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**Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself:  
Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Social Work at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

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## **Abstract**

Social service management has regularly undergone transformation while adapting to an ever-changing social and political climate. Managerialism and New Public Management has redirected social service management expectations, resulting in the prevalence of employing non-clinical managers. This study uncovered the transferable skills held by managers with qualifications external to social work, and discussed what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as manager.

A qualitative research design was utilised, underpinned by subjective ontology and an interpretivist approach, in order to uncover and highlight the participant voice. Semi-structured interviews gave room for topics to be proposed, and provided participants with the ability to share their experiences.

The seven key themes which emerged from this study were management journey, external influences, internal influences, social work knowledge and interest, transferable skills, advice for future managers, and unanticipated findings. The participant group were found to be managers with an eclectic range of experiences, qualifications and knowledge crucial to the survival of social service organisations in the present day. This study uncovered the participant's steadfast values and unwavering passion, and demonstrated their fierce commitment to empowering their staff, clients and communities.

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This work is dedicated to Arabella Martha Jean Osei-Agyemang Cocker. A little girl who has inspired me to stretch further, aim higher and be the role model she deserves. I love you sweetheart.

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Introduction**

This study aimed to uncover what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess. It aimed to understand what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as a manager and uncover the contribution this group of managers brings to the social services. This study aimed to shed light on the transformation within social service management, and to add to the pool of knowledge surrounding present-day social service management roles. In particular, it sought to focus on managers who led non-government organisations (NGOs).

The participants involved in this study held undergraduate qualifications external to social work, had not engaged in direct social work practice, and had undertaken some form of management education. Participants held senior management roles within non-government organisations, led multi-disciplinary teams and had at least one qualified social worker within their staff group. This study utilised semi-structured interviews, under the umbrella of qualitative research, in order to collect and document participant experiences and answer the study's key aim.

This chapter will outline the study's key aims as well as the researcher's motivation and interest in engaging in this research. It will go on to provide a brief background of the study's topic area and will conclude with outlining the thesis structure.

## **Key Aims**

With the introduction of managerialism and New Public Management (NPM), common routes to management in the social services have changed from direct practitioner's promotion to appointing non-clinical managers (Sullivan, 2016).

The key aim of this study was:

To investigate what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess. And what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as manager.

In order to answer the study's aim, the following areas were investigated:

Exploring the managers' perceptions of their role.

Determining the opportunities afforded to/created by managers with qualifications external to social work.

Determining the challenges experienced by managers with qualifications external to social work.

Exploring what transferable skills are possessed by managers with qualifications external to social work.

Establishing what additional knowledge managers with qualifications external to social work consider to be required in order to successfully manage social workers.

## **Researcher's Motivation**

The researcher has been involved in direct practice social work, and social work middle management over the past decade. Within their various roles, they have primarily engaged with line managers and senior managers who held qualifications external to social work. To date, they have been managed by alcohol and other drug senior practitioners, child therapists, psychologists, ex-principals and occupational therapists. Across their roles, they have only ever once been led by a manager with a social work qualification, and a background in direct social work practice.

Upon reflection of these experiences, the researcher noticed their involvement in educating their managers in the area of social work practice. On common occasions they felt the need to explain first what social work was and how it had led them to their proposed action in order to obtain sign off for an intervention. Whilst reflecting on these experiences, the researcher became concerned with the reasons behind why non-social work managers were interested in managing social workers, as well as their competence in being able to do so.

The researcher is a passionate social worker. Their personal values very closely align to those of the social work profession and they feel lucky to have come into the profession at an early age. The researcher comes from a family legacy of social workers on one side, and advocates for the disadvantaged on the other. This family upbringing spurred the researcher's desire to support and empower people, and to advocate on behalf of those who found they were unable to do so themselves. With this in mind, the researcher found themselves wondering what the impact was on the social work profession with a rise in managers who did not hold qualifications or experience in the social work profession. Additionally, it led them to consider the motivations, abilities and values of managers with qualifications external to social work.

This study sought to do away with personal experiences and aimed to uncover what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess. It aimed to understand what additional skills are considered required in order for such managers to succeed in their role and uncover the contribution this group of managers brings to the social services. The following section will briefly outline the topic background and provide an understanding of why this study was important.

## **Background**

Over the course of history, social welfare from both philanthropic and State organised arenas, has transformed and adapted in an attempt to best meet the needs of the people it serves (Davidson, 2004; McDonald, 1998). This ongoing transformation has

largely been impacted by the political and social climate of the day (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; Whalen, 1972). New Zealand, like many other Western countries has experienced the unfortunate unsustainability of a 1930's Keynesian Welfare State through to the more austere and business-like neo-liberal agenda of the 1990's (Finkel, 2006; Lunt, O'Brien & Stephens, 2008; Osiichuck, 2017). Welfare in New Zealand has undergone a number of reforms which has changed its expectations of citizens and their level of engagement in welfare activities (Fraser & Simpson, 2014; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

Historically, social service management roles were predominantly filled by the promotion of social workers, who were grounded in social work ideology (Shanks, Lundstrom, & Wiklund, 2015). However, managerialism, the idea that managerial tasks are separate and therefore transferable across any sector, became more prevalent in the 1990's (Klikauer, 2015; Rogowski, 2011). This, along with NPM, which relies on applying business principles, worked together to diminish the need for clinical knowledge in management and promoted efficiency over all else (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Klikauer, 2015; Lane, 2000; Rogowski, 2011). Social work and therefore social service management has been directly impacted by these political and societal changes, and has had to acclimatise in the wake of these pressures (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017; Staniforth, 2015).

Social services began to require managers with a breadth of management administration skills, in order to survive in a competitive contracting environment. A division of roles began to emerge, with clinical leadership on one side and management administration on the other (Coulshed, Mullender, Jones & Thompson, 2006). As the need for technically competent managers expanded, many social workers chose to remain in frontline practice rather than divert their skill base towards management roles (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Shanks, Lundstrom & Bergmark, 2014; Wuenschel, 2006). This created a gap in the workforce, and generic managers were brought into the social services to meet management and contracting requirements (Menefee & Thompson, 1994; Sullivan, 2016; Wuenschel, 2006). Amid these changes, business skills including financial management, human resource management and future planning became a normal expectation of managers of social services (Aronson

& Smith, 2011; Germak, 2015; Knee & Folsom, 2012; Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

The literature suggests that non-social work managers are proficient in outworking tasks, making controlled judgements, and undertaking administrative responsibilities, and have a number of transferable generic managerial skills (Austin, 2002; Feit & Holosko, 2013). However, there are also authors who suggest that the lack of direct practice renders them unable to engage with their clinical staff, and somewhat separated from the sector's vision and values (Easton, 2019; Shanks et al., 2015). With these concepts in mind, and in light of the transformed landscape of social service management, it is important to better understand this group of managers, their experiences, their needs and their contributions. The following section will outline the thesis structure in order to provide the reader with an overarching understanding of this written work.

## **Thesis Structure**

The current chapter has framed the topic of this study, and expressed the motivation for undertaking this piece of research. Additionally, it has provided a background to the study and suggested why it is important to understand the experiences of social service managers with qualifications external to social work. The following section will outline the thesis structure and provide key signposts for the reader.

