts and also in the way the researcher selects, pays attention to and understands information during the data-gathering process. So, interpretation cannot be seen as a process that only begins once the interview transcripts and other data have been gathered.

For this reason interpretation could perhaps more properly be described as a three stage process, first of selecting, secondly of analysing and thirdly, synthesising.

The first stage of selecting is difficult to describe. In listening to the interviewee or reading the newspaper story or interview transcript, the researcher feels a sense of excitement as data which seem particularly resonant with meaning almost vibrate or become luminous in the way that it stands out as being significant for the research. The researcher recognises that particular piece of data as being significant and requiring analysis. The next stage of interpretation involves scrutinising the pieces of data to see why they are significant, what is about them that is relevant to the research. This scrutiny is the analytic part of the process as separate pieces of information are examined in isolation from each other. The next stage is synthesis when the pieces of data are grouped together under related themes. In this way, the research transcripts or other research texts are searched to distinguish critical statements relevant to the research question, which are later grouped to give a picture of larger themes emanating from the research.

### *Research orientation*

In qualitative research, the researcher is the most important tool in the research activity (Kvale, 1996), as interpretation and judgments are influencing the research from its earliest stages, in selecting the research topic, in data-gathering and in fact at every stage of the planning and execution of the investigation. Thus, the researcher's theoretical perspectives, assumptions and prejudices need to be made transparent in explaining how the research was carried out, as all of the individual's ideological and perceptual baggage affects the way the research is conceptualised, executed and interpreted. However, I readily admit that the following attempt to make my influences transparent will only be partial as it is difficult to be fully aware of all aspects of my background that have affected my involvement in this research.

### *Impact of socio-political and experiential influences*

Having come from a working-class background with parents who were unionists and Labour party supporters, my political perspective remains left of centre. Nevertheless, as a feminist I am in the reformist camp rather than finding a place amongst the

radical, system-challenging revolutionaries. However, I admire the courage of those who have been prepared to take risks to achieve social change, particularly the risk of being shunned by society. I am Māori from the Kai Tahu iwi which has given me the advantage of cultural ambivalence, which is being able to see almost everything from at least two perspectives, Māori and Pākehā, as well as Feminist.

In my academic background I have studied English, Philosophy and Local Government politics and now work in communication. These academic disciplines have given me an appreciation of the power of narrative and words, a recognition of the importance of crafting a logical argument, a realisation of the contingency of any political system and an understanding of the complexity of sharing meanings and caution about assuming success in communication.

Having been editor of New Zealand Local Government magazine at a time when there was only one female mayor in the country - seemingly the exception that proved the rule that mayors were male and that the abilities acquired in life as a male were more suited to the requirements of the position of mayor - made me particularly interested in women mayors when they became a sizeable minority recognised for bringing a different kind of leadership to local government. Assertions about the success of individual female mayors in places such as magazine profiles made me interested in carrying out systematic research to see whether female mayors approached the role in a particular way which could be explored and described. In carrying out such research as a feminist eager to see women succeed within the system, there were several dangers to avoid. For example, the problem of over-identification with my participants, or being locked within my own frame of reference and thus unable to anticipate differences in the way women mayors saw the world, as well as the possibility of interpreting data in an overly favorable way because of an unwillingness to criticise female mayors. The existence of these problems was clear to me, but that did not mean that I found them easy to overcome.

I will give some examples of the problems encountered with each of the separate sources of information. The first problem could possibly be described as crossing the boundary line between researcher and participant. To illustrate this problem, in the face-to-face interviews with the mayoral candidates, I felt tempted to give advice

about their campaigns, but managed to control myself and concentrate on clarifying their opinions, perceptions and experiences. I was particularly concerned about the candidate who had no previous experience of local government who I felt would have been well-advised to stand for council as well as the mayoralty.

However, others had given her this advice that she had rejected. I had no desire to ruin the research relationship by giving her advice she did not wish to hear, even though I was conflicted, feeling she had the ability to make a contribution in local government but was unlikely as a relative newcomer to be voted in as mayor. Similarly, when one of the candidates mentioned that she had been subjected to bullying and death threats by male councillors, I was shocked and was tempted to ask more about the nature of the threats, but judged the topic to be a sidetrack away from the leadership focus and managed (one of the hardest tasks sometimes as a researcher) to remain silent.

The second problem was that as a feminist who sees feminism as an obvious ideology to espouse, it was a surprise to me that some of my sitting mayors when asked questions about male and female difference felt that there was an attempt on my part to trap them into taking up an anti-male position which they equated with Feminism. Some of the mayors wanted to make it very clear that they were not Feminists and there was no doubt for them that Feminism was a bad thing. Working in the relatively benign atmosphere of the university (where one is almost expected to be a feminist) had not prepared me for the possibility that a question about male-female difference would gain this kind of negative response. I would then have to smooth over the awkwardness to regain the warm, positive interview relationship that had previously been established.

Perhaps the most complicated problem arose with the case study where I had to contend with the problem of over-identification with my research subject, Jill White. Jill White was an acquaintance before our research relationship began and I admired her concern for social issues and her genuine 'goodness' as a person, her strong ethical principles and her integrity. However, I was quite unprepared for the emotions I felt about what I have called the 'ups and downs' of her term. When Jill White and some of the other mayors who I had interviewed were voted out at the end of the term I studied, I felt upset at what I saw as the waste of committed leaders who were in the

midst of doing important work in their communities. This problem is one that I have tackled using two strategies: first, taking the time needed to view the election defeats more philosophically, and second - in the case of Jill White - using both newspaper stories and key informants' views to give a more rounded view of her leadership, so that I am able to see her experiences during her term and her leadership through other eyes as well as hers and my own.

### *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

This chapter gives an overview of the way that I approached the research, my background and orientation to the research topic, my choice of methods, my way of interpreting the findings, the types of problems I encountered and the ways I used to find solutions. I have explained the reasons for my choices and decisions as a researcher in designing the research. Actual methods used in the research have been made transparent so that others could see how the methods related to the research questions and the site of the research and, if they so desired, either follow a similar pattern of research or critique the research results with a thorough understanding of the way the results were obtained.

In the next three chapters, five, six and seven – each part of the study's research results will be detailed. In the next chapter, information from interviews with the three female mayoral candidates in the 1998 Palmerston North election will be presented.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Aspiring candidates describe mayoral leadership

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Well, you could say that people who are bullied into a system accept it, but that is only superficial. Deep down, there is all this discontentment ... I think to be truly effective, the best way is to be consultative (Marilyn Brown, mayoral candidate).

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter presents the views of three female mayoral candidates, all standing for election in the same city. All three candidates were also standing in a mayoral election for the first time. Because candidates are likely to have gone through a time of reflection and careful consideration before deciding to contest the election, interviewing them during their campaigns seemed likely to gain valuable perspectives on mayoral leadership. Also, candidates as observers might be able to see and describe the ‘big picture’ of mayoral leadership more clearly, as they are not as distracted by the complex, detailed realities of being submerged in mayoral life in the way mayors are. So, the task of this chapter is to present the results of interviews with candidates, highlighting and teasing out information that is relevant to the research questions and the research objectives.

The research questions were ‘How do women mayors (or in this instance aspiring women mayors) perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice?’ and ‘How do women mayors’ (or in this case mayoral candidates’) views of leadership compare with leadership theory?’ The first objective of the research was to explore women’s leadership and find out what women as leaders demonstrated that might illuminate an understanding of approaches to leadership and leadership theory.

The second objective was to find out whether the findings of this study would support the claims of other researchers in the field of women and leadership who had claimed that women were more likely than men to be democratic leaders and more likely than men to be transformational leaders (Burns, 1978; Rosener, 1990; Helgesen, 1995).

Similarly, there was a general perception in communities that the advent of women as mayors had made a difference in local government leadership. However, although noticing positive community reactions had stimulated my interest in the research topic, asking women who were involved in local government leadership how they perceived exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice seemed a much more focussed, tangible, organised way of gaining information than relying on community perceptions. Interviewees' perspectives on leadership could then be related to leadership theory to see whether they provided any support for researchers' claims of gender difference in leadership.

The first stage in this process is setting out the results of the research, so that readers can evaluate for themselves the support that the results provide for this report's conclusions. Data gained from interviews with the mayoral candidates is the first of the three sources of information presented and used to provide evidence to help in answering the research questions and meeting the research objectives of this study.

### *LEADERSHIP, GENDER AND BEING MAYOR*

The interview material gained from the women standing for the mayoralty was categorised under three headings. The first of these was concerned with leadership itself, how the candidates defined leadership and their opinions on what makes a good leader, particularly in the mayoral context. The second area can be broadly designated as gender and leadership. The gender and leadership designation covers all of the comments to do with society's perceptions of a mayor as necessarily male, the old boys' network, being a woman and a mayor and the different perspectives and approaches women and men bring to leadership.

The third area is centred on their views about being a mayor themselves, why they wanted to be mayor, their personal leadership style, their image in the campaign, how they would like to be seen as mayor and their priorities if they were to become the

mayor. They were also asked for an example of a time in the past when they had been required to show leadership. These stories were expected to show how each candidate exemplified leadership in practice. This chapter will deal with the interviewees' responses in this order; definitions of leadership, gender and leadership, and mayoral leadership. But first of all the candidates and the research setting will be introduced.

### *INTRODUCING CANDIDATES AND RESEARCH SETTING*

The interviews took place during September in the campaign period of the 1998 local government elections in Palmerston North City where, among the 15 mayoral candidates, there were three women. Palmerston North is a provincial city two hours' driving distance north of Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand. The city is set in a rural hinterland and has a population of approximately 75,000 people. The economic base of the city depends greatly on the distribution industries as it is well-positioned for moving goods through the North Island between Auckland, the largest, most-industrialised city in New Zealand, and Wellington, the capital. As well as being a distribution centre, Palmerston North also depends for its economic base on servicing the agricultural sector, local army and air force bases and the education industry as it has a university, a polytechnic and scientific research institutes within its boundaries.

In 1998 the city's election was unusual in the number of mayoral candidates attracted by the opportunity provided when the incumbent of 13 years decided to stand down. Among the 15 contenders were three women. To have three women among candidates seeking a mayoralty is an unusual event, as women are still very much in the minority among mayoral candidates and it is relatively rare to find women standing against each other. Each candidate was interviewed only once, though Marilyn Brown did expand on a further point related to leadership when she was reviewing the transcript of her interview. The three candidates came from backgrounds with different levels of political experience, though all three were in full time employment in professional roles within public service environments.

In local government terms, the least experienced woman was Karen Hyland. She was community liaison manager for the region's Health Funding Authority (one of the

regional bodies set up by the Government to separate funders from providers in reforming the health system's framework) but with further changes to the restructured health service her post was to be disestablished. She was 41, the single parent of a six-year-old daughter, and her highest qualification was an MBA. She had no allegiance to a political party as such, but her initial intention had been to stand for council under the banner of a group called "Building Bridges". The name "Building Bridges" was a pun referring to the public campaign to urge the building of a second bridge to ease traffic over the river on the single bridge that carried traffic to the university, and out of the city to the west and to the south.

According to Karen, Building Bridges performed the same kind of function as earlier citizens and ratepayers groups that aimed to preserve the interests of ratepayers and keep rates (property taxes giving local government its financial base) as low as possible. She had welcomed the support of Building Bridges in her bid to stand for council alongside other members of their team. However, when their mayoral candidate decided not to stand after all, because she felt standing for mayor would be such a wonderful thing to do, she volunteered to be a replacement. In taking up the challenge of standing for the mayoralty, she gave up her original plan to stand for council, even though several other mayoral candidates were also standing for council and the higher profile gained from standing as mayor can be an advantage in gaining a place on council.

Another of the women candidates standing for the mayoralty, Marilyn Brown, came from a background of nine years on Palmerston North City Council, having experienced the rows and dissension that had been a part of the council's recent history and having fought some arduous battles successfully. Marilyn had three adult children and was 52. She lived alone and had no family responsibilities. Although well-known for her connections with the Labour Party locally, as yet national politics have no place in local politics in Palmerston North, as is the case in most of New Zealand's local authorities, and she stood as an independent. Marilyn Brown's highest educational qualification was a Masters' degree in Social Sciences and she was employed as Victims' Advisor for the local District Court, supporting victims of crime in court appearances and keeping in touch with them on the outcomes of court cases.

The third female candidate for the mayoralty, Jill White, had most recently been a 'list' MP in the Labour Party in opposition in parliament. The list is a feature of the recently-introduced MMP (mixed member proportional) electoral system. A proportion of MPs are voted in by electorates, but political parties are also able to select others from their list of candidates depending on the proportion of the total vote they have gained as a party. As well as being a backbench Labour MP, Jill had two Bachelor's degrees, had been a public health nurse and had also served on the city council for nine years and the regional council for five years. She was 57, married, but without family responsibilities. All three candidates were asked the same questions (see Appendix I) and their answers are summarised below. The first area covered is the candidates' views on the nature of leadership.

### *DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP*

In discussing the concept of leadership and what it was, the candidates tended to stress the relational aspect of leadership. They did not emphasise the leader's personal traits or abilities, but rather the way a leader relates to others. For example Jill White said about leadership:

I think it's the ability to bring out the best in others, so that you are all working in the same direction. And in spite of what I said about authoritarianism a minute ago, it is also the ability to say, enough – quite firmly.

As this quote shows, for Jill White the focus was on others, encouraging and motivating them, but also restraining them. By comparison, Marilyn Brown highlighted the need for balance and recognising the boundaries between self and others:

It is balancing the competing interests and keeping your own integrity, not sacrificing it just to get people to agree. A lot like dispute resolution really. Standing aside in order to facilitate the coming together and still maintaining your own persona.

Here, having some distance from issues, maintaining an overview, allowing the decision-making process to take its course, facilitating the process but remaining true to your own ideals, is seen as the definition of leadership. Of the three women, Karen Hyland was the only one who had undertaken any formal study of theories of leadership. She talked about having made presentations about what leadership was

while doing her MBA. She discussed the idea that leadership is not necessarily attached to a particular type of person and the difficulty of summing up leadership in the form of a definition, but she too concentrated on the relationship between the leader and others:

I tried to sum it up that leadership, and it could be seen as negative, but leadership is the ability to influence others towards achieving goals. So, in the mayoralty, leadership would be the ability to influence people to work together as a team to achieve what the community's needs are ... leadership is a hard one really. And I'm trying to explain it to the public, but I can't explain it ... it's like a hierarchy where you have the leader at the bottom, so to speak, and you have the people at the top ... a leader is a person who is a role model, but not a perfect person, just someone who can show that they're human, they're honest and admit mistakes. They can be single, they can be this or that, they can be whoever they are – but feel comfortable in that.

In this quotation, Karen Hyland emphasised the wide range of kinds of people who can be leaders, with two factors amongst them - the ability both to influence others towards achieving goals and to see themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy, thus putting the collective needs of the people they are leading ahead of their own. In talking about what makes a good leader, Jill White also emphasised the point that Karen had made about being comfortable with oneself as a prerequisite for being a good leader, saying that uncertainty or a lack of confidence could lead to feeling threatened by other people. She added, “you have to be prepared to make mistakes. I think you do have to be able to think on your feet. You have to do your homework superbly well. I think you've got to genuinely like other people.”

Marilyn Brown expanded on the importance of being able to relate to other people by stressing interpersonal skills as the most important requirement for leadership. She gave the example of trying to reach people and get their agreement to your point of view by presenting what you were saying in a way that was relevant to their enthusiasms, “whether it's vintage cars or woodwork”. She pointed out the importance of timing, explaining that people might agree with you one-to-one, but after talking to their colleagues could change their mind. So you had to be careful not to end up in a situation where you thought you had everyone in agreement only to find out later unexpectedly that a significant number were saying no, they were not in favour. She explained:

You need to have a really good sense of timing so that you get them all together while they have still got it fresh in their minds and they are still on board with it, and you present it in a positive way. It doesn't matter if it is council colleagues or sections of the community or whoever it is, the interpersonal skills and the ability to put yourself in the other person's place, rather than just say, I think, I believe, etc. On the other hand, you cannot abdicate your responsibility altogether and say 'I have no idea, you tell me what you want'. You have to have the bones of an idea, the germ of an idea.

This quotation from Marilyn Brown shows her understanding of leadership as requiring the ability to formulate ideas and goals so that communication with others can be strategic, tactical and goal-directed. She also highlighted the need for leadership communication to be empathetic in order to enthuse others, as well as time-conscious, so that individuals would not renege on agreements reached one-to-one in another setting.

Karen Hyland's view of the ideal qualities for leadership also centred on communication, particularly being able to communicate with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds, and on being able to "respond to individuals but still keep the big picture in mind". She mentioned honesty, integrity, respect, the ability to think on your feet and lead a team, as well as skills in delegating and facilitation. She also pointed out that in a leadership position you needed to avoid being too narrowly-focussed, as you couldn't afford to "get tied into one area, like all into sport, or all into the arts ... in a way you've got to be a jack of all trades ... I don't think you should be on one bandwagon". She gave the example of being community-minded, but balancing that with a concern for business. She felt that it was necessary to have a lot of different interests and arguments to feed into robust decision-making.

The three candidates were also asked about their perceptions of what the job of being mayor involved. Both Marilyn Brown and Jill White distinguished clearly between the responsibility for chairing and leading the council and the need to be involved with people and groups within the city. Jill White spoke of being the "chairperson of the council and building the council team" compared with the mayoralty as being:

important to the people of the city ... [involving the] desire to have the mayor interested in what they are doing in the city, interested in their particular group, interested in advocating on their behalf, interested in promoting the city. And obviously there are sort of interrelationships, intertwinings between those two sides of the role, but I think that there is a distinction ...

In describing how she saw the two sides of being mayor, Marilyn Brown spoke of the social aspect of the role, “getting about in the community” and contrasted it with the “politicking” and the “hard work” and the “endless meetings”. She particularly emphasised the need to be persistently creative in finding ways to encourage harmony within council, talking about the need for:

constantly coming up with new and better ideas to keep people working together in a harmonious environment. That is not to say that they are ever going to all agree, I don't think that's desirable, but just that they are not plotting against one another. I have heard it said that the art of politics is offending the least number of people. I don't think it is. I think it is knitting people up together. Now, it is a huge ask in this particular council, given that we are likely to get a good number of incumbents back again.

By contrast, Karen Hyland did not focus on the separate areas of responsibility that the other two candidates had distinguished, but listed the ways that a mayor would need to approach the role, the capacities that would be called for from a mayor. She listed - facilitator, strong PR, liaison person, lobbyist, listener, leader and lead by example, ‘can do’ attitude, problem solver, good delegater, team leader and a keen creator of the team spirit. Nevertheless, some of these capacities are more relevant to the council role and some to the community role, so Karen Hyland may have been aware of the two main areas of responsibility that a mayor has, even though she did not make the distinction explicit. For example, working as a facilitator would be relevant mainly to the community role and a delegator mainly to the council role.

All three candidates emphasised the role of building a team, but Marilyn Brown in particular gave a more detailed account of the importance and difficulties of teambuilding on council. Jill White did, however, expand on the difficulties of building a team in this particular council when she talked about her communication priorities, explaining the need for reconciliation. Her account of this need is covered in the section of this chapter on candidates’ personal views about themselves and being the mayor.

In order to gain candidates’ perspectives on transactional and transformational leadership, they were asked about their image of a competent mayor, compared with an outstandingly successful mayor. Jill White saw a competent mayor as having the ability to chair meetings well, as “an absolute minimum”. She also mentioned ceremonial functions and speech-making, being there to hear annual plan

submissions, answering correspondence and following up issues individuals brought to your notice. Other essentials, from her point of view, were establishing a good relationship with the city manager and getting out with the message to central government on key areas.

As an outstanding mayor, she gave the example of Vicki Buck as someone who had:

the intelligence, the drive, the ability to infect others with enthusiasm, the ability to pull things together and get all the different things happening that have made Christchurch come alive. And people feeling that she really is on their side ... and that the whole council is on their side ... they've got a real pride in what's happening and an involvement in what's happening ... being there, really being supportive ... [as well as] working through with council and with the community to make hard decisions and to have people with you.

Jill White made the point about negative, counterproductive qualities that could work as barriers to the leadership process saying, "without naming any names", that there had been mayors who were both pompous and controlling. Without being in any way authoritarian, she said, "one can still be strong". Marilyn Brown also saw authoritarianism as a negative quality of the mayor she mentioned as an example of someone she would not want to emulate - Sir Dove-Myer Robinson, a former mayor of Auckland - although she explained:

It is a bit unfair to criticise him in this day. In his day he was very popular and he was mayor time in and time out, but he was just too authoritarian. He was the leader and what he said went, and he was only about five feet high. You need to be a lot more consultative than that and more of a team player. It is not the case of the ringmaster getting all the animals into line, although it can feel like that sometimes.

Marilyn's view of a competent mayor as opposed to an outstanding mayor was that competent mayors had the ability to put themselves in the ratepayer's place, to think of things in broader terms than just a project and to sit back and see the overall scheme of things. She felt that the difference with outstanding mayors was that they did everything with style, went the extra distance, had enormous energy reserves, always presented themselves well, were always organised, prepared and able to cope, even with the unexpected, such as having to make a speech without prior warning. Her examples of outstanding mayors were Fran Wilde, Vicki Buck and Cath Tizard. She also saw Paul Reiger, the former mayor of Palmerston North, as a good role model who she admired for his ability to make hard work look easy, for his personal

dignity and his genuine charm and ability to fit in with all kinds of people comfortably.

Karen Hyland saw the difference between a competent and outstandingly successful mayor as being related to the degree of recognition a mayor has from all of the people in the city. She said:

I think a very successful mayor is someone who everyone in the city actually recognises as their mayor and feels comfortable about approaching, who creates a sense of belonging. The mayor who's really successful, everyone will know, not just the business leaders or movers and shakers, but even kids will know who their leader is ...

In terms of mayors with qualities she saw as outstanding, Karen Hyland mentioned Vicki Buck's innovation and Georgina Beyer's courage. She also mentioned Mr. Lawrence, a former Mayor of Waiuku, and his way of treating everyone with respect. She felt Tim Shadbolt as mayor was not an example she would want to follow because he was "a bit of a sham" and difficult to respect, and she considered it essential that leaders should be worthy of respect as leaders.

### *IMPACT OF GENDER ON LEADERSHIP*

This section records information relating to the impact of gender on leadership that arose in interviews with candidates is recorded, both points raised in answers to questions, and comments made when interviewees, without any prompting, mentioned gender-relevant experiences or observations.

One significant area for women seeking a mayoralty is others' perception of their strength and weakness. Some sections of the community find it easier to visualise the mayor as a male for a range of reasons. For example, the fact that the majority of mayors are male, the notion that some leadership qualities such as strength and assertiveness are typically seen as linked to being male (Bem, 1981), and the idea that males are more appropriately seen in the public spheres of life such as public office while women are considered to belong more properly to the private sphere such as the home or domestic scene (Cox, 1987; Heywood, 2002), are all factors that influence attitudes towards women in leadership roles.

The candidates gave their views on some of these areas, particularly in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman standing for the mayoralty. Jill White saw it as an advantage that there was a considerable acceptance of women mayors because of “the brilliant record” of other women mayors and she listed some of them:

Vicki Buck is the first one who is always mentioned, but Georgina Beyer has added her influence. Then in their different ways, Margaret Evans and Claire Stewart are seen as having been strong leaders. Fran [Wilde] was seen as being a strong leader in Wellington. And I think Dame Cath [a former mayor of Auckland and later Governor-General] had her part to play in setting that scene.

Jill White said that it had been her experience in the election campaign that people often commented about women mayors in other places and, whoever made the comment, there was “immediately a positive response ... that has been very strong. When people look at women mayors as a group, they say, yeah, good.” Marilyn Brown saw it as an advantage for women candidates that they tended:

to have people at the forefront of their minds, whereas generally speaking – and this is a sweeping generalisation – men tend to think about things, sewerage treatment plants and the like. It is an advantage because you can relate straight away to people – and I have noticed in speeches on the hustings how men talk about infrastructural things. If they do talk about people they tend to do it in a sort of numbers or statistical, clinical way - rather than saying, ‘we are all in this together’.

As well as the focus on people being an advantage, Marilyn Brown felt that women mayoral candidates also had the advantage of having strong networks. She claimed that women’s networks were stronger than men’s networks and that men’s networks were fairly superficial, revolving around having drinks in the pub or belonging to service clubs, rather than being relationships of any depth. As a disadvantage she said that men, or at least some men, didn’t take women seriously, particularly in financial and economic matters.

As far as Karen Hyland was concerned, women’s ability to have what she described as a “helicopter” overview of things while still knowing how to “deal with the details” was an advantage. She felt that ability to see how things interlinked with each other helped in generating several potential solutions to a problem instead of becoming focussed on one particular solution or problem. She also felt that women had a

“natural ability to engender respect” partly because of their respect for others, and were able to bring a team together and work co-operatively. She supported Marilyn Brown’s point that women had different sorts of networks and a wider variety of networks because “a woman has more than one life”.

As for disadvantages in being a woman standing for the mayoralty, Karen Hyland saw these as being the weight of “old ideas” that refused to die, for example “the perception that a mayor is a man” and “that a woman can’t be strong enough”. When asked about differences they saw in male and female leadership styles, the candidates echoed some of the views put forward in the literature on women being more democratic and consultative rather than autocratic (Brown, 1979; Powell, 1988), with Jill White explaining that she saw it as a spectrum:

And I think it’s fair enough to say that at one end you would find more males and at the other end you would find more females. But we only have to think of Mrs Thatcher to get a woman who doesn’t fit at the end of the spectrum we’d probably prefer to think of women being at.

Jill White also said that if women felt out of their depth their leadership style could become more authoritarian, but that generally she would see women’s leadership as tending to be collective and more inclusive with “less ego by and large”. She said that she would probably be “jumped on” by some of the speakers at the retiring mayor’s recent farewell. Some of the speakers in the all male line-up had said of Paul Rieger, the retiring mayor, that “he had no ego”.

Now I don’t agree with the fact that anybody’s got no ego. We all do. It might show itself in different ways, but I do accept that there are men who are more down the less ego end of the spectrum than the greater end. But I think that women find it easier to see the importance of other things in life as well. It’s not completely true, but there’s truth in it. The reality is that men’s and women’s life experiences to date have been different. So women find it easier to give other priorities in life a bit of space. I think they find it a bit easier to give up the public life. And I think this is part of the ego thing, because I think men may have more - sort of - eggs in that public life basket.

Whereas Jill White talked about the degree of ego tied up in the leadership role as being a difference between men and women as leaders, Marilyn Brown said that she didn’t see a difference between male and female leadership styles in terms of great leaders. But with mediocre leaders she considered that women tended to be a bit

fluffy and a bit too consultative and unable to make up their minds and men tended to be too bossy and authoritarian. As she put it:

Bullying, I suppose, is the word that comes to mind for male leaders who talk about strong leadership. They usually mean that they are going to bully people into their way of thinking. Often they are physically big people and they try to bully in that way. I have learnt not to be intimidated by physical size but it took me quite a while.

Karen Hyland also saw the difference between male and female leadership styles as being broadly “men – autocratic, women – democratic” while pointing out that leadership style was not necessarily tied to gender. And although an autocratic approach was not desirable, she emphasised the importance of being “willing to stick your neck out” as “sitting on the fence and being really nice and keeping everyone calm is not always the way to do things”.

On the issue of whether women’s leadership had made a difference to the image of leadership in local government, Karen Hyland felt that it was still seen as the old boys' network and didn’t have a very good image. Jill White felt that the greatest difference was in local authorities that had women mayors. But Marilyn Brown was convinced that having women mayors had definitely made a difference to the image of leadership in local government because:

It has smartened it up. Brought it into the late twentieth century thinking. What surprises me is the number of men who are willing to vote for women. I think men have moved light years. I think that men have also seen women’s style and it is more consultative and it is more community-focussed and they have realised that this is what they want and that it achieves results, more than the bullying does and smart men have got onto it.

Although Marilyn Brown had already commented on the fact that women leaders’ consultative, community-focussed approach achieved results, in the quote above, she had an opportunity to expand further on this with the question that asked whether she saw a difference in the effectiveness of male and female leadership styles. She answered:

Well, you could say that people who are bullied into a system accept it, but that is only superficial. Deep down, there is all this discontentment. You must be very careful when you have got the result that it is what you want and I think to be truly effective, the best way is to be consultative. That is not to say that you can do everything by consensus because sometimes people will say,

‘What the hell are you doing? We have already said three times that we want it, so do it. Don’t keep coming back and saying - are you sure you want it?’

In this answer Marilyn Brown is comparing consultation with bullying. Although bullying may gain an outcome in the form of a decision, the agreement is liable to be superficial because those involved might not be committed to the decision. They may have given in just because it was too exhausting to do otherwise. By comparison, she sees a consultative approach as more effective because everyone has been involved at a deeper level, really thinking about the issues rather than just wanting to get the unpleasantness over and done with. But she also makes the point that the leader has to accept that the decision has been made and the time has come to implement it, rather than attempt to keep continually revisiting it in the quest for consensus.

She described Fran Wilde (a former mayor of Wellington City and a former Member of Parliament) as an example of an ideal female leader and mayor. During her mayoralty, Fran Wilde had managed to put paid to warring factions on council by doing some quite simple things like changing seating arrangements. She had also consulted groups and councillors beforehand about proposals or projects that were to come to council, so that when the formal report reached the order paper at a council meeting, “everyone was on board with it”.

When Jill White was asked about the effectiveness of male and female leadership styles, she chose to contrast two central government politicians; Helen Clark (leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister) with Jim Bolger (former leader of the National Party and Prime Minister). She talked about Helen Clark’s ability to listen to a variety of different arguments in caucus and analyse what was being said and then to say, “It seems to me the way forward is such and such”. Her ability to analyse and synthesise viewpoints meant that it was very seldom that caucus disagreed with her “and I think that is admirable in a leader”. Jill White said that Helen Clark’s ability to weld caucus into a team had helped the Labour Party through “some pretty rugged patches”.

Although she had not been in the National Party caucus, Jill White’s impression of Jim Bolger’s leadership style was that, “he might have got a bit full of himself and

full of his own importance and stopped listening and analysing what others were saying” so that he could not help to find a way forward which represented a collective view. She said that there were obviously some “effectiveness parallels” between the two leaders and that the outcomes for Jim Bolger had been “disastrous”, but for Helen Clark the outcomes had been “superb”. On this question of different effectiveness in male and female leadership styles, Karen Hyland said that she was unsure whether it was “a male/female thing” but she thought you gained more of a consensus with a female.

The final question the candidates were asked about female leadership in local government was simply whether there was anything else they’d like to mention and this drew a range of quite different comments from them, although they were all linked to the importance of women’s participation. Jill White talked about the need for women’s participation in local government, because so much of human experience would be missing if they weren’t there. She said:

There are a number of women who are still sort of a bit apologetic about being there, and who at times are too conciliatory, who may be too focussed on the caring and nurturing part of themselves – I hesitate to use the term self-sacrificing part of them – but that sort of ‘burnt chop’ syndrome [giving everyone else the best and eating the burnt chop yourself] can be carried over - so that they hold back at times when I think they should be standing up and waving a flag vigorously, not in terms of personality, but in terms of issues.

Marilyn Brown talked about the fact that women in leadership roles are sometimes threatened with physical violence by those who disagree with them, saying:

some people think that females are easy targets and I have come in for a fair bit of personal abuse and threats, but I am not bowed by that. Let them go for it. At one stage when I was very ill it got to me a bit, because they were threatening to kill me, but I reached a stage where I didn’t care. I was never intimidated. I have said to them, ‘can we talk about things?’ but I haven’t ever shown fear or fright.

Rather than dwelling on the risks of participating as a leader in local government, Karen Hyland’s comments related to encouraging more female participation. She said that female leaders had a deeper understanding of the community and had more networks than just the old boys’ network. Their networks were everywhere, “and I think if we can get in there and show that it can be done at the local level - it might inspire other women, young women and so on, to get into the world of politics.”

Karen Hyland's other gender-related comment was that women had tried to persuade her not to stand for the mayoralty, or at least to stand for council as well, but she wanted to put all her energy into the campaign for the mayoralty. Some women had asked her why she was standing for mayor and splitting the vote. Some had said she "should wait a bit longer" before standing for the mayoralty. She was hurt and puzzled by their attitude and wondered whether it was related to the Tall Poppy syndrome. She made the point that no one said to the male candidates, 'why are you splitting the vote?' though there were 12 of them and only three female candidates.

A further comment from Jill White, related to women's participation in political environments, was that women tended to think if someone else had made a point that they agreed with as well, it would be silly to "stand up and say, 'I support that,' ... They think, somebody's said that - so I don't need to, but those are very bad tactics, politically". Jill White said that she would be pressing women, perhaps with "a bit of quiet backroom encouragement", to stand up and say positive things in support of other people's arguments, because positive support could be powerful and she had seen it swing meetings.

Jill White also discussed how much more delicate and complex it is for female politicians to conform to society's expectations of them as women. Possibly some of the public scrutiny and criticism of women related to society's double standard for males and females in respect of sexuality and her perception was that there were probably more affairs amongst male politicians in parliament, than female politicians. In local government she had certainly noticed that people seemed more comfortable with the idea of a married female mayoral candidate. She had been given:

some strong messages, 'look, in your third pamphlet put in that you're married, put in who you're married to, people want to know.' It takes me back to standing for council in '89 when there was a Papaoiea Ward meeting where an elderly gentleman, whose neck looked very red, asked me about 'my living arrangements'. So I said 'well I'm living with two males and one's black and called Timothy, then I paused and went on to say - and the other's ginger and called Tobias.' But it's not just related to whether you've got a sex life or not, it's that whole business of women being criticised for their clothes or their hair. What male politician gets criticised for their clothes?

Jill White went on to say that in the election she had been criticised early on because of her light voice. She had been practising pitching it lower, but had been criticised

for not projecting it and had even felt the need to deal with her soft voice in one of her election pamphlets. She had also been told that she was “too nice”. And a radio host had said to her that he was going to question her about the criticism that she had no charisma, but when they went to air he changed this to the criticism that she was “too weak”.

She said that the level of personal criticism was something she hadn’t actually experienced before in a campaign, but she assumed it was because the job of mayor has a higher profile. She said that by comparison you were quite sheltered from public scrutiny and didn’t get much personal criticism as a backbench MP, although Helen Clark had been criticised relentlessly for her mannish clothes, her severe hair cut and her deep voice.

### *PERSPECTIVES ON BEING MAYOR*

Some parts of the interviews dwelt on aspects of each candidate’s self-image as a leader. Initially, they were asked to explain their motivation for standing for the mayoralty. Jill White spoke about her desire to live in Palmerston North (rather than commute to the capital city as a Member of Parliament). She explained that she, and her partner, had both been approached by several people asking if she planned to stand for election. Finally, they discussed the possibility that she might join the list of candidates and, after a week of intensive talking, they decided that she should take the opportunity “which would not come again” or she would always have regrets.

Marilyn said that after she had been on council for a while she began to feel that it would be nice to aspire to the mayoralty. She had “no ambition to be in central government” though she had “been courted by both the Labour Party and the National Party” at different times. For her, the attraction of local government was that it was “about people, it is community level stuff and that is what I have spent most of my life involved in.” She “would never have challenged” the sitting mayor, but when he decided to step down, she could see that it was the right time for her to stand in terms of her age, experience and leadership skills.

For Karen, the attraction of the mayoralty came largely from an intensely-felt need to change the community where her six year old daughter was growing up. She wanted to be an effective leader. Although others had tried to suggest that she would be well-advised to wait until she had gained a place on council and gathered some experience, she felt that if she waited for an apprenticeship period, her sense of the urgent need to create a better community would have dissipated. She wanted to go in with a fresh approach, while she had the energy and enthusiasm, without having to serve time and possibly have her ideals become tainted by compromise and forming alliances.

