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**Women academics: tensions between the workplace and
the personal and professional selves**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines issues associated with the individual/institutional nexus in the context of the New Zealand academic workplace from a female and narrative perspective. Tensions among the many cultures that form part of the personal and professional lived experiences of five academic women and their workplaces are investigated, drawing on some elements from feminist post-structuralist views in order to identify assumptions, ambiguities and contradictions. My interpretations are examined through narratives and critical discourse analysis of selected official texts relevant to the context of women in academia. Recommendations are made for ways for collectively researching, debating and challenging discourses that act to disempower women in the academic workplace.

Although the multiple realities of the lives of these women were diverse, in drawing together the tensions they experienced in the workplace and in their lives, there were some common threads that linked their narratives. Differences in expectations and values/world views between those embedded within the institutional discourses and those of the women constrained their freedom to make choices in their professional and personal lives, thereby creating conflict. The university is seen to be a gendered and hierarchical workplace and sources of conflict involved complex interweaving and overlapping of workplace and personal issues.

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