Chapter two contains the literature review, which was conducted as a way to define the study's topic and consider the context in which this study would be situated. It provides a clear understanding of the history of the topic as well as highlighting where the topic is situated within a social and political context.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Subjective ontology paired with an interpretivist approach was employed to locate and understand participants' perspectives of their reality and relationships. The use of qualitative

instruments and thematic analysis ensured that the participants' voice was valued and a rich understanding extracted. Ethical considerations, in addition to limitations of the study design, are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter four presents this study's findings, and arranges them by explaining the seven key themes which emerged throughout the data analysis process. These were: management journey, external influences, internal influences, social work knowledge and interest, transferable skills, advice for future managers, and unanticipated findings.

Chapter five connects this study with the wider body of knowledge as it was presented in the literature review in chapter two. It reflects on participant experiences by outlining the study's key findings, and comparing these findings to the wider knowledge reviewed in this topic area.

Chapter six aims to conclude the thesis by providing a brief summary of the study's key themes as it links them to the primary enquiries of role perception, opportunities, challenges, transferable skills, and additional skills considered required in order to successfully manage social workers, when you are not one yourself. Additionally, it outlines the researcher's reflections on the research process, considers implications of this study on practice and policy and suggests areas of interest for further research.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

The researcher's involvement in social service management led them to consider the motivation and competence of managers with qualifications external to social work. The ongoing prevalence of non-government organisations appointing social service managers, who have not engaged in direct social work practice, has transformed the management landscape within the sector. With this in mind, this study sought to uncover the participants' experience when managing and leading social workers, when their journey had not included completing a social work qualification.

This chapter has acquainted the reader with the study's aims and presented why the researcher was interested in, and concerned about the topic. It provided a brief background regarding social service management historically, the transformation it has undergone in recent decades and the impact on social service management in the present day. It concluded by providing an overview of the structure of the thesis. The following chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the topic area of social work management. In particular it reviews social service management history, tracks the transformation of managerial tasks and the impact this has had on the social service manager role, and discusses social service management education.





## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This study explored the experiences of social service managers in the NGO sector and the opportunities and challenges they face in their roles when they are not a social worker themselves. It considered what transferable skills participants possessed and sought to understand what additional knowledge was required in order for them to be successful managers of qualified social workers. A literature review was conducted as a way to define the study's topic, consider the context in which this study would be situated and ensure that no unintentional replicating of previous studies occurred (Dawson, 2006). Additionally, it provided a foundation in which to consider what research methods and instruments would be most suitable for this type of study (Alston & Bowles, 2003). The following literature review maps social work management through its history, the transformational changes it has undergone and explores where it fits in the current social and political context. Furthermore, it delves into the education of social work managers, both historically and currently, and examines the management needs of the ever-present way social work has engaged in multi-disciplinary teams.

Initial speculation into the topic area began with a mind map. Ideas such as training/education, positive experiences of management, internal/external pressures and questions of manager identity set the scene for future investigation. Preliminary enquiry into these topics began with a broad search of the Massey University's online library website, utilising the 'Discover' function. Searches for articles were sought regarding topics such as social work management and leadership, history of social work, social work management education and social work management identity. After reading and analysing a range of articles and books, the topic of this study was redefined as an idea relating to "what drives social service managers?". This topic change aimed to understand how non-social work trained managers understood the social work profession, and how they related to it. It also considered questions in relation to the ability of a non-social work trained manager to promote social work practice within their organisation. After considerable investigation and reading of

books, articles and policy documents from databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar and utilising the reference lists from like-minded articles, a final change in topic was made and the study's parameters were set. The study's focus would be on the transferable skills of participants, and the opportunities and challenges they faced as managers of social workers, when they were not one themselves.

Social work has significantly changed over time. With roots in the ideas of philanthropy and charity, it has grown into an established profession (Nash, 2001; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). A hallmark of this change is the protected title of 'Social Worker' which was established in 2000 within the United Kingdom (Health & Care Professions Council [HCPC], 2017), and will come into full effect in New Zealand in 2021 (Social Work Registration Board [SWRB], 2019). Social work is a profession that seeks to promote empowerment and advocacy on behalf of others. It has an emphasis on people and positive social change (Akhtar, 2013; Payne, 2005). With internal growth and external social and political pressures throughout the 1980's and 1990's, the profession found itself needing to become more organised, this enacted a major change in leadership and management of the profession (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017). Pressures such as increased drive for efficiency and cost-effectiveness stimulated the appointment of managers from diverse backgrounds (Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017).

The researcher's interest was prompted by the change in management qualifications and practice, seemingly brought about by the influence of managerialism and NPM that promoted business-like ideals and outcome measured contracts. This way of engaging in social work management highlighted the need for managers to be able to develop and run bona-fide businesses in addition to the 'good works' their organisations were engaged in. The following section will provide a background into the history of social work and social work management. It will outline various challenges the sector has encountered and discuss the sector's response to them.

## **Social Work Management History**

Social work management history has a long and interesting narrative. In this section, an exploration of international and New Zealand history of social work and social work management will be undertaken. Specifically, it will describe early social work organisation, the impact of major social issues, systemic changes and the sector's response.

### *International background*

Social work in Canada emerged from the 'neighbourly care' of people, especially during periods of industrialisation and urbanisation (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). While the New Brunswick Poor Law of 1786 made provision for the poor compulsory, those administering support used their own discretion, often to the detriment of those needing their assistance (Whalen, 1972). Like many Western nation's early iterations of organised social response were led by a Christian ethos, particularly up until the 1940s, and social issues were analysed using this lens. Canada has endured many social issues in its history and groups. such as the Settlement and Charity Movements played a large role in defining how they interacted with those who required support (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). The bombing of Halifax in 1917 and the war efforts of both World Wars meant that social work expanded into areas of practice previously unknown (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). Due to the presenting needs of citizens, social work became involved in disaster relief and focussed largely on war veterans and their families. Over time, charity responses and early government casework became insufficient to meet the growing needs of the Canadian population. The State assumed responsibility for social welfare and by the end of the Second World War 75 per cent of all social workers were employed in agencies related to the war. The 1930s brought about the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW); this organisation worked alongside the government to meet the need of qualified social workers in areas of the country that were lacking the profession (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011).

Social work foundations in the USA had a similar history to Canada prior to the 1960s, and experienced comparable effects of industrialism and urbanisation (Abramovitz, 2018). Being heavily involved in two World Wars and the Depression that followed

each, caused social work to re-deploy its efforts into supporting returning soldiers, and the families for whom loved ones would never return (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Akin to Canada and the USA, the United Kingdom (UK) has its social work roots in the work of volunteers and religious efforts. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, they had been a country that lived on and worked the land. With the discovery of coal and the shift in workforce requirements, citizens had to swiftly adapt to being citizens engaged in industrial production (Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009). Terrible working and living conditions coupled with the ruling class' laissez-faire attitude to poverty created an environment where millions suffered and were met with indifference. The English Poor Law 1834 was an effort made by the government to manage the ever-growing health and social concerns of the day (Pierson, 2011; Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009). However, it was based on the premise that poverty-stricken people were afflicted with a moral deficiency and therefore imposed strict, and ultimately detrimental, conditions upon struggling citizens (Pierson, 2011; Young & Ashton, 1998). While amendments were made to this law over the coming decades, it remained in place until the end of World War Two and volunteers continued to be the main source of practical support (Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009).