In discussing her priorities as mayor, Jill White talked about a “reconciliation role”. She saw a lot of divisions in the way council was working, between councillors and staff and between council and the city. She described one or two exchanges she had heard sitting in on council meetings as “quite fractious” and compared it with her previous experience on council in the 1980s when “you could have quite profound differences with people, but there was still a sense of working together”. She also mentioned that there was a perception that senior management were “running the show”, and talked about the “important” and “interesting” relationship between councillors and staff.

She said that although councillors and staff needed each other and had to work together, “at the same time councillors are there as representatives of the people and so must challenge the bureaucracy to an extent”. The challenging and working together had to be managed so that it was “a healthy tension rather than a destructive tension” and made for “a creative relationship”. She also said that the relationship with councillors that she would want to develop, would involve “getting them to articulate their positive aspirations and then actually getting them into positions where they could develop their aspirations”. She tended to think of this process as “community development within the council”.

High on her list of ‘things to do’ if she became mayor would be “sitting down and talking over a wide range of issues with the City Manager, then speaking with individual councillors”. Also “very high on the priority list” would be reading Standing Orders “until I know them pretty well off by heart”. She said that knowing Standing Orders well would be important in “being able to exercise the firmness that

will be needed at meetings, so that everybody does get a fair go". Jill White also talked about wanting to get together a "broad-based group of people from the city" to get their "intelligence on what's happening in the city".

She saw the range of interests as covering "education, science, business, community organisations, sporting groups" so that they could act as a "sounding-board", "an outreach into the city", and a way of "bringing different sectors together". She also said, "the other thing I'd hope that such a group would do [is to] give positive support to positive initiatives". As she saw it, her greatest challenge would be within the council itself, in dealing with "the faction of negativism". Her plan would be to try to give everyone a positive role, but if there were a group that "did not want to come on board, to put them to one side and to get support from enough councillors to be able to go ahead with the positive direction". If she became mayor the things she would like others to say about her mayoralty were that "the city is a better place to live in, I'd like them to say that I listened and that I do what I say I'll do".

Like Jill White, Marilyn Brown said that if she became mayor, "knitting up the council into an effective unit" would be her greatest challenge. Her way of dealing with the dissension would be to "try to see what was at the bottom of things, try to uncover the real issues and deal with those". As for her priorities as mayor, she would want to start by "meeting the people". She would make a point of getting around as many "community groups, service groups, business leaders, youth groups and homes for the elderly" as possible and she would consult with ethnic groups. When asked what she would like to think people would say about her mayoralty, Marilyn Brown said that she would like them to say she was "effective", that she was "doing her best" and that she was "communicating", which she saw as the most important thing of all.

Karen Hyland felt that as her first priority she would get the council together and meet the City Manager and build her relationship with him. She would also concentrate on gathering all the information she needed to go through, as it would be necessary to have "the first three months as her learning curve", a three month orientation to the job. She also felt that there should be a city celebration, "which needn't cost a lot of money, everybody could bring a plate to the Square". She would deal with dissension on council by negotiation and possibly by getting people to do team-building

exercises and games to show them the value of co-operation. In terms of what she would like people to say about her mayoralty, Karen Hyland suggested that open, transparent, approachable, caring, businesslike, accountable would be “the right words”, basically a balance among all of these.

The three candidates were asked what aspects of themselves they were emphasising in the election campaign. Jill White said that she had emphasised her experience and the value of knowing the system in both local and central government. Apart from her experience, she was also highlighting her networks, her capacity for hard work and her commitment to the city. In campaign advertising she had stressed being prepared to listen, to do her homework and:

to give due consideration to other ideas ... to look at different ways of consulting. The word ‘consultation’ is getting to be a very abused word ... but, and this partly relates to the fact that we’re small enough and we’re big enough, there are an awful lot of people here [in the city] who are prepared to be involved and who have got ideas ... and I believe that you don’t want to waste ideas, any more than you want to waste anything else in this world. But it’s looking to whether forums and workshops and that kind of thing are more effective than asking for written submissions.

Marilyn Brown explained that in her campaign she was also emphasising experience as well as “my energy, and my belief in the future of Palmerston North. I don’t allow myself to be negative about things and I feel that I can make a career out of being positive.” As a newcomer to local government, Karen Hyland emphasised creativity rather than experience, being able to think outside the square (which she used as a campaign slogan) along with being capable, strong, approachable and able to listen actively. In her campaign advertising she highlighted commonsense, creativity and community focus, linking these to thinking outside the square.

The candidates were also asked to describe their own leadership styles and to give an example of a time when they had been required to show leadership. In describing her leadership Jill White used the word “reconciling” and talked about bringing people together, but said that she knew that she could be tough when she had to be and that “people can sometimes be surprised by my determination”. She said that she remembered a women’s group meeting where she spoke with two other women who were also local government politicians: “they were asking us about qualities we saw

as essential and the one that I remember that came from all three was determination". When she was asked to encapsulate the essence of her leadership style in just three adjectives, Jill White chose fair, honest and inclusive.

Marilyn Brown said she would describe her leadership style as consultative, persuasive and encouraging. She also thought that she was good at following through, implementing decisions and setting up monitoring and review systems. Karen Hyland described her leadership style as positive and decisive and said that she liked to gather all of the facts and then make a decision. Karen Hyland gave as an example of showing leadership her calming a controversy by clarifying, summarising and exploring everyone's knowledge in the group, until a resolution was reached. Jill White gave the example of having to bring together a lot of opposing views when she was on the Regional Council chairing the Regional Policy Statement.

Marilyn Brown considered that she had had to show leadership in chairing the New Bridge Site Selection working party. She explained:

We had a great spectrum of views and backgrounds and opinions, and we consulted with the public and at the end of the process the public said 'x' and the committee said 'x', they were in agreement. Then it started to unravel and some of the committee members said 'y' and that was really the result of one person lobbying and that was quite hard to control and keep on track ... It was resolved on the vote with a good speech from me, but those people who didn't agree have always regretted they didn't get their own way and they have been very devious and underhand. Not only to try and topple me, but also to try and derail the decision.

The exploration of the role of mayor led into a description of the candidates' models of leadership. The three models volunteered by the interviewees without the prompt of an interview question relating to leadership models, were community development, risk-taking and entrepreneurship, and dispute resolution. The dispute resolution model saw the mayor as reconciling competing demands which could not all be satisfied. The risk-taking model considered that the mayor had to push some things out to the edge of innovation and be prepared to fail, because a cautious approach was unlikely to break new ground. The community development model focussed on getting people to express their aspirations and then finding ways of giving them the resources and support to meet those aspirations. These approaches are interesting in the way that they cover all of Clarence Stone's (1995) styles of mayoral leadership apart from the

caretaker style, which is a conservative, ceremonial approach to the role. Stone's other three styles are the broker (negotiation and conflict resolution), the social reformer (community development), and the entrepreneur (initiating and problem-solving).

### *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

The information presented in this chapter shows how deeply the three candidates interviewed had thought about what was involved in being mayor. They were able to articulate their ideas about leadership and give reasons for their views. They have shown that they see leadership as a process based on relating to others, communication with others and having the ability to involve different interest groups in decision-making and goal-setting. They see the mayor as an important source of pride in the community, giving people a sense of belonging.

While there are several areas of overlap and similarity in their viewpoints, there are also different points each candidate makes that are not echoed by the others. Examples of these are Karen's point about leaders being at the bottom of the hierarchy, supporting rather than dominating, Jill's example of too much ego involvement in public life being a problem for some male mayors, and Marilyn's example of bullying as ineffective leadership. In other words, the candidates have been able to answer the questions asked and volunteer examples from their experience that give insights into their perspectives of leadership. The information gained will be valuable in understanding the candidates' views of exemplary mayoral leadership and relating their views to leadership theory. This chapter has shown that three interviews can provide a substantial amount of fascinating data. In the next chapter, the data from 18 interviews with mayors who have had widely different experiences of being mayor in 18 different local authorities will present an even more complex and interesting pattern of information relevant to this study.

# CHAPTER SIX

## What being mayor means: women mayors' perspectives of leadership

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The mayoralty is a bit like a puzzle. It is important that you help your council to fit the necessary pieces, all the time visualising the big picture and planning for sustainable growth and always see the need to fit more pieces so that we ensure we have a clear, progressive kind of pattern (Joan Williamson, mayor, Taupo District).

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter presents information gained from interviews with eighteen of the nineteen women mayors in office during the 1998 to 2001 term. The nineteenth women mayor serving during this period, Mary Ogg of Gore, agreed to be interviewed, but was not able to find a time for the interview to take place. The objective of this chapter is to distil the relevant information from the interview data to answer the research questions guiding this investigation. The research questions seek to know more about women mayors' perceptions of exemplary leadership and their own leadership practice and how the mayors' views of leadership relate to leadership theory.

The chapter begins with an overview of the mayors, giving a profile of their demographic features including age, former occupations and educational background. After introducing the mayors as a group, the chapter then presents the information gained from the interviews within broad topic areas similar to those used to discuss interview results from the three female Palmerston North mayoral candidates which were presented in chapter five. The three topic areas are perspectives on leadership, gender and leadership and personal experiences of leadership.

The section on leadership perspectives covers the mayors' definitions of leadership, their perspectives of the role of mayor and their distinctions between competent and outstanding leadership. The leadership section also covers the interviewees' examples of outstanding mayors and the qualities that made them outstanding, compared with examples of mayors who had flaws that impaired their leadership.

The section on gender considers information on the mayors' opinions of advantages and disadvantages of being a woman mayor as well as differences between male and female leadership styles and differences in the effectiveness of males and females as leaders. The gender and leadership section also covers any changes the interviewees felt women mayors had brought to the image of local government leadership.

The section on the personal experience of being mayor deals with the eighteen mayors' view of the public's perception of them as leaders compared with the way they would like to be perceived. This section also covers their perception of their leadership styles and the experiences in their background that they found useful to call on in being mayor. In order to give specific examples of what each interviewee considers leadership to be in practice, this section reports on their accounts of incidents or issues which have required them to show leadership during their time as mayor. First of all, then, the characteristics of the women mayors as a group are outlined.

### *PROFILE OF THE MAYORS*

The motivation for standing was similar for most of the mayors. The majority of them had received strong encouragement from others. Without this encouragement and persuasion, most of them would not have considered standing for the mayoralty. One mayor had been told by a senior council staff member, when she was still a relatively new councillor, that if she stood for the mayoralty she would sweep in. Although she was flattered by this confident prediction from a knowledgeable source, she was still not persuaded to stand until three separate deputations of local people came to her home to ask her to contest the mayoralty.

Another of the mayors had been deputy to a mayor who was seriously ill. She had promised to take over the mayor's role though she felt ill-equipped to do so because of her lack of ease with writing, despite being comfortable with other aspects of a mayor's job such as understanding accounts and making speeches. Because of her promise to the incumbent mayor she respected, she set her doubts aside. Once in the mayoralty, writing did not seem as much of a problem as she had feared.

Apart from persuasion to stand, the other motivating force for many was dissatisfaction with the way things were being done in their councils. Some saw the mayoralty as being too distant from the community and worse still, many felt that critical areas were being neglected. The women mayors were all very committed to and ambitious for their communities. Some felt compelled to stand, to help meet needs that were being ignored.

Fifteen of the eighteen mayors had had some experience of local government as councillors before becoming mayor. The three who did not, tended to be either very involved in the community or have other political or local government experience which gave them the confidence to stand. Two had been council staff members and one had served at community board level, with those who saw her abilities there persuading her to stand for mayor. In terms of ethnicity, two of the mayors were Māori, one was Indian and the others were Pākehā (New Zealand European). The majority of mayors were in their fifties (11) with two in their sixties, one in her thirties and the remaining four in their forties.

Eight were in their first term as mayor, five in their second term and another five in their third term. The longest-serving mayor was in her fifth term. Four of the mayors were single and the others had partners. Both kinds of domestic situations had their strains. The mayors with partners felt concerned and guilty that they were neglecting their home life to cope with the demands of the mayoralty. Yet those who were single would have sometimes liked both support at home and also a partner at the social occasions that are a part of being mayor.

The majority of the mayors had some tertiary study including university papers, nursing and teaching qualifications and a trade certificate in farm management. Two

had completed university degrees while three had reached school certificate level and one had completed three years of secondary school. They were cautious about declaring their political perspectives, one mayor saying that she was right on some issues and left on others. Four said that they were centre left and one centre right, but most preferred to categorise themselves as non-aligned, saying they preferred to concentrate on whatever was best for the community.

Their previous occupations were varied and some had worked in a few different areas before becoming mayor. Four had been businesspeople, one a policy analyst, three teachers and two council officers. Others had worked in farming, nursing, community work, accounting and banking. All were full-time mayors, a departure from former times when most mayors combined the mayoralty with other employment.

## *PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP*

### *Defining leadership*

The mayors all saw leadership as a process that happened within a relationship with other people. Rather than a being at the top of a hierarchical structure, they saw an effective leader as one who was working with other people to achieve particular goals by helping bring the right mix of resources together. As one mayor said, “leadership is coming from somewhere in the middle and creating teams around you.” In the same vein, another mayor described a good leader as a ‘channelist’, “able to sort of network and bring the right skills together and facilitate” saying that “a good leader knows when to be in front and when to be in behind”. She said that leadership entailed recognising that “you can’t and don’t have to do everything yourself”.

The overall view of leadership was seen by the mayors as a facilitative, enabling and empowering process both within the council and in the community. One mayor spoke of leadership as being able to sum up the pros and cons and guide everyone towards a decision in a meeting, so that they did not “mill around like a flock of sheep”. However, she thought that to be able to offer guidance, leadership required more knowledge in the depth and breadth of the context surrounding the decision than simply concentrating on the specific details of an issue. For her, leadership was seen as the ability:

to articulate the community's desires and interests and concerns and then leading the way and assisting in those desires being achieved to the best of your ability, given all the myriad legislation and all the other regulations you have to deal with.

As well as acknowledgement of facilitation and community empowerment as integral aspects of leadership, there was also a strong emphasis on responsibility, courage and discipline expressed by the mayors. The mayor of one rural district said "leadership to me consists quite simply of not being afraid, not being afraid of doing the hard stuff and having the courage of your convictions". She spoke of the way that central government was willing to sacrifice the lives of rural people when big problems such as unemployment seemed too hard and it was easier and more efficient for them to pay benefits than to find ways of boosting local economies. In her words, "we have to pick up the rubbish that creates in our communities". To her mind, distancing yourself from people's needs was a failure of leadership, because you had to be able to "stand up for your community".

Another requirement of leadership participants mentioned was vision. Several of the mayors spoke of the importance of having a longer-term view of the direction for the council, the community and what could be achieved. Janice Skurr (Waimakariri District) felt that leadership involved having a vision and guiding people, "You encourage people, you're the frontperson and you take people with you, you find their strengths and you encourage them to use them". Also talking about leadership, vision and change, another urban mayor said:

Leadership is being prepared to take responsibility for making a difference. Leadership is even though you may not be directly responsible for a negative outcome, you're still there being responsible. To me a leader is someone who, if there's a dirty job to be done, will be there inspiring the staff, inspiring the public ... not staying away from issues, but leadership that's actually prepared to look out into the long-term and move things forward.

As well as the need to face up to difficult issues, leadership was also seen by interviewees to require constant checking for hidden agendas and anything else that might derail the process of change. They considered that leaders needed to constantly scan the environment for anything which might either threaten or support their vision and be ready to protect, defend or expand their plans for the future. So, in summary, leadership was seen by the participants as a process of empowerment, using people's

abilities to find ways of fulfilling their desires, taking responsibility for change and the vision of the future as well as having the persistence and courage to face up to difficulties and keep going. From this broad view of what leadership is, the next area of focus is the specifics of the job of being mayor.

### *The mayor's role*

As one mayor said of the mayor's role, "there's no job description, you just have to do the job as you see it". Nevertheless, there was a great deal of agreement about some aspects of being a mayor, the immense workload, the community focus and the changing nature of the role due to changes in the local government context. The workload was seen as stemming from the fact that "the job had no boundaries" and was "as big or as small as you want it to be" so that 70 to 80 hour weeks were the norm among the women interviewed. The number of meetings, functions and appointments and the need to answer correspondence or follow up complaints, usually with very limited secretarial or administrative support, meant that the job was "full-time or more than full-time".

The job was described in a nutshell by one mayor as "serving the communities of the district, leading the council, managing the councillors and assisting with decision-making". She pointed out that it was important that councillors had quality information before them as a basis for making decisions and she saw it as the mayor's role to make sure that reports from council staff provided that level of information. Another mayor mentioned the need to write speeches and keep up with the flood of paper.

A community focus was very clear in the way the mayors described the role. The difference between leadership in general and being mayor was that the mayor was leader of a community - and that particular community and its needs and resources shaped the specifics of the mayor's role. Each of the mayors talked about the importance of the community in describing what a mayor does. They spoke about the job variously as: "a leadership role for communities", "a leadership role working at the community level", "being a figurehead that the community can feel proud of", "a glorified community worker with a fancy title", being a "hands-on leader who is aware of people's concerns and community issues", "being an advocate for your

community”, “giving you the chance to really shape your community” and “being the public face of the city”.

There were two strands running through the various descriptions; the figurehead or ‘public face’ ceremonial role and the hands-on community worker, community-shaper role. As Jenny Brash of Porirua City noted, being mayor requires a very thorough, intimate knowledge of your community, “getting to know your city or district in a way few other people get to know it”. One mayor, from a district council, spoke of the enormous public expectation that mayors should be able to deliver everything, “ ... they [mayors] have to have a magic wand and it’s something I keep telling my community I don’t have”. In a similar vein, another mayor of a district said that the role didn’t have any of the power that many members of the public assumed it had, but was “a very hard-working role and sometimes tedious”.

Two mayors commented on the changed and changing nature of the role. As one of the mayors serving in a rural township said, the changes had meant “a focus on becoming more socially responsive and responsible”. She explained that prior to the 1989 reforms and restructuring, local authorities were not involved in:

things much wider than roads and sewage and core services of council and tended to steer well clear of social issues and community services. But the devolution of responsibilities [from central government] down to local communities meant that local authorities had to take a leadership role.

Another mayor who mentioned the changing role of local government and its impact on the job of a mayor, said legislative changes had brought about “more and more stringent requirements for financial management”. One of her challenges had been getting councillors to face up to the “uncomfortable realities” of the new law change. For example there was the need for accounting standards that included accounting for depreciation to cope with future replacement or maintenance of assets, in turn requiring large rates rises to fund. In the case of her council, the councillors had wanted to flout the law and go on as before, but their mayor had “little interest in this life or in any future life, in having presided over a blatant attempt to flout the law”. She said that she and her council did not agree on the need to do long-term planning, which had been one of the policy platforms in her first mayoral election campaign and was:

what this Amendment No. 3 to the Local Government Act was all about. It was saying to the council that ‘if you don’t get off your butts and do some financial planning off your own bat, we’re going to legislate to make you do it.’ ... We have a small district of 28,000 people, within that we run 16 water schemes and 10 sewage schemes and we are looking at millions of dollars. Because they are not obvious things, they are buried underground, everyone heaved a sigh of relief and forgot about them. So now we have a legacy of not having enough maintenance and no long-term planning coming back to bite us, because we are facing major expense to bring them back up to a reasonable standard.

A city mayor also mentioned the way the role of a mayor had changed in keeping with changes in local government. She considered that the position of mayor had once been quite remote and was mostly limited to being a ceremonial position and chairing council meetings, but it had become, “much more involved with the whole gamut of life and requires juggling several things at once”.

The mayors also emphasised the importance of a team approach as mayor. Joan Williamson (Taupo District) described the process as leading from the centre, not “driving from the bottom or bossing from the top” but being “up-front” and having everyone involved. In summary, the challenge of the mayor’s job was that it was completely open-ended and this intrinsic hugeness was compounded by the mayors’ level of commitment and their desire to do everything the community needed. The mayor’s role was a combination of the more formal ceremonial and council chair role alongside the community supporter and shaping role. The job of being mayor had changed with central government’s devolution of social responsibilities to local government and central government’s increasingly stringent requirements for longer-term financial planning. As the participants said, being mayor had now come to need a broader skill base, a much broader view of what was happening in the community and the ability to communicate with others about what the community needed and enthuse them to work towards longer-term goals. Having established the perspective of the role of mayor, the next area to consider is the differences the mayors saw between competent, outstanding and less competent mayors.

### *Explaining differences among mayors*

Most of the mayors thought of competence as being able to give speeches when necessary and chair a meeting efficiently, but one said that competence required a

high community profile. She said that as a mayor you couldn't just stay in your office and go to council meetings and council-related meetings with other organisations and think that you were being a mayor. She argued that a mayor had to get out into the community:

You've got to do the spring openings, you've got to turn up at the school plays and you've got to tell people that what they're doing in the community is great, because in small rural communities like ours we're so dependent on our volunteers. And you've got to support the fundraising because it's the glue that holds our communities together and a lot of it's how our farmers socialise because they work on their own. (Noeline Allan, Banks Peninsula District)

She also made the point that another reason the mayor had to be out in the community was for ordinary people to have a chance to come and talk. By being there and talking to people, you found out a lot of what you needed to know to do the job of mayor. For example, who needed help with fundraising and who needed you to sort out a problem for them. She said that most people didn't ring up the mayor to tell her what was on their mind, so "you have to create opportunities, then the ordinary person can bang into you and say what they're thinking".

She said that it was a personal rule that community functions came first, so that if she were invited to a prestigious corporate function on the same night as a community 'bring a salad and bottle' barbecue, she would always go to the barbecue. In her opinion, going to the community barbecue sends the message that "this organisation is valuable and I value it because I'm giving it my time. And as well I come away with six to twelve different issues that people have raised with me". In Noeline Allan's view, you have to be in touch with the community to be a competent mayor. Other mayors agreed, with one also saying that in a choice between a prestigious embassy function or lamb and calf day at the local school, the school would come first.

Other opinions about competent mayors centred on a concern for the basics such as the need to "chair a meeting competently, keep people on track, know standing orders, know about planning and finance, keep up with the paper work and know how to handle staff in terms of understanding and respecting the different roles of elected members and staff" (Joan Williamson, Taupo District). Another mayor felt that it came down to "Be open, do your homework, communicate" (Janice Skurr, Waimakariri Council).

The fact that the requirements for competence might vary somewhat from place to place depending on local issues, was highlighted by a mayor of a rural district. She said competence was “getting on with the job of mayor whatever that may entail for that particular council”, but that it was always crucial to have good relationships with the Chief Executive and the council. A city mayor made the point that there would be different views about competence. Some would see a competent mayor as being strong, assertive, banging the table and being autocratic, whereas she would see competence more as the power to bring people together.

The difference the interviewees perceived between competent and outstanding mayors seemed to centre on innovation, risk-taking and leading change. Heather Maloney (Franklin District) said that a competent mayor would just concentrate on the figurehead aspect of the role and carry out basic duties, content to be plodding rather than controversial. Joan Williamson (Taupo District) felt that an outstanding mayor needed to be active, whereas a competent mayor could be quite passive. An outstanding mayor, in her view, was aware of what was going on in the community, of what was happening nationally and globally and was prepared to adapt the mayoralty to what was happening, to learn something new and change.

Beyond competence, one of the city mayors spoke of outstanding mayors as having council with them, generating a positive community, “making it hum” and creating confidence around them. The mayor who was most often mentioned as being an example of an outstanding mayor was Vicki Buck, ex-mayor of Christchurch City. Ten of the mayors mentioned her as outstanding. As one mayor said:

She has personality and she engaged people and she was accessible and she was innovative and she made people in her community feel great about their town. She made them feel some community pride and she kind of shook the place up and perhaps allowed the city to evolve from being something very conservative and staid, into quite a vibrant community and everyone responded. She had so much positive energy ...I respected her ability to engage her community. Others have adopted a lot of the policies where she introduced the concept. She really brought the whole concept of festivals right into all of New Zealand – and went out there and had the courage to say, “Let’s spend to create”. (Noeline Allan, Banks Peninsula District)

The mayor who made these points was very clear about Vicki Buck’s contribution and some of the attributes that made her an outstanding mayor. But she also pointed

out that Vicki Buck was quite careful to make sure that she was always associated with 'good news' and that anything unpleasant was always attached to another spokesperson in order for her to retain her "good fairy" status. In contrast, as comments from some of the mayors have already shown, many mayors felt that it was very important to face up to the community in difficult times and tell them unpleasant news.

Apart from Vicki Buck as an example of an outstanding mayor, 17 other mayors were mentioned as outstanding including seven women and 11 male city mayors. The predominance of mayors from cities reinforces the point made by several of the mayors, that recognition of being outstanding is partly linked to a media profile. Outside the cities, the work of mayors gains much less publicity and is seldom covered by the media, which makes it much harder for them to be widely recognised as outstanding. Fewer of the mayors in districts, who would meet many of the criteria the mayors gave for being outstanding, are well-known. Nevertheless, their problems are often very challenging and have to be faced with a far more constrained financial base than cities, which have more industry and a larger population to expand the funds gained from rates.

Other criteria for an outstanding mayor, apart from capturing the media, were being proactive and ahead of the play, having credibility with and the confidence of the community, being dignified, assertive 'out there', really leading, being prepared to take risks so your city or district could go ahead, winning battles for the community, having vision and energy and listening to make sure the community was working well and being able to carry councillors and staff with you in what you were trying to achieve.

Being perceived as an outstanding mayor is to some extent a matter of luck, according to one of the district mayors. She felt that in her first term she had a 'dream run'. There were no major issues and as a "keen" new mayor she went to "absolutely every function and completely lived the role". But in her second term when there were major controversial decisions to be made so that it was impossible to please everyone, her popularity "dropped quite significantly".

One of the qualities that can prevent a mayor from being effective was described as the problem of becoming captured by your own importance. This research participant described one male mayor who she had no respect for, because he was “a terrible chairman, boring, stuffy, perceived himself as local royalty but was not innovative – really only doing the social stuff and relying on a competent town clerk”. She said that even if as mayor you took on one big infrastructural project and did that to make your community better, you could justify being in the position. Although things like roading, water and sewerage were not very exciting, they were important. She disapproved of a mayor who “was in there to cruise”. From her words, it was clear that she made a distinction between a mayor who was merely occupying the position and one who was involved in leadership.

Flaws which the interviewees had seen in other mayors and which they thought should be avoided were hypocrisy and deceit, pettiness and gossiping, an autocratic style or “the great big ego trip” of thinking you were above other “mere mortals because you were wearing a chain round your neck”. An even more serious problem was mayors who became involved in playing politics within council or within the community, attempting to play off one section against another. One mayor said that something she would avoid at all costs which could harm a mayor’s effectiveness was a close association with developers or pressure groups, as the mayor had to remain non-aligned and unbiased. Two mayors mentioned the difficulty of being a mayor who only represented a narrow elite such as the upper middle class or big business, rather than the whole community.

Several mayors were concerned about those in the position of mayor who were aloof and stood apart from their communities, or those who became obsessive about single issues and lost sight of the big picture. Jenny Brash (Porirua City) gave the example of mayors who forgot to take any account of the community and forged ahead with their own agendas on things such as going down the commercial path and “getting rid of everything”, that is selling assets and contracting out council’s traditional functions.

One of the district mayors echoed others when she deplored mayors who were dogmatic, pompous, bumptious or arrogant. She characterised this kind of attitude as

“I am the mayor and it must be done this way because it’s always been done that way. I’ve been elected by the people and I can make my decisions and that’s it”. Other negative features that the interviewees had observed in some mayors were a fondness for political point-scoring and pontificating (once a common feature of Local Government New Zealand conferences, according to one mayor), parochialism, imperialistic ambitions (particularly with reference to amalgamation) and also prejudice or bias on race relations.

Although some of the interviewees were naturally reluctant to mention the names of mayors who they felt epitomised characteristics that would detract from one’s effectiveness as mayor, several names were mentioned in the conversational context of the interview. All the mayors cited as having negative qualities were male, but this is perhaps hardly surprising as for so long almost all mayors were male and even at the time of the interviews, over three-quarters of all mayors were male. In the next section, this area of gender and leadership will be more fully explored by summarising relevant sections of the interviews.

## *GENDER AND LEADERSHIP*

### *Pros and cons of being a female mayor*

There was a cautious or even prickly element in some of the women’s responses to questions about perceived differences between women and men. Two of the mayors wanted to make it clear that they were not ‘feminists’. Three of the mayors said that they did not see any advantages or disadvantages in being a woman and a mayor. As one mayor said about gender differences, “I don’t see any. It’s not the way I see things. I’m an equal, I don’t see any advantages”. Nonetheless, one of the mayors who did not see any gender differences, said that she did think that gender balance in representation on councils was important because women were more involved in community issues and had closer contact with welfare concerns and that perspective needed to be represented.

So the assertion that there were no differences between men and women in leadership positions possibly meant that males and females had to do similar things and achieve similar goals to be effective participants in leadership. Claiming that there was no

difference did not necessarily mean that there was no discrimination against women in local government, as one of these women told a painful story of how she had been discriminated against in an appointment to chair a committee. A male had been chosen when her experience had been much more relevant to the position. So it seems reasonable to assume that multiple meanings were operating around understandings of differences between male and female mayors as leaders. For both interviewer and interviewees, gender difference was a fraught and confusing mass of contradictions to negotiate in itself.

Certainly no participants saw themselves as anti-male. In fact, some of the mayors had been asked or encouraged to stand by a male or an all-male group, had been mentored by a male or were working closely with a male mayor developing parallel policies on community issues - in one case a 'safer communities' programme aimed at diminishing criminal re-offending. So, there was a general concern to make it clear that one could not generalise about all males or all females, though it was possible to make some observations.

Among those who did make observations about gender-related differences, there was a lot of agreement in the points they raised. For example, most of the mayors mentioned that the pressures of bringing up a family had given them skills in doing several things at once as well as a good deal of experience in dispute resolution, both of which were considered an advantage in the mayoralty. Even one of the mayors who was single and childless, said that if she'd had experience as a mother, she was sure she would have been more skilled at doing 20 things at once, like so many other women.

Overall, the mayors saw women as more polychronic or able to cope with doing several things at once in their approach to time management while men were seen as more monochronic, that is having to concentrate on one thing and complete it, before going on to the next task. As well as a different approach to time management, women were also credited with thinking differently and being more lateral in their approach. Noeline Allan (Banks Peninsula District) described women as operating in a non-linear process, being aware of "what's happening on the fringes and the impact that might have, whereas men work in a straight line, one foot in front of the other".

She said, “I think women are better at leaping ahead and anticipating and looking at what’s sitting on the horizon”.

Women’s “better balanced and broader view”, was described by another mayor as being able to differentiate “black, white and grey” in issues, whereas men tended to see things only in “black and white”. Another perceived advantage was women’s greater awareness of social issues and of the layers within a community, which intensified their empathy for and appreciation of voluntary groups and alerted them to the way council’s decisions might impact on the community. Women were considered to be more concerned about the social health of a community and “not just water, roads, sewers and bridges”.

In fact, Iride McCloy, mayor of Kapiti District, said that it could be an advantage that few people expected you to know very much about infrastructure, such as water, sewerage and roading, because you were liable to be given much more thorough, detailed explanations and briefings by council officers. They might have assumed that a male mayor would understand and a male mayor might not like to admit a lack of knowledge. However, sometimes it could take a long time for males to move beyond their stereotypes and acknowledge a woman’s competence in an area more commonly seen to be part of a male’s expertise. One of the mayors complained that one male councillor kept explaining the estimates process to her over and over again as if she were incapable in financial matters. Finally, she explained that she had three sons with degrees in Maths and Physics whose abilities had come from both their parents, and as well she did all the book work and accounts at home for the family business and understood it perfectly. The male councillor was rather taken aback, but told her that she must be one of those rare women who understood such things.

Nonetheless, the stereotypical perceptions of areas that women might find difficult, such as Accounting, were balanced by many positive attributions about women mayors. The interviewees said that people in the communities saw women mayors as more approachable and accessible, more caring and better listeners. This perception tended to give people the feeling of a more intimate relationship with the mayor as a friend, someone they could relate to and someone who cared about them. One mayor told the story of the council’s receptionist laughing, because a “little old lady” had

phoned the mayor for advice about whether or not to go to the doctor. Although the mayor (Noeline Allan, Banks Peninsula District) saw it as a compliment to be trusted and to be seen as a friendly, approachable advisor, she did wonder whether the woman would have phoned a male mayor and tended to think she probably would not have.

One of the city mayors felt that this public perception that you were someone people knew, so they could phone you at home or at work for help, had the potential to become quite disabling. She explained that the constant phone calls added to the workload, destroyed the boundaries between public and private space and absorbed time needed for you to recharge your batteries and have a refuge from the stress of public life. She also expressed the view that the number of phone calls from the public would not happen to male mayors. In fact, staff members had told her that former male mayors would not have countenanced this degree of accessibility. But she did have her home number listed in the phone book and thought that in principle, people should be able to phone her at home. However, the actuality of the torrent of interruptions and the extra workload created was difficult to manage.

Nevertheless, being prepared to listen and having good listening skills was seen by participants to be an advantage in helping mayors to maintain a relationship with a complainant, even when they could not help them. One mayor made the point that people appreciated being listened to and having their concerns acknowledged, even if it was not possible for the mayor to do anything to help them. She said that she had had approving feedback on that, with people saying, “we know you’ll listen, even if you can’t do what we want”. She also said that it did seem to help people to be listened to and have their concerns taken seriously.

One of the observations about women’s different perspective, which echoed a similar comment made by Jill White in her interview as a mayoral candidate, was that women did not have “the same egos as men”. Yvonne Sharp (Far North District) said that for women “there is not the same sense of having to maintain our own importance”, which makes it easier for women to compromise. Another mayor expressed this idea by saying that with women there was “... less pride as an impediment than males suffer from, they tend to have that competitive desire to claim the glory”. She

considered that women were often quite strategic and prepared to let someone else have the glory as long as they could achieve what they thought was the best outcome. Another comment in this vein was that women tended to be “less fazed about the indignity of losing a scrap”. In other words, for women, ego is less of a barrier in conflict resolution, problem-solving or risk-taking.

The cooperative, co-ordinating focus of women as mayors was stressed by interviewees, along with the desire to bring the council and the community closer together in an integrative way and get beyond the ‘us’ and ‘them’ attitudes existing between some councils and their communities. But women’s close identification with the community was also seen by participants as a disadvantage, with the potential to make the job of mayor impossibly demanding for a female mayor. According to participants, the danger was that women mayors could be drawn into trying to do too much, sometimes without any regard for self-preservation, because they saw how much there was to be done and how important it was and felt compelled to try to do it all.

One mayor made the astute comment that that if you had cared for a family or worked in roles like nursing and teaching you wanted to apply those skills to the whole community. She said, “I am used to caring for people, now I care for the whole city. It’s just impossible because you become too exhausted” (Jenny Brash, Porirua City). Another mayor also said that caring for the community dragged you down “into the minutiae and that’s why women mayors are always so tired, because of doing more of the grass roots stuff – though it does keep you in touch with what’s real” (Noeline Allan, Banks Peninsula District).

Another point made was that having internalised a role such as ‘peacemaker’ within a family might not always be the best way of approaching issues on council. Mayors undertake a variety of roles and have to be able to move beyond the peacemaker approach when it’s not appropriate (Claire Stewart, New Plymouth District). All the mayors who recognised advantages and disadvantages attached to being a female mayor, saw sexism as a disadvantage. Some felt that men were often uncomfortable having to deal with women in positions of authority. As one mayor said, traditionally women had not been mayors and in her city there hadn’t ever been a female mayor

before her election, so there was some discomfort and some men felt threatened. Some people “living in the Middle Ages” genuinely believed that a woman couldn’t be mayor.

Other mayors also made the point that some people felt that women would be too weak to be able to be mayors and “wouldn’t be able to control an unruly meeting” or that women were too emotional, “whereas men can get what they want by being bigger and louder” (Yvonne Sharp, Far North District). Male Chauvinist attitudes were seen as a disadvantage and some mayors had particular groups of males in their communities who were antagonistic towards them, in one case because the males were developers and entrepreneurs who saw the mayor as anti-development. Even without groups of male detractors, “because you’re a woman you have to prove your ability. Women often have to work so much harder in these roles. Working harder and proving yourself is the only way to get over prejudices,” according to a long-serving district mayor.

### *Gender differences in leadership style*

When it came to talking about differences in male and female leadership styles, some of the points made included women’s less combative, less competitive, more collaborative style which can encourage a diversity of views. Women mayors were seen as being able to listen to alternative ideas, without trying to shout or talk people down. Participants considered that women were focussed on the need to do the job and to do the job well, so that their desire was for the right outcomes, whereas men were more driven by money.

The difference was expressed by one mayor in these words:

Most of the male leaders are your top-down authoritarian types and see the style I’ve adopted as one that’s somehow of less value. I think it’s inclusive and besides if you operate in a consultative, co-operative way, you’re bound to get heaps of support from people who do things a lot better than you and you can get them on side and, you know, work more together and use the human talent out there. Now I can’t say that’s all men, but a lot. Still [men have] more that style, got to have the answer to everything and be telling everybody everything (Claire Stewart, New Plymouth District).

Among the mayors who perceived gender differences in leadership styles, one, Iride McCloy (Kapiti District) talked about the determination and focus shown by Fran Wilde, Vicki Buck and Sukhi Turner compared with a lot of males. Her impression was that males diversify more readily and fragment their principles and take on more projects, even when it might affect their ability to complete what they are already involved in. She said that women set their goals and stayed focussed. Heather Maloney (Franklin District) mentioned men's preference to stay distant from people's problems, while another mayor pointed out that you did not see female chauvinists. She feared that some male mayors "probably didn't pay much attention to female councillors" and said that some of the men are on "ego trips" so they are selective about invitations and prefer to go to functions where they will be "*best seen*".

Nevertheless, several women felt that it was difficult to differentiate about leadership styles on gender lines, that it would be easy to select inadequate female leaders as well as inadequate male leaders. Yvonne Sharp (Far North District) said that she thought leadership style operated:

across the board. Some mayors are definitely out there leading by example and these are the ones you hear about and these are the ones you see making some difference. Some mayors are just caretakers, just sit in their office and have meetings. Maybe they have very easy districts to manage, I don't know. Definitely there are those that are making a difference and those that are just there.

Joan Williamson (Taupo District) made the point that in her view there was little difference in the way mayoralties were handled, particularly since local government reorganisation had brought about a much more uniform approach, with so many requirements to do things in similar ways. She saw both men and women as becoming increasingly competent in areas that may have been less familiar to them previously. Male mayors were taking responsibility for the community as well as what happened in the council chamber and female mayors were becoming very competent at doing some things in the same way as men, because the local government situation had changed. She felt that men's attitudes had changed too and said:

I remember when I first started on council, one councillor saying to me 'you can't be a woman because you're sitting at the council table,' and I was the only woman sitting there. You don't get talk like that now ... sexist comments between male and female councillors. We approach it on an equal footing. Women have achieved that more than men. It is because of women and the

way we have had to work just that little bit harder to be elected members that we have earned the right to be on an equal footing. And men have given away any idea that women can't do the job as well as they can.

### *Gender differences in leadership effectiveness*

Gender differences in leadership style are interesting to explore, but differences between men and women as far as leadership effectiveness is concerned, constitute a more searching, more explicit, less vague area in terms of evaluating differences. Some mayors saw little difference in effectiveness in terms of gender, one because it she felt both council and mayor were involved in every undertaking and that effectiveness was collective in local government. However, another mayor who did see a difference, considered women well-suited to the style of governance that was currently required, not just because of local government reform, but also because the expectations of communities had evolved and expanded.

Although some interviewees found it difficult to be decisive about such a complex area with so many variables to take into account, there was some feeling that women were particularly effective in some areas. Claire Stewart (New Plymouth District) mentioned that one of her achievements had been to change the culture of her local authority from top-down, authoritarian and hierarchical to inclusive, consultative and co-operative and "it had been a very positive change".

Two mayors stated that peoples' personalities were more important than gender in terms of effectiveness and four others discussed the difference gender could make in creating community acceptance, rather than effectiveness as such. A city mayor who made this point about community acceptance said that in her experience being consultative and working with a community vision made outcomes more enduring. She cited a project that she had taken time to work through with wide involvement rather than pushing it through and she "hadn't had one negative letter about it".

A critical point, that effectiveness in achieving outcomes also depended on the community's ability to afford the outcome, was pointed out by two mayors, one of whom thought that women were more aware of the ability of people to pay and tended to consider the impact on people financially as well as all the other aspects of an

issue. She felt that women took time to think things through, “we don’t just bowl on and do it”.

### *Female leadership and local government’s image*

On the question of whether women mayors had changed the image of local government, there was general agreement that it had. Women mayors were thought to have enriched local government, improved its image and made it seem more approachable, more open, less stuffy and more democratic.

One city mayor talked about the positive reactions she had experienced:

So many people, male and female have come up to me and sort of said to me, ‘It’s great to have women mayors, we just think they’re serving the public so well’, and they’ve said, ‘we think they’re better’. I don’t know if it’s because women mayors 15 to 20 years ago were a novelty, but all of a sudden we got a whole clutch of them, didn’t we?

Several of the mayors talked about the fact that without women there had been something lacking in local government. One made the point that the participation of female leaders in local government had made a similar crucial change to the one that had taken place with women’s participation at the top in central government:

It’s taken away the question mark of ‘can women do it or not?’ They can do it. Now that women mayors are in a critical mass, you can actually form a judgement with the women that are there – are they doing a good job or a bad job? Rather than just assuming that all women are going to act the same.

At least three mayors also mentioned the changes in Local Government New Zealand that had had no women on its national council in 1992 and was really just an old boys’ club but since then had become “almost half and half”. Local government conferences were described as changing over the years from a room full of males’ dark suits to dark suits with several spots of colour, as more women became mayors and councillors. Conference agendas had changed, incorporating issues women recognised as important. And men’s attitudes towards women speakers at conferences had changed too. Male sniggers had turned to close attention and consideration of the messages of high profile women speakers. As the changes become taken-for-granted one mayor foreshadowed a time to come when women would be such an accepted part of local government leadership that “we will get to a point where gender

difference is irrelevant”. The next section moves from gender and leadership to explore the women’s own experiences of the mayoralty.

## *PERSONAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES*

In this section, the mayors’ personal experiences of being mayor are examined. The areas covered include their leadership styles and the public’s perception of their leadership, along with the way they would like to be perceived as a leader. Also covered in this section are the background experiences the women found useful to call on in their role as mayor and finally, what it is that they would like people to say about their mayoralties.

### *Leadership styles*

Two mayors found it too difficult to describe their leadership style beyond “evolving” in one case and “always learning” on the other. Another mayor chose not to attempt to describe her leadership style, thinking she would sound “big-headed”. Among the rest of the mayors who did talk about their leadership styles, some shared characteristics stood out very strongly. The first was the notion of being inclusive, collaborative and involving others. The next set of characteristics that were widely shared were those of being accessible and approachable as well as being people-oriented, caring and loyal to their communities. Enthusiasm and commitment, strength and forthrightness as well as balance and fairness, were also mentioned by several mayors. Not all comments about their leadership styles were from their own perspectives or wholly positive. Two mayors felt that some critics saw them as too strong and too decisive. One said that some observers felt that she had the council “in her pocket” and that they did whatever she said, which she hastened to add was not actually so.

### *Relevant past experience*

The examples of background experience that interviewees had found it useful to call on as mayor were many and varied, apart from the very generally shared view that bringing up children and running a family was extremely helpful and relevant. As one of the women said:

If you can raise six kids and all the hangers-on, to raise six kids would be no more difficult than to run a council. In fact, sometimes I tend to blur the two of

them the way they [councillors] act. Sometimes it blurs so much that I have to watch my sometimes acerbic tongue in replying to them as you would a child.

Other areas that had been helpful included the facilitation skills learned from managing a classroom, having done accounting and having a mathematical brain, having been unemployed and understanding people's hardships, working with shearing gangs and doing bar work which gives an ability to talk to people from all walks of life, the good public relations skills gained from a background in retailing, and experience in central and local government as well as having been on committees in voluntary groups. One of the women said she had been helped by the survival skills she developed being a solo mother for five years:

when I tried to bring up children by myself and was in survival mode – and that gets you by every day that you have a new challenge. The first months were a bit daunting and it is even now... a background in young farmers' and women's institutes prepared me for the amount of public meetings that you have to do. I still have different comfort levels, some days better than others. (Heather Maloney, Franklin District)

Family backgrounds had been helpful. Parents with a background in local government or an interest in political issues, or family settings where you were expected to discuss issues and back up your point of view with arguments were considered to be invaluable training grounds. Other areas mentioned were: an understanding of Myers-Briggs personality types, business training, nursing as a way of building community relationships and performing arts experience as a preparation for public life. Janice Skurr, mayor of Waimakariri District, said that being a trained singer and being used to standing up in front of people and knowing how to project her voice was one of her "real strengths" and she seldom used notes when giving speeches.

### *Self-perceptions and other's perceptions*

Many of the women had not had to take dress or a public image very seriously until they were elected mayor and for most it had been a low priority in their lives and it was a surprise to discover how high people's expectations were of their mayor's self-presentation. Several of the women bemoaned the fact that they had to take care with their appearance even if they were just going out to the supermarket. Although there was no clothes allowance for the mayor, they had to invest in an extensive wardrobe

of new clothes whereas a male could just buy a few new ties. One mayor had gone to an occasion in a good knit suit and had been made aware that a higher level of elegance was expected of her. Another mayor said that her two female councillors had dropped several hints that she should wear make-up. One mayor said, “there is an expectation that you’ve got to be the best dressed person in the district”, and another stated:

People do comment on what you are wearing and what you look like... My first three months, my whole pay was spent on clothes and then you have a husband that you have to dress as well, as he has never been to so many functions. Suddenly, we need all these good clothes ... even going to the supermarket you have to look nice. You can actually see some people that you don’t know staring at you. (Heather Maloney, Franklin District)

The mayors were asked about how they would like to be perceived as mayor compared with how they thought they were perceived. One mayor said that you would need to be polling all the time to know what the public thought of you and another two mayors were quite unsure, but others were very clear and matter of fact and some were very thoughtful in their answers. One mayor saw herself as “one of the people, feminine but strong” and felt that she must be OK in the public’s view as they kept voting her back in. She added:

I think you have to make sure you are perceived as a doing person, but it is no good being too visionary if you are not going to action anything now. I like to be seen as somebody who likes to see action happen, but at the same time balance it with looking after our environment, making sure that development is sustainable but having growth and progress. I have six grown children and four small grandchildren and I want to know that the future is going to be good for them (Joan Williamson, Taupo District).

She made the point that:

the public can’t see the whole of the job and perhaps they don’t know me terribly well either, but after all these years they probably do. I think they just accept me as better the devil they know. I am very enthusiastic. I work hard at the job. I never say no. People do appreciate your being prepared to go to every little thing. They [the events] are important to every one of those groups and whether it’s opening an important conference which is very erudite and you need to keep your wits about you, or whether it is simply going to a mothers’ group and playing on the floor with the kids - they are all equally important. (Joan Williamson, Taupo District)

Overall, the comments the mayors made showed that it was much less important it was to them to be liked and admired by everyone, than to have achieved positive

gains for the community. However, many felt that the way they wanted to be seen and the way they were seen was very similar. One mayor who wanted to be seen as “someone who comes through for people, accessible, ordinary, normal, not removed and remote” felt that having gained 90 percent of the vote at the last election showed that people were satisfied with the way she’d done her job and the way she’d brought the council and the community closer together.

Some mayors found that the image that some segments of the community had of them differed markedly from others. One mayor who said she would like to be seen as “fair, speaking from the heart, honest and committed”, in fact saw herself as having two public images. The image the business community had of her was as someone who had made “sound but hard decisions” and she had their support. But many others saw her as “dictatorial” and did not believe that she was “prepared to listen to their issues”. One mayor who wanted to be seen as accessible, direct, honest, someone who listened and had integrity, freely admitted that some people couldn’t stand her, but pointed out that some people “don’t like directness and honesty”.

Another mayor said of others’ perceptions, there was always the risk that if you looked warm and friendly, you were going to be seen as weak. She felt that she polarised people and probably 50 percent loved her and 50 percent hated her. Yvonne Sharp (Far North District) wanted to be seen as visionary and a mayor who listened to the community. She added, “I really feel good when people refer to me as ‘my mayor’ or ‘our mayor’ and say it in a warm and intimate way”. She said that it gave her a “sense of connection”. She felt that she was seen in that way but that was because of being “born and bred in the district” and being known to have “the good of the district at heart”. She said she was someone who did not have “ulterior motives or private agendas”.

However, one mayor who wanted to be seen as “approachable” and “down to earth” with “an open mind and an open door” felt that she was seen as “exactly that”. But she made the point that as a new mayor it took time to build relationships and get support from staff and others who had been used to working with somebody else as mayor.

### *Others' judgments on mayors*

The overall impression gained from comments the mayors made on what they would like people to say about their mayoralty, is that the whole group of women are exceptionally humble and focussed on outcomes for the community. Typical comments they would like to hear people using to sum up their mayoralty included; "She did her best", "She made it better for us", "I'd like to think I had left some tangible improvement for the community", "I had achieved efficiently during my term", "That they were comfortable and happy that I was here", "That the community is now involved in the council and it was my leadership style that achieved that", "She is bringing about some good changes to the district", "that I achieved things", "that I made a difference", "that I took a fresh approach and really made a big difference", "I'd be happy just for people to say, she did a good job", "That I am making some progress and that I am conscious of people's ability to pay extra", "She is bringing about some good changes to the district", "Just that she did an OK job and I could be seen to be fair", "She made a difference to the city – a good difference", "She took part in the wonderful progress that we have made in this area". These comments centre on having improved the community and what has been done in terms of making a difference, rather than focusing on what a wonderful person the mayor has been. One mayor said she would inevitably be known as "the mayor who built" as she had put so much effort into a building programme. She had been responsible for building a new library and new council offices, which had been controversial at the time, though once built everyone seemed very proud of them.

### *CULTURE CHANGE*

Perhaps one of the most demanding challenges some of the mayors faced was the need to change the culture that they came into when they were elected mayor. One mayor was concerned about the existing culture of having the 'real' meeting over drinks after the meeting, so she stopped restocking the drinks cabinet and caused a furore. She had support from other women on council, but not from the men. Finally she had to bow to pressure, but at least she has managed to establish an honesty system where people paid for their drinks. This example shows people treating the council as their private club and expecting free drinks as part of their membership.

Several of the women quoted earlier in this chapter talked about males having more ego involved in being mayor than females. One male mayor was so shocked at losing the election that he refused to vacate his office for the new female incumbent. She explained:

he was so astounded that he just could not leave ... I had to work from home for a week before I could get in here and it was very difficult. I had other mayors ringing me up and I wasn't even here to find out ...for those early weeks I had to start behind the eight ball completely.

She made the point that in that district there had never been a female mayor and that for two months she had to concentrate on proving her worth and let staff and councillors, come to terms with the change. Her other challenge was to get the councillors who came from four different areas which had had separate councils before amalgamation, to realise that they could work towards the well-being of the district while still remaining loyal to their areas. She has managed to get councillors to move beyond competitive infighting for their separate areas and the four towns have now begun to support each other.

Another mayor said that she had raised the issue even before becoming mayor about “the old boys’ network and the backroom deals and decisions being made by the select few before they actually hit the council table”. After becoming mayor she worked to get everyone to participate in decision-making and move away from the previous situation where the mayor and two committee chairpersons had dominated and everyone had tended to vote with them.

She began by asking councillors “and many had served 10 years, but some had served 15-25 years, so they had a mindset and a routine and a way of doing things” to supply her with the answer to a simple question within a week. The question sought their reasons for being a councillor and what they wanted to achieve as councillors. She said that her purpose was to help everyone work toward the realisation that their vision had to be a collective one “because our function was to lead our community”.

Another area that at least three of the mayors had to work with in changing the culture was establishing the difference between governance and management. Several councillors were used to being involved in functions that were more properly the role

of staff rather than confining themselves to policy formulation and having council officers carry out that policy.

### *Community empowerment and conflict resolution*

Another kind of cultural change for some mayors was encouraging more community involvement in scoping out the future. One of the mayors had been a kindergarten teacher and used brainstorming in her communities to help them in problem-solving. One community in Tuatapere had lost the forestry industry which had been providing the small rural town with its economic base and the brainstorming solution they developed was to build a tramping track, which is now open as the Hump Ridge Track and is bringing tourists to the area. The local community built the track and the huts. The mayor described visiting the project and seeing the local pub owner and the local chemist with sleeves rolled up out building the track. The track cost four million dollars and the local people formed a trust to run it.

The mayor of the district talked about the community workshop process, saying:

we've found out that no economic development takes place unless the communities have ownership. And when it comes from the bottom up and the people's ownership of their community and the development of it, then you start to see economic development ... the role of the mayorality is to get out there and to work at grassroots with communities and to provide leadership so that they can go forward.... we've got 30 little communities, 12 community boards, 18 community development committees and all of them set their own rates and are sort of self-governing. I believe very much in having government right down at that community level. And then we have, in these communities, we have brainstorming sessions and we come up with these concept plans and that's what the community, where they see their vision and where they see their community's future. It started from those communities who have been hard hit by the rural decline and what could we do to stop this?

Other examples of community empowerment include Vicki Buck's schemes to hold festivals and spend to create, as described by Noeline Allan. Another example of assisting a community to reach its goal was Janice Skurr's resolution of Rangiora's 26 year long struggle over wanting to build a library. Janice reported that there had been a poll and arguments and "it had just gone on and on". There were five men in Rangiora who had worked against the library under the previous mayor. When she became mayor she set up a working group and invited one of the male opponents to the working group meeting when he tried to stop her meeting from going ahead. The

meeting revealed that the plans had tended to become too grandiose and expensive because they had turned into a library and a theatre, or an administration building and a library. After listening to everyone's wishes Janice Skurr said that it seemed as if what everybody wanted most was a library and everyone agreed. Within 10 months the library was built.

Another conflict faced by the mayor of a mixed rural/urban district is the conflict between rural realities and urban lifestylers who buy land and have real estate agents airily promise them that the council will provide tar seal and sewerage in a few months. Then the council has to cope with people making unrealistic demands for services; people who have an idealised image of the country without flies or the noise of cows mooing. This mayor also stated her disapproval of transactional leadership saying:

I don't go along with all of the endless politicking and filling everybody's pockets because at the end of the day your position will rely on that person whose pockets you have just filled giving you a vote. I don't go along with that.

The mayor described a situation which had required her to show leadership over a district plan change. She had to "take a hard decision because it was closing down a rural subdivision". The council took 16 months to work through the change. When the draft went to the public, the mayor was hotly criticised, because, as she says: "Everyone wants someone that they can blame, so the blame was put squarely on the mayor's doorstep, despite the fact that the council had democratically chosen all of these options".

Some of the councillors tried to distance themselves from the decision, even though they had actually supported it. The issue was a huge controversy at election time which was a very testing time for the mayor, who had to stand up and defend the document and explain that it was out in the public arena so they could have their say. She said:

I came on to the council in 1992 but past councillors had actually opened up the subdivision rules under the Resource Management Act. They damn near threw the gate off its hinges. They didn't test it or monitor it. They let everyone know they could do what they wanted. In the District Plan in 1991, the front page clearly said that council would monitor the outcomes and as soon as the effects turned from positive to negative over time, the council

would address the issue. That was exactly why this last variation arose. For the first three years the effects were positive, but after that it all turned to negativity and that was why we addressed it, because we said we would in 1991.

In her opinion, people expect even higher standards of their leaders than of themselves, so it is very important “to be honest and fair and moral”.

### *Identification with the community*

Another kind of cultural change is linking the council to the community, which was mentioned by several of the mayors in their interviews. One mayor talked about the way that people contrasted her leadership to that of the previous mayor. He had taken a very ‘hands-off’ approach to flooding in the district during his term but when flooding happened when she was mayor, Heather Maloney (Franklin District) said:

there was no way I could walk away like it was not my problem. So I pitched in and cleared out houses and shifted furniture. I don’t know if it is the people’s personalities or a male/female thing but previous mayors had never done those kinds of things. It’s like they were above doing those things.

Yvonne Sharp (Far North District) also talked about flooding as a time when her leadership had been tested, as it was a 24 hour day, seven days a week time for her. She said that what was required was the ability to direct, guide, comfort and give hope.

Some of the other examples mayors gave of displaying leadership also showed that they identified with the community and that being mayor was something they were doing for the community rather than for themselves. One mayor, who had been a stalwart supporter of a bid for the Olympic Games to be held in the capital city, took the unpopular stand of arguing against continuing with the bid when it became evident that the financial resources required to keep up with the stiff international competition could cripple communities. Other mayors talked about reconciling competing demands in budget rounds, taking the lead in complex financial negotiations on the sale of a power company, and lobbying central government on siting a major hospital locally.

Other examples that showed that mayors' ways of working were relevant to transforming leadership included Joan Williamson's description of 'vision'. She says:

The mayoralty is a bit like a puzzle. It is important that you help your council to fit the necessary pieces, all the time visualising the big picture and planning for sustainable growth and always see the need to fit more pieces so that we ensure we have a clear, progressive kind of pattern.

Her metaphor is an excellent way of picturing a need for openness alongside a need for structure. She uses another metaphor in discussing having to show leadership over amalgamation:

nobody wanted to be reorganised or amalgamated. In this district we had part of the district of Taumaranui, we had some that belonged to Rotorua, the Taupo borough and so there were groups of people who didn't really want to come together. A marriage that you agree on can sometimes be shaky but you get a marriage that is forced, it can be hell on earth. In this case nobody wanted to co-operate with anyone else. So that was what I concentrated on 10 years ago. I had to show that I was just as interested in the whole of the area as one big family and I have consistently done that. I was absolutely rapt that towards the end of the first term, I was invited to be a member of both community boards. Of course legislation doesn't allow that, but they were so courteous to invite me. I know that some community boards have a resentment of the mayor being there, but certainly here, if I could vote on community board matters, they would have me do so. I do speak up at them and contribute and offer my view and help in any way. It is a good relationship and I think welding the district together is one of the most important parts of leadership.

Other mayors' transforming activities have included helping council to see a new role for itself and change its policy over time to become an advocate and a facilitator, espousing collective leadership, refusing to accept unemployment as a necessary evil, listening to people and explaining the underlying ideas and why their ideas couldn't be adopted during the annual planning process.

Examples of rejecting transactional approaches given by informants included insisting on the importance of maintaining one's integrity and freedom from bias as mayor and resisting manipulative lobbying as a technique.

## *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

This chapter has traversed the perceptions, ideas and experiences of the women mayors in office during the 1998-2001 term. As much as possible their ideas have been expressed using their own words and by grouping their responses under the

headings of leadership, gender and leadership, culture and leadership and their personal experiences as mayor. The purpose of this chapter has been to give breadth in covering the variety and diversity of experience of the whole range of women mayors, so that an almost panoramic view of similarities and differences among them and their situations as mayors could be distinguished and used in answering the research questions. In the next chapter, a different approach will be taken and a single mayor's experience of leadership during the whole three years of the 1998-2001 term will be studied in depth.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Riding the rollercoaster: Jill White's term as mayor

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Leadership is being able to grasp ideas and get them into the sort of processes that turn them into reality. (Jill White interview)

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter is a case study detailing insights about leadership gained through observing one mayor during her three-year term. To gain the depth of understanding needed, I gathered data by informal and formal means: informally as a local citizen talking to others in the city, formally in interviews with the mayor and by analysing newspaper stories about the mayor and council. At the end of the three-year term, further information was gained in formal interviews carried out with four key informants on their view of the mayor's leadership and by becoming a member of the mayor's re-election campaign committee and taking part in discussions about the campaign. This case study's overarching purpose was to provide a holistic view of leadership during the three-year term showing the different events which took place during the three-year local government cycle of the council, from the mayor's perspective as well as the perspectives of other key people.

The in-depth nature of a case study enabled the researcher to gain information about the way one woman mayor acted in a leadership role and the way she perceived the leadership process, by following the mayor's response to issues and events throughout the term. Although chapters five and six gave an overview of mayoral candidates' aspirations and serving mayors' leadership perspectives, the information in those

chapters was gathered in a single interview with each respondent. There was no opportunity for revisiting issues or discussing and analysing events as they unfolded. By contrast, the objective of this chapter is to provide information gathered over a longer time sequence. Over time, situations change. A leader has to react to different demands at different times and a series of interviews allowed the mayor to explain her reactions while events were taking place. In this way, the case study aims to show leadership as it happens, rather than looking back on it as a static event.

### *BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY*

The case study information was gained in 10 interviews with the mayor during the 1998 to 2001 term, discussing leadership in the light of the events taking place at the time of each interview. An analysis of newspaper stories published during the three-year period allows data triangulation and offers a separate perspective on the leadership shown by the mayor and council. This close scrutiny of a mayor's term facilitates analysis of events, interactions and processes that took place during the three years in terms of leadership while minimising the distorting effect of hindsight bias.

In this way the case study gives an opportunity to use the experiences of a full three-year term to answer the research questions, "How do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice?" and, "How do women mayors' perceptions of leadership compare with existing leadership theory?".

#### *Case selection*

As the methodology outlined in chapter four explains, this study examined women mayors' views on leadership in three ways; by interviewing three female mayoral candidates, by interviewing all serving female mayors and by selecting a female mayor to interview periodically during the three year term as a case study. Jill White, the incoming mayor of Palmerston North in 1998, was selected for the case study following on from her involvement in this study as a mayoral candidate, as reported in chapter five. Jill White was seen as an ideal research subject as she was a first-time mayor making leadership decisions on every aspect of being mayor without the influence of past experience in the role. However, her previous experience as a local

government politician would influence her analysis of the processes she was involved in. She was both interested in the research and very positive about being involved in the research process.

Not only was Jill White an ideal research subject for the case study, her local authority was also particularly suitable as a location for the research. Being a provincial city set in a rural hinterland means that Palmerston North shares many features with a wide range of local authorities unlike the larger cities, such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Large cities have many specific, idiosyncratic problems and issues which cannot be easily related to smaller cities and districts in New Zealand. By contrast, Palmerston North, is involved in both rural and urban concerns and the leadership issues faced by its mayor and by this local authority are similar to many other city and district councils in provincial New Zealand. Another advantage was that as the researcher lived in the city, it would be possible to observe meetings and participate in occasions where the mayor and councillors would be present and to be close to the specific events relating to this local authority as well as observing the city's response to the larger events affecting local government as a whole.

For example, in Palmerston North during this term, the city manager resigned and there was a need to appoint a new chief executive. As well as events like this one, which was internal to this particular local authority, there were also external issues affecting the council relating to events taking place in government or local government. For example, during this term, in 2001, discussions on the then newly-introduced Local Government Bill were taking place in Palmerston North as well as other local authorities throughout the country.

Other events taking place reflected the familiar nature of predictable activities that would happen in the cycle of the three-year term in any council during this time, such as public meetings on the annual plan. When this research was carried out, legislation required each council to consult with the community on its plans for spending in the next 12 months by developing a plan and holding a series of public meetings. So, as well as having to meet unpredictable local challenges (such as unemployment following closure of a local business) local authorities also go through a shared

predictable cycle of events during a three year term. Stages in the cycle itself demand different qualities and responses from a mayor and give different insights into a mayor's approach to leadership.

Some of the features of the New Zealand local government system set it apart from local government in other Western countries and can be significant when discussing mayoral leadership. The initial framework for local government in New Zealand was established by the British Crown during colonial times and for the most part reflects its British roots. However, New Zealand local government does differ in some respects from local government in Britain and Australia, despite both Australia and New Zealand having similar backgrounds as British colonies. For example, New Zealand has always had mayors who are directly elected by voters rather than appointed by fellow councillors as is the case in Australia and was so in Britain until a legislative change in 2000 enabling mayors to be elected in some British local government units. There is also legislative provision in New Zealand for communities to choose whether to have a ward system, allowing councillors to stand for and be voted in by a specific 'electorate' or ward within the city or district, or to opt for a system of voting 'at large' so that electors can vote for all the councillors across the city or district as a whole (Bush, 1995).

### *Relationships between mayor and council*

There can be tensions between a mayor who has gained the largest number of votes in a city-wide election and acknowledges a city-wide responsibility, and councillors who represent wards may feel a duty to put ward issues first before the concerns of the local authority as a whole. Helping councillors to balance city-wide and ward issues can be a demanding task for the mayor who has to reconcile competing interests within the council.

The mayor has to achieve this task without the discipline enforced by the organisational machinery of political parties – which, in sharp contrast to British local government, are almost completely absent from local government in New Zealand where candidates are generally independent (Bush, 1995). Nevertheless, there are a few notable exceptions, such as the strong Green party involvement in Wellington City Council. And in Palmerston North, the 1998 election did include candidates

standing on the newly-formed 'Building Bridges' ticket, a reference to the campaign for a second bridge to be built across the Manawatu river. Only two councillors standing on the ticket were voted in, and only one of the two was a new councillor. The *Evening Standard* (White clearly wins the race. 1998, October 12, *Evening Standard*, p.8.) suggested that voters may have perceived 'Building Bridges' as a negative influence since it campaigned against the 'establishment' on the council.

In any council, whatever differences may have arisen during the election campaign, councillors must be melded into a team working towards common goals through the mayor's influence, personality and people management skills. Achieving and maintaining functional leadership of the council and ensuring that it operates as a council, rather than an assortment of 'independent republics', is one of the areas which mayors are judged on. Thus, in exploring a mayor's three-year term, interaction with the council is a significant factor in assessing leadership strategies, alongside public profile and support within the community.

### *The three phases of the mayoral term*

Any mayoral term of office for a newly-elected mayor can be seen as comprising three distinct phases. Firstly there is an initial phase devoted to establishing oneself as mayor, secondly a consolidation phase of being the mayor and achieving leadership goals then, finally, a phase leading up to the election where one either decides to relinquish or attempts to retain the mayoralty. Although each phase can be distinguished from the others, they may overlap with each other depending on the circumstances. Some mayors may be planning their next election campaign from their first day in office and some may still be trying to establish their leadership well into the consolidation phase. So although the three phases typically mark the beginning, middle and end of the term of a mayor, they are unlikely to be completely separate from each other.

This chapter is structured to reflect these three phases initially by examining Jill White's leadership from the time of her announcement that she would contest the mayoralty. The discussion of the first phase begins with her stated aspirations in the role through to an early challenge to her leadership and the way that she dealt with it.

For Jill White the second phase was a time of coping with council process, facilitating change and initiating new ventures. The third phase began with the announcement that she would stand again for the mayoralty and continued with the attempt throughout the election campaign to communicate about the successes of the term.

Communication about successes was overshadowed by the controversy surrounding a mismanaged attempt to sell the Civic Administration Building. The Civic Administration Building houses the council chamber and all council's departments and is a large multi-storey building sited in the Square. The Square is the city's large central area of green open space which is home to significant historical monuments and is seen as iconic, an important part of the city's identity. Because the Civic Administration Building and the Square became critical issues in terms of Jill White's ability to lead decision-making and communicate with the public as well as council officers and staff, some information on the history of the Civic Administration Building and its siting in the Square is needed as background.

### *To sell or not to sell: the council building controversy*

The council complex was built as the result of an architectural design competition. The previous council building which had become too small for its purpose was also sited facing across the road towards the green space of the Square. The new Civic Administration Building was very controversial in its early days because it occupied space in the Square as it was designed and built on two sides of the road. Part of the building occupied a site alongside other CBD offices and shops and part was sited across the road in the Square. The two parts of the building were joined with an interlinking walkway lined with meeting rooms at the second level which was built above the road. Although the building was dubbed 'the grey battleship' and generally considered to be a tall, ugly concrete structure dominating the Square, it did provide ample space for the council's staff and politicians.

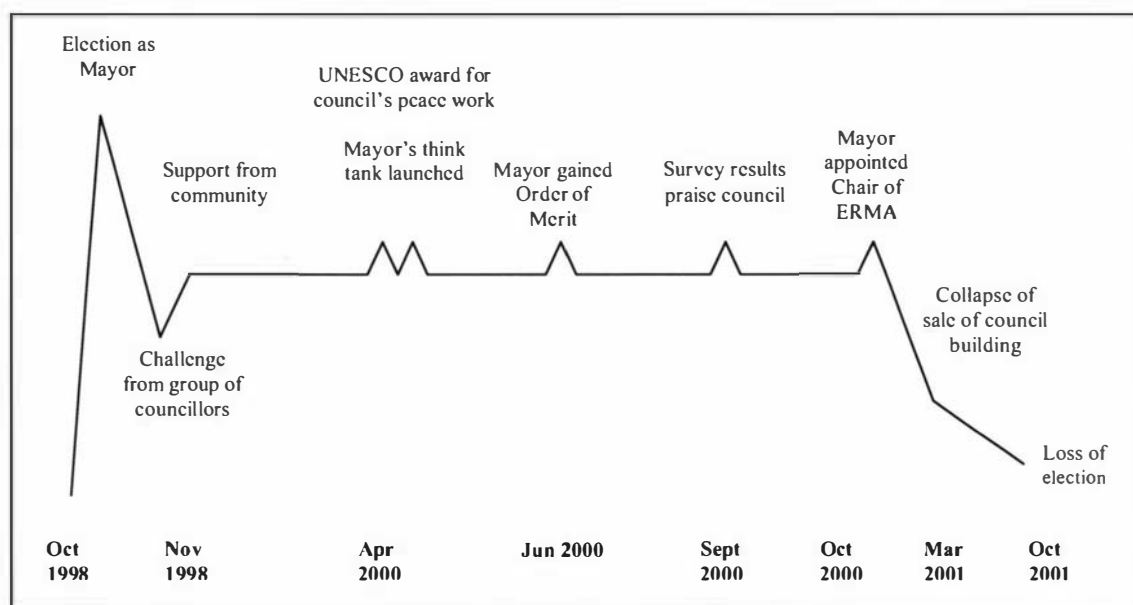
However, over the two decades since its opening in 1979, the city complex had become depopulated. There were fewer council staff and several floors were providing a home to city business organisations. Council's restructuring in the eighties and nineties had resulted in staff cutbacks and the size of building which had seemed appropriate when it was first built had long been recognised as having

become far too large for its purpose. Living in such a large building was seen as wasteful and there had been discussion at various times about finding a more suitable space and possibly selling the council building. As this chapter will show, public perceptions of a failed attempt to sell the council building during the term, were a strong factor in Jill White’s failure to gain re-election for a second term as mayor of Palmerston North.

### *THE PATTERN OF JILL WHITE’S TERM*

Jill White announced her candidacy for the mayoralty in May 1998. She had made the decision to resign from her role as a backbench member of Parliament on the Labour Party’s list and return to her home in Palmerston North if she succeeded in gaining the mayoralty. However, she was no stranger to local government in the city, having served as a councillor on both city and regional councils. She also had knowledge of the community and recognition from a wide cross-section of people and groups for her work as a public health nurse. Her background helped her to win the mayoral contest. Nevertheless, three years after being voted in, she lost the mayoralty just as suddenly as she had gained it in the election of 1998.