The Cold War era (1946-1991) brought a social focus on civil defence and restrictions on freedoms in Canada. Political activists both internal and external to the social work profession were driven out of their jobs or underground (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). America's embroilment in the Vietnam War spanned almost 20 years (1955-1975), during which, social work education, training and practice went through a period of severe restriction and financial cuts (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Following on from this, the 1960s brought social work activism to the fore. The Civil Rights movement amongst other social revivals impacted the social work sector in a professional sense, and social workers personally, if you failed to align with the status quo (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). In the UK, the child evacuation of 1939 displaced three million children from their homes as the country attempted to safeguard their children from imminent attack. The ongoing effects of surviving two world wars and a major evacuation created a sudden rise in need, particularly in what we would now understand as mental wellbeing (Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009). Social workers emerged as moral advisors

and sought to promote responsible behaviour, which in turn was expected to alleviate poverty (Pierson, 2011). In Canada, the USA and the UK, the 1940s brought the idea of the Welfare State. A political and social idea promoted as the appropriate way forward. It was a comprehensive programme which aimed to deal with physical needs, health, education and housing. It required high fiscal input but created a situation where welfare was appropriated based on citizenship (Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009).

The Welfare State crisis of the 1970s and 1980s brought severe cutbacks to the social service field across the globe. This was followed by dramatic decentralisation in the 1990s, a move that attacked social programmes and left the social work profession vulnerable (Finkel, 2006). Social work in Canada became ill-equipped to provide strong leadership within the profession and NPM diverted management within the sector towards those with business knowledge and skills (Finkel, 2006). In the USA, issues arose regarding migrants from Communist nations, and social work entered a new era of politically motivated advocacy (Hantz, 1996). President Regan instigated financial policy widely known as the 'trickle-down effect'. Taxation policy designed to reward those in an already financially affluent state, with the promise of affluence for everyone eventually (Osiichuck, 2017). These policies proved ineffective as the economy was unable to grow at the rate required, and social work attempted to serve and support those in need while battling reduced funding and increasing costs. In the UK, the Local Authorities Social Service Act 1970 moved the provision of social services to local authorities. The Act gave them the duty of managing the needs of their constituents within their own budgets (Pierson, 2011). An era of justifying their worth began for the social work profession. This resulted in the sector embarking on a period of functional survival, with this came a need to ensure management was able to meet fiscal, business and contractual obligations (Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

To summarise, internationally, social work and social work management has undergone several major changes. From unorganised voluntary and religious beginnings, to engaging in the provision of the Welfare State and surviving mass scale decentralisation, social work has had to adapt to its new environment while also growing into an established profession. In the wake of ongoing effects from national disasters and political pressures, the balance between the social work profession and

social service organisation has become more polarised (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). In order to remain financially viable, social work has had to take on increased reporting and bureaucratic practices (Pierson, 2011). While the work of social workers is seen as a legitimate and useful profession, the survival of social service organisations internationally is now largely determined by the ability of its manager to be able to engage in all forms of business management (Scottish Government, 2017). The following section will discuss the history of social work and social work management in New Zealand. It will provide comparisons with the international landscape and consider the present-day setting.

### *New Zealand context*

Social Work as a profession finds its foundation in the philanthropic work of the church and the hands of the State. In New Zealand, by 1876, the State held control of welfare arrangements for the 'deserving poor' by way of orphans, widows and old age pensions (McDonald, 1998). Alongside this, various denominations, primarily of the Christian faith, outworked their mission of 'by love serve' and 'saved to serve' by taking in the chronically ill, establishing soup kitchens and visiting the prisons (Davidson, 2004). Prior to social work education being available in New Zealand, a myriad of people performed social work-based tasks. The local police would conduct social control functions such as child foster and adoption checks, and churches provided charity and pastoral care (McDonald, 1998). However, churches often felt that they were the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff as opposed to a fence at the top (Davidson, 2004).

The Welfare State in New Zealand was activated by the Social Security Act 1938. This Act widely expanded the historical government benefits to a comprehensive system designed to ensure vulnerable members of New Zealand's society were financially secure (Lunt, O'Brien & Stephens, 2008). While there had been previous policy to assist widows and orphans, this was the first full scale attempt in New Zealand to create a society where no person, who required it, was left without aid. Throughout its time of popularity, the Welfare State kept unemployment low, new houses were built with space for children to play in the yard, and a positive view of family life was engendered

(Lunt, O'Brien & Stephens, 2008). With the focus on married family life, single or divorced women were not a priority. Social workers employed by the government were able to withhold some benefits and this resulted in a greater reliance on non-government organisations (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018). The needs of communities increased and changed over time, due to shifts in the social, political and economic landscape of the country (Fraser & Simpson, 2014). An idea emerged that social issues could be understood and therefore unilaterally dealt with by the State. Until the 1980s the State continued to believe it held the key to achieving this goal and was the largest employer of social workers in statutory roles, such as child protection and health (Fraser & Simpson, 2014).

The first social work qualification established in New Zealand was at Victoria University in 1949 (Hunt, 2016), 50 years after the USA and UK (McDonald, 1998). Although this diploma was on offer at Victoria University, the rapid growth of the social work sector meant the number of graduates from this programme were not sufficient to meet the presenting needs of employers. This gap in training, particularly for government employed social workers, became an obvious issue and the Department of Education sought to remedy this by establishing Tiromoana, based in Porirua, in 1963 (Staniforth, 2015). Tiromoana was a well sought-after training programme during the 1960s, people came from all over the country to attend. The ongoing need, especially in the north of New Zealand, for social work training prompted Taranaki house, based in Auckland, to be set up in 1974 (Staniforth, 2015). While these centres provided an opportunity for social work training in a time where there was little on offer, they also experienced issues. Tiromoana and Taranaki House were both live-in education experiences where adults were away from their spouses and families for weeks at a time. This environment proved to be contentious and sometimes physically and emotionally unsafe (Staniforth, 2015). Victoria University held the role of the primary tertiary social work educator in New Zealand, until Massey University embedded a four-year Social Work degree in 1976 (Hunt, 2016).

As New Zealand experienced the effect of politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social welfare was converted and reformed on many occasions. The country went from Keynesian welfare at the start of the century which offered security, healthcare and education for

all, to the post-war collapse and neo-liberal redesign at the end of the century which took an open market, business-minded and austere approach (Lunt, O'Brien, & Stephens, 2008). A domestic and international desire for economic and societal change ushered in an era of neo-liberal politics, decentralisation and greater financial expectations on government contracts. Welfare transformed from citizenship eligibility to an expectation that beneficiaries would work and social services underwent a change from government grants to government contracting. Social work has continued its work, walking alongside the citizens of New Zealand. The following section will describe how the profession has undergone its own revolution in the face of external changes and political pressures (Peters, 2017).