**Figure 6: The pattern of Jill White’s mayoralty**



This line diagram gives an overview by visually representing the “ups and downs” of Jill White’s mayoralty. The peaks and troughs represent punctuation points (positive

and negative) rather than magnitude. The diagram begins with the line rising very slightly during her election campaign, then a huge rise upwards when she gained the mayoralty with 28 percent of the vote and two and a half thousand more votes than the nearest contender in October 1998. That initial rise is followed by a dip with the setback of having her recommendations for council chairpersons overturned by a determined group of councillors at the November council meeting. The expressions of support from the local newspaper and the public which followed are shown in the line with a modest rise. From then on the line plateaus at that level, with small rises when there are positive responses to events taking place in the council and the city, events such as the square redevelopment proposals and the Wastewater 2006 scheme.

Finally, the line falls sharply with the failed sale of the council building which left the council committed to new leased premises that had been refurbished and refitted at council's expense, while they still occupied the old council building. The line representing her term falls even further with Jill White's failure to regain the mayoralty in the 2001 elections. Many of the ups and downs of Jill White's term came from sources that were outside her control, and that is why the title of this chapter, riding the rollercoaster, likens the events of her three-year term to a ride in an amusement park. Although she decided to stand for mayor just as one buys a ticket for a ride, what happened once she became mayor was not always within her control, just as the pleasure-seeker cannot control the speed or height and depth of the ups and downs on a rollercoaster. At times, the mayoral rollercoaster seemed to leave her powerless to influence anything beyond her own reactions.

## *PHASE ONE - ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP CREDENTIALS*

### *The election campaign*

Jill White announced on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1998, that she would be standing for the Palmerston North mayoralty in the October local body elections. According to a report in the *Evening Post*, she said she had "the experience and skills for the job and wanted to lead a new team of councillors in the development of the city." (MP to stand for mayor, 1998, p.10).

In an interview with the *Dominion*, Jill White explained that her decision to stand for the mayoralty had not been an easy one and that if she had been an electorate rather than a list MP she would not have considered it as, “causing a by-election was not her style” [Campion, S. (1998, 23 July). All-rounder wants to lead Palmerston North. *Dominion*. p.5]. List MPs who resign can be replaced by their political party – in Jill White’s case, the Labour Party – by the next person on their party’s list without the need for an election. Talking about the background to the Palmerston North mayoral election campaign, Jill White said: “Mayor Paul Reiger’s announcement that he was standing down offered an opportunity unlikely to present itself again and I realised with my experience in both local and central government politics I had much to offer the position” (Campion, 1998, p.5).

In that *Dominion* interview, Jill White also admitted that she found becoming a list MP in 1996, when her bid for the Rangitikei electorate was unsuccessful, much less appealing than being an MP with an electorate. Previously she had served as the MP for Manawatu when she won that seat for Labour in 1993. Nevertheless, in spite of becoming a list MP without electorate responsibilities as such, she had still been determined to be as accessible to the public as possible and had set up a ‘community office’ in Feilding (a small country town in the Manawatu electorate, 15 minutes from Palmerston North where the Manawatu District Council offices are also sited). She intended to maintain a similar level of accessibility in her approach to the mayoralty, should her bid be successful.

Jill White said that as a former public health nurse and politician she had always had a strong interest in the basic needs of the community, and that she preferred to work in and for a community where she belonged. To head that community as mayor was a job she would relish and she, personally, saw Palmerston North as having a great future, provided it had strong leadership. Jill described her Methodist upbringing as having given her an inherent sense of responsibility for others, so that among the particular things she would focus on as mayor would be community support for those in need and investing effort and energy into young people. Nevertheless, her approach to the mayoralty would be about more than compassion and would emphasise developing the city’s economic prosperity and looking at the big picture - ways the city and neighbouring district could work together, and ways to increase links

between the city's scientific and educational base and the business community (Campion, 1998 p.5).

These quotations from the *Dominion* article on Jill White highlight her sense of community and her strong connection to Palmerston North, her sense of belonging to the city. There is an irony in Jill White's assertion that the city would have a great future as long as it had strong leadership, considering that she was to be judged so often as weak. However, judgments about strength and weakness are very subjective and often made on superficial evidence such as whether one has a loud voice and a commanding presence, rather than whether one has positive integrity.

In Jill White's case, her comments demonstrate integrity and commitment to her party because she would not wish to cause a by-election simply to meet her own needs. She cites her Methodist upbringing as the foundation for the strength of her principles, her sense of responsibility for looking after everybody in the community, young and old, rich and poor, elites and underprivileged groups. Nevertheless, she is also very aware of the need for strategic economic cooperation and highlights her interest in ways of developing alliances between city and district, between science, education and business. From the outset, her perception of what needs to be done for the city to prosper is broadly-based and logical.

Although Jill White declared that she would be campaigning vigorously for the 12 weeks before the election, (Campion, 1998, p.5) the campaign was clearly going to be a demanding one for her. She had the disadvantages of having to be at Parliament from Monday to Friday, coping with the constant demands of being an MP yet having to fit campaigning into her schedule. She had to constantly travel to and fro for parliamentary duties in Wellington and back to Palmerston North to attend election meetings. Moreover, the campaign in Palmerston North was not an ordinary local government election campaign, by any means. The number of people standing was much larger than the norm for Palmerston North city, where the greatest number of mayoral candidates in any previous campaign had been five, compared with 15 contenders in 1998.

### *The fifteen mayoral candidates*

Also, many of the candidates were well-qualified to stand. One candidate, Rob Moodie, was the mayor of Manawatu. Six of the candidates were sitting councillors. Five other candidates worked locally in science, health and business. Only two candidates could be seen as very unlikely to attract many votes, one because he was standing for the Natural Law party, which is a very minor political party and typically even mainstream political parties and tickets do not find favour with voters in local elections (Bush, 1995). The other candidate who seemed unlikely to succeed had stood in several elections previously and each time had gained only a small number of votes. In the 1998 election he was standing for the 'Uprising Party' and one of his policy planks was that Palmerston North should become a United Nations host city alongside Geneva and New York, (Staff reporter, 1998a, p.1.)

Although in the three year term that followed, voters would be given the chance of voting for a change of electoral system to STV (single transferable vote) which would enable rankings and preferences to be taken into account, at the time of this election the voting system was FFP (first past the post) so that the candidate with the largest number of votes was the winner, even if that person did not gain a majority of the votes cast. As one of the mayoral candidates said in describing the nature of an election with 15 people standing and splitting the vote between them, it was "like Lotto" and voters "might just as well put all the names in a hat and draw one out". A sitting councillor who was standing for both council and the mayoralty, told an election meeting, "Whoever wins could do so with 2000 votes and they won't have a mandate from the city, so it's a difficult choice for you to make" (Myers, J. 1998a, p.3).

With 15 candidates for mayor, election meetings could give each candidate only a few minutes to speak. During the election campaign, the city was awash with hoardings. One of the candidates had decided that in this situation, where it was difficult for voters to differentiate between 15 possible mayors, he needed to capitalise on having a memorable name, Hornblow, and so he used a trumpet symbol beside his name on hoardings, rather than a photograph. The possibility of having a new mayor who had gained the mayoralty with only a very slight majority was obviously a potential outcome.

### *Jill White's electoral platform*

As the campaign continued there was no clear frontrunner in the mayoral stakes. Jill White emphasised her point of difference as her breadth and depth of political experience and described the vibrant, vital city she wanted Palmerston North to become. On 14 September 1998, as part of the election coverage, Jill White was asked to discuss her long-term vision for the city and to explain the particular leadership strengths that she would bring to the role. She said that her vision for Palmerston North was of:

A city with pizzaz, full employment, ethnic and cultural diversity, excellence in performing arts, education and science, and supportive of its frail and vulnerable. I bring experience as a politician, knowledge of the community, ability to forge a team of councillors, ability to develop policy, a sense of fairness (Jill White, 1998, p.2).

Here, Jill White describes a new Palmerston North coming into being through building on recognised strengths, such as those in education and science and developing potential by exploiting its existing yet little known creativity and cultural diversity to become seen as a city with pizzaz. The kinds of changes she describes would make Palmerston North's image more akin to that of Wellington, New Zealand's capital city. Nevertheless, although Wellington is currently seen as vibrant and lively, it did have to shake off its former image as the dowdy, dreary, grey, home of Government departments. Jill White clearly considers that in the longer-term she can help a similar transformation take place in Palmerston North by using her skills and experience.

The newspaper story does not go into detail on how the transformation might be effected. However, when asked about her perceptions of the job of mayor in a research interview during the campaign, Jill White elaborated on her awareness of two major aspects of the role, working within council and working out in the community. From her explanation it is clear that working in the community entails for her some of the image-building work that is part of her long-term vision. In her words:

I think there are two roles, two primary roles, which obviously relate a bit, though there's a separation between them. And one is being the chairperson of the council and building the council team. The other one is actually a position which is important to the people of the city ... that desire to have the mayor interested in what they are doing in the city, interested in their particular group, interested in advocating on their behalf, interested in promoting the city. And obviously there are sort of interrelationships, intertwinings between those two sides of the role (Jill White, Interview; September, 1998).

As a mayoral candidate, Jill White was also asked what her priorities would be if she were elected. She mentioned several important but predictable tasks. However, one of the major ideas she put forward was her desire to set up a group of people from the community to act as a sounding-board and intelligence-gathering team to keep her in touch. In the following quote she explains that as soon as she has done the essential housekeeping, setting up a task force would be her next priority:

The first thing would be sitting down and talking over a very wide range of issues with the City Manager, then speaking with individual councillors. Then writing thank you letters to all the supporters ... very high on the priority list will be reading Standing Orders, until I know them pretty well off by heart, before the first ever council meeting ... Then I want to actually get a broad based group of people from the city that I can actually turn to, to sound out ideas, to get their intelligence as to what's happening in different parts of the city, and that would be education, science, business, community organizations, sporting groups, showgrounds, you know – that kind of range, that would just be an outreach for me into the city, and a sounding-board and also a part of bringing different sectors together (Jill White Interview; September, 1998).

Jill White's idea of having a group to keep her in touch with the diverse interests within the city shows that she was planning to start early on gathering the knowledge required to create "a city with pizzaz" and that she saw this area of responsibility as just as critical as being able to run a tight council meeting and being aware of the background to issues facing council. In fact, Jill White was later to need the thorough grounding in Standing Orders that she listed in her priorities and would also use her 'think tank' idea productively, but at this stage there was still no way of knowing whether she would become mayor.

### *Electoral success*

With the number of candidates standing for the mayoralty, it was very difficult even for the candidates themselves to guess who might be the future mayor. It was a matter

of waiting until after the close of the period of postal voting when the votes were counted. That evening “more than 200 people packed into the city council chamber ... to hear the election results” (Morgan, J. 1998, p.9).

Jill White remembers the Returning Officer telling all those standing for mayor, that the successful candidate’s name would be printed in bold type on the overhead projector slide he would be using. She looked for the names of those of her opponents she thought most likely to win and then noticed her name ‘White’ in bold (Jill White, Interview December, 1998).

As the *Dominion* reporter explains, (Morgan, 1998, p.9) “Ms White headed off her nearest rival, business consultant John Hornblow, by more than 2000 votes with a further 1500 (votes) back to Commerce Centre head Kelvin Speirs.” As Jill White describes the reaction to the announcement, there were congratulations from her opponents and jubilation from her supporters. She felt that the newspaper photographs of her on that night told the story, one photo with tears as she absorbed the news, and another photo with a huge grin (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

The *Evening Standard* of October 12, 1998, (White clearly wins the race, 1998, p.8), in its comments on the election, mixed congratulations with cautious advice; first of all expressing relief at having a clear winner:

The mayoral election in Palmerston North, contested by 15 candidates, could have produced a disastrous result with no genuine mandate. The city can be grateful that did not happen. New mayor, Jill White, who will now resign as a Labour list MP, won well. Her support was certainly nowhere near a majority of voters, but was significantly ahead of second-placed John Hornblow and the other 13.

The newspaper story then moves into congratulatory mode:

Congratulations to Ms White. Her fine past record as a city councillor and Manawatu-Wanganui regional councillor, before she entered national politics, clearly stood her in good stead with city voters. In Wellington she has been highly regarded in terms of her capacity for work and research, qualities that

will now serve her well. She is also the city's first woman mayor, and it can be assumed she received considerable support from women voters who believed the time was well overdue for a woman to lead the city.

But later, the story sounds a note of warning about the difficulties ahead:

The new mayor is talking of leading a "united team", but, unless some councillors change their spots, she will find it a huge challenge creating that unity. Perhaps now the mayoral race is over, and councillors are no longer jockeying to succeed long-serving Paul Rieger, the mood may become more conciliatory. The city can hope so. It goes without saying times are tough. Councillors have to work together (White clearly wins the race, 1998, p.8).

### *First steps in establishing leadership*

So, as the *Evening Standard* clearly outlined, although Jill White had won the election, there might still be a battle in establishing her leadership within council. In some respects her task was particularly challenging. Foremost among the challenges was the fact that seven of the councillors had themselves been unsuccessful mayoral contenders. Although they had all been congratulatory and encouraging on the night of her victory, it would be unrealistic to assume that there might not be some mixed feelings.

Nevertheless, despite the potential for friction because of disappointed ambitions, relationships within the new council seemed cordial and co-operative. Later Jill referred to this time as a period when she was leading "a charmed life" and as "a honeymoon which had to come to an end" (Jill White Interview; December, 1998). It was a time when she was still being celebrated as the new mayor, she did not have to make any hard decisions and everyone seemed positive and happy to work together. The first weekend after the election had been set aside for a councillors' retreat with workshops on topics such as legislation and committee structures.

From Jill White's point-of-view, the retreat gave the first of many chances she felt councillors needed to express their views on the shape, style, structure and leadership

of the new council. She was impressed with the degree of unanimity, the number of 'common threads' coming through in discussion. Councillors thought that there should be fewer committees than in the previous council, that decisions about who should chair committees should be governed by 'what was best for the city' and that council should work as a united team (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

For several weeks, Jill White delayed making decisions on recommendations to take to a full council meeting about her choices for the positions of Deputy Mayor and committee chairpersons. She was determined to take the time needed to make the best decisions. When she was sworn in as mayor of Palmerston North on 2 November, 1998 at the inaugural meeting of the new council, there were still no hints as to who would be her choice for leadership positions or even when a decision would be made. The swearing-in ceremony was reported in the paper with stories on city manager Michael Willis's speech to councillors as well as Jill White's address to the meeting. Michael Willis reminded councillors that they would be:

... signing a declaration to represent the best interests of the city as a whole. By all means represent those who elected you, but in your final weighing up of the contribution to the debate or voting round the table, always ensure you are advancing the interests of the city, and not any one part of it, however important (Myers, 1998b, p.1).

In the same speech, Michael Willis also referred to the importance of staff and councillors working together. He described the relationship between staff and councillors as a partnership, with each needing the other to truly succeed. He dwelt on leadership, explaining that:

... we need your leadership, direction and decisions and, with great respect, you need us to help you in those tasks as we implement decisions. Leadership, of course can mean many things. But it does go beyond issuing instructions and commands. Leadership is more about instilling a sense of purpose and hope in all that we do ... I'd like to ask you to exercise your leadership in a way that goes beyond instructions. Inspire us with your vision and aspirations, with your hopes for the city (Myers, 1998b, p.1).

In this speech, the city manager does not merely point to the separation between policy and administration in the different but connected roles of officer and councillor. He also talks in a very positive, even rhetorical way, about the need for councillors to provide staff with inspiration and vision – far beyond mere instructions or commands. Michael Willis' speech is an exhortation and a challenge to the councils' newly elected politicians to demonstrate leadership.

Jill White's speech was not as involved with leadership as such but dwelt strongly on the themes of unity and interdependence. Her speech could be characterised more as a call to put the house in order before other objectives could be met. She spoke about the need to integrate social, economic, recreational and environmental goals, rather than putting them in separate compartments. She referred to the positive directions that had come from the councillors' retreat, such as the desire, "to work as a team, to work differently, to build on our abilities and skills, acknowledging that the people of the city have said they want change" (Myers, 1998c, p.1).

In making these points, Jill White was simply developing a theme that she had already discussed in earlier research interviews as a candidate and as newly-elected mayor. In her interview while a mayoral candidate, Jill White had spoken of the importance of a 'reconciliation' role for the new mayor:

Now I'm not sure the perception is right, right in part only possibly, that there are a lot of divisions within council, between councillors and staff, and between council and the city. The divisions are there, but I don't know if they're there to the extent that is always perceived. There are some ... people on council who have been fairly abrasive. I see a considerable difference from when I was on council in the 1980s, for example, when you could have quite profound differences with people, but there was still a sense of working together. Now, from the outside anyway, that seems to have gone to an extent and council seems to have been quite fractious. And certainly one or two exchanges I've heard, sitting listening in on recent council meetings, I have thought were unnecessary in their tone and in their sort of personal flavour. I have no problem with good healthy debates about issues, but there were personalities very definitely coming in. Then there is a perception also that the senior management has too much to say, is running the show. Now, it seems to me that there's a really important relationship here of working with, the councillor team must work with the council staff team, but at the same time are scrutinising the working of the council staff. It's an interesting relationship, because the councillors very much need the council staff, and we have some excellent staff on the city council. At the same time, councillors are there as representatives of the people, and so challenging a bureaucracy to an

extent as well. So you have to actually manage that, manage it so it's a healthy tension rather than a destructive tension. And my experience from the past is, that is more than possible. It is something that one can do to make a very sort of creative relationship. Once again there is a question of perception from the outside which might not necessarily match the actual reality. Or may; I suspect most of the destructive tensions reside with a few councillors, rather than the many (Jill White Interview; September, 1998 ).

This account of what the ideal relationship between councillors and officers should be mirrors the comments of Michael Willis in his call for leadership from councillors at the first council meeting. From his point of view, councillors need to have an impact on the aspirations of council staff, to inspire them with a vision for the city and prevent them from becoming absorbed in carrying out bureaucratic roles for their own sakes rather than as a way of realising the desire for a better future.

### *'Creative tension'*

Similarly, Jill White describes the interplay between the officer/politician roles as a creative tension, both needing the other, but the politicians having responsibility for carrying out a monitoring role on behalf of the city's people. She also described the existing factions within council. Her first newspaper interviews on coming into office had stated publicly that one of her major goals would be to unite the new councillors into a team, working together for the good of the city. On the face of it this particular goal sounds like the straightforward 'motherhood and apple pie' objective which any mayor would have. But in the case of Palmerston North City, as Jill White outlined from her observations as a mayoral candidate sitting in on meetings, creating a team approach in council would be a major undertaking.

The previous council under the former mayor of 13 years, Paul Rieger, had been dogged by factionalism and in-fighting. Newspaper reports of councillors' bad behaviour had irritated the public. Councillors were seen as being childish and people found it hard to respect the council, or to believe that they were capable of acting in the best interests of the city, when they were so easily distracted by internal squabbling. An *Evening Standard* story centering on the length of time the mayor was taking to reach decisions also referred to the "divisiveness" within council "during recent terms (White charts a steady course, 1998, p.9).

This particular newspaper story gives a very perceptive account of the complexities of Jill White's situation and the reasons for the long delay:

Ms White remains tight-lipped on how discussions are progressing. Given the ambitious make-up of her council "discussions" might be too polite a word to describe the likely negotiations and jockeying occurring. Of the 15 councillors who sat around the table at Monday night's inaugural meeting, seven of them ran campaigns against Ms White for the mayoralty ... This leaves Ms White in a tricky position. She doesn't choose the deputy mayor. She recommends a person with whom she believes she could work successfully. A majority of councillors must agree with her choice. So far, so good. But this decision is usually reached out of sight of the public in order to promote a united front when it is announced. The deals are done behind the scenes and it can be expected that much more lobbying will be going on this year than for decades. Ms White has to find a deputy who is acceptable to the rest of the council full of people with their own ambitions, a deputy with whom she can work and liaise with successfully, and one she is happy won't use the position as a chance to challenge for the council leadership ... Given these factors, and given the fresh look to the committee structures that Ms White wants to introduce, it's understandable some delays are necessary while she charts a course that unites rather than frustrates. If she finds the right deputy and puts the right structures in place then any time spent carefully now will have been worth it. But if the process becomes too bogged down then the cautious approach will risk looking like indecision. This is the first of many challenges Ms White will face over the next three years. The outcome will be a good indicator of future success (White charts a steady course. 1998, p.9).

As the writer of this piece has explained so clearly, Jill White's decisions on recommendations to take to council on who should be her deputy and on committee structures and chairpersons are fraught with political complexity, yet crucial to the council's effectiveness. A week later another story in the *Evening Standard* (City Eye, 1998, p.2) criticised the delay because of the impact it was having on the practical day-to-day running of council:

It's now just over four weeks since the local body elections and Palmerston North still doesn't have a deputy mayor or any formal committee structure.

That means none of the working parties or advisory groups set up in the last term of council can be formally recognized either because the standing committees who set them up don't exist ... things are grinding to a halt and decisions which would normally be made at committee level are having to be discussed at special committee of council meetings. Let's just hope it all gets sorted out before Christmas because that's when the council traditionally closes down and no meetings are held in January. Hopefully the new structure will be in place well before then so that things can start in earnest in February (p.2).

Nevertheless, the delay was caused by commitment to the process, not indecision. During this time, Jill White was talking with the councillors and staff, and weighing up all of the information she was gleaning from discussions about how council had worked in the past and what people wanted in the future. The ideas voiced by councillors included the importance of council unity, the need to make leadership choices based on what was best for the city, the value of streamlining the committee structure and the possibility of sharing or rotating chairperson responsibilities (Jill White, Interview December; 1998).

### *Challenging past practices*

Jill White explained that some councillors made it very clear that one aspect of the previous council that they hoped would change was the former mayor's strategy of working with the councillors who he could count on to work with him and ignoring the rest. This strategy had led to a deep division within council. There was seen to be an 'A' team (those close to the mayor) and a 'B' team (those ignored by the mayor) on council. As Jill White described councillors' stories of past practice on council:

Councillors used the phrase to me, we weren't consulted, we don't want to have an A team and a B team like last time. Whether there really was an A team and a B team I don't know, but that was the perception and one councillor said to me, "I was in the A team last time and I don't want to be in the B team this time". He was totally open and honest with me (Jill White Interview; December 1998).

So from this account, Mayor Reiger's apparent coping strategy of ignoring the dissenters and working with supporters, while an understandable way of dealing with an intractable problem, was not an ideal solution. Within council, existing divisions

became deeper. The council's public image and the public's patience with the council had been seriously tested. Recognising the public disillusionment, Jill White assessed the need to create a new council that worked effectively as a team, as one of the major challenges she faced on coming into office, and also a challenge that had to be faced immediately. So, she took time to reach decisions on committee chairs, partly because consultation does take time and thinking through the choices for important roles needs time, but also because she felt that people had to get to know each other as a new council and have a chance to grow beyond the old tensions. Although she was aware that there was some discomfort among councillors about the length of time it was taking to form the new council, she chose not to hurry the process in the interests of creating an effective committee leadership team.

After considering everyone's concerns and priorities, she formulated her nominations for committee chairpersons to take to the formal council meeting where the appointments would be discussed and finalised. A few days before the council meeting, she gave councillors prior notice of her decisions with an informal chat during a meeting on the strategic plan, but later felt that it could have been handled better. In hindsight, she thought the way she dealt with the committee chairpersons' issue might have seemed too much like a "Head Prefect's pep talk" (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

Her briefing had a fairly simple format. She warned everyone that some people would be disappointed. Discussions had shown that everyone supported a simpler structure for the council with fewer committees and fewer committees had to mean fewer jobs for councillors at the chairperson level. She went over the principles that had been established in discussions with councillors - the importance of making choices based on what was best for the city and on choosing the best person for the job. Then she told the informal group meeting the names of her choices for the positions (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

In most councils a mayor's recommendations would be accepted routinely and passed at a formal meeting of the full council. The norms or conventions of selecting council chairpersons dictate that councillors serving their first terms are seldom selected. It is assumed that people need at least one term to become familiar with the workings of

council and to show where their abilities and interests lie before being given a position of responsibility. Jill White's choices concentrated on people's abilities rather than length of experience on council and she selected a first-time councillor as Deputy Mayor and, as he was a qualified accountant, she also proposed that he should chair the Finance Committee. Some councillors who had served two terms or more were not put forward for any positions of responsibility. As the mayor had reminded the councillors, with the new streamlined structure of fewer committees, there were fewer chairperson positions to go around.

### *Leadership challenged*

Even before the council meeting where the mayor's recommendations were to be defeated, there were signs of discontent. Jill White was told that some councillors were disgruntled with her decisions. Over the weekend, she had warning phone calls from supportive councillors to let her know that those who disagreed with her decisions were plotting and scheming and ringing around to organise opposition, so the council meeting could be difficult. Nevertheless, as someone used to the cut and thrust of the parliamentary chamber, Jill White claims she was not deterred by the prospect of robust debate at the council meeting. Her main concern was to keep to the principles that she believed in, the same principles which had been supported by all the councillors at the workshops and had clarified her approach to making the decisions – that the well-being of the city should come first and the best person for the job should head each committee. As Jill White said:

I was given the responsibility for coming up with the recommendations and had to put forward what I thought were the best recommendations. When I actually sat down and thought to myself, well, your job is to put forward the best recommendations, then it was a whole lot easier to do the job. It clarified it. That in itself was interesting (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

When the meeting came, there was more than a 'robust debate'. There was a sustained and seemingly orchestrated attack on the mayor's recommendations for chairpersons of committees. In particular, the recommendation that the same person should be both Deputy Mayor and head of the Finance committee was roundly condemned and defeated when put to the vote. Those opposing the recommendation argued that it would be impossible for anyone to cope with both tasks, being Deputy Mayor and Head of the Finance Committee. The attack gathered momentum. In talking about the

experience later, Jill White said she had been interested to see who seemed to have shaped the bullets and who was firing them. She was taken aback by the ferocity of the attack, the energy that had gone into its orchestration and its focus on her. She was also disturbed by what she believed to be the obvious enjoyment those assaulting her with words and attacking her judgment gained from overturning her recommendations and asserting their power. In her own words:

There were people who genuinely believed that jobs should be shared around, but also, I strongly suspect it [the claims about the difficulty of being both Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Finance Committee] was seized upon as a very handy attacking point because that was where the first real debate came up and that was where the real ferocity of the attack came from. There was at least one councillor who said that he voted the way he did because he accepted the argument that the deputy Mayor would be too busy to be able to do two jobs and I was not able to give details of the deputy mayor's private life to anybody, but I was able to assure the councillors twice that the deputy Mayor had told me he had time to do both jobs. So I was very upset a few days later, when that councillor phoned me and said that he had subsequently found out that the deputy's circumstances had changed and he now realised that the deputy would have been able to manage both jobs. I didn't mince my words and told him that I was very sorry that he had not been able to accept my reassurance in the meeting, which I had given twice, that the deputy would be able to do both jobs. Then I dropped the telephone in tears. I came out of that meeting feeling battered. And during the meeting I had thought, "What can I do now?" and the only thing I could do was to keep calm and just keep working through the order paper. I decided to stick to Standing Orders and go through each item and just put to one side each knock that came (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

Jill White went on to explain that as the excitement of demonstrating the ability to assert their strength rose amongst the group of attacking councillors and drew in others, she was even voted down on the one agenda item that affected only herself:

Perhaps the most ridiculous thing was that I had said during our workshop that I did not want to take the maximum salary that I could, which was \$81,000, that I was totally happy with the \$71,000 which was about where Paul [the former mayor] was. I think. Palmerston North only comes in to the 75,000 grouping [population numbers are the basis for mayoral salary levels] by the skin of its teeth and I also thought I'd like to prove myself a bit first before sort of saying that I felt I could justify a bit of an extra salary and I'd said that at the workshop. One councillor in all sincerity said, "That's wrong. Our mayor should be getting the maximum salary," – and firmly believes that. Nevertheless, when I spoke about it again at council and said that I would be accepting only the \$71,000, the councillors still voted me down on that one and put me in for the \$81,000. But all I had to do was what I did do, write and say I do not want the extra \$10,000. Councillors don't know I have done that,

but they all know that any elected member can say, “No, I do not want that level of remuneration”.

I found that whole experience bizarre and I suppose it's stupid the kinds of things one does feel a little resentful about, but I do feel I could have been supported in my own desire on that one. That's one of those little ironies. However, there is talk of a Mayoral Relief Fund and if I do put that proposal ahead I can say well, there is \$10,000 sitting there, although they might have spent it on something else by now for all I know. In spite of knowing it was going to be a difficult meeting, even though I'd had councillors ringing me up over the weekend saying, hey, do you know there's a real campaign going on, ringing up to say, look, I've been contacted - so I did know what was happening, but I didn't quite know the extent of it and I didn't know I would feel so personally attacked (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

### *Perceptions of mayoral disempowerment*

In all, three of the mayor's recommendations for chairpersons were defeated and replaced with those preferred by the group of councillors who opposed her recommendations and had organised the campaign to defeat them. Under the headline “Mayor ‘badly burned’”, the *Evening Standard* described the events, explaining the tactics used and pointing out that a group of six had voted consistently against all but one of the mayor's recommendations. The story read:

Mayor Jill White took a key package of recommendations to a committee of council meeting last night but came away badly burned. While she was successful in getting Jim Jeffries appointed as deputy mayor, three of the four committee chairpeople she recommended were rejected and their deputies appointed instead. A group of councillors, led by Cr Bob Stewart and Cr Pat Kelly, campaigned to prevent the deputy mayor from being appointed to chair a key committee on the grounds that the workload was too heavy. Cr Stewart said it was his belief that decision had been made at a workshop earlier this month. But Ms White said while a straw poll had been taken it was not a finite decision.

I felt it was too inflexible and did not want to be bound that way. In my perception [of the workshop] it was left open,” she said. It took 40 minutes to get Cr Jeffries appointment as deputy mayor approved. In the final vote only Cr Stewart voted against it and there were two abstentions – Cr Jeffries and Cr Les Baty. Cr Stewart then put forward a motion that the deputy mayor should

not hold a committee chairmanship. As part of the package of recommendations put forward by Ms White, Cr Jeffries would have chaired the finance and review committee.

Cr Heather Allan said she believed that the key issue to come out of the recent workshop was that councillors wanted chairpeople with the best skills for the job. "Is there anyone else with the qualifications Cr Jeffries has to pick up the chair of finance?" Cr Marilyn Brown said the question had been raised about whether equity or skills were more important. "Were we going to give a job to everyone, or go for those with the skills. I thought we decided to go for the skills." The motion was eventually carried by eight votes to seven. (Myers, 1998e, p.1).

After the motion that the deputy mayor should not also hold a committee chair position was carried, two people were nominated as potential chairs of the finance committee - but each declined, until Cr Kelly was nominated and seconded and finally elected on a vote of eight to seven. Cr Stewart was nominated for chair of the city development committee, but did not win sufficient votes and the position went to Cr Kelvin Speirs who had been the mayor's choice. The final two chairs for the community affairs and the resource management committees respectively went to members of the group of six who voted together throughout the meeting (Myers, 1998e, p.1).

The newspaper account of the meeting shows the emergence of the group of six councillors and their effectiveness in gaining control of the chairperson positions. Jill White may be in the chair, but she is not running the meeting. The group of six is successfully implementing its own agenda. A defeat of this magnitude is a significant setback, showing as it does a lack of respect for the mayor's judgement and a determination to wrest the leadership decision-making away from her. There are implications too for those councillors who supported Jill White in the meeting and maintained their dependable support for the principles which had been agreed to in councillor workshops. In this meeting they have seen that loyalty to principles can lead to becoming effectively disempowered. They have been outnumbered by the

group of six and their supporters within the meeting and could only have gained some control by mounting a counter-attack. They looked to their mayor to solve the problem by advising her of the lobbying tactics before the meeting. In the event, the mayor's conviction that the situation could be managed within the meeting left them and herself powerless to resist the attack. After the event, it was difficult to do anything to retrieve the situation and its damaging effects on Jill White's leadership.

### *Community support for mayor*

Jill White came out of the meeting feeling in her own words, "very battered" (Jill White Interview; December, 1998). However, help was to come from the media and the community. The day after the meeting, the local newspaper included an editorial opinion that was extremely supportive of Jill White as mayor and rebuked some of the councillors for their behaviour in the meeting:

So much for protestations from councillors that a new-look Palmerston North City Council would usher in an era of sweetness and light. Some councillors will never be sweet; some, it can be feared, may never see the light.

Last night a group of councillors, for whatever motives, treated reason and logic with derision. It is sad enough that the group (and at least six councillors seemed to act in concert all night) overturned all but one of the thoughtful recommendations new Mayor Jill White had made for chairpeople of the council committees; but it defied commonsense they should decide it was far too onerous for one person to be both deputy mayor and a committee chairperson. The fact plainly passed them by that for decades one person, most recently Bernard Forde, has managed to cope with both jobs extremely well. The fact also plainly passed them by that that the role of deputy mayor is not at all onerous when a fulltime mayor holds down the top job. In fact there were so many thoughts passing them by the traffic inside their heads must have been almost as bewildering as the thoughts that came out of them.

Four of the six baton-wielding councillors, Pat Kelly, Bob Stewart, David Ireland and Les Baty, were abject failures in the mayoral contest less than two months ago. Voters showed what they thought of their leadership qualities by

the fact that the four candidates who gained most support, Ms White, John Hornblow, Kelvin Spiers and Robert Burgess, were all non-councillors. Another fact that passed them by. Yet now, despite the thumping verdict from voters, two of the four, Cr Ireland and Cr Kelly, are chairing committees. Democracy in action. Cr Kelly last night made the classic remark that the only skill needed to chair the finance committee was that of being able to chair a meeting. The public will soon be able to see because Cr Kelly now has the job that Ms White believed, quite rightly, should be allocated to Cr Jim Jeffries, a person with eminently suitable qualifications. Cr Jeffries, meanwhile, will be consigned to “onerous” duties in the deputy mayoralty, and his talents, while not wasted, are not being fully utilized in the interests of the city.

If last night was an example of the new council working as a team, then the city is in trouble. The *Evening Standard* congratulates Cr Speirs on being the only mayoral chairperson to survive the blood-letting and believes he will do a strong job in a city development portfolio in which he has considerable practical experience; and it offers its condolences to the three nominees who went missing in action, Cr Jeffries, Cr Alison Wall and Cr Heather Allan. Most of all condolences should be offered to Ms White, whose “bold and adventurous” approach to re-charging the city’s batteries was torpedoed last night. She knows she will need to be mentally tough to prevent the cancer of divisiveness spreading. (Editorial, 1998, p.1)

This tone of this editorial is clearly pro-Jill White and very dismissive of her antagonists. The writer of the editorial applauds Jill White’s attempt to recharge the city’s batteries by putting people into positions where they can use their strengths for the city. The editorial also details the flaws in the position taken by the mayor’s opponents. As well as a thorough critique of the group of six councillors and the individual rationales offered for their behaviour, the newspaper also gives direction to Jill White herself pointing out the importance of “being mentally tough” to stop “divisiveness spreading” through council. The way this direction is expressed is very supportive both assuming that she already has the mental toughness required and that she is well aware that this is what she needs to cope with the situation.