### *Systemic change*

The late 1980s brought a concerted neo-liberal shift by the New Zealand government, in line with the USA and UK, towards managerialism and NPM. This is a form of organisation co-ordination which gives more control to managers and less to the professionals they manage (Rogowski, 2011). Managerialism contends that there are core management functions that organisations require to successfully operate, and that these skills are transferable across all organisations (Klikauer, 2015). Klikauer (2015) goes on to explain that managerialism implies that it can meet the needs of all levels of organisation due to its ideology, training and its exclusiveness of managerial knowledge. NPM works hand in hand with managerialism as the method of applying business models and ideals to social services (Lane, 2000). Dunleavy and Hood (1994) describe NPM as a theory that draws on economics and law, and which relies on transparent budgets, quasi-markets and creating competition between providers. NPM focuses on contracting and compliance. At its core it is about governance and how to deliver services effectively (Lane, 2000). In New Zealand, the Treasury briefing papers to incoming governments ('Economic Management' 1984 and 'Government Management' 1987) advanced a number of themes regarding social policy and the role of the public sector (The Treasury, 2019a; The Treasury, 2019b). Dominant themes included free-choice and market efficiency were clearly seen in major legislative reforms including the State Sector Act 1988 and Public Finance Act 1989, which reshaped the face of the State (Belgrave, 2004; O'Brien, 2001).



Domestically and internationally, the neo-liberal agenda affected government contracts and accountability expectations (Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Hooley & Franko, 1990; Shanks et al., 2015). It drew on both Conservatism and Liberalism to promote self-reliance and opportunity for infinite wealth creation. Neo-liberalism expected that all good things could be accomplished by self-regulating free markets and relied on self-motivated citizens fulfilling their economic potential. Neo-liberalism views the government as bound to provide an environment where there are no barriers to fulfilling one's own destiny. It expects the government to redesign market regulations and ensure there is not a drain on property rights through high taxes and lenient social security (Kelsey, 2015). Political environmental pressure and stringent reporting expectations increased responsibility for social services in relation to budgets, understanding markets, administration and risk accountability (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017). An emphasis on strategic planning, business cases and reportable outcomes radically changed the perspective of social service organisations. The need to operate proficiently within the business world became a requirement in order to survive contract renewals and changes in government. Efficient management administration became a crucial part of survival. This has shifted the focus of social service organisations, which were previously primarily focussed on their service users (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999).

Coulshed et al. (2006) describe an idea, which claimed that leaders and managers no longer needed to be social workers themselves. The premise being that as social services became more business-minded, that general managers held the required business skills to successfully operate the organisation. This ideological and practical change challenged the specialisation of the social work profession (Coulshed et al. 2006). A struggle began which separated clinical roles from the leadership and management of social services (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Coulshed et al., 2006; Peters, 2017). With the introduction of strict contracting and reporting, social work management encouraged the continuation of case management practices (Aronson & Smith, 2011). In order to survive in the new landscape, social work, including the

management of social work, became more political, cautious and self-serving (Rank & Hutchison, 2000). The following section will discuss this response further.

### *Response to change*

In an attempt to meet the expectations of funders and needs of the communities being served, business models and ideals were brought into the social service arena (Peters, 2017). Proficiency in communication, technological advances and staff management were highlighted as required skills (Hafford-Letchfield & Lawlor, 2013; Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999; Rank & Hutchison, 2000). Productivity and efficiency became key drivers, and instruments such as online reporting, presentation of services and handling the professional needs of staff became an inescapable part of managing a social service. Additionally, previous key relationships that were built on trust and goodwill were replaced with contractual arrangements (Shanks et al., 2015). This represented a clear shift from grant funding to contracts, a visible link to NPM practices. Managerialism and generic management qualifications became the preferences of funders, causing a culture shift to occur within social service agencies (Coulshed et al. 2006). Principles such as competition, individualism, efficiency and neutralising accountability came to the fore (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015). Values which are contradictory to the inclusive, holistic and equitable vision of the social work profession (Hunt, 2016).

Easton (2019) describes the 'cult' of the generic manager as having sprung from the economy performing badly and the sentiment that the way to increase social service productivity is to manage these services 'properly'. He goes on to mention that some of the issues that arise from being manager-focussed are that generic managers have decreased service delivery knowledge, can be distracted from the service's real purpose, and due to the sectors high demand, generic managers can be both inexperienced or incompetent (Easton, 2019). Management administration of social services is now widely viewed as able to be undertaken competently by anyone with managerial skills and experience (Coulshed et al. 2006). Whereas, social work clinical leadership is expected to be headed by a social worker at a senior level. However, smaller non-government organisations are not always funded sufficiently in order to

have both positions, and therefore both roles fall to the manager whether they are social work-trained or otherwise (Kane, 2001). Political and contractual changes to social service organisations and the clear demarcation of separating leadership and management roles begs the question, do social services require qualified social workers in director-level roles?

Studies exploring the competency of middle managers and the relevance of Master of Social Work (MSW) programmes suggest that social work-trained leaders are crucial to the profession's future (Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999; Shanks et al., 2015).

Interpersonal skills, attitudes and experience were ranked most highly for managers in the social services, however, technical skills such as strategic planning and marketing were considered necessary in top level management roles (Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999). Whilst there are social work management courses and competencies in the international field of social work, there is no such benchmark in New Zealand.

Organisations in the USA offer a human services manager competency framework, this includes overarching themes of community collaboration, executive leadership, resource management and strategic management (The Network for Social Work Management, 2018). While the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) suggests that supervisors work 'within their competency and pursue professional development'. In New Zealand, both the ANZASW and the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) fail to discuss competencies or minimum expectations of social work managers and leaders (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers [ANZASW], 2017; SWRB, 2017). While these organisations are designed specifically to support social workers, and sustain good clinical practice standards, it is curious that they appear to have no public interest in how their social workers are managed and the impact this could have on their ability to ensure quality social work outcomes (Webster, McNabb & Darroch, 2015). The following section will explore social work registration and introduce the prevalence of integrated teams.

### *Recent history*

Professional social work registration in New Zealand became possible in 2003, and until 2019 it was a voluntary action by social workers in New Zealand. With the passing

of the Social Workers Registration Legislation Act 2019 there is a legal obligation that by 2021 all New Zealand social workers will be appropriately registered with the SWRB or cease to use the title 'Social Worker' (SWRB, 2019). This move is in line with the UK where registration is mandatory and the term 'Social Worker' is a protected title by law (HCPC, 2017). Mandatory registration advocates in New Zealand suggest that passing a law to protect the title 'Social Worker' would minimise risk of poor practice, remove unfit social workers, maintain education and competency standards and increase the public's trust in the profession (SWRB, 2018a). However, there is no move to place such a level of expectation or benchmark to perform their role diligently on those who will be managing these social workers. Therefore, it is vital to reflect on the skills that managers of different backgrounds bring with them to their social service management roles and consider how they ensure the clinical needs of their social work staff are met. A lack of appropriate clinical oversight could be unsafe for both the social worker and those they are working alongside.

Integrated teams have become a normal way of delivering social services. Managers are expected to bring together professionals and support staff from a myriad of backgrounds, including health, social and administration to form cohesive teams in order to meet their organisational goals (Rubin, Cohen Konrad, Nimmagadda, Scheyett & Dunn, 2018). Multi-disciplinary team environments have meant that leaders and managers from professions outside of social work have been able and encouraged to take the lead of these integrated teams. While social work has always informally worked alongside other professions and support systems, this move to formalise these teams has meant that other professions have taken over the leadership and management of previously social work specific units (Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015). In light of this, and with the belief that social work is different to other professions (Rank & Hutchison, 2000), further exploration of management and leadership is required in order to understand how successful management of social workers is achieved.