Although newspaper editorials are expected to take a stand on issues, such a blatantly partisan account of a political situation is unusual in the media which usually promotes the need to express a 'balance of views' from both sides of any issue. The unambiguous declaration of the newspaper that Jill White was doing the right thing in putting forward those specific recommendations while the successful attack on them by the group of six councillors could only harm the city's future prospects was enormously helpful in re-building the mayor's credibility. As well as the positive backing of the newspaper, there were also supportive letters and encouraging comments from citizens, which strengthened Jill White's resolve to continue following the principles which had guided her initial decisions on committee chairperson recommendations. She claimed that, in all of her actions as mayor, she had to think first of what was best for the city rather than any other pragmatic considerations, such as gaining support from particular groups within the council. In an interview reported in the *Evening Standard* on December 1, 1998, the day after the meeting, Jill White said that she would do exactly the same thing again if she were in the same situation:

I thought I had put forward a bold and adventurous package making use of the very best we had to offer. I had expected there would be some debate and challenge, but I had thought it would be accepted in the interests of the city. I am disappointed, but that's democracy. (Myers, 1998d, p.1)

The mayor was also quoted on the telephone lobbying that had taken place among councillors over the weekend before the meeting and said that her real concern was that the informal caucus did not lead to the development of two teams within the council. She saw it as the responsibility of every councillor, including herself, to see that the council did not become submerged in divisiveness. The community did not want a divided council. (Myers, 1998d, p.1)

### *Recovering from the challenge*

After coping with the initial crisis and the challenge to her power in the position of leader, Jill White claims that she refused to let her mayoralty be defined by it. She felt she must not let that one event affect and partially determine all of her future actions. The new chairperson of the Finance committee, chosen instead of her recommendation of the accountant who was Deputy Mayor, had no background in the

financial area and was going to need considerable support in the role. However, according to the mayor, after the committees had begun to meet and she had been able to see chairpersons in action:

Some of the councillors who most wanted to be chairs and who I had not proposed are having some difficulties with the process and the responsibilities. They are realizing that being the chair of a committee is not straightforward and that there is responsibility involved and that you do have to lead the decisionmaking to an extent - and if your style has been to challenge and oppose, then there is a different approach that you have to learn to take (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

Jill White believed she had been fortunate to have what she perceived as a large groundswell of support expressed by the public and the local newspaper for her as mayor. The *Evening Standard's* criticism of the councillors who voted against the mayor's recommendations led to public spats as those councillors tried to take issue with media reports and justify their actions. The public reaction may have served to remind councillors that Jill White was the person chosen by voters as the city's mayor and had come into office because she gained a higher number of votes than any other candidate. She had a city-wide mandate in her position which councillors, having been voted in according to the ward system of separate suburban electoral districts, could not match. The *Evening Standard's* editor, John Harvey, made his opinion on the meaning of the difference in the level of support Jill White had received from the voters very explicit when he was quoted in a story as saying:

It is interesting that the charge against Ms White's recommendations was led by a group of councillors including four who ... failed abjectly in the mayoral contest in October. Cr Stewart won 4.59 percent of the mayoral vote on election night, Les Baty 3.91 percent, David Ireland 3.66 percent and Pat Kelly 3.25 percent ... Mayor White (28.96 percent) received the city's mandate, and it is her recommendations that have been overturned by those who 'will not be silenced' even by the wider city's rejection notice (Staff reporter, 1998b, p.1).

In spite of this harshly unambiguous reading of the situation by the editor of the local newspaper which, along with broadly based local support had been important for her morale and vital for maintaining her credibility as mayor, Jill White said she realized that she "could not afford to have headlines such as 'Mayor Jill burnt again'" on the

front page of the local paper too often. With too much negative publicity, she would become seen as part of the problem within council rather than the hoped-for solution (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

Despite the problems encountered, she was determined to achieve her major goal and she redoubled her efforts to unite the council members into a team. To this end, she claims that she spent almost more time with those who had voted against her motions at the stormy council meeting where committee chairpersons were decided, than with those who were her supporters. She explained how difficult it was to remain balanced in dealings with councillors:

... it's hard not to listen more either to those who support you, or to overcompensate in your efforts to try to be fair to the other side which may make your supporters feel you are unappreciative of their support and that you are listening more to those who oppose you and accommodating them (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

However, Jill White was convinced that just because people had voted against her at that meeting, it did not mean that they would necessarily vote against her on every issue. From her perspective, it was important to give all councillors the benefit of the doubt, and an opportunity to contribute to some of the positive things that she hoped council would achieve. To give the team a chance to develop, she wanted to keep the lines of communication open and stop antagonisms from hardening into barriers that would prevent co-operation. Nevertheless, the workload of being mayor was such that she had little time to spend on anxiety or looking backwards. Her energy and her focus shifted to concentrating on achieving positive outcomes in her role as mayor (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

### *PHASE TWO -WORKING TOWARDS LEADERSHIP GOALS*

In the middle period of her term, Jill White's working life as mayor was able to settle into a routine of meetings and appointments, as she worked towards achieving her leadership goals. In this section, it has been necessary to select three areas of her mayoralty to deal with in detail, before considering her overall leadership style more broadly. There were many aspects of Jill White's term which could have been chosen.

For example, two of her successes were in fostering closer links with major Palmerston North institutions such as Massey University and the army at Linton Camp. She also achieved an excellent result in the complex negotiations which culminated in the sale of the power company. On the negative side, her lack of success in convincing the business community of her business acumen and support for business was an important issue in her ability to create a mayoral persona. However, although these were many important events which took place while Jill White was mayor, the three selected were chosen for their significance and because they could be separated out from all the other events and issues surrounding the mayoralty. Importantly, the areas selected demonstrated both positive and negative outcomes. The first was positive, the second was negative, and the third was mixed and extremely complex. Also the first two objectives were ones which the mayor had set for herself at the beginning of the campaign. The three areas were:

- transforming Palmerston North into a vibrant city,
- the attempted sale of the council building,
- melding the council's factions into a united team.

### *Creating a vibrant city*

When asked during her election campaign how she would describe her long-term vision for the city, Jill White spoke of Palmerston North becoming “a city with pizzaz” (Jill White, 1998, p.2). In my research interviews, she elaborated on her feelings about Palmerston North's self-image and the importance of changing its inhabitants' perception of the city as dull, dowdy and lacking in excitement compared with other cities. Jill explained that when a local journalist had asked her what she most wanted to achieve in the first year of council she had answered that first and foremost she wanted a city that believed in itself:

For some reason we've let ourselves be put down from outside and we also accept putdowns from within. So, I actually see that the council and myself have to take a very real lead in making the city feel that it is a positive, dynamic place with a good spirit and good things happening, especially when people look at council (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

In a first step aimed at achieving change from within in the city's self-image, Jill White set up a think tank in April 2000. The *Evening Standard* announced the new venture, “A mayor's think tank on the advancement of Palmerston North was

launched last Friday, Mayor Jill White calling together a broad group of representatives for a closed-door ideas exchange” (Myers, 2000b, p.1). In the newspaper story the mayor said the think tank had gathered together people with ideas, energy and a concern for the city to work creatively on medium to long-term goals. She described the initiative as being about enhancing pride in the city and creating an environment that would draw people to Palmerston North and keep them in the city (Myers, 2000b, p.1).

When interviewed for this study, Jill White reflected on her role and abilities in terms of whether she was an ‘igniter’ capable of setting the city on fire, as one of her critics, local resident Barry Morrall, had suggested she should be. An enthusiast for the city, which he described as “only reaching about 10 percent of its potential,” (Boyes, 2000, p.3). Morrall had sent more than 350 letters to the *Evening Standard* newspaper, addressed to Jill White, and to the previous mayor, Paul Rieger, suggesting improvements (Boyes, 2000, p.3).

Jill White found Morrall a somewhat trying critic because of his tendency to deluge targets of his criticism with negativity, rather than finding even the smallest positive point to make. However, she completely accepted the importance of “having the power to ignite people, having that power or that influence to be able to make people say ‘yes, - not just this is a great place to live, but - this is a place I want to contribute to’ and be actively involved in the city - rather than just feeling good and passively enjoying living here”. She said that when she was asked about her New Year wish (for 2000) by a community newspaper, the *Tribune*, she had said that she wanted a city that believed in itself, “but I’d add to that now, a city that is actually enjoying working at being itself - so that people are really part of it, in all sorts of different ways” (Jill White Interview; November, 2000).

### *Turning ideas into reality*

And although she had doubts about whether she was an igniter, Jill White was confident that she was an encourager. She felt that there were others who could play the role of igniter and she could encourage and support them. She stated, “Leadership is being able to grasp ideas and get them into the sort of processes that turn them into reality. I’m thinking about things like the think tank, about identity and pride in

particular” (Jill White Interview; November, 2000). So, she identified setting up the think tank as an example of putting this way of operating into practice. She began with the conviction that there were people in Palmerston North with creative ideas about energising the city who could help it get rid of the apologetic self-image of provincial dreariness - or, as Barry Morrall had personified the image in an *Evening Standard* interview, “a balding, middle-aged man with spectacles” (Boyes, 2000, p.3).

Part of the problem for Palmerston North was that it was so often defined or described in terms of what it was not, rather than what it was because people so often claimed that it seemed lacking when compared with other cities. Therefore, the ‘think tank’s’ task was to identify the city’s ‘essence’ and ‘heart’ (Nash, 2000, p.1). In December, 2000, the *Evening Standard* reported, “Jill White last week issued a challenge to people to take pride in Palmerston North so it can move positively into the future. As a result she’s gathering together 30 people to come up with an icon or brief to ‘ignite the community’” (Nash, 2000c, p.1). In the same story, the Residents’ Association complained that more people than just the Mayor’s hand-picked group of 30 should have a chance to contribute ideas on the city and its future. By January, the think tank was announcing a plan of action that would involve the public, the *Evening Standard*, and also a one-day brainstorming session or ‘lock-up’, which people could be nominated to take part in, that would, “discuss ideas on identity and pride” (Nash, 2001, p.1).

As the *Evening Standard* reported, the mayor was also “seeking responses from the community to five questions: What is the essence of the city? What do you value? What makes Palmerston North special that we can build on? Why do you live here? What do you love about the city?” (Nash, 2001, p.1). The newspaper was supporting the drive for more pride in the city - a need identified by the think tank - by publishing a form with the five questions on it twice a week for readers to fill out and return for forwarding to the mayor.

A member of the think tank, Simon Barnett, said that for the ‘lock up’ to succeed and lead to a positive outcome, the lock up participants needed input from the community. The lock up group would use the community’s contributions and build on them. One

outcome would be a branding campaign that had “relevance and meaning for the city” (Nash, 2001, p.1). The mayor said that:

... identity and pride were critical issues for the city to build a bright and positive future. People saying what they believed about the specialness of Palmerston North would help instil pride in the city, socially, economically and environmentally ... It’s up to us to stand tall and be proud of our city and our people and tell others why. (Nash, 2001, p.1)

With the help of the newspaper, the identity campaign captured the imagination of the public. A series of articles was published where local notables, such as the city librarian and the museum director, said what they thought was special about Palmerston North. Vox pop style quotations from various local people and their views were published alongside photographs and details of their roles in the community, so readers could compare what a student said with, say, the opinion of a young mother, a pensioner and a retailer. People were acknowledging and discussing what they enjoyed about living in the city while the think tank continued with the task of building the ideas into a city brand.

Jill White’s success in this identity campaign was in the way she captured the public imagination, managing to enunciate a complicated idea in a way that people could understand so that they could contribute. She also managed to build and broaden support and commitment as the process continued. Newspaper evidence suggested that she enlisted the enthusiastic support of both the newspaper and also local people with marketing expertise who believed in the need to be able to express the essence and identity of Palmerston North sufficiently to give their time for nothing and stay with the project until the brand was launched. Nevertheless, Jill White did not mention the brand identity as a mayoral success story during her re-election campaign and she did not allow the brand to be launched before the election because she thought it might give her an unfair advantage in the mayoral contest.

### *Selling the civic building*

As soon as the idea of selling the civic building to hotel developers became a firm proposal, Jill White attempted to urge people to join her in opposing the sale. In an interview with the *Dominion* she said that when the vote on whether to accept the deal

came to council the following week, she would be voting against it. She explained her reasons for concern:

“I’m saying let’s pause and think about what we’re doing. Have we got the community behind us on this one?”

She said the vote would come down to how the community managed to get its views across to councillors in the coming week. She urged people to write, fax or phone their views, both negative and positive, “just in case this turns out to be the only opportunity for input”. (Morgan, 1999a, p.4)

This story shows that even from the early days of the hotel development on the civic site as a possibility, Jill White was expressing her concern, both in terms of potential problems and in terms of a need for community consultation. The *Dominion* story also detailed the conditions of the sale including requirements for the developers to have a hotel tenant in place, find a use for the Convention Centre alongside the Civic Building and to allow the council until November 30, 1999, to find new premises. One of the problems highlighted in the newspaper story was that there were some parts of the Civic Administration building that the developers did not want to purchase. These were the sections of the building that were built in the gardens of the Square which included the council chamber, the Rangitane Pavilion and the information centre. Also superfluous to the developer’s plans for a hotel were the walkway and meeting rooms built over the road, which linked the two parts of the civic building.

Although the city manager was to investigate other possible uses for the council chamber once it became an ‘island’ cut off from the hotel building, Jill White was very clear in her criticism of the lack of attention to problems raised by the piecemeal approach to the building’s future. She was particularly concerned about the remaining parts of the building which overhung the Square. Although the vote at the previous week’s committee of council meeting on the sale of the building had been eight to five in favour of the sale, only three of the other councillors who were against the sale supported Jill White in her efforts to argue against the move. The three councillors said that the decision had been amazingly swift and had taken the community by

surprise and had not been revealed recently when the council's annual plan had been under public scrutiny.

As well as concern with lack of public consultation before considering the building's future, Jill White also raised the importance of thinking about the impact a hotel could have on plans for the Square. She argued that holding events and functions there might not be seen as compatible with a hotel in terms of generating noise. She argued the need for longer-term thinking and recognition of the broadening role of local government as central government's role changed, a trend which could mean more staff, more responsibilities and need for more rather than less space in the council's building.

However, the vote at the council meeting was carried and negotiations with the developers, Townscape, continued until just over three months later when the *Dominion* reported that the plan to convert the civic centre into a hotel had fallen through. The spokesperson for the developers said that four hotel chains approached had each decided that the "deal was too risky" (Morgan, 1999b, p.12). The council's property manager said that the building should be kept on the market to send positive signals to other prospective developers. Townscape had joined forces with an Auckland investor to buy the council building for \$8.5 million as long as they could find a hotel tenant by November 8. Their plan to convert the council building to 160 hotel rooms had been expected to boost the regional economy by \$27 million and provide 180 new jobs in the city.

Time had run out, however. The developers had not found a tenant and were bowing out leaving the council to decide what to do with their building. Jill White responded to the situation by saying that since the council was now staying in the civic centre and no longer had to move out, it was necessary to decide what to do with the building's unused space. She reiterated her belief that there was no need to move to new offices, saying, "The role of local government is continually evolving and we need room to expand if necessary" (Morgan, 1999b, p.12).

Peter Claridge, one of the councillors who had voiced his opposition to the planned sale of the civic building alongside Jill White, said he was pleased the sale had not

gone through. He considered the \$8.5 million price offered for the building was not enough and the sale would not have been in the ratepayers' interests. In his view the council needed to be positive and get on with finding new tenants, possibly some of the community organisations that the council helped fund. Pat Kelly, another councillor who had been opposed to the building's sale, said that the council needed to keep hold of the building as an asset, but still get some income from it. He said that the council could now debate the alternatives (Boyes, 1999, p.3).

### *Community consultation voted down*

A few months later, the council was once again considering the sale of the building. This time the price tag was \$8.3 million and a decision from the previous year that the community would be consulted on any future plans regarding the building's sale was voted down when a majority of councillors accepted a report's recommendation not to consult. Members of the public at the meeting who opposed the sale:

claimed the building had a far higher value than the report to council states and accused the council of being "high-handed" and selling at a loss to developers "rubbing their hands with glee". Pro-sale speakers cited the widespread problem of crumbling inner city property markets, the business and community benefits of the hotel project and jobs, and the contribution to putting "real life" back into the Square (Myers, 2000a, p.1).

Jill White said that she felt the consultation issue, the last recommendation in the report being considered, should be handled first in the council's discussions. Although she opposed the sale, she was prepared to accept the challenge of consultation, listening to views different from her own which might change her mind (Myers, 2000, p.2). A councillor who was also against the sale immediately moved a consultation motion saying that not to consult "would be treating the community with contempt". But another councillor in favour of the sale of the building countered by opposing the motion, saying he didn't believe there was a public outcry against the sale and he had "watched too much employment leave the city in recent years to jeopardise the hotel deal" (Myers, 2000a, p.1).

Throughout discussions on the sale of the building, Jill White and four councillors voted against the sale and 11 other councillors voted for the sale. The terms of the

new \$8.3 million deal required that the council find alternative accommodation by 25 July 2000, so on this date a full council meeting decided to lease a building for \$617,000 per annum. The city manager, Michael Willis, explained that the rental would be offset by interest gained on the money invested from the sale of the building and in about five years the council might consider whether it needed a more permanent home. The refit of the leased building was to cost \$1.73 million and the Palmerston North City Council would be one of the few in the country to lease its administration offices (Nash, 2000a, p.1). Jill White said that leasing this particular building formerly occupied by Inland Revenue, (rather than other premises that had been considered) was the best financial outcome for the council, although this did not alter the fact “that she had opposed the sale from day one”.

“I have thought that this (present civic building) was a satisfactory building to remain in, but I firmly believe in the democratic process, and there was a very clear majority. My job is to do whatever I can to make it a successful move” (Nash, 2000a, p.1). This newspaper story appeared in the *Evening Standard* with a photograph of the mayor and the city manager making the announcement together that the council’s 300 staff would move in November 2000. This announcement marks the point when Jill White accepted that the move was going to happen, that the majority on council were in favour of it and that her role as mayor was to help make the process as smooth and efficient as possible. In her view the time for opposing the sale had passed. As mayor she had to accept the reality of council’s decision and move forward with it. At this stage, although there were voices against the civic building’s sale within the city, there was no strong or organised opposition.

The lack of any strong community concern was highlighted about six weeks later, on 7 September when the results of a poll on the community’s opinion of the council’s performance were announced. The National Research Bureau survey showed that a majority of 400 residents polled, 60 percent, rated the performance of the mayor and councillors as very good or fairly good. Of the remaining respondents 26 percent rated the performance as ‘acceptable’ and seven percent said it was not very good or poor. However, the results on consultation were somewhat confusing. Although 62 percent of respondents wanted to be consulted on major issues, nonetheless only 15 percent wanted to be consulted on the revamping of the Square and only 12 percent wanted to

be consulted on the sale of the council building. Only 11 percent of those answering the survey felt that there had been a lack of consultation (Nash, 2000b, p.2).

The survey results give support for the view that until this time community opposition to the civic administration building's sale had been very muted. Jill White had tried early on to rally opposition to the sale from the community, but without much success. However, in 2001 events were to happen that would rouse community concern. At a meeting of the Finance and Review committee in March 2001, it was decided to put the move to new premises 'on hold' and to consider pursuing other sale options than the one reached with the developer, Townscape. The move had been planned for April 6, but in spite of renewing their commitment to the objective of selling the civic building for a hotel redevelopment, the council had decided to consider an alternative contract. Their reason was that Townscape had still not paid a deposit on the sale so that its commitment to the project was uncertain.

The decision to delay the council's move to the new leased building came after a deputation to the Finance and Review Committee from a group of city business people led by a city businessperson, Mark Bell-Booth, and Richard Lewis, a local barrister. The deputation put forward the view that there was a strong likelihood that the contract for the civic building might not be finalised, as the deposit had still not been paid. Given that the potential costs of shifting to the new building would be severe for the council if the contract on the old building were not settled, the deputation asked the council to reconsider the move. Uncertainty about what was going to happen to the council building was already affecting business confidence in the central business district, the delegation claimed. An empty council building would have an even more serious effect on the saleability of business premises on the Square.

The delegation gave the committee a list of points to consider before making a final decision to move to the new premises. The list included the need to factor in costs to ratepayers of funding either an unoccupied old civic building or empty leased premises if the prospective purchaser did not settle by the due date (Council puts new HQ move on hold, 2001, p.1).

Jill White issued a statement explaining that the decision to delay the move made sound commercial sense. Councillors needed time to study the alternative contract for the civic building and also wished to be responsive to the concerns expressed by the business community about the impact of the council's move taking place at that time (Council puts new HQ move on hold, 2001, p.1). The council did not succeed in selling the building and had to continue paying the cost of the lease on the refitted unoccupied new offices while, in an election year, the community became increasingly concerned about the incompetence and expense of the situation of one council with two buildings. Although whose incompetence it was remained vague, it was less satisfactory to blame the council collectively than to find an individual scapegoat. Jill White had been against the sale of the building and had then changed her mind. People in the city were angry about the building debacle and felt that Jill White should have prevented it from happening. In the election which took place soon after, several of the councillors who had supported the building's sale were voted back in, yet Jill White lost the mayoralty.

### *Countering effects of leadership challenge*

After the challenge to her leadership staged by the group of councillors dissatisfied with her committee chairperson recommendations, Jill White had to confront the need to make progress with one of her pre-election goals – creating unity in the council. Yet after the emergence of a faction more concerned with their own goals than achieving a shared sense of purpose as a council, Jill White claims that she knew that unity would be even harder to achieve than before. However, recognising the difficulty of the situation, her first resolve was to give the councillors who had been part of the faction all the support that she could rather than set up barriers by assuming that these councillors would oppose every measure she supported. To anticipate a future pattern of behaviour following on from the council meeting of 30 November, 1998, would help to make an opportunistic grouping into a firm faction that could have an intensely negative impact on the way the council operated. In a research interview she said that if she had reacted against the initial opposition:

... would actually put into concrete that there were two teams and it would be unfair because I do not believe that those who voted against me that day would vote against me on every issue. They voted against me for a variety of reasons, but reasons that seemed right to them. The actual attack was led by just a small number of councillors and it was mainly on that issue of whether the deputy

mayor should have another job or not. And I also say to myself that maybe I should have listened harder to that at the workshop, but I also believed then and believe now, that I was given the responsibility for coming up with the recommendations and had to put forward what I thought were the best recommendations... .On the other hand, there is no doubt that the meeting has left me vulnerable also. I can't afford to have headlines saying too often, Mayor Jill burnt again, not if I want to really lead things. So, it's quite fascinating, because I feel that I have a very clear responsibility to give as much support as I can to all my chairpersons - because it's absolutely essential from the city and the council's point-of-view that we make good decisions and that we make them in as rational and cordial a way as possible, (Jill White Interview; December, 1998).

Jill White said that in spite of the attack by the faction which emerged at the meeting, it was still important to try to achieve a united team, because unity on council was so clearly what the city wanted. In a research interview after four months in office Jill White spoke about the way she was approaching the problem of dissension on council both in terms of managing councillors and communicating with the public about the council. From the public at meetings she had attended on the annual plan, including meetings of Grey Power and the Poverty Action Group, she had been met with an obvious concern about the divisiveness within council. However, the divisiveness was not constant. Although the council meeting in late February had been "pretty unpleasant", the March council meeting had been "a joy to be at".

Jill White said she had done some soul-searching about how best to manage the differences within council and felt she was on a steep learning curve about that. Previously her leadership involvement had been centred on groups where there was one goal everyone wanted to reach, such as the local Labour Party group. Although one might say the same thing about council – that everyone wanted to achieve what was best for the city – there were different philosophical stances which led to entrenched positions and difficult tensions.

According to Jill White, she had found the most effective way to approach the problem was by enlisting the aid of other councillors in quite an upfront way, to get them to try to encourage fellow-councillors to work more co-operatively. The mayor felt that the boundaries to the problem of friction and animosity on council had to be drawn when dealing with issues that were important to the city. Councillors did not have to like each other to be able to work together to achieve what was best for the

city in a spirit of 'professionalism'. She also believed that it was important for people to be able to relax together after the meeting in the councillors' room:

It's a matter of acknowledging that what matters most is that this city has important things it has to do and wants to do - and that council needs to focus on the task, not interpersonal disputes. Any debate should be about issues. People should be able to put aside their feelings. We can't deal with people's histories on council and any historical tensions should be able to be kept within bounds, so that council can be productive. It's important also to acknowledge that if you are seeing behaviours you don't like in other people, they may be seeing behaviours they don't like in you, (Jill White Interview; March, 1998).

Jill White recognised that it would be a challenge for her to keep people focussed on the issue and that they would need reminding to keep on track. Nevertheless, although there were 'hot spots' within council, the vast majority of councillors were very disturbed and concerned about the perceptions of council in the community and wanted to win back the respect of the community. Jill White knew she had worked well with the whole group of councillors at the retreat. She felt that the 'crunch' had come with job allocation and she needed to look back at that process to see what she did not do that might have made a difference.

In a research interview in November 2000, Jill White said that the biggest disappointment of her term was that the council was, if anything, more divided than at the beginning. Although she had been prepared for, and aware of, the need to work at relationships to keep things together, it had not been possible to repair the damage. According to Jill White, the way she had approached the recommendations had set or jelled a faction. This had operated for the whole term as a core with one or two who were often part of it and one or two who, in spite of the way they voted at the time were never really part of it. "So, throughout the term there has been a core group of councillors who have routinely vote against the majority, not on every issue, but they do operate as a faction"

Not having a really happy team of councillors is an area where I actually feel less than adequate, at the same time not taking the full responsibility on myself. There are sixteen of us and each one of us has got a responsibility there, but given the make-up of council it may never have been possible. But I suspect there are things I could have done at different times that might have made the going easier and a bit happier, a bit more united. But on the other hand I think it's also true what I said in the Evening Standard when they asked about the 'bickering' which was the term they used earlier on in council. The

bickering was not there right at the beginning. Not when we had our retreats and things like that. And I didn't think that the meeting of November 30 [1998] when we had the big debacle about committee chairs – I didn't think that that was actually bickering. I thought that was a power struggle – and a whole lot of things like power and ambition and anger coming in there. But that showed early on that the going was not going to be exactly smooth, but it was always going to be interesting.

(Jill White Interview; November, 2000).

However, the mayor also said that there had been times when the council had been very united, to the benefit of the city and the council. She gave working on the sale of Central Power as one example and the current building debate as a contentious and complex issue which the councillors had managed to discuss putting personalities and agendas aside “for a good long while until the cracks started to come in”, (Jill White Interview; November, 1998).

### *PHASE THREE - THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN*

During the election campaign Jill White had to contend with the busyness of still managing all the responsibilities of being mayor which were a distraction from the campaign. She advertised in newspapers and on the radio, distributed leaflets and tried to emphasise the projects she had been successful in achieving. The information in her leaflets was mostly factual, whereas it may have been necessary to connect with voters on an emotional level. She contested the election against three other contenders, one of whom figures regularly in mayoral contests as a ‘protest’ candidate, not expecting necessarily to gain office but using the platform to point out the deficiencies in the way the city is being run and another who had returned to the country very recently from Australia and decided, seemingly on impulse, to stand for the mayoralty while he was here. The fourth candidate was Mark Bell-Booth, a Palmerston North businessperson, described in the Dominion as “the main challenger” (Morgan, 2001, p.7).

#### *Emergence of a challenger*

As the Dominion story explains “the stock nutrition products manufacturer ... shot to prominence in the mid-1980s when his company sued the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries over comments about the seaweed-based fertiliser Maxicrop on the Fair Go (consumer rights) television programme” (Morgan, 2001, p.7). Bell-Booth was also

known for leading a protest in 1997 against the city council's decision to cut down plane trees in a main street leading into the Square. He is described as having gained early support for his forthright views on the council's handling of the hotel deal, but having "lost ground when he suggested taking parkland for a hotel and convention centre site. He remains committed to that idea, saying the land has "lain fallow since its previous industrial use 40 years ago and could be a useful bargaining chip for the council in negotiations with developers" (Morgan, 2001, p.7).

In terms of promoting himself as a prospective mayor, Mark Bell-Booth emphasised his business leadership experience, particularly having built up his business after the Maxicrop scandal, when the seaweed fertiliser was said, after testing by scientists, to have no components that would be beneficial to plant growth. Nevertheless, by 1999 he had reached a level of success that enabled his nomination for the title of Entrepreneur of the Year. In his own view, he saw himself as someone who could function as a "strong chairman of the board" in the mayor's role. His perception of a good leader was one who could weld together a team of people with different agendas so they are "pulling in the one direction". Bell-Booth saw leadership as being about getting people to agree to a vision, "It's what I want and what they want, melded together into what we want" (Morgan, 2001, p.7).

### *Election loss*

Mark Bell-Booth offered voters a credible candidate who had connections with business and was comfortable with promoting himself and as a male was able to appeal to those voters who had been dubious about the notion of a female mayor. These were important points of difference between him and Jill White. However, perhaps one of the most important factors in the election was the need to blame someone for the problem of the city carrying the cost of having two administrative buildings. That someone was Jill White and, on election day, Mark Bell-Booth became Palmerston North's new mayor. After losing the election, Jill White accepted her loss with speed and grace. She moved out of the mayor's office, cancelled speaking engagements where she was conscious that the audience would want to hear what the mayor had to say, rather than what Jill White had to say. She continued with her work for ERMA (the Environmental Risk Management Authority) and her active

involvement in the Labour Party, as well as beginning a postgraduate oral history research project at Massey University.

### *INSIGHTS FROM KEY INFORMANTS*

The information gained from interviews with the mayor herself and from collating newspaper stories about her as mayor, gave a valuable picture of events as they had happened and her response to them. But there was still a need to supplement the newspaper's version of events and Jill White's perceptions with informed commentaries from experts who had observed the mayoralty from close quarters, but different standpoints. Four key informants from different backgrounds, a journalist, a councillor, a council staff member, and a businessperson (who had served on Jill White's campaign committee), were interviewed to gain their impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of Jill White's leadership.

#### *Jill White's leadership strengths*

There was agreement amongst the four that Jill White was strong in her leadership. As Informant A said, "people thought she'd be weak, but she wasn't, she was 'gritty'". For example, she had had the toughness to take a lot of flak as in the meeting on committee chairs where she was challenged in a harsh, bullying way, "but she held it together and didn't cry".

Informant B agreed that the reality was quite different from the appearance where Jill White was concerned, saying that she seemed meek, but when you talked to her you could sense her whole energy and "feel her spirit". Informant B also mentioned Jill White's integrity, that she was someone "who lives her life as she says she does". Another strength was Jill's skill in facilitating participative group decision-making and her desire to gain the commitment of the whole group involved by deciding through discussion the direction things should take. Linked to this strength was her outstanding ability to create and maintain links with the community. People saw her as a friend because of her sincerity and the way she talked *with* people whereas many others in leadership positions tended to talk at people.

Informant C also highlighted as a strength Jill White's deep passion and belief in community initiatives, her ability to bring people together and her desire to do things that were right for the city. Another valuable skill was her ability to handle the analysis of information well and she to process a large amount of paper effectively. Informant C saw Jill White's other strengths as being a 'great listener' and as being someone who could stand very firm on things, even though people underestimated her strength of mind.

Similarly, Informant D also mentioned Jill White's "steely determination", saying that she was actually a very strong woman although, to her detriment, her strength did not always show through. Other strengths Informant D was aware of included her depth of knowledge of local and central government and her ability to get along with people from all walks of life with her warm, outgoing personality and her approachability. Informant D pointed out that Jill White was always accessible and available to the public.

### *Jill White's leadership weaknesses*

When informants were asked about the weaknesses of Jill White's leadership, Informant D explained that because she did not come across vocally as a strong person, she had difficulties in convincing people of the right path to take. Not only was her 'little girl' voice a distinct disadvantage, but she also tended to take a middle line on a lot of issues rather than a hard and fast line – she was too swayed by consensus politics; yet in politics the middle line is not always desirable. Informant D also felt that Jill White was badly advised by council staff and did not always realise it, allowing herself to be persuaded to do things that were not right for the time.

Other areas of weakness according to Informant D were Jill White's lack of awareness of public feeling towards her and some of the council's policies. On some issues she was not outspoken enough and did not seem to have a strong personality for the public to see and some of her good qualities made it too easy for certain councillors to take advantage of her.

Informant A's opinion of Jill White's weaknesses were that she did not have political insight and that the sample of people who advised her was too small. Informant A also

made the same point as Informant D, that the mayor's voice let her down badly and made it hard for her to sound authoritative and for people to take her seriously. Informant B agreed with Informant A that Jill White probably did too much herself and did not use others enough and also said that she was hampered by perceptions of her image as weak rather than strong.

Informant C gave some insight into the reasons why Jill White may have been seen as weak, explaining that the desire to listen to all sides meant she found it difficult to make a decision, although sometimes leaders need to make a decision even if they're wrong. Also she did not use the Deputy Mayor enough and was "a bit of a lone operator" whereas her predecessor had more the "kitchen cabinet" approach. Once elected, she should have built business community networks, but did not do so. In fact, Informant C believed that Jill White should have been strategising and networking much more, but a lack of ability to delegate ate into her time. Informant C conceded that small things were important for a mayor, "but you have to keep an eye on the big picture all the time". Informant C also mused on the emotional aspect of being a leader and thought that perhaps Jill was not able to carry people with a speech, by using rhetoric rather than logic.

To give a clearer picture of the way Jill White's reported strengths and weaknesses relate to each other, a summary of key informants' views is included in tabular format in Table 2.

### *Mayoral leadership challenge – key informants' perspectives*

As well as being asked about Jill White's strengths and weaknesses as mayor, the key informants were asked about their views of the three areas selected for study as critical leadership issues in Jill White's term of office. They were asked to comment first of all on the mayor's actions during and after the appointment of chairperson's council meeting where her recommendations were overturned, in particular, what they felt her handling of the incident showed about Jill White as mayor.

**Table 2: Jill White’s Leadership Strengths and Weaknesses according to Key Informants**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength of mind, determination</li> <li>• Integrity, “lives life as she says she does”</li> <li>• Able to facilitate group decision-making</li> <li>• Approachability, accessible to public</li> <li>• Good listener, “genuine interest in people”</li> <li>• Commitment to improving the city</li> <li>• Warm personality, outgoing</li> <li>• Image, seen as friend, trusted</li> <li>• Knowledge of central and local government</li> <li>• Good at taking account of small things</li> <li>• Able to analyse large quantities of information</li> <li>• Links in community, knowledge of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearance of weakness, lack of authority in voice, manner</li> <li>• Not outspoken enough, needed stronger public personality</li> <li>• Considered to lack knowledge of business</li> <li>• Vulnerable to being taken advantage of</li> <li>• Taking middle line too often, too consensus-driven</li> <li>• Too aloof, a “lone operator”, needed more advisors</li> <li>• Lack of ability to delegate, overwhelmed by busyness</li> <li>• Decision making hampered by need to listen to all sides</li> <li>• Not aware of “big picture”, need for more strategising, networking</li> </ul>

Informant A considered that Jill White had been very, very good on the night of the meeting though it was apparent she had not foreseen the attack, even though she had expected the meeting to be a little ‘rocky’. Because there had been a council retreat and the mayor had asked everyone about the things they thought were important as part of that and the councillors had all undergone leadership testing at the retreat and heard different speakers on specialist areas, she felt that she knew people’s views.

However, both Jill White and Paul Rieger [the former mayor] had had trouble with a “difficult” group of councillors. Informant A felt the only way to cope with them was to isolate them as a group. Jill White was not prepared to do that, yet getting them to work together as a team with everyone else was an impossible task. Then, whenever the core group persuaded one other councillor to vote with them, the mayor did not have a majority. Informant A believed Jill White needed to say publicly that those councillors were not helpful. In the current council (the council which followed in the 2001-2004 term) one of the troublesome group had gone and that had left one of the others “completely demoralised”, so they were no longer a problem.

Informant A believed that the ructions in council were led by one councillor who had been a chairperson from 1995 to 1998. In 1998 this councillor wasn’t re-selected as

one of Jill White's choices because he wasn't seen as a "good team player" – and that was where "everything came unstuck", through his anger at not getting "his" job back. Informant A maintained that it became "a personal vendetta". Some of the other councillors who formed the dissident group also wanted chairpersonships, one was "just a parrot" and another one or two were "just in it for the thrill of the fight".

According to Informant A, that disastrous meeting had an effect on the whole term. The dissident group maintained their combative stance. Within council a division was called on nearly every vote, even on whether the report should be received. Jill White's effectiveness, as well as the whole council's effectiveness, was weakened by the constant need to anticipate how the group might try to derail things and find ways of accommodating them in advance.