To summarise, social work, and therefore social work management, has undergone a myriad of changes over the course of time. Social and political views of the time have greatly impacted citizens throughout history. At worst, it has created an environment

where people who don't meet exacting standards suffer greatly, and at best it has offered every citizen the same access to health, education, housing and work opportunities. During the Welfare State, social workers had resources widely available in order to meet the needs of their clients. However, after its collapse significant funding and contracting changes redesigned how social work was able to operate. Social work management, historically a role taken on by promoted social workers, found itself unable to keep up with the rapid changes which occurred amid decentralisation and the emergence of managerialism and NPM. Expectations from funders changed to be prescriptive and the role of social service managers had to adapt to meet the business-like expectations. In an attempt to ensure the survival and astute management of social service organisations, managers with qualifications external to social work become more prevalent.

More recently, New Zealand has followed suit with overseas countries in making registration for social workers mandatory, a move that aims to legitimise social work as a profession and ensure appropriate competence is upheld. While social service managers are expected to lead a combination of clinical and non-clinical staff, there has been no move to ensure managers of social workers attain a benchmark of clinical competence. The following section will expand on social work management in the present-day, and outlines both international and domestic contexts. It will consider the differences between management and leadership as well as discussing management styles and the gap that has been left in the sector by the lack of social workers moving into management roles.

## **Social Work Management Today**

The following section will consider social work management in the present-day while discussing both international and domestic contexts. It will outline the key differences between management and leadership roles as well as explain management styles.

Lastly it will discuss the reduction of social workers moving into management roles and reflect on how skills and experience external to social work has filled that gap.

Management and leadership in social work are shaped by both internal professional and external environmental factors. Political, social, and economic aspects alongside current public opinion, influence the needs and wants of communities and the response that is required from social services (Fraser & Simpson, 2014). Internal characteristics such as funding pressures, staff mobilisation and retention, preferred management practices and leadership style, impact on the ability of individual staff members and the collective team's ability to achieve positive outcomes (Shier & Handy, 2016). Shanks et al. (2015) argue that a foundation in social work is essential when leading and managing a social service. They believe that the level of experience gained from a background in direct practice is unable to be replicated and that the core values of social work are intrinsic to those who are in or have been in direct practice (Shanks et al., 2015). However, Menefee and Thompson (1994) suggest that it is difficult to attain the level of skill required for social work leadership and management from frontline work. They believe that the high level and breadth of administration tasks required of managers are unable to be appropriately outworked from frontline practice alone. Frahm and Martin (2009) expand on this idea by proposing that the political and social landscape has required social work management to rethink its paradigm. They go on to recommend that skills such as establishing and maintaining coalitions, building and maintaining external collaboration and creating environments which encourage cooperation, are vital skills in today's management context (Frahm & Martin, 2009).

### *International context*

With the influence of managerialism and marketisation in the international arena there has been a shift from social workers being promoted into leadership roles, to professional managers being appointed (Wuenschel, 2006). This has been perpetuated by the political climate, expectations set by funders and the wide range of administrative tasks required of director level roles. Routinely, physiotherapists, doctors and culturally based services are expected to be led by their respective

professions. However, social services are now routinely managed by professional managers or other health professionals promoted into management roles (Sullivan, 2016; Scottish Government, 2017).

The neo-liberal push in politics led to compliance-based practices for social services. Managerialism came to the fore as 'management by objectives', and efficiency and effectiveness was promoted as best practice for attaining government goals (Rogowski, 2011). While managerialism provided a conduit to meet the strict expectations of funders, it is a limited ideology as it fails to recognise the emotional life of human beings and the relationships crucial to the social work profession (Trevithick, 2014). Managerialism has contributed to an environment of high caseloads, compliance to protocols and increased administration tasks which has created a stiffness in service provision and has left workers time poor (Elofsson, Lundstrom & Shanks, 2016; Trevithick, 2014). Professional judgement and flexibility were replaced with rigid adherence to risk management practices under the umbrella of managerialism (Trevithick, 2014). While protocolisation offers new practitioners security in adhering to practice rules, the rigidity stymies individual creativity and initiative, causing person-centred interventions or case-by-case decisions to be at risk. Additionally, middle level leaders and managers experience being wedged halfway between social work values and organisational expectations (Elofsson et al., 2016). A pressure is created for middle managers between frontline social workers, their professional opinions and expectations, and director level management who are concerned with the strategic picture of the organisation.

#### *New Zealand condition*

New Zealand has had a similar recent history to the rest of the Western world in its social work management practices. Comparable social and political pressures and changes have caused social services to adapt in order to survive the new financial reality of being beholden to government contracts and community donations.

In 2004 'management' was selected by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) as one of the 13 core principles. This showed a clear mandate for the management of social workers to be held in high esteem and therefore carried high

responsibility and expectations of competency. Four years ago, Webster et al. (2015) presented the first in a series of papers designed to discuss the formation of standards for social work management. Due to the complexity of this notion, however, professional standards have yet to be established and adopted within the sector. Leadership and management within the social services have undergone an obvious disconnect, the following section will discuss these concepts.

### *Management versus leadership roles*

Managers in the social service field deal with complex situations on a daily basis (Wonnacott, 2012). They are expected to carry out multiple roles including direct practice oversight, vision casting, stakeholder collaboration, and problem solving (Feit & Holosko, 2013). Management role descriptions commonly include budgeting, communication, human resources, evaluation and legal requirements (Hughes & Wearing, 2017; Martin, Pine & Healy, 1999). Conversely, clinical leadership roles in social services often entail clinical supervision, sector leadership, promoting professional development and problem-solving direct practice issues (Wonnacott, 2012). Clinical leadership roles can also include contractual reporting, finding and maintaining funding sources, public accountability and creating new programmes (Feit & Holosko, 2013). Both of these roles are vital for the safe and continued delivery of service for all social service clients, however, there can be some conflict within organisations regarding how these roles operate. This is especially found in smaller organisations, where management and leadership identities can be combined into one job title due to budgetary restraints.

In the present-day context of social service management, various tasks including human resources, community relations, governance and evaluation must couple with values of dedication, integrity, motivation and credibility in order to be successful (Scottish Government, 2017; Southard, 2016; Wimpfheimer, 2004). This combination of identities requires many director level roles to encapsulate management skills, clinical knowledge and discernment in order to effectively balance the needs of professional staff and the organisation. Managerial ethos versus a person's individual reasons for working alongside and on behalf of vulnerable persons can create a tussle



between succeeding in business and preventing distress (Coulshed et al. 2006). In a sector which is dedicated to empowering and supporting people it is important to understand the wide range of skills, knowledge and values required in order to succeed as a social service manager.