Informant A explained that, unlike the previous mayor who met with committee chairs once a month, Jill White did not get chairpersons in on a regular basis to give her feedback. She was too busy running everywhere to do the work of maintaining communication networks. Informant A said the mayor was overloaded because she didn't delegate and "her deputy mayor seemed so weak that he was able to offer very little support".

Informant B also said the after-effects of the division created in that meeting were still being reflected in the council chamber through until the end of Jill White's term. Informant B felt that the meeting "knocked her confidence but she still kept the core principle of working to get people to agree, although she didn't get her own way a lot". Informant B agreed with Informant A that the deputy mayor was not strong enough to help and that he didn't come across firmly, "perhaps because of being new on council".

According to Informant B, Jill White's 'crime' was being a woman and a mayor in a conservative city. Some of her antagonists found it a shock to have a woman there and were determined to make it difficult for her. Although as mayor Jill White had the "nurturing, supportive skills that mothers have, it was no help in getting the support of the 'anti' group within council".

Informant C also said that the difficult meeting had a lasting impact for at least two years. According to Informant C, because the councillors had had workshops together, the mayor felt she knew what they wanted and the strength of feeling about her recommendations came as a real surprise to her. On the night of the meeting the mayor was challenged about making Jim Jeffries both Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Finance Committee, therefore she chose to put him in as Deputy Mayor. But in Informant C's estimation that was the wrong decision., because "she didn't think it through". It meant that Jill White didn't have chairs she had chosen herself and for the Finance Committee in particular, this was very important. Informant C believed that the other thing that was evident was that the mayor had no contingency plan for the meeting. "She had her view of what she wanted to happen, [for her recommendations to be supported] but she hadn't thought about what to do if it didn't happen. She needed a plan 'B'".

Informant C suggested that wishing to be seen to have integrity seemed to encourage Jill White to cultivate a kind of aloofness, "but marshalling the troops around you for support doesn't mean you don't have integrity". Jill White seemed, according to Informant C, to be too distant to know what people's feelings were among the councillors and so she got caught out a few times when some on her side moved over and sided with the others on certain issues. She did not know in advance that people were against a particular issue and what their reasons were. More importantly, when this kind of unexpected shift happened, she did not take from it the lessons that were there to be learned.

Informant C claimed that there were serious difficulties with carrying out negotiations like the sale of Central Power. Pat Kelly, the Chair of Finance, had a destabilising way of looking for conspiracies in everything and the mayor needed to find ways of diluting his influence. Overall, Informant C believed that Jill White had been "misled by her belief in being fair and treating everyone similarly. Others were not necessarily fair to her, yet she believed that if you treat everyone well, they'll treat you well".

Informant D added similar points to those of Informants A, B and C concerning Jill White's lack of awareness that the key meeting would take such a combative turn and added an interesting historical perspective on the meeting. Informant D said, first of

all, that it was clear the mayor did not know that the attack was going to happen and had she been in touch she should have had “an inkling”. Informant D saw it as a very embarrassing and humiliating start to Jill White’s mayoralty because it showed right from the start she would have problems, but “she should have known that some councillors might behave in that way”.

However, Informant D felt that Jill White accepted it gracefully and “didn’t ever seem to be the sort of person who would hold a grudge”. The mayor was able to accept defeat and move on. Nevertheless, that defeat coloured the whole of her term. “It showed that there was a faction within council that wanted to show that she wasn’t the right person for the job. That underlying faction was always there. It had been there in the previous council, where it was often referred to as the ‘gang of four’”.

According to Informant D, the opposition to the recommendations was linked to hangovers from a previous period when Jill White was on council and she and one or two of the ‘anti’ faction were “sparring partners”. In that council there was a group of socially aware councillors, mainly women, who argued that council had to take on a social role. It was at the time when central government was abrogating its social responsibilities and the argument was that if central government was not going to do it, then someone had to take on the social role in the city.

Informant D claimed that the councillors who argued this way were always “jumped on”. They did not ever get their way easily as there were not enough of them. On the other side of the table a group of mainly male councillors argued that council should stick to its ‘core business’ of providing services and should not get involved in a social role or social policies. Informant D pointed out that the phrase ‘core business’ was used over and over again. Nevertheless, the council did become involved in social areas and community development.

But once Jill White became mayor, some of the opponents from the former council saw it as “a chance for payback”. The “anti-social” group wanted to teach her a lesson for the past, even if they weren’t fully aware themselves that this was what they were doing. They may have rationalised it to themselves quite differently. Also Jill White “was seen as an easy target, because she didn’t appear strong”.

The second aspect of Jill White's leadership that key informants were asked to comment on was the setting up of the think tank and city branding exercise. They were asked what they thought this initiative showed about her as mayor. Informant A said that the whole exercise was a "good way of trying to get all views across all sectors and showed that the mayor took a holistic approach rather than concentrating on one sector of the community". Informant A thought that the whole branding exercise was done well. The 40 people in the lock-up developed good ideas and people in the city felt it was well worth making a change from the 'knowledge city' slogan, which was seen as elitist and didn't excite anyone.

Informant B approved of the process carried out in the branding exercise, though not necessarily the outcome. Informant B considered that Jill White was sensible in recognising that the whole issue needed a lot of thinking by everyone in the city before doing anything. She had the idea of forging a city identity that people could get behind, through encouraging them to express their positive feelings about the city. Informant B also felt that the lock up was a good way of getting a group of thinkers together to work on the project and come up with solutions to put to the community. In Informant B's view, although there might be some flaws in the brand, the process itself was really good.

Informant C also admired the process, because it was not just an imposed solution. Even though Jill White initiated the branding exercise, the ideas that went into creating the brand came from the community. Informant C said that the whole approach went very well until the implementation phase, when some councillors became very frustrated because they felt left out of discussions about the brand. However, the members of the implementation group established to take the branding exercise forward, had enough standing and ability to win over most of the council.

Basically, Informant C saw the branding exercise as a reflection of Jill White's community development roots. The whole approach was a typically community development way of working. The branding exercise also had the effect of beginning to improve her relationship with the business community. In Informant C's view the

mayor should have emphasised her role in the branding initiative in the election campaign.

Informant D felt that the branding exercise showed Jill White's strong belief that consensus in everything was the way to go. The mayor recognised that Palmerston North needed to improve its profile, so the branding idea was something she was very passionate about. It showed the "depth of her concern for her city".

The third issue key informants were questioned about was the failed attempt to sell the civic administration building. Informant A pointed out that Jill White was "opposed to the sale in the first cut", but when the majority of council decided to sell it she went with it because she judged that the time for debate was over. She was leader and had to take responsibility for helping to implement, rather than attempting to undermine the council's decision.

It was "very unfortunate" that her recognition of a responsibility to support the majority decision led to her "being blamed for the botched sale". She could have done risk minimisation and managed the building sale controversy. For some reason, she did not seek the support of those who were willing to support her but took the disappointment on herself.

According to Informant A, the new regime which came into office after Jill White lost the election, made much of the failed sale during the elections. Jill White could have pointed to the sale of the power company in her campaign. That had been a great success and it was very lucrative and offset the costs of the building. She could have also taken comfort from those who were prepared to offer it. In a sense, Informant A believed there was a "hair shirt" aspect to Jill White's approach, as if she almost wanted to take on the blame and suffer alone.

Informant B described Jill White's handling of the building controversy as "honourable and professional throughout", but wondered whether it could have been prevented. Somebody should have handled it and stopped it from reaching the disaster stage. Informant B felt "somebody must have made the wrong punt" and it was hard to know whether it had been the administration or the city councillors.

Informant C said that the building controversy was another example of Jill White's sense of fairness affecting her approach. Once she had lost the vote on the sale of the building, she felt that as mayor her role was to support the decision. Sadly, as a result, "she got tarred with the collective brush".

Informant D had not seen another example in politics where someone was blamed for something they so clearly had not done. Although the mayor was opposed to the sale of the building, as one person among 16 and the leader, she had to go along with it. Because council as a whole voted to sell the building she was blamed for the majority decision. Informant D considered she should have done more to distance herself from the decision, but that "being a consensus politician, may have made it difficult for her to distance herself".

However, as Informant D observed, time had proven her correct in opposing the sale. The whole thing had been a fiasco. Councillors and the mayor were badly advised by staff who were in turn badly advised by their consultants. It was very unfortunate that Jill White was caught up in it. "If not for that hotel project and the IRD fiasco [the alternative premises leased and refitted but not occupied by the council, when their building was not sold after all] she may well have retained the mayoralty". For Informant D, this was a classic example of collective responsibility and as a result of the controversy generated, Jill White did not have the support of the community towards the end.

When asked to sum up Jill White's approach to leadership and add any other comments about her term as mayor, Informant D said that it was unfortunate that she did not have the opportunity to have another term because she had the city's interests at heart. Circumstances and fellow councillors were against her. "She was the first woman mayor and there was a good positive feeling about that". She had, Informant D claimed, argued for improving facilities and improving long-term relationships. For example, she was behind council's support for the athletics track at Massey University. Some councillors did not see the point of supporting it financially because in their view the council would not get anything out of it. But Jill White argued that supporting the athletics track was important in terms of improving the council's relationship with Massey, which was a good long-term strategy.

Informant D said it was bad luck that Jill White was not still the mayor, though she had not campaigned strongly enough in the election. A lot of people on the sidelines were saying, “Come on Jill, what are you going to do?” However, she was extremely gracious in defeat and “no doubt there are times now when she is pleased to have been freed from some aspects of the council as it was in that term”.

Informant C’s comments on Jill White’s leadership in her term highlighted the mayor’s exceptional ability to relate to people. Informant C said that the council staff “thought highly of Jill White because she treated them with respect and cared about them”. The mayor also achieved a lot in terms of specific projects, but many of these were completed after the election and she did not get credit for them. According to Informant C, if the makeup of council had been slightly different with just one more person on Jill White’s side, then there could have been a different outcome in what she achieved and what she was seen to achieve.

In Informant C’s view, there was no doubt “women have a much harder time in these positions and the mayor did suffer more criticism because she was a woman”. Conservative people are still sceptical about women as leaders and men can feel threatened by women in leadership positions and tend to either oppose or patronise them.

Informant B said that in terms of being elected, leadership is about the perceptions of people out there, what they see and feel about how Jill White presents herself. Some of them did not understand her approach. They thought, “She can’t be a real leader because she’s always asking us what we want.” Consultation was a fairly sophisticated activity conceptually, which Informant B was not sure people understood.

Informant B explained the gender factor in the perspective on leadership and consultation in this way:

A builder beginning a house will think, “I’ll tell these two guys working for me how to do it.” That’s how he thinks about leadership. Most people in the pub talk that way. They deal with their wives and girlfriends in the same way.

Their attitude to Jill White is, “She should know what to do, she’s the mayor.” They expect a more authoritarian approach, rather than a democratic, participative, consultative approach.

According to Informant A, the outstanding feature of Jill White as a leader was that “she really, really tries”. Informant A said that if there were a prize for effort, Jill White would get it. As mayor she had had to work under difficult circumstances, because she did not have that closeness that you need with the committee chairpersons. They were all in the other camp. She needed to counter that negativity in quite an aggressive way. By contrast, Informant A believed, the maverick group *were* very aggressive. They were up to every trick in the book. For example, Informant A claimed, the one committee chairperson who was not with the 'other side' was investigated by the Audit Office, because of being reported by councillors in the other camp for financial irregularities.

From Informant A’s perspective, the whole thing was just a “mischievous power play”, but the councillor involved found it very disturbing. The councillors in the other camp were so disruptive that the mayor would have been better to isolate them and have an ‘A’ team and a ‘B’ team. Although building a united team is the ideal, that just would not work with the agendas people had. The botched sale of the building was a huge part of losing the election. But another part of it was to do with the way she handled the difficult group of councillors, treating them with patient forbearance and respect that they did not deserve. Some council meetings would go on until four in the morning with all their delaying tactics and obstruction. She could have, and Informant A thought *should* have, approached her mates for support and guidance. Going it alone was a mistake.

### *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

This case study has shown Jill White’s term as mayor from different standpoints. Her personal perspective has been seen through interview material, the media perspective has been shown through extracts from newspaper stories and the views of four key informants have been presented. While this chapter structured the information in terms of events, it did not attempt a close analysis of the material. Chapter eight offers

an interpretation of this case study information. The Jill White case will be analysed and discussed alongside the interview material gained from mayoral candidates and from sitting mayors examining significant themes and ways in which the separate sources of information reinforce or differ from each other and address the research questions.

One unifying theme which has come through in accounts from all of these sources is Jill White's determination to embody fairness, to treat everybody in the same way. Her concern to treat everybody with similar attention and goodwill without discriminating or prioritising was heightened and reinforced after the leadership challenge in the first council meeting, when she saw this course of action as the only way forward in achieving her goal of council unity.

According to the various information sources, Jill White's punctilious desire for fairness also prevented her from claiming the establishment of the think tank and the forging of the brand identity as one of her achievements in the election campaign of 2001, where she even went so far as to insist that the brand launch be delayed so that she would not gain an unfair advantage over her rivals for the mayoralty. Similarly, her commitment to democratic consensus, led her to share the blame for the decision to sell the council building rather than disassociate herself from a majority decision, even though she had disagreed with the idea of selling the building from the very first time it had been mooted and had consistently maintained that position.

It could also be argued that her tendency to be involved in everything and give every claim on her attention the same weight was another outcome of her concern to be fair and not privilege some causes over others. As one of the key informants said, "She was fair to everyone, except herself".

From this case study chapter, which examined one mayor's experiences during the three year term in detail, the next chapter moves on to draw together the information presented in the last three chapters of results and uses that information to answer the two research questions:

- how do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and explain their own leadership practice; and

- how do women mayors' views of leadership relate to leadership theory?

The information gained from the interviews with candidates and mayors and from the case study will be used to explain what women mayors perceive as exemplary leadership from their own experience and to compare women mayors' views of leadership with leadership theory.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Linking leadership theory to women mayors' accounts of leadership

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I like to be seen as someone who likes to see action happen, but at the same time balance it with looking after our environment, making sure that development is sustainable, but having growth and progress. I have six grown children and four small grandchildren and I want to know that the future is going to be good for them. (Joan Williamson, mayor, Taupo District).

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter returns to the research questions to see how far the information gained from carrying out the research provides answers. The first research question sought to find out women mayors' view of exemplary leadership and their own leadership practice, while the second question builds on the first by asking how women mayors' view of leadership fits with leadership theory. So, the purpose of this chapter is to distil the relevant information from the three previous chapters of research results to show how women mayors 'see' and 'do' leadership and how their way of 'seeing' and 'doing' relates to leadership theory. Setting the research results alongside leadership theory will enable us to see how women mayors' perspectives fit within, differ from or perhaps even change and expand our understanding of existing theory.

Chapter Two examined the leadership literature and theoretical approaches to leadership in order to map the pattern of understandings surrounding the research questions. This chapter brings together that map and the research findings, looking for relationships between them. This first section in the discussion of the results deals with the way the participants saw leadership. Participants were very reflective and

analytical in the way they answered questions and gave perceptive accounts of the leadership process in action. Although one imagines that mayors are too busy coping with multiple demands on their time to think about leadership as an abstract concept, in fact they showed an acute understanding and gave convincing rationales for their viewpoints. For many mayors, a highly-developed level of awareness in noticing and analysing their leadership interactions seemed to be part of their strategy for remaining accountable and responsive to their electorates.

### *ELEMENTS OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP*

The first task then, is to look at what has become evident about women mayors' ways of seeing and doing leadership. The areas that will be dealt with in turn are:

- the 'mother' metaphor
- the place of ego
- the web metaphor and
- the nature of leadership.

Talking about abstract concepts like leadership and capturing meanings that help express what they are, tends to require the power of metaphor. In this study, the strongest metaphor, repeated over and over again in the participants' accounts and already familiar from the literature in other studies of women and leadership (Drage, 1997), was the 'mother' metaphor. In this research, the mother/carer metaphor is used by participants in a normative way, to explain what leaders should be. Interviewees' explanations mention, but also go beyond, the relatively trivial and familiar notion that it is helpful to have been a mother because a mother has to be able to do several things at once, so that the multi-tasking skills gained from motherhood are valuable in other arenas. In a much more radical linking of the mother metaphor with being mayor, the participants' accounts make it clear that they are not concerned merely with the notion of transferring skills. Much more importantly, they believe that leadership requires the same level of commitment as motherhood.

#### *The 'mother' metaphor*

The mother metaphor has not yet been thoroughly deconstructed by leadership writers, but in this investigation it has immense significance in helping to understand

both the effectiveness and vulnerability of women mayors in their connection with and concern for the community. The way that these mayors saw their task as mayor involved an expanding of the mother/carer role to encompass the whole community. Thus, the community became a very large family with the mayor as its mother. Participants' explanations show that to them the 'mother' metaphor is more than a metaphor, it is a model of ideal leadership which they try to exemplify as mayors. Their desire to meet every need, to be available to everyone, shows how much they have internalised the mother metaphor as a leadership model. Motherhood is open-ended in the demands it makes on an individual and similarly, for the women, the demands and obligations of leadership are open-ended and cannot be met. They are an unattainable ideal to strive towards, rather than a standard which can be reached.

There are several strong indications that the women mayors had internalised the mother role in the way they interacted with and felt for their communities. First of all, many described their local authority areas as a mother might describe her children. They showed a fondness and concern for the particular idiosyncratic traits and complexities of their districts which evidenced a deeper connection than say, a businessperson might feel towards a business. The women mayors described the characteristics of their cities or districts with a depth and quality of intimate caring. They were concerned that I, the researcher, would understand too - in much the same way that a mother might talk about the differences between her older, introverted, bookish child and her younger, energetic sport-loving child.

In this way, Jenny Brash (Porirua City) talked about the different cultures and the different socio-economic groups which made her city complex and exciting. In her view, being mayor required a very intimate view of your city or district and getting to know it in a way very few other people would get to know it. She rang me back after we first talked to go over some points and make sure that I fully understood the complexity of her city. She also gave me a hint that metaphors affecting the way a mayor thought about leadership, would be likely to influence the nature and level of a mayor's commitment. She said that if you had cared for a family or worked as a nurse or teacher you were likely to want to apply those skills to the whole community. She shared the insight that, having been a nurse, she now felt the need to expand her caring and be a nurse to the whole city even though that was "impossible because you

become too exhausted”. Her perspective showed the powerful impact of the mother or carer metaphor on the commitment to leadership the women mayors expected of themselves. They measured themselves against a mother or parent rather than a businessperson, in terms of what they felt they should give to the job, so that their expectations of themselves were often completely open-ended. As another mayor (Noeline Allen, Banks Peninsula District) said, caring for the community dragged you down “into the minutiae and that’s why women mayors are always so tired”.

The mother/carer role and the acceptance of an open-ended responsibility for everything, along with giving all groups a hearing and being fair to all, was seen to be one of the areas that impaired ex-public health nurse, Jill White’s effectiveness, according to one of the key informants interviewed about her term. Informant C felt that it would have been more realistic for Jill White to be selective and discriminating and recognise that some groups and people were more deserving than others. Informant C considered that trying to respond to every need was exhausting and impractical. Yet mothers and nurses tend to be selfless and indiscriminating and accept the minor worries of a child or the needs of a patient as more important than their own needs. This mother/carer model of meeting the needs of the community in a comprehensive way is very taxing. There is a cost in terms of energy in not letting anyone down, going to all the functions, rather than choosing just the more prestigious ones and those which offer an obvious personal gain from attending, as some mayors are reported to do.

There are also other drawbacks in modelling one’s behaviour in a leadership setting on the mother paradigm. As Claire Stewart pointed out, mothers will often compromise in the peacemaker role within the family to avoid conflict, yet sometimes in a council environment, you have to recognise when the peacemaker role is not appropriate and be prepared, as mayor, to choose from a variety of roles. Both Jill White and Karen Hyland gave as an example of a time when their leadership had been tested, situations where they had had to be staunch in their management of opposing viewpoints and keep people focussed on the need to find a solution that was a solution, rather than opt for an inadequate compromise. They summarised the situation, directing people back to the problem, aiming for a resolution that was the best outcome by clarifying criteria and issues and calling on the knowledge of those in

the group. So, like any metaphor, the motherhood metaphor of mayoral leadership is appropriate in some respects, but not in others.

However, the mayors' perception of leader as mother is a major shift from the main strands of historical leadership theory and from the conventional wisdom about local government which promotes the business model - that is the need for a mayor to be knowledgeable about business and to be able to run the council as a business. Business is, of course, seen as a male-dominated activity while motherhood is, by definition, a female activity. Business is also an environment with a hierarchical structure which gives a leader 'power over' compared with 'power to', the distinction which Stone (1995) highlights in his discussion of political leadership in urban politics. *Power over* is the ability to effect outcomes which are within one's jurisdiction, *power to* is the ability to exercise power in a way that helps others to achieve their potential.

The business model also reinforces the traditional view of leadership as a male preserve. The view of the leader as male was retained in early understandings of leadership as the 'great man' theory gave way to trait theory and then to theories that grew out of the rise of leadership studies within business and corporate environments. Women's leadership was almost completely ignored by theorists until the 1970s when feminist writers began to expose the way that the undeclared assumption that women occupied the private sphere and men the public sphere had affected scholarly work in the area of leadership, particularly political leadership (Heywood, 2002; Siltanen and Stanworth, 1984).

However, the women who took part in research for this study did not draw a distinction between their private selves and public selves. They were the same person or persona as mayor as in their home lives. They related to their communities and their councils as if it were a family relationship, enjoying the experience of being called 'our' mayor rather than 'the' mayor and sometimes seeing the councillors as unruly children who needed a mother's reprimand or a mother's coaxing to make them behave properly or to help resolve conflicts. They were also ambitious for the councillors as fellow-leaders, encouraging them to voice their aspirations and coaching them in chairperson roles. Moreover, examples of interaction with the

community such as helping to clean up flooded homes and being phoned at home, show that they saw being mayor as drawing them closer to others rather than creating a hierarchical distance. The need for a sense of being in an elevated position in the hierarchy or for personal recognition is linked to the place of ego in the leadership role.

### *The place of ego*

The first time I was alerted to the importance of ego was in interviewing Jill White, when she explained that in her view women did not have the same egos as men. She felt that men tended to have “more eggs in the public life basket”, so that male mayors were more likely to have their identity and their sense of importance deeply involved in being mayor. In other words, being mayor was a very significant aspect of their sense of self. For example, it was clear that an overwhelming sense of loss was suffered by the mayor of Tararua District who would not move out of the mayoral office when he lost the election to Maureen Reynolds. For him, life without being mayor was difficult to contemplate, almost unthinkable, because being mayor was critical to his sense of self-worth, his sense of being someone who mattered in the world. Several of the female mayors interviewed also pointed out that ego could get in the way of one’s effectiveness as mayor, because excessive ego could lead to an autocratic style or the “great big ego trip” of thinking you were above other “mere mortals because you were wearing a chain around your neck”. The ego problem was variously described as becoming “captured by your own self-importance”, as in the case of the mayor who saw himself as “local royalty” and only bothered to do “the social stuff”, and as “having that competitive desire to claim the glory” or as being overly concerned about risking any possible indignity.

Frana Cardno also felt that a mayor who was too self-absorbed or too arrogant was less likely to be effective. She spoke of the attitude of “I am the mayor and it must be done this way ... I’ve been elected by the people and I can make my decisions and that’s it”. Her view, along with the other women mayors’ view of being mayor, centred on what she could achieve in the position. The women interviewed saw themselves more as a tool or catalyst for helping the community achieve its goals. As Georgina Beyer said, a mayor was just “a glorified community worker with a fancy title”. What a mayor did for the community was more important than the particular

person who was mayor. The mayors interviewed all wished to be remembered for what they had done for the community, for their actions rather than for themselves personally. They also had a clear sense of a life outside being mayor which they would like to give more time to living as soon as they were able, once they had achieved their goals as mayor. Of course, it was sometimes difficult for them to escape from the mayoralty as there was always more to achieve. Joan Williamson, the longest-serving mayor, expressed this problem - explaining that she had had to keep standing again because at each election she was always in the middle of things that she wanted to see through to completion.

In explaining how hard it is to leave the mayoralty, Joan Williamson is describing the excitement and momentum of being involved in the leadership process as it happens. She is describing responsibility and involvement rather than control. Control can prevent new ideas from developing and may stifle change. Although an overdeveloped ego can be a barrier to leadership, seeing oneself as an encourager like Jill White, or a recruiter of local human talent like Claire Stewart, is a catalyst for leadership. If leadership is seen as a process which requires involving and supporting others, recognising oneself as only a small part of the leadership process is vital. When someone believes that they can do leadership alone or mainly alone because of their superior abilities, leadership is rendered less effective or becomes something else such as self-aggrandisement. If the mayoralty becomes a way of feeding and enhancing the mayor's ego, then - through concentrating on self - the mayor may miss opportunities to initiate, encourage and support leadership. The leadership process does not begin until other people are involved in interacting and seeking ways to reach a shared goal. The way these interactions take place is facilitated by a 'web' of connections.

### *The 'web' metaphor*

The web metaphor was used by Helgesen (1990) to describe the way the women leaders she included in her investigation led from the centre of those around them, rather than from above. Their relationships as part of the leading process saw others as being on the same level, linked together with them by what they were all trying to achieve. Similarly, the women mayors were very clear in their descriptions of the way they saw leadership as coming from the middle and "creating teams around you".

Joan Williamson saw this team approach as leading from the centre, not “driving from the bottom or bossing from the top”. There was no place for a mayor who was aloof and stood apart from the community. The view of the mayor’s role and function was to work with the community to help members of the community achieve their objectives, whether they were concrete things such as a new building for the playcentre or more abstract things such as an image of the city that expressed their pleasure in living there, as in the case of Jill White in Palmerston North. The women mayors saw themselves as being within rather than above their communities, at the centre of a web of important relationships.

The relationships are created by being out in the community, by going along to a mothers’ group and playing on the floor with the children or attending the volunteer fire brigade’s fundraising barbecue, by talking and listening. Taking the time to be with a group sends the message that you value the work they do, as Noeline Allan pointed out. And, as Maureen Anderson said, people appreciate having you listen carefully to their point-of-view even when it is not possible to do anything to help them. Creating the relationships in the web is in itself an important part of leadership as is the maintenance of relationships over time. Once relationships have been established, groups are more able to trust the mayor over difficult decisions and issues and it is easier for the mayor to be in touch with the views of different segments of the community. Gathering intelligence and having good networks (Marilyn Brown) were prerequisites to initiating or supporting the leadership process and making a difference in the city or district.

### *Making a difference*

Leadership was seen by those interviewed as making a change or making a difference. Their way of doing leadership was to be inclusive, collaborative and involve others. Exemplary or outstanding leadership centred on action: innovation, risk-taking and leading change. Signs of outstanding mayors were those who had the council with them, generated a positive community and created confidence around them. The example of Vicki Buck was given as someone who had the courage to spend and take a risk to introduce the concept of festivals, events which succeeded in increasing everyone’s enjoyment and community pride as well as being financially successful.

The point was made that a competent mayor could concentrate on the figurehead aspect of the role and be plodding rather than controversial, or passive and 'laissez-faire' rather than active. Burns (1979) writing about political environments, compares and contrasts transforming and transactional leadership with laissez-faire leadership. Similarly Svava (1990) summarises and analyses scholarly typologies of mayoral leadership which refer to mayors with a 'minimal' involvement in leadership as figurehead or caretaker mayors. They are limited in their contribution to a ceremonial role, presiding over meetings and being a spokesperson for the council. In Svava's own research on mayoral leadership, this limited level of mayoral leadership in council-manager structures is identified as 'symbolic head'. His four types: symbolic head, coordinator, activist/reformer and director are the names given to four levels of effectiveness in policy co-ordination and policy guidance. The symbolic head mayor is low in involvement in both areas while the director mayor is high in effectiveness in both policy coordination and policy guidance.

With the 'making a difference' test of effective leadership, women mayors also supported the director or guide as the preferred kind of leader. In the sense of scope, the mayor is somewhat like the conductor of an orchestra or the producer of a play in relation to the city or district. The mayor is able to initiate, encourage and influence and should use the advantages of the breadth of knowledge, exposure to networks and the unconstrained ability to influence that is conferred by having a city or district-wide role that is outside the specified boundaries of accountability which are so much a part of the internal council bureaucracy. Mayors need the breadth of vision to see possibilities and the ability to set previous assumptions aside. From the perspective of Joan Williamson, an outstanding mayor should know what is going on in the community, what is happening nationally and globally and be prepared to learn something new and change. Christine Fletcher was one of the mayors who was particularly explicit in supporting the 'making a difference' view of exemplary leadership, saying that leadership entailed being prepared to take the responsibility for making a difference and being prepared to look out into the long-term and move things forward.

Similarly, most of the mayors made it very clear that being a mayor required much more than just sitting in your office and attending council-related meetings. Carrying

out these functions covered only the basics, whereas to do more it was essential to be involved with the community; to be aware of the needs and desires of the community and to lead by example. The mayors described themselves as accessible and approachable, people-oriented and caring and loyal to their communities. Basically their notion of leadership relied on the strength of their relationship with the community as for most, concern about the long-term well-being of their communities was one of the major factors which had drawn them into a leadership role. Both of the main reasons mayors in the study had given for standing; other people's persuasion and confidence that they would be good in the role of mayor and their own dissatisfaction with the way that the mayor and council had been functioning, gave a strong impetus for contributing to change and making a difference. In the first place a mayor encouraged to stand by others does not want to let them down and wants to justify the confidence they have shown in her. In the second place, a mayor who has been dissatisfied with aspects of the council's performance clearly wants to initiate change.

The need to make a difference is one of the four requirements of exemplary mayoral leadership as expressed by the research participants. The other three are: the motherhood metaphor, the place of ego and the web metaphor. Together, these four interrelated aspects of participants' views answer the first research question; how do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice. The next section of this chapter moves on to discuss the areas of the findings that relate to the second research question, finding out how the participants' views of leadership fit with existing leadership theory. In discussing the theoretical approaches to leadership in Chapter Two of this thesis, a diagram showing three overlapping circles was used to demonstrate the interlinking of gender, culture and leadership. Although many of the conclusions covered under one heading are relevant to one or both of the other two headings, for the sake of clarity each area – leadership, gender and culture - will first be discussed separately without drawing attention to the obvious overlaps. Linkages and connections between concepts will be highlighted later in chapter nine, the conclusion of the thesis, where recommendations will be made.

## *LEADERSHIP THEORY AND THE RESEARCH FINDINGS*

A great deal of the mystique of leadership comes from investing the leader, the person in the leadership position, with almost magical powers. Part of leadership's appeal for researchers is its glamour, the challenge of unravelling a mystery. People are searching for the secret of leadership success and many think that the secret must be within the leader. However, the women mayors were keen to dispel illusions others might have about any glamour or special powers involved in being mayor. For example, Maureen Anderson pointed out that she did not have a "magic wand" she could wave to solve problems or make things happen instantly, even though many in the community seemed to assume that she did. Lyn Hartley talked about the hard work of being mayor that was often tedious and Georgina Beyer described the mayoralty as similar to being a "glorified community worker". None of the women romanticised the job of mayor. Their view was of practical things to be done with and for the community. The point was also made by Claire Stewart that one could not achieve very much by oneself and it was better to operate in a co-operative, consultative way because you were likely to get support from people who were better than you at many things and you could use "the human talent that is out there". In this kind of way, many of the mayors saw themselves as catalysts for a co-operative process.

Nevertheless, much of the confusion surrounding leadership has come from conflating the term leadership with leader, with whatever a person in a leadership position does or is. Keith Grint (2005) has helped make the meanings given to the term clearer, by identifying four different ways of seeing leadership. These four different views of leadership are:

- that leadership describes a *person* and the person's qualities (as in the Great Man and trait theories),
- that leadership describes a *position* (say, mayor or president),
- that leadership describes a *process* (leader and followers working together towards shared goals) or
- that leadership describes the *results* achieved by a leader or achieved through leadership.

So, Grint is suggesting that the different senses in which the term 'leadership' is used can be broken down into person, position, results or process.

### *Leadership not seen as a person*

Leadership as a person is perhaps the most popular and populist way of viewing the phenomenon of leadership. Opinions related to the 'Great Man' theory and the 'trait' approach are still commonly expressed by people when they talk about leadership, particularly those who have not been exposed to contemporary scholars' views. However, in this study, the answers given by the participants themselves in talking about leadership did not show any support for the qualities of a person as leadership. The research participants expressed views which directly opposed the trait and 'Great Man' notions of leadership and they were firm in explaining that they did not see leadership as equivalent to some of the specific personal qualities that have often been argued to be sufficient conditions for leadership, in particular qualities like charisma or authority and strength.

For example, Jill White made it very clear that she had a profound distrust for "charisma", which is one of the qualities which several commentators (from Weber to Bass) have seen as being at least a necessary or in some cases a sufficient condition for leadership. Similarly, Christine Fletcher said of "strength" that while some people would see competent mayoral leadership as "being strong, assertive, banging the table and autocratic" (specific traits and behaviour), she would see it more as "having the power to bring people together" (process). In other words, although some traits were seen as assets for those involved in leadership, the traits themselves were not seen to be the leadership. When the participants talked about their attributes or those of leaders they admired, they spoke of them as useful tools (such as, in one case, having a trained singing voice and being used to performance) or as behaviours that enhanced or detracted from the leadership process. For example, being pompous, controlling or biased by having links to specific interest groups such as developers, were all seen as factors which could obstruct the leadership process. Having integrity was seen as important, but that was because this quality was seen as essential for creating the relationships involved in leadership through establishing the trust required for building teams, not because integrity was equivalent to leadership. So, since the idea of leadership as contained within or defined by a person was rejected by the

participants, perhaps leadership would be seen as closely related to the position of mayor.

### *Leadership not seen as a position (relational process)*

However, just as the information gathered in interviews did not support the view of the person as being equivalent to leadership, similarly the position itself was not seen as the key to the meaning of leadership. The meaning of leadership was much more complex than describing the occupation of a superior position hierarchically speaking. Besides, the interviewees rejected the idea that being mayor should require them to maintain a distance between themselves and their communities. In no way did simply becoming a mayor mean that leadership happened almost automatically as part of what took place surrounding the position and its responsibilities. The participants' relational view of leadership required the involvement of other individuals and groups in the community. The process nature of the participants' views was mirrored in the mayoral candidates' accounts of leadership. The models of leadership the three candidates described (in chapter five) centred on community development, risk-taking and conflict resolution. All three models are also mentioned by other participants as important aspects of mayoral leadership, but most often the descriptions given of the way a mayor should lead are closely linked to community development - although risk-taking and conflict resolution are likely to happen as part of the community development process.

For example, in deciding to build the Waimakariri District library, Janice Skurr had to step in and be a risk-taker and resolve the conflict and opposition surrounding the project, in order to give her community what it had been trying to achieve for over 25 years. Her approach was very similar to Marilyn Brown's description of Fran Wilde and Jill White's description of Helen Clark. Janice Skurr gathered intelligence from the community and other sources. She summarised all of the information and finally said that she thought that a library was what everyone wanted and so concentrating on a library, rather than a grandiose scheme for combining two or three amenities in the same development, was the way forward. She dealt with the library's main opponent through openness, listening to him and urging him to explain how it could be achieved in a better way.

Similarly, Jill White's experiences in creating a positive city identity present clear examples of trying to identify the community's needs and ambitions and find the resources for those ambitions to be realised. Like most of the other mayors, she sees leadership as a shared process, a team approach. She is also able to see when the process has reached a stage where others have taken on responsibility for leading and she can and should withdraw. In this way, leadership was viewed as a facilitative, enabling, empowering process with the mayor as catalyst or midwife, there helping at the beginning of the attempt to achieve change, such as the building of the Hump Ridge Track in Tuatapere or the creation of the city identity campaign in Palmerston North. In other words, leadership happened through "finding people's strengths and encouraging them to use them" as one mayor said. Nevertheless, even the most facilitative political leader is not necessarily recognised as a success. If election results can be taken as public recognition of a politician's success or failure as the public judges the results achieved by a leader and cast votes accordingly, then possibly leadership should be seen, at least to some extent, as located in judgments about results.

### *Results as leadership*

An area of confusion and concern in interpreting the information gained from the research was the seeming failure of Jill White's leadership. Despite achieving many improvements in facilities, despite the strong connection with the community, despite an impressive galvanizing of support for the city identity project, Jill White lost the election. Among the women mayors interviewed there were others who, in spite of their commitment and - from my point of view - their ability in the role of mayor, were voted out. The 2001 election was quite a painful realisation for me, as it forced me to come to terms with the unpalatable reality that good people, who are good at being mayor, may still lose elections. Obviously, as part of this research, it was necessary to explain the process of judging leadership results.

From the extensive range of material about Jill White's term as mayor presented in the case study chapter, it is possible to see some obvious contributors to the loss of the election. The botched attempt to sell the civic building happened very close to the election and affected voters' perceptions of Jill White's competence. The accounts of the key informants interviewed about Jill White's leadership are in agreement that to

vote against Jill White in the election on the basis of the civic building fiasco as many voters seemed to do, was not fair. However, to expect fairness in any judgement about a person in a leadership role is to misunderstand the nature of the process of voter or observer evaluation. Clearly, only a certain amount will be known and only a certain amount of that knowledge will be considered relevant by people assessing leadership. The leader or frontperson is typically considered blameworthy. Most people still see leadership as a person, rather than a multi-staged process with many players. Even leadership researchers, who one could expect to have a more sophisticated understanding of the multi-participant nature of leadership than voters in local body elections, have nonetheless concentrated much more on the leader than on followers within the leadership process (van Kippenberg et al., 2004). Some leaders recognise the limited knowledge and perspective of most observers and attempt to manage the impressions others have of their leadership.

For example, in speaking about Vicki Buck's success as mayor, Noeline Allan observed that Vicki Buck was careful to ensure that other people were used to break bad news to the press or the community, so that the mayor would not lose her 'good fairy' status. Mary Bourke pointed out that although she had had a dream run in her first term when she did not need to face up to any hard decisions, in her second term she had to do several things that were unpopular and only the business sector who understood her reasoning and the need for her to think longer-term, were still sympathetic to her. These examples demonstrate that people do not judge leaders from the leaders' own perspectives. Nor do they take into account the reality that many other people are involved in leadership as well as the person holding the leadership position. People judge leaders from partial information gained from their own mixture of impressions and the stories others and the media have told them. Stories circulate about leaders and leadership and the story that most people choose to believe constitutes leadership success.

For example, there were several competing stories and claims about Jill White. Jill White was considered to be weak, yet the key informants in the study who were in positions which gave them superior information, considered that she was strong and resolute. Jill White was thought to be lacking in business acumen, but her recognition of the range of different contributors to the regional economy was broader than

manufacturing or retailing, whereas a businessperson might have concentrated on specific areas familiar from personal experience. She supported the defence forces at Ohakea and Linton Army Camp, particularly the expertise and commitment of peacekeepers serving overseas, by drawing attention to their work and supporting it. She also strongly supported joint ventures between the city council and Massey University, recognising the importance of the education industry in Palmerston North. Members of the public possibly had a more narrow definition of 'business' - but a more narrow definition does not serve the city's interests as well. The kinds of stories about leaders and leadership and success and failure which circulate among the public tend to be those which are simple and uncomplicated, containing limited information. The story of the botched attempt to sell the civic administration building was not a simple story, but once simplified into a story of one person's failure, rather than a failure of council and staff, the person who was blamed - yet had perhaps the least responsibility for the outcome - was Jill White.

Perhaps regrettably, there is no omniscient observer to pronounce on the absolute rights and wrongs of such judgements. Leadership success or failure is judged and indeed created, not by results or facts, but by what most people say. Grint (1997) refers to the outcome of this process as constitutive leadership. Obviously a mayor is able to play a part in managing the leadership stories as Vicki Buck is reputed to have done. It is critical to have a story about one's leadership at election time, otherwise, historic and erroneous stories may take over the public consciousness, such as - in Jill White's case, the notion that she was too weak to be an effective mayor. However, success and failure is usually the result of shared efforts. The research participants made the point very strongly, that in local government little is achieved by an individual as an individual. Their view of leadership was of outcomes achieved by people working together. They thought that 'results' in the sense of making a difference were important, but they were well aware that they would be judged differently by different groups according to those groups' own sectional interests and their degree of empathy for the responsibility leaders have to make decisions according to longer-term future needs as well as current comfort. Heather Maloney tried to overcome this gap by encouraging people to see that the community and the council were actually one and needed to work together to find solutions to problems that confronted them. Several leadership writers make the point that leaders are not

expected by virtue of being leaders to solve their followers' problems but need to present problems to followers, so that the followers take responsibility for finding solutions (Heifitz, 1994; Hefitz and Linsky, 2002; Grint, 2005). Grint contrasts the earlier concept of the heroic leader confronting and solving the problems of followers single-handed with the leader who recognises that problems need to be directed back to the community to find the answers. In other words, leadership is really co-leadership.

### *Leadership seen as co-leadership*

Perhaps the most important element in the way the women mayors saw leadership, was their understanding that it was a group process involving people working together rather than power centred within an individual leader. Obviously leaders who feel they must find all the resources for leadership within themselves are going to be more limited in what they can achieve than those who expect to lead by working through groups. Again and again, each of the 18 women mayors interviewed explained the importance of "leading from the centre", rather than driving from the bottom or bossing from the top.

Similarly, Jill White's approach to setting up think tanks from within the community shows that she believes in the ability of the community to lead with the mayor taking the position of facilitator. In Peter John's (1997) typology of urban leadership styles (consensual facilitator, visionary, caretaker, city boss) Jill White's approach can be seen as a mix of consensual facilitator and visionary. She saw the possibility of the city creating a new image of itself, encouraged community involvement and set up a think tank to analyse input from the community and use that input to create a new city identity.

Perhaps the mayor who took this concept of co-leadership with the community to its furthest extent was Frana Cardno, the ex-kindergarten teacher who had faith in communities to generate their own ideas for economic development and set up brainstorming groups with community committees and community boards and gave them their own independent funding. She saw leadership as coming from the community and ideas for economic development as needing to be owned by the community in order for them to work. This method of community empowerment led

to the community's decision to create the Hump Ridge walking track, to compensate with tourist dollars from trampers for the income lost from a moratorium on milling native timber, which had previously been the major industry in the region. This finding, that leadership is seen as a group process, supports Helgesen's (1990) concept of women leaders' as centred in a web of relationships rather than positioned at the top of a hierarchy. There is also a close relationship between leadership and the notion of empowerment (Alimo-Metcalf, 1995; Rosenbach and Taylor, 1993). However, the women mayors did not see empowerment so much as one way to lead among others, just a technique, but more as the essence of leadership. To use empowerment effectively and as one mayor explained, to "have everyone involved", one needs both "confidence and humility" at the same time.

Another of the themes which emerged from the research, was the importance of community and in particular *their* communities to the women mayors. One important benefit which came from interviewing almost all of the mayors in office was the way that their intensity of feeling for their communities and their depth of knowledge about their communities showed through, as they attempted to explain and educate me about the nature of their district or city. Each area had its own idiosyncratic features and problems which the mayors explained to me so that I would understand their answers to my questions. The context was everything in terms of what they were trying to achieve. This was not leadership in a vacuum or leadership according to a recipe, but rather giving as much of themselves as they could to meet the needs of their people.

One mayor (Joan Williamson, Taupo District) felt that the reason why she kept standing each term was her sense of "unfinished business" or things that she was in the middle of with her community and wanted to see through to completion. As she expressed her motivation for staying in the mayoralty:

So much had been started in this young, growing, exciting district of ours and I wanted to be part of it - and I was part of it - but I wanted to take a leadership role and I wanted to ensure that things that had been started in a certain term were going to be continued over in the next term. I think I have grown, in the job, with the job, with the district.

Joan Williamson epitomises the leading by ‘learning to lead from followers’ in an iterative process when she talks of growing in the role and with the district. She did not begin knowing in advance all that she needed to know about how to lead and how to be mayor in her district. In this case, the importance of being open to learning in a collective way links to Grint’s (2005) assertion that “it is the leader who has to learn how to lead as much as the follower has to learn how to follow” (p.106). Grint cites Wenger’s (1998) concept of a ‘community of practice’ as demonstrating the type of mutual learning and engagement within a collective community required for leadership and problem-solving “through lived experience that constitutes identity” (p.115).

Apart from human beings forming communities that turn collective learning into social practices, the other part of Wenger’s community of practice concept is reification. As Grint (2005) explains Wenger’s notion of the process of reification it is “the way we make things represent ideas to the point where the thing seems to embody our own projections on to the world” ( p.116). He gives the example of flags as reifications of identity alongside classifications of people or things. Reifications reflect participatory practice and are needed as anchors to link the practices and create social meaning. The notions of reification and community of practice resonate in the example of Jill White and the creation of a city identity through and with the community in Palmerston North.

### *Attitudes towards transforming and transactional leadership*

Along with other explorations of the way the study’s findings related to theory was the need to explore the claim made by some researchers (Bass et al., 1996, Helgesen, 1990, Rosener, 1990) that women were more likely to be transformational leaders than men. Although this seemed a rather far-fetched claim to me initially and one that would be difficult to prove or disprove, it did become evident in talking to the women mayors that what counted as leadership for them was the kind of event that would be classified as transformational. They did not count transactional leadership as leadership, but more as doing the ‘run of the mill’ aspects of the job of mayor. In other words, they fulfilled the requirements of their role just as others fulfilled theirs. But what they were aiming to achieve and what they thought ‘counted’ as leadership was transformational leadership.

By contrast, being the mayor in relation to the council was seen more as simply doing the basics, or in the words of the study's questionnaire, being 'competent'. Although it was considered important to do tasks like answering mail or chairing a meeting well and efficiently, in the normal course of events these activities would not be seen as leadership. In carrying out organisational duties as mayor, the interviewees played their part in doing things that were required for the organisation to function, just as others, councillors and staff, carried out their responsibilities. Everyone's complementary duties enabled the organisation to exist as an entity. In this functional sense of 'you do your job and I'll do mine', people carrying out their interrelated roles can be seen as engaging in transactions without any sense of that transaction being morally dubious. Although people gain a benefit from having others fulfill their roles, it is not a personal benefit and does not involve any manipulation or coercion. These are just mutual contributions to the smooth running of the machinery of the organisation. In this way, meeting the functional requirements of the office of mayor could be called transactional leadership.

However, although mayors recognised that these routine abilities were requirements of the role and essential to mayoral competence, most of them reserved the word 'leadership' for transformational leadership as shown by the examples given when they were asked about a time when they had had to show leadership, or when their leadership ability had been tested. These examples were transformational examples. Also, when asked to give an example of outstanding mayoral leadership, many of the respondents gave the example of Vicki Buck who is acknowledged to be a transformational leader, that is someone who encouraged and facilitated the process of transformational leadership - in her case inspiring others to work with her towards changing situations such as high youth unemployment and the stuffy image of the city.

The mayors' positive attitude towards transformational leadership was in strong contrast to their negative attitude towards transactional leadership, in the sense of 'doing deals' to satisfy one's own self-interest (Burns, 1979). Striking a bargain by giving someone a reward in return for their providing a benefit for you, was clearly repugnant to many of the mayors. Some of them specifically described examples of possible transactional exchanges and then said that they would never do such a thing.

Examples of transactional leadership described by interviewees included forming alliances with developers, or giving councillors chairpersonships in return for their support. The transactions involved in transactional leadership are not necessarily ethically suspect though. As argued above such transactions can be seen as routine interactions carried out to fulfill the requirements of the position one holds.

For example, Jill White made the comment after reading an article of mine which described the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership, that she saw transactional leadership as relating more to her work with the council and transformational leadership as being more relevant to her work with the city. All in all, the research participants were united in the view that leadership involves making a change for the better, and this meaning is closely allied to transformational leadership. Therefore, in the case of these women, it would not be surprising if the majority of them could be classified as transformational leaders, if one wished to use this particular term, because creating change and transforming situations was the kind of leadership they saw as exemplary and worked towards achieving in practice and they reflected on this in depth in their examples of leadership. Many of the examples of leadership mentioned by participants - building the library after 26 years of struggle, creating new jobs by building the Hump Ridge track - were transformational leadership.

### *Attitudes towards adaptive and technical leadership*

Another dichotomous theory that is important in understanding leadership, alongside the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership, is Heifetz's (1994) separation of leadership situations into those requiring adaptive and those requiring technical solutions. According to Heifetz, the critical work of leadership is recognising the difference between the two. If a situation requires a technical solution, then it is a simple matter of matching the solution to the situation. But, if the situation is not one for which a technical solution exists, then change and adaptation is required and followers and leader need to work out what kind of change. Grint (2005) sees this process of working through as involving a need to confront followers with the problem and ask them the hard questions, rather than allow them to see the person in the leadership position as the one who can wave a wand and make the problem go away. Grint points out that followers have to accept responsibility for the type of

problem that requires an adaptive solution and be involved in making changes rather than ignoring the problem.

Adaptive leadership is also allied to the concept of wicked problems. Some of the problems requiring adaptive leadership could well be wicked problems. Rittel and Webber (1973, cited in Grint, 2005) pointed out that problems could be divided into the categories of tame and wicked. Tame problems could be solved or managed using normal problem-resolution techniques and strategies. Wicked problems, on the other hand, are unique and unpredictable. Any approach taken is risky and may lead to a host of new problems. There are no right or wrong solutions to a wicked problem, which is why, according to Grint (2005) they can only be handled by leadership. Local government is fertile ground for wicked problems, which are often seen quite differently by different stakeholders. Several of the intractable problems faced by the interviewees in the study could be classified as wicked problems. For example, the problem of the four local authorities amalgamated into one district where the councillors' loyalties remained with their original areas rather than the new council. Another obvious problem in local government is the provision of services to meet boundless expectations and genuine needs with limited financial resources. Adaptive leadership, which recognises the need to change and the impossibility of knowing in advance whether the change will improve or worsen the situation, requires the courage to work with uncertainty and many of the mayors described situations like this.

### *Attitudes towards political leadership and representation*

Leadership positions in political contexts have another layer of accountability which is not present in other leadership situations. Political leaders have to be voted into power through elections. They have to have popular appeal with voters as well as being able to meet the requirements of their roles. They have to cope with both the structure of their organisations and the multi-faceted nature of their constituencies. So, political leadership introduces the notion of representation. Political theory holds that a leader represents electors either as a trustee, delegate, representative (member of a group sharing a common feature) or as a person with a mandate for particular policies (Heywood, 2002). In discussing the results of the research, the way women mayors speak of their relationship with their community will be considered in terms

of the relevance of these four models. The kind of representation that the interviewees saw in the mayoral role was a combination of being a representative of the community as well as a trustee and a delegate. Nothing that any of the participants said gave any indication that they saw gaining the mayoralty as a mandate for particular policies although presumably, had Karen Hyland been successful in the mayoral contest, members of the 'Building Bridges' ticket could have chosen to interpret that success as a mandate to build the second bridge over the river.

### *Representation as a hybrid trustee/delegate*

My assumption that there was partial support for the trustee view of representation is based on the way that the interviewees did not expect their local residents or in some cases even the councillors (as in Mary Bourke's case of councillors who wanted to flout the new law which required accounting for depreciation of assets) to have a complete understanding of all of the complex issues that they needed to understand as mayors. The mayor herself was expected to make decisions based on an understanding of all the complex legal and other factors involved. Yet the delegate perspective was also clearly shown in the need serving mayors felt to be out and about in the community finding out about people's opinions and needs by going to local functions such as lamb and calf day at the school or the volunteer fire brigade's 'bring a bottle' barbecue and fundraiser. So, while representation at the national level might function quite differently, my interpretation of the mayors' descriptions of their approach leads me to see them as community representatives performing as part trustee/part delegate. This interpretation of my findings fits well with Nirmala Rao's (1998) explanation of the distinction between representational focus and style and a third kind of style alongside trustee and delegate which comprises aspects of both trustee and delegate. This third style is commonly referred to as the politico. Rao explains that "the politico is disposed to both trustee and delegate styles in various ways" and "is more sensitive to conflicting alternatives in role assumptions" (p.31) and adapts well to a more flexible approach to decision-making. To clarify the relationship of the politico style to trustee and delegate, Rao says that, "Representation should then be seen as a continuum of styles, with the trustee and delegate orientations as poles, and a midpoint where the orientations tend to overlap and, within a range, give rise to the politico role" (p.31).

The politico style as a combination of trustee and delegate expresses the orientation and practice of the women mayors very well. In their view, if they were to become too removed from the opinions of the community, they would not be functioning as mayors. However, had they expected members of the community to have a similar level of understanding of the intricacies of council operations and the statutes affecting their work and to be able to give an opinion as informed as the mayor's when making submissions – that expectation would be wildly unrealistic. The way the mayors talked about community involvement showed that they realized that the knowledge of local residents would naturally be limited to their own personal interests. For this reason, information collected as a delegate or community representative has to inform decisions made as a trustee when serving as a mayor. The mayors see close relationships with the community as a requirement of being mayor, a necessity for the leadership process to work. The link between trustee and delegate in the role partly explains the reason why mayors feel such a responsibility to attend community functions and gather community opinions, although there is also the need to attend as a way to recognise the importance of the work community groups are doing and show that they are valued.

The representation perspective or focus was shown by the commitment to the local community as a member of that community. A paper published on community leadership and the new local government in Britain (Clarke and Stewart, 1998) lists as an underlying principle of community governance that the “ local authority's role in community governance is only justified if it is close to and empowers the communities within and the citizens that constitute them” (p.2). This sense of closeness, connection and depth of understanding of their own local authorities acted as a touchstone for the women mayors, giving them both the right and the means to represent their community's interests. Other factors such as gender and ethnic group seemed very secondary to the passionate concern and the depth of the bond mayors felt with their communities. However, although gender did not seem to be a critical factor in terms of mayors feeling that they represented women, they did consider that women's participation in local government was important. If only one gender was participating in local government then, as Jill White said, too much would be left out of councils' consideration without women's experiences and perspectives. Nevertheless, historically, women were - for the most part - left out of local

government for a century, in much the same way and for much the same reasons as gender was omitted from scholarly work on leadership. The idea of women being mayors or councillors seemed unthinkable and was not even considered much as the academic work on leadership was framed only in terms of men because leadership was synonymous with characteristics commonly thought of as male (Wilson, 1995). However, in the next section these research findings will be examined in the light of relevant gender theory, in particular the split between public and private spheres, the linking of strength to masculinity and weakness to femininity and the differing preferences for hierarchical distance or connection.

### *GENDER THEORY AND THE RESEARCH FINDINGS*

Apart from the women's own perceptions of gender-distinctive factors in approaches to being mayor, they were also very aware of the ways others saw them. Although some mayors reported enormous support from the community and an intimate sense of connection when people talked of 'our mayor' there was also a ready acknowledgement of the public perception of women as weak and men as strong. As one mayor put it, many people equate warm and friendly with weak. Jill White spoke of being seen as too weak, although the key informants questioned about her said that she was actually strong and gritty. The stereotyping of women as the weaker sex seems to come readily back into the public consciousness whenever something goes wrong. At such times they revert to the stereotype of women as the weaker sex. Nor should academic research be seen as an antidote to popularly-held gender stereotypes. Male and female stereotypes are also prevalent in academic research and writing on leadership. Moreover, as Sinclair (1998) explains, psychological research such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory has not just recorded, but also helped to institutionalise the link between leadership and masculinity. The inventory, compiled by asking people about the qualities seen as desirable in men, women and in both genders has, through its continued use "contributed to the perpetuation of those stereotypes – that leadership requires particular masculine behaviours and feminine characteristics are opposed to leadership" (Sinclair, 1998, p.63). So, in keeping with the female stereotype, when the planned sale of the council building failed in Palmerston North voters assumed it was Jill White's fault. The public view was that she had 'changed her mind' from opposing the sale and decided to support the sale of the building and

thus was clearly 'too weak' to keep to her course. The more complex reality, that she had been overruled in a democratic decision and as the political head of the council should assist in implementing the decision of the majority, was too subtle and required an insider's knowledge of council procedures.

As this example shows, arguments against women in leadership positions such as mayoralties, seem to centre on something that they have and something that they lack. What they are seen to have is an intrinsic weakness and what they are seen to lack is experience in the world of business and finance. In spite of the fact that the participants themselves found much in their domestic roles as well as their work experience that was useful preparation for the mayoralty, they recognised that being a mayor had formerly been very much a male role seen as needing male 'strength' rather than female 'weakness'. Participants said that old ideas that a mayor ought to be a male were slow to change. So, the women mayors' own realisation that they had a lot of relevant experience to contribute to being mayor was not one they expected to be shared across the whole community. Many of them recognised that there would be pockets of society which would find it difficult to accept a woman as mayor. Much of the negative attitude towards women in positions of public responsibility is linked to belief in the old adage that 'a woman's place is in the home', the private sphere of the family (Cox, 1987).

Gender theory has made explicit the illogical way that public and private spheres came to be seen as quite separate from each other, with women being considered to be appropriately confined to the private sphere, while men were associated with the world of business, politics and public life in general (Heywood, 2002; Siltanen and Stanworth, 1984). Although it is clear that both males and females inhabit both realms, despite each gender being more involved with one than the other, the public/private split became so embedded in people's way of thinking that it gained the status of an oppositional dichotomy whose validity was seldom questioned. Belief in the split even influenced the disciplinary writing of those who were practised at thinking logically. For example, as Whitbeck (1984) shows, several philosophers and scientists in their explanations of sex differences repeatedly use three themes which support, rather than expose, the muddled thinking behind the public/private gender

split. Whitbeck (1984) summarises these themes to show the underlying features of a masculinist ontology in theories put forward by these scientists and philosophers:

1. woman is an incomplete man;
2. there are two opposing or complementary principles, masculine and feminine that are constitutive of reality; and
3. the strengths or virtues proper to women are defined by male needs (p.67).

At first sight in their bald state, these three themes seem ludicrously illogical, yet they are also very familiar having permeated many of the arguments put forward as reasons why women should be excluded from different activities, such as political decisionmaking. Although the suffragettes argued with logic and political action that women should not be cut off from participating in political life by voting, and women's participation at that level came to be accepted, acceptance of women's participation as political representatives took much longer to achieve.

As this study has shown, the gender separation of public and private worlds has been very evident in attitudes within New Zealand local government. As well as having to overcome the attitude that only men could be mayors, which was mentioned explicitly by some of the women in the study, one participant also gave an example of having been disadvantaged and discriminated against when it came to a choice between a female and a male for a leadership role. Similar problems sometimes existed for women when they became mayors. All new mayors have to begin their terms by establishing their leadership (as described in chapter seven). For a woman the process of gaining acceptance, recognition and respect in a male-dominated setting can be particularly difficult. One woman, in her first term as mayor, (Iride McLoy, Kapiti District) also recounted the story of going to a meeting of local businesspeople who were all male, with a senior male staff member. No one in the audience asked her a question or even acknowledged her presence. Everyone in the audience addressed their questions to the male staff member. The clear message was that she was of no use to them and she was aware that she was seen by them as being "against development" when she would have expressed her stance as being concerned to control and manage development. She felt that a core group of "grumpy old men" were working against her throughout her term as mayor.

As well as the problem of simply being female, many of the mayors who were new to the mayoralty were also unwelcome to those who had received favoured treatment from the previous male mayor, if he had been part of the male club of local business. Having to get to know a female mayor, who might have different ideas from the previous incumbent and be less susceptible to the influence of cronyism is naturally an unpleasant prospect. Those who need to deal with the council in their business lives must feel more secure when they know that they can rely on the mayor to do whatever is possible to bring about favourable outcomes for them. Mayors can use their influence to help others but, as Maureen Reynolds emphasised, it is important that they do so in an unbiased way.

All of the research participants were concerned that mayors should be fair to everyone and should not discriminate. Some of the female mayors went further and argued strongly that one of the factors that made a mayor incompetent in the role and harmed credibility was being aligned with particular local groups or individuals. Obviously one of the most fraught areas where bias may be seen to give an unfair advantage is in property development and building. In fact, the previous mayor of Palmerston North, before Jill White's election, had reluctantly chosen to step down because of a scandal over his supposed influence on planning procedures in permitting a friend to build a very large house which seemed to exceed provisions on site coverage, bulk and location.

Within this study, the force of the mayors' convictions on the importance of fairness seems to belie the assumption, so often made, that women are inherently weak, too weak to have the strength to be mayors. Being resolutely committed to treat all groups in the same way without doing favours is a sign of strength. Some of those who cling to the notion that women are weak and men are strong may be limiting their notion of 'strong' to aggressiveness, physical strength and bullying behaviour of the type discussed by Marilyn Brown, without recognising the importance of focus, determination and moral strength. Yet it is moral strength, courage and determination that is most admired by the female mayors. These are the qualities they admire in other mayors and the qualities they aspire to as mayors.

Another gender-related finding of the research was the way the women highlighted the notion that women had less personal ego tied up in being mayor than some male mayors who were described as identifying with the position almost too closely. For example, both the mayor who refused to move out of his office when he lost the mayoralty along with the mayor who thought he was “local royalty”, had begun to think that being the mayor was who they were in terms of being a large part of their identities. In their minds, position had become person. Being mayor for them was no longer something that relied on voters at an election or doing work for the community. They felt the mayoralty belonged to them. By comparison, most of the women interviewed seemed to care much more about what they could achieve as mayor rather than the position itself. Sinclair (1998) in her research, documents the way that women focus on making a contribution rather than on the position they have achieved and tend “not to be so driven by the need for personal status and recognition” (p.115). However, perhaps over-identifying with the position is a danger of staying in the role of mayor for too long. Both of the male mayors in these examples were long-serving mayors. Most of the women interviewed had come into the mayoral role relatively recently. Only one of the mayors interviewed had been mayor for more than three terms. Even she was very aware of her identity outside the mayoralty and mentioned how hard it had been to have to go to a meeting and disappoint her four-year-old grandchild by not going to a birthday party.

Although this example suggests that women mayors may experience stress as a result of role conflict and traditional role theory does hold that competing demands are likely to lead to role strain, Pietromonaco et al. (1998) present research findings which show positive advantages for women in having multiple roles such as increased well-being and satisfaction with life. Pietromonaco et al. also cite other researchers’ findings which indicate that performing multiple roles may “act as a buffer for problems or failures in any single life domain” (p.374). This potential advantage of women’s multiple roles, that each role may balance the others to some extent and help in maintaining a sense of proportion, might also be a factor in women mayors having less ego involved in the mayoral role. Despite the fact that Pietromonaco et al.’s research showed that women’s multiple roles do not necessarily cause undue stress, many of the mayors in this study looked forward to a future when they could be more self-indulgent, more family-centred and would not always have to put council and

community interests first. Being mayor was only part of life for these women and there was a sense of having put much of the rest of their lives 'on hold' while they gave a limited time to serving their district and achieving particular goals. Jill White had made the observation that many men "seemed to have a lot more eggs in the public life basket". In other words, her perception was that many men's sense of self-worth was tied in to their public role as mayor, whereas for women it was not who they were, it was what they were doing, a role they were filling for a limited time. Most of the women mayors looked forward to a time when they would be free from the exhausting work of being mayor. They did not feel that being mayor defined who they were as people. They were very conscious of other areas in their lives which they wanted to give more time to after the mayoralty. Having other roles made them more confident in their identity and self-esteem.

The different outlook of this group of women, then, is related to a combination of factors. Two significant factors are their socialisation into a role within their culture which centres on family and relationships with work occupying a less crucial role, and also the time when they had entered local government - a time of great change during local government restructuring. Previously mayors had been able to assume that they would remain in the position for several terms. Incumbency was the strongest predictor of electoral success according to Bush (1995) and many mayors stood unopposed term after term in the 1960s and 1970s. However, at the stage most of the women took up their mayoralties, in the 1980s, there were several changes as boundaries changed, authorities were amalgamated and consequently, many of those who were mayors changed. Coming into a mayoralty at that stage made it much clearer that you might not remain the mayor forever, and it was sensible to plan for a future beyond the mayoralty. The next section will examine the importance of women's socialisation into a gendered role within their culture in influencing their attitudes towards leadership and the organisational culture of local government.

### *CULTURE-RELATED FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH*

From the information the women in the study have given, culture can be seen as having played a significant part in their experience of and attitude towards leadership. I would broadly define my use of culture in this study as the pattern of living and underlying beliefs and values shared by a social group. Some of the women have told

stories of encountering very male-dominated cultures in local government and of their experiments in changing the cultures within their councils. As well as organisational cultures, the national culture of Aotearoa/New Zealand is also important in terms of its influence on gendered roles and perceptions. Culture can be defined as “ ‘a system of shared understandings’ – understandings of what words and actions mean, of what things are really important, and of how these values should be expressed” (Metge and Kinloch, 1984, p.8). In this research, culture is critical in the understandings of gender in New Zealand society and the impact of these understandings on the position of women and the potential differences between men and women in their perceptions, values and attitudes.

New Zealand, particularly Pākehā New Zealand, is considered to be a relatively masculinist and individualistic culture. However, as Hofstede pointed out in his explanation of different cultural dimensions, which he developed having undertaken research in 60 different countries, males and females can almost be regarded as belonging to separate cultures (Hofstede, 1997). Moreover, he classified national cultures as being placed at different rankings on a masculinity-femininity cultural dimension with assertive, competitive, masculinist cultures at the masculinity end of the index and nurturing, co-operative, feminine cultures at the femininity end of the ranking. Perhaps the most telling feature of his explanation of the masculinity-femininity dimension was his demonstration that in more masculinist countries (where assertiveness, toughness and a desire for material success are valued over modesty, tenderness and concern for the quality of life) the difference in values on this dimension between men and women is far greater than the male-female difference in cultures that are placed at the femininity end of the continuum.

The diagram adapted from Hofstede (1997) and shown in Figure 3 in chapter two depicts the way that women’s cultural values diverge more sharply from men’s in masculinist cultures compared with cultures that are located towards the femininity end of the masculinity-femininity continuum. So, although in a masculinist culture men will be assertive and tough and women will also be relatively assertive and tough, women as a group are likely to be much less assertive than the males in that culture. Hofstede asserts that “women’s values differ less between countries than men’s do”, (Hofstede, 1997, p.83). Therefore, in New Zealand as a relatively

masculine culture, women can be expected to express their goals as mayors and their leadership ideals from a more caring, nurturing, inclusive perspective than males. The male-female gap is particularly wide in a country like New Zealand which was placed in a relatively high position (16 among 60 countries) on the masculinity dimension among participant countries at the time of Hofstede's study.

In fact it is culture and gender socialisation, not any intrinsic nature of women, that makes women's leadership different. Men are quite capable of doing the things women do - but men do not necessarily see the world or see leadership in quite the same way women do. Men have been programmed differently as Hofstede (1997) would say, using his computer software analogy to describe the learning of gendered cultural roles and behaviours. Nevertheless, men are quite capable of expanding their range of responses and behaviours. As Marilyn Brown said:

I think that men have also seen women's style and it is more consultative and it is more community-focussed and they have realised that this is what they want and that it achieves results, more than the bullying does and smart men have got on to it.

According to Hofstede's explanation, there are shared overlaps in values held by men and women, "so that any given value may be found both among women and among men, only with different frequency" (p.85).

Hofstede (1997) also makes the point that:

We readily experience other cultures as wrong, ridiculous or frightening, and such feelings can be detected between the genders in the same society. The males in virtually all societies dominate in politics, in the community, and at the workplace; so the subcultures of politics, community affairs and work are relatively masculine (pp.85-86).

Some of the participants in this study did report entering cultures in their councils which were very masculinist and operated like an 'old boys' network'. Most of these women worked to change the culture and the majority were successful in bringing about change, to some extent at least. One of the problems of the existing cultures in some councils was that decision-making was effectively limited to a few men.

In one instance, a woman described two men withdrawing from a meeting to have their own private corridor meeting and then returning once they had reached a shared view on the matter under discussion. In another, a group of men had their meeting in the hotel over drinks before the formal meeting. In another case, all the other councillors watched the way that the mayor's loyal crony voted and voted the same way. The methods some of the women mayors used to change the existing cultures were subtle but effective. Georgina Beyer asked each of the councillors to write down what they wanted to achieve as councillors and then meet with her individually to discuss their goals. Once people had ownership of personal goals as councillors, they felt more need to express their own viewpoint in meetings.

One woman met an attitude of denial and rejection when she first joined her council as the only female member. She was told by a fellow-councillor that, as she was sitting at the council table, she couldn't possibly be a woman. She felt that hard work and displaying her competence was the only way to silence male chauvinists. Sinclair's (1998) research on women leaders echoes this approach, with interviewees reporting their reliance on persistence and professionalism to gain recognition and acceptance within a male-dominated culture. Within my study, some of the mayors had to introduce a more professional approach to the role of councillor by explaining the difference between management and governance and deflecting councillors from meddling in the work of council staff. Many of the women mayors worked to increase consultation and inclusiveness and improve the council's image and relationship with the community and unify their councils, particularly after amalgamations. Their recognition of the need to build and repair relationships in such situations shows their tendency to work with a family model of how they should operate rather than a business model.

### *Business model versus family model*

The explanations the women mayors give of their approach to the role shows that they see the nature of the way that they work with their councils and communities more broadly as an extended family with a concern for ongoing relationships and working together, than as a business with a product and a desire for profit. Sinclair (1998) records the weight of research showing that women choose consultative styles of working together, "giving a high priority to communicating and to building and

maintaining relationships” (p.126). Although one of Sinclair’s interviewees did not think that she was more empathetic because of being a woman, she did think that the source of her ability to empathise came from experience as a mother, explaining, “your heart does break for your child ... there is something about having experienced that ... your heart just lurching as they have to do things.”(p.126). Despite considering that this quality of empathy did not depend on being a woman or a mother, she thought that women were likely to use this awareness to achieve better outcomes and maintain relationships, especially in negotiating.

Although business uses language which suggests co-operation, with terms such as ‘team-building’ and ‘win-win negotiation’, these approaches can be tactical rather than part of the cultural value system. Co-operative strategies may be used in business, but often their underlying purpose is to meet competitive business goals. Although business is part of the work of council, it is too narrow a concept to encompass all that is important in the way a council approaches the future and the economic and social well-being of their district or city. Section 3 of the Local Government Act (2002), which was under discussion as a bill at the time this research was being conducted, lists four well-beings; social, economic, cultural and environmental, all of which should influence the way councils plan both for the present and the future. Taking into account that economic well-being is only one of the four areas highlighted in the legislation reinforces the perspective that while business is part of the family of relationships that concern councils, taking a narrow business approach is too over-simplified to be seen as the way a council should operate.

Usually, within a business there is an internal hierarchy of command and a concern about external competition. In contemporary local government, the new environment requires more complex, subtle approaches. As the concept of governance has increased in importance within local government, the need for co-operation with a range of other organisations and entities which will affect the council’s ability to achieve its goals has become increasingly obvious. The boundaries of organisations are more permeable. What one organisation does affects another. A mayor needs to have skills in building alliances and foreseeing patterns of change. A council cannot govern and control every environmental change that will affect its future. Mayors

with skills in diplomacy and the ability to establish and nurture relationships will be more comfortable with the governance model and some of the women mayors have shown that they understand the sophisticated notion of governance rather than being limited to merely 'governing' within the boundaries of their local authority.