### *Management style*

While management tasks are generally similar across various forms of social services today, the way in which managers conduct themselves can determine the climate and success of a team. There have been many management approaches over the course of history, some of which we still see widely used in organisations today. Frederick Taylor founded a scientific approach: breaking each task into functions, he required each part to be highly efficient (Coulshed et al. 2006). He sought permanent prosperity for both employer and employee, and believed this would be achieved by dividing the worker/management roles, understanding each worker's task, offering targeted training and monitoring that work is achieved in accordance with his rules (Taylor, 1911). Conversely to Taylor's approach, Max Weber spoke of charismatic qualities and vision alongside formalised rules and policies (Coulshed et al. 2006). He believed that devotion to the exceptional or personal magnetism of a manager was a crucial element to attaining positive ends. Weber suggested an "obey me because I can transform your life" ideology (Allen, 2004). Elton Mayo, however, preferred a consultative approach where importance was given to motivating staff by taking a keen interest in social issues and mental wellbeing (Coulshed et al. 2006). Leadership is designed to inspire, increase awareness and help people critically reflect in order to be motivated and perform at their peak. Styles, such as authoritative, deliver a clear direction and provides feedback, whereas affiliative is empathetic and built on communication and trust (Weld, 2012). Democratic leadership seeks consensus through involvement while coaching styles seek to make investments in order to grow an individual's strengths (Weld, 2012). Whichever combination of styles are chosen by a manager, understanding the social work profession and the personal connection each social worker has to their vocation is important when managing social work staff.

Fisher (2009) describes McClelland's three factors for which staff are said to be allied to: power, affiliation and achievement. She goes on to explain that understanding how each staff member is connected to these factors is critical for effective management. Underpinning values of social justice, human rights, cultural respect, empowerment, fairness, advocacy and liberation are at the heart of social work (Hunt, 2016). Both domestically and globally, social work ethics, competency and effecting positive social change are the drivers of the social work profession (Hunt, 2016). Leadership styles including affiliative, democratic and coaching must sit alongside key values of social work, including reflective supervision practices in order to maintain professional integrity (Lawlor, 2013; Weld, 2012). In an ever-changing management landscape, managers of social services will understand their social work staff best when they appreciate these values.

#### *Change in the management landscape*

Social services continue to grow. Yet, while the profession has expanded social workers have often chosen to remain in frontline environments rather than move into management roles (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Shanks et al., 2014; Wuenschel, 2006). Many have preferred to stay in face-to-face contact with the people they journey with in order to provide grassroots support and advocacy. Due to the lower rate of promotion into the management environment, coupled with the lack of specific social service management training, the sector has failed to produce sufficient leaders (Menefee & Thompson, 1994; Sullivan, 2016; Wuenschel, 2006). At present there are a range of other professions in social service management roles. They create a high competition setting during recruitment for the roles due to often holding management qualifications and experience (Wuenschel, 2006). Non-social work managers are practiced in outworking tasks, making controlled judgements, undertaking administrative responsibilities and have a number of transferable generic managerial skills (Austin, 2002; Feit & Holosko, 2013). Whereas, managers with a social work background bring their ongoing involvement and understanding of practice issues, self-awareness from reflexive practice and their underpinning social work values and beliefs (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Patterson, 2015). Within a present-day context, the literature suggests that there is some concern about the ability of managers to

appropriately lead social workers when they themselves have not been one (Shanks et al., 2015). However, it is also recognised that non-social work managers have important skills, external to social work practice, which are crucial to present-day social service organisations (Frahm & Martin, 2009; Menefee & Thompson, 1994).

To summarise, social work management in the present-day has been impacted upon by a variety of internal and external influences. Both internationally and domestically, the political climate has created challenges for traditional routes towards management to remain in place. A rise in business administration tasks created a climate of social workers being reluctant to move into leadership roles. This has ultimately led to management workforce gaps within the sector. Managers from other backgrounds have been in a position to enter into social service management roles and clinical leadership has been relinquished from the role of manager. Management styles are varied, and within a social service which is value based, this has an impact on how organisations both financially survive and stay true to their vision. Differences in knowledge and skill have become apparent between social service manager roles and the roles of their social work staff. The following section will outline social work management education from a historical perspective, while examining both international and domestic environments. It will go on to consider the relevancy of education and discuss present-day knowledge and skill requirements for those who hold management roles in the social services.

## **Social Work Management Education**

Historically, social work leaders have been promoted out of direct practice (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Patterson, 2015). Whether they have been nominated by colleagues, or an unexpected career opportunity arose, social work qualified managers have brought experience of direct practice and social work core values to their roles (McGivern, Currie, Ferlie, Fitzgerald & Waring, 2015). With the emergence of managerialism and NPM, since the 1980s, the skill set required to lead and manage social service organisations has altered (Germak, 2015). An increase in management administration

and strategic focus has caused the role of manager to operate from a business approach. Indeed, how would service delivery occur if there were no organisation or funding available?

New Zealand's recent change in political environment has not curtailed the continuation of neo-liberal ideals. The fifth Labour Government aimed to reduce the negative social effects, but still aligned itself to neo-liberal policy in order to survive the global financial crisis. Whereas, the subsequent fifth National-led Government aimed to entrench neo-liberal ideals in its policy from the outset (Roper, 2005). A combination of negative financial impacts including New Zealand's private debt and the Canterbury earthquakes, coupled with unstable international market, encouraged neo-liberal ideals to be embedded in both domestic and international policy. Even after the global financial crisis, the general belief prevailed that neo-liberal economic and social policy was the most reliable way to move forward successfully (Roper, 2005). Business ideals were held in high esteem and business skills continued to be a standard expectation of managers and leaders within the social work field (Germak, 2015; Knee & Folsom, 2012). Social work leaders and managers have undergone changes to their role, professional identity and organisational expectations (Patterson, 2015; Ward & Bailey, 2016). These changes have required current and prospective leaders and managers to focus on education and up-skilling in order to adapt appropriately within their role. New Zealand experienced a change in government in 2017. The new government has made major inroads towards a social well-being approach, in contrast to the social investment approach of the previous administration. However, it is yet to be seen how far the new government is able and willing to make changes, whilst also living with the realities of a global neo-liberal landscape. The following explores social work management education in light of international settings and New Zealand experiences. It goes on to consider the relevance of education and reflects on present-day requirements in order to better understand the historical practices and current education expectations for social work managers.

### *International setting*

Routes into social work historically came via complementary occupations or philanthropic endeavours (Dahle, 2012). With social work leaders and managers requiring both social work and business knowledge in the present day (Germak, 2015), it is important to consider what the knowledge sources are and whether they are sufficient. Competency and proficiency of managers and leaders are key indicators of successful learning of appropriate knowledge. There are a range of knowledge bases including experiential learning and various levels of academic teachings alongside multiple paths into leadership and management roles, including promotion, secondment and recruitment (Austin, 2018).

In a Swedish study of social service manager competence, it was found that almost all managers interviewed held a professional social work qualification (Shanks et al, 2014). This denoted that the majority of social service managers in Sweden had been promoted into these roles. One assumption that can be drawn from this is that these managers had a good handle on social work knowledge in which they were able to bring into their performance in a manager role. Additionally, while only 25 per cent of subjects had undertaken post-graduate study, 81 per cent had been involved in short courses designed specifically to aid their leadership and management abilities (Shanks et al., 2014). This would suggest that management skills and knowledge are important to Swedish managers, however, constraints such as being time poor and holding a high level of responsibility means that completing a higher qualification is not often engaged in.

### *New Zealand experiences*

The first social work qualification in New Zealand was commenced in 1949 (Hunt, 2016). However, while the first New Zealand Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme commenced in Otago in 1976 (Hooley & Franko, 1990), social work management training and qualifications, even up until the 1990s, were not well organised (Coulshed et al. 2006). A general culture of promoting social workers into management roles was in place for many decades and, in many ways, seen as sufficient training to be a manager.

Today, advanced social work short courses and academic qualifications are available in New Zealand including, Massey University's PGDip Social Service Supervision, and University of Auckland's PGDip of Social and Community Leadership. These courses assist managers and leaders to broaden their knowledge and skills in order to meet the demands of the present-day role (Massey University, 2018a; University of Auckland, 2018). Both professional social workers and professionals from other disciplines are able to enrol in various versions of MSW programmes throughout New Zealand, an academic qualification designed for senior practice and management level roles (Massey University, 2018b).

Management and leadership are more than simply protocols and processes; they are experiential, and require reflection and growth (Bliss, Pecukonis & Snyder-Vogel, 2014). A combination of academic and in-work experience would be most beneficial for those who do not already hold a recognised social work qualification. Massey University's Master of Social Work (Applied) encompasses theoretical, research and practical elements in order for non-social work trained professionals to become social workers and then to move on to proficient leaders and managers in the social service field (Massey University, 2018c). Additionally, many organisations provide in-post management training and mentoring, a type of upskilling which promotes professional development while accommodating the restrictions of a full-time role.

### *Relevance of education*

While education is a useful way of gaining knowledge and skills, it is crucial that various forms of education are reviewed and updated to ensure the relevance of the course and the competency of the students. In the USA a study was undertaken regarding the sufficiency of knowledge gained within an MSW programme for leadership and management roles. It suggested that teachings on communication, empowering others and self-awareness were skills transferable from direct practice (Knee & Folsom, 2012). Skills, it ascertained, which were crucial to leadership and management roles within social services. The study also suggested that although participants were enrolled in a management level academic qualification, 80 per cent of students planned to remain in direct practice (Knee & Folsom, 2012). This particular finding from this study

supports the notion that there are insufficient qualified social workers coming through into management roles. It goes on to suggest that the MSW programme, which was set up to aid students to become leaders and managers, is primarily being utilised to gain higher-level knowledge and a higher academic qualification for people who wish to continue in direct practice (Knee & Folsom, 2012).

With the focus of these MSW students being direct practice, it is worth considering the merits of short-term courses or academic qualifications for all managers of social services. In doing so, it is vital to understand how far a short course can go in terms of covering the breadth of knowledge required from social work managers in the current context (Ward & Bailey, 2016). Business skills are crucial to the survival of social service organisations. However, business skills and knowledge are not underpinned by the human values and ethics that social work is founded on (Germak, 2015). Business ideals and skills are rooted in effectiveness, profitability, considering opportunity cost and managing risk. They are required in order to run the business side of a social service but can be abrasive against social justice values (Lane, 2000). In order to find a way to marry the two, an overarching structure and regulation may assist in promoting key issues and collaboration.

### *Present day*

With changes in social service structure, the professionalism of the social work sector and the ever-changing social and political climate, it is difficult to believe that solely business models or social work models will be sufficient to tackle present day and future issues in social service delivery. The challenge of juggling reporting, business administration tasks, leading people, keeping abreast of professional body expectations and delivering a 'top-notch' service requires a vast array of skills and talents not found in traditional social work or business training programmes alone. Peters (2017) proposes that there continues to be a disconnection between social work leadership models and practical management practices. He goes on to suggest that embracing a new integrated identity could give the social work field the confidence and clarity to raise the standards and expectations of social work leadership and management education (Peters, 2017).

There has been some interest in New Zealand in the development of standards for social work leadership and management, underpinned by the International Federation of Social Worker's standards (Webster et al., 2015). Webster et al. (2015) suggest a set of generic competencies for all managers of social services, something akin to the competency structure of that which registered social workers adhere to. A framework that could consider and promote the collaboration of business ideals and the supporting values and mission of social work. However, to date, there has not been an agreement in the sector regarding this notion. The emergence of social work management courses and practice business management courses aim to meet some of this need. Nevertheless, further investigation into the experiences of managers and the skills they already possess is required to understand how best to meet the needs of social services, their managers and their staff.

To summarise, social work management knowledge and skills have adapted over the course of history. In Sweden, it is normal for almost all managers to hold a social work qualification, but they are also required to have engaged in higher learning specifically to expand their leadership and management abilities. In New Zealand, training for social work managers was un-organised up until the 1990s, however, now there is a range of short courses and academic qualifications offered across the country and by correspondence. In America, interpersonal skills have been found to be transferable from direct practice into management roles, yet most students enrolled in an MSW programme intend to remain in direct practice roles. In the present-day there is a need for managers to hold both social work and business administration bodies of knowledge if they are to be successful in navigating their organisations. Ongoing professional development concerning these key skills is not only prudent, but necessary in order for managers to keep abreast of the ever-changing nature of their roles. The following section will outline the collaborative practice for which social work is actively involved in: multi-disciplinary team (MDT) working. It will provide a description of what an MDT is, consider the political influences and discuss the management of MDTs. It will go on to discuss identity and difficulties raised within an MDT and reflect on education requirements for those leading such a team.



## Management and Multi-disciplinary Teams

Social work has its roots in collaborative practice. As first a philanthropic effort through to the present-day profession, social work has a history of engaging in multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) (Frost, 2017; Frost, Robinson & Anning, 2005; Ward & Bailey, 2016).

Social work has been working alongside other professions such as health, law enforcement and family support systems since the profession's infancy. Advocating by way of collaboration and sometimes agitating various individuals, groups and professions for the betterment of clients. In their daily work, social workers liaise with and work alongside both government and non-government organisations and seek to mediate and negotiate on behalf of an individual or group (Frost, 2017). While social work has been involved in first organic then structured MDT working since its beginning, in recent decades that MDTs have become the expected way of delivery services in communities (Giles, 2016; McDonald, 1998). The following section will provide a brief description of MDTs, political influence, the management of MDTs, difficulties MDTs raise and management education requirements when leading an MDT.

### *Multi-disciplinary teams, a description*

MDTs are a group of people with varying occupations who work together to reach common goals (Frost, 2017; Giles, 2016). There are many variations of MDTs including different professions with one manager, individuals seconded from other teams with multiple managers involved, and ad-hoc groups who come together for a common purpose then return to their usual roles. Objectives and values in MDTs vary widely. Influence of funders, organisation management, professional regulations and individual expectations of hierarchy can enhance or disrupt the effectiveness of the team (Hudson, 2002). The benefits of a well-run MDT include early intervention opportunities, any door is the right door, group input and expertise on difficult issues and collaboration across many sectors (Bamford & Griffin, 2008). They are often used in order to provide a wide range of support within budgetary constraints.

The opposite of MDTs is groups that seek to secure the exclusive ownership of knowledge. For instance, in the 1800s the medical profession sought to accomplish

medical dominance. They achieved this through subordination of clients, limitation of knowledge and exclusion of peers (Reeves, MacMillan & van Soeren, 2010). In doing so, they were able to secure their knowledge and instigate a hierarchy of knowledge and power (Reeves et al., 2010). For all intents and purposes, this occurs in all groups that seek to establish themselves as separate to others. In more recent decades, many different groups have sought to become established professions. Social work is one such group, it has created exclusivity through the establishment of professional bodies, registration protocols and protecting titles through legislation (Connolly, 2001). With this in mind, it is the dilemma of multidisciplinary teams to negotiate and navigate the coming together of many separate ideas, perspectives and motivating factors (Bamford & Griffin, 2008).