As change has come, the women mayors seem to have been able to adapt. Just as many of them have shown themselves to be catalysts for internal change within their councils, they are also competent at dealing with external change such as legislative changes, increasing requirements for community participation and the way that global changes are affecting local economies and industries. Much of this adaptability is linked to the responsiveness and willingness to communicate which has been shown in the words and examples of the women themselves. As Gerry Stoker (2004) writes of local political leaders, "In a complex governance system, they provide a focus for public debate of the key issues" (p.137). The women mayors interviewed have shown that at a time which was particularly demanding for mayors as leaders, they proved to be well-suited to meeting those demands.

### *CONCLUDING COMMENTS*

The objective of this chapter was to link the findings of the research to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. The questions were, 'what do women mayors perceive exemplary mayoral leadership and their own leadership practice,' and 'how does women mayors' view of leadership relate to leadership theory?' The women mayors' view of exemplary mayoral leadership has been shown to be a consultative, inclusive, shared process of community development. They tended to disapprove of passive leaders, judging themselves and others in terms of whether they had made a difference for the better. In their own practice, they are accessible, unbiased communicators – willing to listen to problems even when they are not able to solve them. In terms of theory, the women's view of leadership did link to transformational leadership. Transactional leadership met with disapproval and rejection in the sense of self-interest and a relatively dismissive attitude in its sense of fulfilling complementary organisational roles.

Just as transformational leadership met with approval, there was also recognition of the need for adaptive leadership, when it is necessary to change a situation in response to a complex, novel problem rather than try to match the situation with a technical, 'tried and tested' solution. Politically speaking, the view of representation expressed was a mix of the delegate and trustee positions. This mix fitted with the co-leadership with the community notion that the women had of being mayor. Because the success of anyone's leadership is constructed of different people's views, the view held by most observers constitutes the results or success of leadership. The women mayors were aware that different people judged them and their success differently. Overall, the mayors' support for the mother/carer metaphor as embodying the ideal relationship between mayor and community, their view of an inflated ego as a barrier to leadership, their vision of the mayoral leader as linked to all parts of the community in a web rather than a hierarchy and their conviction that a mayor should be judged in terms of having made a difference, were the points which stood out in their accounts. Leading was seen as acting and achieving, not just occupying a position. Effective leadership needed the involvement of the community both to own and to drive the leadership process forward towards shared goals.

In the next and final chapter, the critical aspects of the research findings will be distilled in a brief audit of new understandings of leadership gained from this research on women mayors, as well as a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research which could explore directions suggested by this study.

# CHAPTER NINE

## New framework for understanding leadership

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And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first  
time.

(Little Gidding, T.S. Eliot)

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter evaluates the significance of points made in the discussion in terms of their answers to the research questions. So, at the end we return to the beginning. The quote from T. S. Eliot at the beginning of the chapter is a good description of the way that the research process spirals around the central problem, encouraging the researcher to redefine the starting-place each time it is revisited. However, as far as this research is concerned, although we know more about where we started, it is an exaggeration to say that we ‘know the place’. We know a lot more about the place, but there is still much more to learn about leadership. This chapter will first deal with what is known from this research and then explain what is still unknown.

### *BEGINNING WITH WHAT IS KNOWN*

The most important realisation gained from the research is that although leadership is not limited to being a person, much research is still framed and conducted as if it were. Even when leadership researchers and writers make the point that leadership is more than a person, they still often write and present their findings with an underlying assumption that leadership needs a hero/leader as an essential ingredient, with authors writing case studies and accounts of leadership that describe only what leaders have

done, rather than what leaders have done with and through others (Jackson and Parry, 2001; Tichy and Devanna, 1986/1997; Zaleznik, 1989). Similarly, the point has been made that charismatic leadership (which relies on the charisma of the leader to gain support, rather than on the commitment of formal leader and 'followers' to a mutually desired goal) is not a new theory, but a new name for trait theory re-vamped for the 1980s and 1990s. Rost (1993) for example, argues that charismatic leadership is just another version of getting people to "do as the leader wishes" (p.85).

In just this way leadership researchers have tended to look in the wrong places for leadership, places where people have had power to enforce their will, not places where leadership is the only way to influence others to help find a solution to a community problem. As well as looking in the wrong places, places where institutional power can be used and leadership is not needed to gain support, there has also been the tendency to look for the wrong kind of leadership. Those who are convinced that leadership comes from within the leader envisage a heroic, superhuman figure, able to achieve miracles single-handed as leader. Yet, this research into women mayors has shown that, in this setting, leadership is achieved by encouraging people to work together towards a common goal, and that leadership is not contained within the formal leader.

Although leadership happens in the interactions between people rather than within one person, the default setting in research seems to have been to find the leader and then look within the leader to find leadership. Even when people are scornful of great man or trait theories, they still sometimes revert to glorifying particular leaders for 'showing leadership' without recognising the inconsistency. Formal leaders with a position related to leadership are likely to be participants in leadership, but leadership as such does not begin until someone (formal or informal leader) starts to communicate with others about a possibility or need to create change through interactive leadership. Therefore, a great deal of research activity exploring leadership has continued to go into looking for people who are excellent leaders, then trying to describe and explain the characteristics and qualities that make them seem like excellent leaders.

This type of research seems to assume that the leader is a leadership container and leadership happens within a person whenever that person decides to press the ‘go’ button. This picture of how leadership happens is misguided. A person in a leadership position may have qualities that assist the leadership process to happen. A person in a leadership position may also have responsibility for trying to encourage and support the leadership process. However, as this research has shown, person and position, while they may be factors in encouraging or supporting leadership, are not in themselves leadership.

Leadership is a process that involves people working together. The leadership happens through the way people work and interact together. Leadership doesn’t begin until more than one person is involved. The magical ability of leadership to accomplish difficult tasks comes from the energy and ideas of more than one person and often many people working towards a goal. People doing leadership shift positions within the process, sometimes initiating, sometimes facilitating, sometimes organising, sometimes clarifying. The nominal leaders, those who hold the position of leader, are not always the people who initiate ideas or take control. Often the role of formal leaders is more focussed on encouraging contributions to leadership from others.

As Jill White said in describing herself, she felt she was an “encourager” rather than an “igniter”, someone who could see worthwhile groups or ideas to support, rather than someone who could inspire and enthuse people to support an idea just by virtue of her charismatic personality. She also said that she would not want to enthuse people to have “the hanging gardens of Palmerston North” just to have the hanging gardens. She would need to be convinced of the value of the hanging gardens to the city before she could explain the value of the idea to others. In other words, she does not see herself as necessarily controlling leadership or as the fount of all leadership ideas, she is just part of a leadership process.

Her idea of herself as encourager rather than igniter, shows how important the group is in leadership. Roles within the leadership process are fluid, possibly involving a formal leader who holds a position of influence such a mayor, but relying on the ideas and energy of other participants who sometimes take on the position of informal

leader in an area where they have expertise or when they see a possible way of dealing with a problem or making progress towards the desired goal. So the roles of leader and follower are not fixed and unchanging. Leaders and followers may swap roles at different times or stages of the leadership process, or in response to different leadership challenges. This role flexibility and the shared desire to reach the leadership goal was hinted at by earlier researchers, then developed further in Burns' (1979) concept of transformational leadership and later clarified and expanded in Rost's (1993) critique of flawed understandings of leadership and presentation of his own definition of leadership.

Rost's (1993) description of leadership, involving mutual striving of leaders and followers towards a leadership goal, helped to move the leader from a position of control in the leadership story and marked another stage in the shift to a new leadership paradigm, from heroic to post-heroic leadership. Rost's definition and explanation of the leadership process was shown in diagrammatic form as a cyclic model of the stages of the process in Chapter Two (Figure 2). The model showed that there could be several iterations of the process led by different people, either formal or informal leaders, joining together with others in their desire to reach the leadership goal. A leader, whether formal or informal, has a responsibility to initiate the process by influencing others to see that a leadership goal is possible or necessary or both, and also has the responsibility to step into the leadership process and initiate re-thinking or re-direction if things are going awry.

So, instead of heroic individuals doing the leadership by dint of their superiority, leadership is achieved through interaction by people working together and taking different roles at different times, united in the interests of reaching a particular outcome. So, the leader gives a sense of direction in terms of the possibility of something that is desired but seems beyond reach, such as new employment opportunities in a town which has lost a major employer, or in terms of something that is a problem which must be faced such as global warming. Leadership, then, is helping people to see things differently, giving them a sense of direction, influencing them to see that a goal can be reached or that a problem must be faced. This is a new understanding of the nature of leadership compared with the emphasis on the heroic

exploits of the leader. In fact, if the full stories of heroic exploits were known, very few heroic leaders have actually carried out the leadership process single-handed.

Grint's (1997; 2000) notion of constitutive leadership points to the way that stories about leadership can create a belief that a formal or informal leader's heroic nature was the reason for success and that the most commonly-believed story about the leadership constitutes success or failure. Obviously, the success or failure of a participant in leadership, constituted by the weight of judgement in the story believed by most people, can change over time, as is shown by revisionist historians who expose later generations to different stories and can change opinions about generals and presidents and their actions in leadership situations.

Formal leaders, such as presidents and generals, are expected to play some part in the leadership process by virtue of their positions and they may be judged and found wanting if they fail to do so. Yet they can seldom achieve a great deal without involving others in the leadership process. Although others can be ordered to obey their formal leader and may do so, this restricts creative ideas to those generated by the formal leader. In situations where people are freely motivated to take part in leadership, it is because they see what could be gained, because the desired outcome seems so worthwhile.

In the case of mayors, some of the desired outcomes could have great benefits for local communities and since local government struggles continually with a lack of resources and problems that lack obvious solutions, leadership is particularly important in this setting. This research chose local government as a place where leadership was required because adaptive rather than technical work, requiring creative changes rather than familiar procedures (Heifetz, 1994), is often needed to find ways of solving local government's problems. Women mayors were chosen as research participants because they were relative newcomers to local government and could be expected to be much more questioning and observant in their reactions to their environment than those who had been mayors for an extended period of time. In many cases, women mayors had also gained the confidence of their communities and established warm relationships, which suggested that there might be something distinctive in their approach to the role of mayor and to leadership.

To explore the possibility of a different approach, research interviews with female mayors and mayoral candidates were used to provide answers to the first of two research questions, 'what do woman mayors see as exemplary leadership?' before moving on to explore the second question, 'how do women mayors' views of leadership fit with leadership theory'. The research showed that the women taking part in the study had clear views about leadership on which their practice was based, views which they used to judge themselves and others. They supported the idea of transformational leadership as the way they saw leadership, rather than transactional leadership. Four main points emerged about the mayors' views of leadership, from the results of interviews and other data. The four points related to: the metaphor of motherhood, the place of ego, the web of relationships and making a difference. In the next section, these four areas will be discussed in turn to show their significance in helping understand these women's approach to mayoral leadership.

## *ASPECTS OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP*

### *Motherhood: sacrifice and responsibility*

First of all, I have used the metaphor of motherhood to express the type of bond between mayors and their communities and the nature of their willing sacrifice and sense of responsibility. They see themselves as serving their communities, but with a degree of commitment that is far beyond the business or corporate model. They are emotionally involved with their communities. They care for them and want to see them grow in terms of their well-being, and they want to be part of that growth. Some mayors, as well as Karen Hyland - one of the mayoral candidates, mentioned the importance of children in inspiring their level of commitment. Karen wanted to help in creating a city that would be the kind of place she would want her daughter to grow up in. Joan Williams (Taupo District) wanted her district to be the right kind of place for her children and grandchildren, because she wanted to know that the future was going to be good for them. The sense of a commitment to the well-being of future generations is a strong aspect of the motherhood metaphor. This type of commitment is also highlighted in the legislation that local government is now working under, the Local Government Act 2002 which was under discussion as a bill during the period when the participants were interviewed.

In Section 10 of the Act, the purpose of local government, or what it should do, is explained as being:

To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of communities; and

To promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.

A concern with future well-being of their communities was strongly expressed by research participants well before the bill became law, which shows that the changing focus of local government was in tune with their own thinking and the 'motherhood' ethic.

For the women mayors, involvement in exemplary mayoral leadership required sacrificing their own interests for those of others. The extent and kind of sacrifice women mayors described resembled motherhood. The motherhood metaphor encapsulates the shared features of interviewees' examples of impossibly demanding, unbounded expectations of themselves in their roles as mayors. Along with the idea of sacrifice, the concept of motherhood also expresses the unlimited nature of exemplary mayoral leadership. For the research participants, being a mayor, like being a mother, meant living with the realisation that there was always more you *could* and *should* do. In other words, mayoral leadership required limitless and unending sacrifice without any expectation of gratitude despite significant potential for blame - particularly since the constraints on a mayor's powers and resources are not widely understood. So, the significance of the motherhood metaphor is the way it shows that exemplary leadership as a mayor for the participants requires unlimited sacrifice of time, energy, privacy - and sometimes peace of mind.

### *Ego: Taking risks versus self-protection*

The motherhood metaphor is also connected to another of the four areas related to the mayors' views of exemplary leadership, their concern about the place of ego and their recognition of the need to be able to keep one's ego in its place. An overdeveloped ego or concern for self and image, was seen as a barrier to being effective in the leadership process. Mary Bourke made it clear, for example, that she was prepared to be unpopular because it was more important for her local authority that she made

prudent, responsible, financially sound decisions, rather than courting popularity. By contrast, an over-developed ego tends to encourage putting one's own self-interest first and thinking that leadership is something that should be done alone rather than a group process, enhanced by others' complementary abilities.

### *Making a difference*

As well as being connected with the motherhood metaphor, ego was also linked to the 'making a difference' test that the mayors expected of themselves and other leadership participants. The purpose of leadership was to make a difference for the community. Passive or self-serving approaches were recognised in other mayors but met with disapproval. Even a small infrastructural improvement was seen by Noeline Allan as sufficient to be able to justify your existence as mayor. However, obviously, a mayor is more prepared to initiate changes and take risks which may have bad personal consequences if, like most of the research participants, the main goal is making a difference for the community, rather than personal prestige and protecting one's position. The women mayors in the study wanted their cities and districts to be better off in some way as a result of their time as mayor. For them, having made a difference was both achievement and reward.

### *Creating a web*

However, making a difference within a local authority, could seldom be achieved by oneself. In describing the nature of leadership, the research participants talked about creating a web of relationships. In many ways interacting to create the web is the leadership. The web-forming refers to the way that they gathered teams around them and included others with different abilities and experience in the process, as shown in Jill White's 'think tank' which worked on developing the new city identity. Some mayors actually talked about how difficult they found the commitment that they had made. Heather Maloney in Franklin District talked about the 18 hour day, seven day weeks and the importance of being out listening to people and making them realise that the council could not do everything itself, that it needed the community to contribute, express ideas and participate, to be involved in the council. She also talked about developing the councillors, team-building and finding skills that they could offer and building their sense of achievement. Being involved in leadership required

developing a web of relationships to work towards leadership goals in the community and on council with both councillors and council staff.

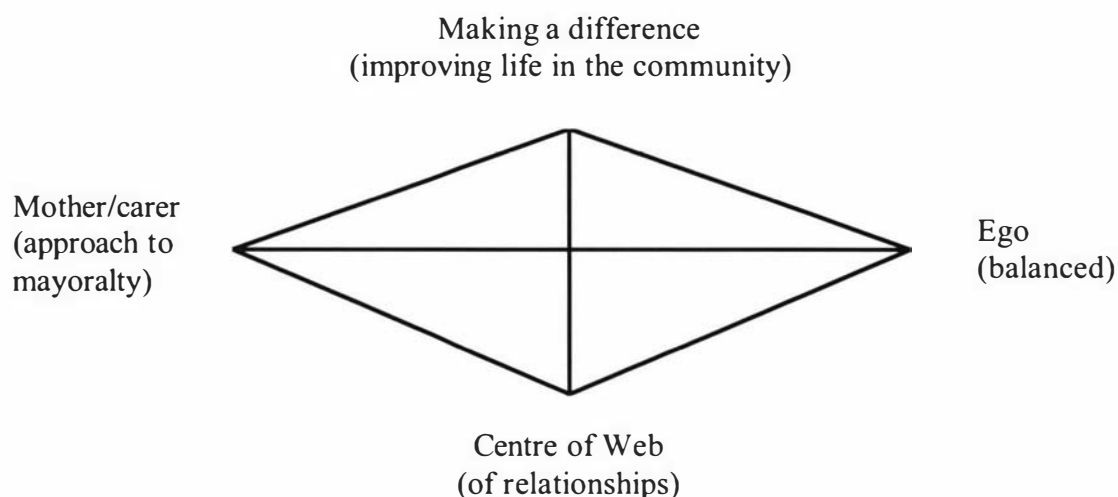
Heather Maloney was making connections with people and breaking down barriers between council and community, between politicians and staff, showing people that they were all part of the same community and needed to work together. For her, the web of shared aspirations was stronger than superficial category differences such as 'council' and 'community'. Heather Maloney tried to explain that the council was also the community and that the community needed to be involved with the council for the council to understand their needs and for the relationship to work properly. Anti-council feelings of the past needed to be overcome to communicate and work together because the separation of council and community was actually quite artificial and worked against co-operation.

These then were the four aspects of leadership as expressed by the research participants; making a difference, the motherhood metaphor, the place of ego and the web of relationships. All four are linked together as interrelated aspects of leadership, supporting each other. As Figure 7 shows they can be seen as four points of a square or diamond shape with a cross joining its corners, so that each aspect is acknowledged in the context of being closely related to the other three. The motherhood metaphor of caring for the community clearly links to having less ego and caring less about self, as well as linking in to the web of relationships. Making a difference is similarly related to the motherhood metaphor. The whole notion of making a difference can be frightening and overwhelming, but having a level of commitment to the community similar to the level of commitment involved in motherhood, means that there is no choice but to put one's energy and determination into achieving the goal.

When these four aspects of leadership are contributing to the way that a mayor works, that mayor is exhibiting exemplary mayoral leadership according to the research participants in this study. Together, these four aspects constitute the core contribution the discussion makes to answering the first research question concerning the research participants' views of exemplary mayoral leadership. However, there are several other factors to take into account in considering the significance of this perspective of leadership in terms of its contribution to a different approach to leadership in New

Zealand local government and its answer to the second research question, how women mayors views of exemplary leadership fit with leadership theory.

**Figure 7: The four interconnected aspects of exemplary mayoral leadership according to participants in the study**



### *LINKING EXPERIENCE TO THEORY*

First of all, the interview data make it clear that the women mayors and candidates support a post-heroic view of leadership. The job of mayor is seen as requiring hard work and commitment, good communication skills and the ability to talk to people from all walks of life. The mayor is a ‘glorified community worker’, a tool for achieving community goals, rather than a heroic figure. Caring about achieving change and the community’s well-being are the main requirements for leadership participants. The ‘making a difference’ criterion of leadership means that the women mayors support transformational leadership as the way they think leadership should be rather than transactional leadership, which they see - at best - as the machinery of their role or - at worst - as acting out of biased self-interest. Their attitude towards laissez-faire leadership was also disapproving, as they think that a mayor should contribute towards making a difference, rather than just sitting in the mayoral office.

So, there is strong support for Burns’ (1979) theory of transforming leadership, which links people together in attempting to create change because the perceived value of the desired outcome lifts people above self-interest and encourages self-sacrifice for the good of a cause. Constitutive leadership is also supported as some of the

participants are very aware that the way leadership results are judged depends on the story which is believed by the majority of people rather than the 'facts' which may not exist apart from people's interpretations, or if they do exist are not able to be accessed except through interpretation (Grint, 1997; 2000).

If one accepts that the data have demonstrated a view of leadership centred around web, ego, and motherhood as the 'how' of leadership and making a difference as the 'what' and 'why' of leadership, the next question is the reason behind such a different approach to leadership on the part of the research participants compared with previous mayors. For many decades, local government leadership had been dominated by the 'city boss' and 'caretaker' quadrants of Peter John's (1997) typology. Yet, among the women mayors there was a shift to the 'visionary' and 'consensual facilitator' quadrants. Women mayors did not simply copy the mayors they had observed and adopt a similar way of operating. Naturally, one wonders what is underlying such a profound change. However, I would argue that there is no one reason for the different approach and that several factors are working together. To oversimplify the interactions of the contributing factors would make it difficult to judge the significance of this change or to assess its likely impact on the future, as more would be hidden and ignored than revealed.

There is no doubt that the fact that local government had been a very conservative, male-dominated culture for so long, was part of the reason for the different perspective of women mayors. Councils and mayors were exhibiting attitudes to leadership that were at odds with the way that many of the women thought things should be done. The conviction that things could be done better and needed to be done better persuaded many women to stand for office (as was also the case with women mayors in Queensland reported by Ryan et al., 2005). Local government was lagging behind social change and although women on councils held few of the council chair positions, society was ready to vote women mayors into office (Drage, 1997). So, the women mayors were a self-selected group who were eager to achieve change rather than repeat old patterns.

At the same time the whole local government landscape was undergoing cataclysmic change. Internal restructuring and external amalgamation, legislative change that

required public consultation, a social agenda that necessitated a broadening of local government responsibility beyond providing infrastructure to encompass a social agenda - all combined to create a confusing, multi-layered context of continuing metamorphosis. As one of the mayors interviewed said, it is much easier to adjust to change if you have not been part of what has gone before, so that you are not comparing the old and the new, but simply concentrating on understanding what is. Women coming into this environment were able to accept and work with the change more easily than those who had based all their knowledge and sense of competence on understanding the previous era.

Also, the fact that women were women and that most of them were the first female mayors in their local authorities meant that those around them anticipated something new. So, even if their new ideas were treated negatively, as with the uproar when a mayor took the key of the councillor's liquor cabinet away, nevertheless the obvious gender difference prepared people for the possibility of changed perspectives, even if they did not like them. The woman mayors also had public support from those who had voted them in - as was shown when Jill White was supported and encouraged in her leadership after facing a group opposed to her decisions in a council meeting early in her mayoralty.

The age and experience of the women was also a factor. The majority of the women were in their fifties and had a considerable amount of life experience to draw on as well as the increased confidence that comes with age. They used their experiences and their strengths in the mayoralty. Much of that experience came from having brought up children, having been involved in community networks or voluntary groups or having worked in teaching or nursing. They saw the community as a resource to draw on and involve in leadership. They were very aware of the different groups within the community and used that awareness. When they felt that they needed to know more they talked to people. They did not feel that all the leadership resources needed to come from within themselves.

However, cultural factors were also a major influence in the shift to a visionary, facilitative community-based view of leadership. As Hofstede (1997) argues, within the relatively masculine national culture in a country like New Zealand, there will be

a greater distance between the nurturing, caring values of women compared with the more assertive, aggressive values of men. Culture, in this thesis, has been described as a design for living adopted by particular members of a social group at the level of both national culture and organisational culture. Cultural knowledge helps people to know how to behave and what is valued by other members of their culture or sub-culture. In the context of this research, the cultural values of New Zealand and of the sub-culture of local government are those which are most relevant, particularly in relation to gender.

People are taught their culture as children and gender-appropriate behaviours are rewarded and meet with approval throughout life. With repetition, the patterns become part of one's repertoire of social strategies and everyday routines. Although one can always choose not to follow the norms, as with the woman in this study who chose not to wear make-up despite the persuasive efforts of female councillors, it is easier to behave in accepted, accustomed ways. So, the women in the study preferred to work in an inclusive way and believed in its efficacy. Examples of that belief were Marilyn Brown's comparison of the superficial agreement gained by bullying compared with the commitment gained through consensus and Claire Stewart's (Taranaki District) argument that although male leaders who were authoritarian thought her style of less value, she was convinced that being inclusive gained support from people who could do things better than she could and gave her a chance to "use the human talent out there".

Unfortunately, the low key nature of women's leadership does make it all too easy for those who expect leadership to be heroic, to dismiss women's ability to involve others as being simply what women do in their everyday lives, rather than a leadership-related activity. Fletcher (2004) argues that women practising post-heroic leadership may not "have their leadership behaviour seen as such" (p.658). Fletcher talks of 'self-as-interdependent entity' compared with 'self-as-independent entity'. In her view, enacting the interdependent, self-in-relation stance with others requires more than relational skills; "It requires a fundamentally different way of conceptualizing the importance of relationship and relational interactions as well as a different way of conceptualizing growth, achievement, success and effectiveness" (Fletcher, 2004, p.657). In other words, behaving in a way that uses relational skills as a means of

achieving personal, individualistic, self-interested goals, would convert post-heroic, transformational leadership to something more akin to manipulation.

### *WHAT IS NOT KNOWN*

The women mayors in this study have exemplified transformational leadership and have shown the four areas they regard as important in exemplary mayoral leadership. However, the future is unpredictable. Cultural patterns are dynamic and change over time. If a similar study of women mayors were to be carried out in 10 or 20 years' time, the four aspects reflected in the research participants' views of exemplary mayoral leadership might not be strongly evidenced. Local government's environment is changing still. Within society at large, gender distinctions are gradually blurring, so that in future more men and women will have shared similar kinds of life experiences. Future women mayors from a corporate environment may bring a business model rather than a family model into the mayoralty with them. With time and with more women in local government leadership from a range of different backgrounds, a similar study comparing findings about women's leadership with the findings of this thesis would be a valuable addition to the field.

This study was limited to one three year term. In a future study, longitudinal research conducted over several terms would give a helpful indication of any changing trends. Without the support of future studies, this thesis could not be assumed to give a full picture or assess the potential impact of the increasing diversity which is likely to be a part of future women leaders' backgrounds. Nevertheless, in terms of contributions to leadership theory, this thesis makes a strong case for scrutinising the influence of ego in leadership interactions as a critical factor. An overdeveloped ego is a barrier to the leadership process as de Vries (1997) has argued in his work on narcissistic leadership. Consensual facilitation as a leadership mode is not likely to thrive when leadership participants are concerned for themselves and what they can gain, rather than the leadership process and objectives.

Although the level of commitment shown in the motherhood metaphor and the web of connections are particularly important in the mayoral context, ego is a barrier to leadership in any context. The importance of the ego factor may have been obscured

by the way that writers tend to revert to seeing leader as a person rather than a process. People are important in leadership but not just a single person. Leadership is an achievement of people working *together* to make a difference.

At its heart, this thesis demonstrates the wisdom of the whakataukī or proverbial saying:

E kore te totara

e tū i te pae

o te wao

*The totara (metaphorical leader) does not stand at the fringe of the forest.*

In other words, a leader is nothing without the support of other people. Leadership happens only with and through other people; never a leader alone.



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# APPENDIX A

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## Checklist of questions used in interviewing mayoral candidates and adapted slightly for telephone interviews with mayors.

### QUESTIONS

1. What made you decide to stand for the mayoralty?
  - part of a long-term plan
  - spur of the moment decision
  
2. Do you see your motivation for standing as being typical of a mayoral candidate or different from some of the mayoral candidates?
  - in what way?
  
3. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman standing for the mayoralty?
  
4. What are your perceptions of the job of mayor?
  
5. In order of importance how would you rank a mayor's relationship with:
  - the public
  - the council members
  - the council staff
  - the media
  - business
  - local M Ps and central government
  - tangata whenua
  - ethnic minorities
  - women
  - other
  
6. What image are you attempting to portray of yourself in your campaign?  
What are you emphasising in your campaign?

7. What aspect of yourself are you attempting to highlight in campaign advertising?
  - competence
  - experience
  - background
  - difference
  - other
8. What resources does it take to stand for mayor?
9. What is your image of a competent or very successful mayor?  
(what must a mayor do as the bottom line to have credibility or to be outstanding?)
10. Are there any NZ mayors (past or present ) who you would like to emulate?
  - in what way?

Are there any NZ mayors (past or present) whose example you would not wish to follow?

  - in what way?
11. How would you describe the concept of leadership? What do you think leadership is?
12. Do you see differences in male and female leadership styles?
13. Do you think that having women as mayors has made a difference to the image of leadership in local government?
  - in what way?
14. What do you see as ideal qualities for leadership?
15. How would you describe your own leadership style?
16. If you could use only three adjectives to describe your leadership style what would they be?
17. Do you see a difference in the effectiveness of male and female leadership styles?

18. Can you tell me about a specific situation during your time on council, which required you to show leadership?
19. Is there anything else about female leadership in local government that you would like to mention?
20. Finally, if you are elected, what would your first priority be?  
And what would you see as your greatest challenge?  
And when in office, what would you like people to say about your mayoralty?

#### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. employment.
2. age
3. education
4. time on council
5. income
6. money spent on campaign (cf campaign to be councillor)
7. political perspective
8. family responsibilities (partner, children's ages, dependent parent)
9. sources of support (family, friends, colleagues etc.)

# APPENDIX B

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Letter used to make contact with women mayors and give them an opportunity to consider whether they wished to participate in the research.

## Women Mayors in New Zealand Local Government

Just to tell you a little about myself, I have been an editor of NZ Local Government and Co-editor of Local Authority Management. I am a senior lecturer in the College of Business at Massey University and have published in the field of women and management. To me it seems especially valuable for women in management and leadership positions to be able to read research findings which are relevant to them and their professional concerns.

Women are bringing a new perspective to leadership and the time seems long overdue when we should find out about the views of women leaders in local government. Even those who are most closely involved would like to be able to compare and contrast their ways of working with those of other women mayors. Outside the local government, little is known of what is happening in the environment inhabited by local body politicians. An overview of women's approach to local government leadership could show distinctive features that might expand knowledge about women in political leadership.

Valuable work has been carried out and published by Local Government New Zealand, including Jean Drage's monograph on women mayors and Elizabeth Hughes' recent survey of mayors and councillors. However, a specific focus on women mayors and their beliefs about leadership can show what women are now contributing to the field of local government that is new and different.

To fill the need for more in-depth information on women mayors, I am working on a research project called *Her Worship the Mayor: Women's Leadership in New Zealand Local Government*, which began with interviews of the three women candidates in the 1998 Palmerston North City Council elections. I have also been interviewing Jill White, the mayor of Palmerston North, every few months during 1999 and 2000 to gain a longitudinal perspective of her approach to the mayoralty.

To be able to reflect the views of all women mayors in New Zealand, I would also like to be able to interview you. Because of the commitments involved in being mayor, I have come to realise that the most straightforward way for you to contribute to the research is a telephone interview. What I would do is to 'phone you at a

prearranged time, after you had read a summary of the interview question areas and tape record your answers over the 'phone. Or, if you prefer, I can arrange to come and see you for a face-to-face interview. As you will appreciate, I need to give you a chance to talk freely rather than merely tick boxes, yet save you from having to write answers at length. If you are able to participate in the research, I shall keep in touch with you on publications that have come out of the research and, if you wish, send you regular updates. I shall be in touch to see whether you will be able to take part in the research and, if so, to make an appointment for the 50 minute telephone interview.

Yours sincerely,

Marianne Tremaine,  
Senior Lecturer in Communication.

# APPENDIX C

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Information sheet used in the research to inform participants before gaining their consent to take part.

Massey University

Research Project Information Sheet

The Political Leadership of Women in New Zealand Local Government

## WHO IS THE RESEARCHER?

Marianne Tremaine is a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication and Journalism in Massey University's College of Business. She is interested in carrying out research on women in management and leadership roles and has published on subjects such as women on Boards of Directors and top women managers' experience of negotiating their contracts after the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act./ her interest in local government comes from earlier experiences as the editor of the trade journal *NZ Local Government* and as founding co-editor of *Local Authority Management*. She completed the postgraduate Diploma of Local Government Administration from Auckland University during her time as editor of *NZ Local Government*. She sees local government as an area where women have made an important contribution to leadership and she would like this research to clarify the reasons why women have made such an impact as local government leaders.

## WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The study is about women mayors in New Zealand and their perspectives of the leadership role and the contribution made by women in changing the expectations about what mayors could achieve. The research question is centred on the kind of leadership that women mayors wish to achieve and their stories about the ways they have gone about dealing with leadership issues.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH?

The benefits of the research will lie in giving more knowledge about women's approach to leadership in local government. Although women have been popularly acknowledged as bringing particular strengths to the role of mayor, there has not been any application of leadership theory to their leadership practice. This study seeks to bring theory and practice together to gain insights into the way women mayors lead.

## WHAT CAN THE PARTICIPANTS EXPECT FROM THE RESEARCHER?

- That the researcher is available to discuss any aspect of the research you wish to clarify both before you decide whether you wish to participate and during and after your involvement in the research.
- That the researcher will keep you informed with research updates on the progress of the research and that you will be advised of the research results and outcomes, if you so wish.

## WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO DO?

First of all, I will have contacted you to see whether the research as outlined in my initial letter interested you and whether you wished to explore the possibility of taking part. If you did wish to know more I will have sent you the research information sheet and a list of the question areas to be covered so that you could give more thought to whether you wanted to be involved in the project. Now, at this stage, if you do decide to take part, you need to return the blue consent slip in the reply paid envelope enclosed and you will be contacted to make a time for the telephone interview. The interview will take approximately 50 minutes and will be recorded on audiotape with your permission. Once transcribed from the tape, a copy of the interview will be sent to you for checking and you can change the written account of the interview as you wish, to clarify any point or to protect yourself in any way.

If you take part in this study, you

- Can refuse to answer questions at any time
- Can ask for sensitive, explanatory 'background information' given in the interview to be treated as an 'off-the-record' confidence
- Can ask any questions you wish about the study
- Can ask for any information in the transcript to be deleted
- Will not be identified explicitly in any publications without your permission.

## HOW MUCH TIME WILL BE INVOLVED?

The telephone interview will take approximately 50 minutes. After this you will receive a transcript to read and check and comment on. Checking the transcript will probably take between 30 to 60 minutes. The researcher will need to contact you, first to make an appointment and possibly later to discuss details in your interview transcript and these telephone calls may take 10 to 15 minutes if details are being checked.

## HOW CAN YOU CONTACT THE RESEARCHER?

IF you would like to discuss the research, any questions or suggestions would be very welcome. These are my details:

Marianne Tremaine  
Department of Communication and Journalism  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North

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# APPENDIX D

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Consent form used to gain the consent of the participant before arranging to interview them.

Massey University

The Political Leadership of Women in New Zealand Local Government

Consent Form

I have read the information sheet for this study and the details of this study have been explained and discussed with me. My questions about the study have been answered in a way that satisfied me and I know I am able to ask more questions at any time.

With this knowledge of the study, I agree to take part but in agreeing to take part I know that I still have the right to withdraw from participation at any time and to decide not to answer any particular question.

I agree to give information to the researcher on the understanding that as a public figure, it is difficult to maintain anonymity, because information in the published study may be able to be linked to me. However, I know that transcripts of my interview will be shown to me and that I will be able to correct, expand or delete any part of my conversation with the researcher.

I understand that findings from the interviews will be published in different formats and that the researcher will send me a research update on the results of the study. I agree that once I have had the opportunity to read and change the contents of my transcript, the researcher may publish its contents in both oral and written formats.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being recorded on audiotape. In agreeing to have the interview recorded I realise that I still have the right to ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to take part in the study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Cellphone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONFIDENTIAL**



# APPENDIX E

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## List of Women Mayors holding office in New Zealand during the 1998-2001 term.

Noeline Allan, Banks Peninsula District

Maureen Anderson, Western Bay of Plenty District

Georgina Beyer, Carterton District

Jennifer Brash, Porirua City

Mary Bourke, South Taranaki District

Frana Cardno, Southland District

Christine Fletcher, Auckland City

Lyn Hartley, Kawerau District

Iride McCloy, Kapiti Coast District

Heather Maloney, Franklin District

Mary Ogg, Gore District

Maureen Reynolds, Tararua District

Audrey Severinsen, Manawatu District

Yvonne Sharp, Far North District Council

Janice Skurr, Waimakariri District

Claire Stewart, New Plymouth District

Sukhi Turner, Dunedin City

Jill White, Palmerston North City

Joan Williamson, Taupo District