### *Political influence*

Neo-liberal based contracts demanded MDTs in order for service delivery to become more efficient. Community and State level services responded by reorganising in order to survive (Austin, 2018). Case management, already in use, became the preferred method of managing outcomes and workload, one consequence being that previous social work-specific tasks were delegated to various non-social work members of the MDT (Aronson & Smith, 2011). Case management is where one person has the overall responsibility for the successful outcome when working with a client, they hold the case in their workload and are expected to organise other services or professionals where required. Social work's natural state is in cooperative and collaborative practice (Frost, 2017; Frost, Robinson & Anning, 2005). The perpetuation of MDTs has changed the way professionals interact with each other, and how managers manage their staff. Engrained hierarchies, power struggles and clashing professional identities within the team continue to be an ongoing challenge for management (Roberts, Ward, Patel, York & Partridge, 2018).

### *Management of multi-disciplinary teams*

In order for MDTs to thrive, managers and leaders need to understand what underpins this particular type of team and what key features must be instilled. MDTs are suggested to be a positive alternative to community care as they provide a wider range

of skills and knowledge than previous individual professional models (Carpenter, Schneider, Brandon & Wooff, 2003). MDTs require each individual team member to identify more strongly with the team's purpose than their own professions purpose and to operate from a 'team' approach (Carpenter et al., 2003; Hall, van der Zalm & Patterson, 2016). In order for this to occur, managers and leaders must provide collaborative leadership, reaffirm the core value of appreciating difference and ensure each member has clarity of their role (Carpenter et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2016; Rubin et al., 2018). By doing these things, individual professions within the team experience reduced isolation and benefit from learning from each other as opposed to gatekeeping knowledge (Carpenter et al., 2003).

There are many advantages of working in conjunction with other disciplines, for both the people they are working alongside and the team itself (Bywaters, McLeod, Fisher, Cooke & Swann, 2011). Working effectively in an MDT requires a holistic approach (Frost, 2017). This 'whole world' view prevents focussing on singular issues as if they are unaffected by or are not affecting other facets of a person's life. Advantages such as early intervention, quick entrance to social care and increased quality of care are positive outcomes for clients of MDTs (Bywaters, McLeod, Fisher, Cooke & Swann, 2011). Managers and leaders of MDTs have an outward focussed perspective. They strive for innovation, collaboration across unusual boundaries and expect collective responsibility (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Roberts, Ward, Patel, Yorke & Partridge, 2018). They understand that not one profession holds all the answers and urge team members to learn off each other and through their extended networks (Hudson, 2002; Reeves et al., 2010). Managers must foster a climate of trust, this allows the team to information share, skill share and become interdependent (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Frost, 2017). When individual control is reduced, hierarchy becomes less important and the 'team' becomes the acceptable way to engage (Bamford & Griffin; Frost, 2017; Reeves et al., 2010). Managers of MDTs have a challenging role, however, a well-run MDT engenders benefits such as reflexive practice, cost savings and more easily integrating a psycho-social perspective into strategic planning (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Rankin, Barron, Lane, Mason, Sinclair & Bishop, 2011).

### *Identity and difficulties*

Challenges are also experienced within MDTs. Social workers experience an increased level of conflict, competing demands on their time and resources, as well as incompatible requests for service (Carpenter et al., 2003). MDTs expect professions, such as social work, to surrender their identity to a certain extent in order to reduce hierarchy (Hudson, 2002). However, as Hudson (2002) states, this proves to be very difficult as this surrender is at odds with protecting one's own profession. Hall et al. (2016) and Fry (2010) explain that while allied health takes up 11 per cent of all District Health Board staff in New Zealand, in a key MDT atmosphere, health settings are not naturally supportive of social work life. In these environments non-health-based roles are seen as lacking (Hall et al., 2016) and a combination of medical dominance, tension and feeling invisible make it difficult for social workers to feel part of the team (Fry, 2010). Managers of MDTs are required to promote the needs of the team over and above all else, however managing perceptions and expectations of status and professional power is not a simple task (Hall et al., 2016). Other challenges when leading an MDT of any description include people's prior understanding and background within teams, the tensions between individual and collective accountability and administration issues such as funding and organisational strains (Bamford & Griffin, 2008).

### *Management education and multi-disciplinary teams*

Education regarding MDTs, and the specific team the worker is part of, is beneficial. Topics such as preconceived ideas, team dynamics, cultural change, benefits and sustainability all aim to help team members understand their own part of the team and the importance of working together (Hall et al., 2016). Managers are expected to provide education, direction and guidance for their teams (Hall et al., 2016). However, Reeves et al. (2010) states that little leadership training, specifically for MDTs has been available to date. Managers and leaders of social service organisations need the skills, knowledge and experience to bring together social work knowledge, other professional knowledge and business administration skills. They constantly juggle

these various needs on top of managing the day-to-day dynamics of MDTs and ensuring they are meeting their client's needs.

To summarise, MDTs are a common and purposeful way for workers, both clinical and non-clinical, to come together to share their knowledge and skills in aid of a common goal. They offer a structure in which colleagues can draw from each other's strengths in order to provide clients early intervention and comprehensive support. Political influences on contracting and preferred methods of working have taken standard social work multi-profession collaboration and moved it into a structured and focussed expectation of teamwork. Social work managers are therefore regularly engaging in MDT management, an arrangement where they ask workers to bring their skills, yet primarily focus on the team's vision and goals. Managers have to understand the skills and knowledge each member brings to the team, work to foster trust and encourage the appreciation of difference brought about by the eclectic mix of workers. MDTs provide an opportunity for a macro approach towards a support need, and encourages inter-team learning. Difficulties surrendering professional identity and the desire to protect one's own profession create challenges for managers of MDTs. Education regarding removing barriers between workers, managing cultural change and managing day-to-day dynamics would be advantageous, but is not common. This section has discussed MDTs, their benefits and difficulties. It has gone on to consider the management of MDTs and has highlighted the prominence of leading this type of team in present-day social work management. The following summary will provide an overview of this chapter and introduce the reader to chapter three of this study, methodology.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This literature review provided an in-depth foundation from which the study was designed. The gathering of both international and domestic knowledge has garnered a clearer understanding of social work management history, present-day context,

education journey and involvement in MDTs. This literature review has highlighted major themes including political influence both domestically and globally, the impact of both NPM and managerialism, as well as human rights movements. It has described how social work management has adopted business models to adapt to meet the pressing needs of organisations and funders while balancing the expectations of clients and the professions they manage.

The breadth of the literature review allowed the researcher to gain crucial insight into suitable research methods and aided in mapping a clear pathway to meet the study's objectives. A full account of this study's methodology is provided in chapter three, which outlines the study's ontology, epistemology, chosen data gathering instruments and data analysis techniques. It concludes by reflecting on this study's ethical and cultural considerations.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This study explored and documented the experiences of social service managers with qualifications external to social work, who manage social workers. It aimed to discover the transferable skills they brought to their roles, and understand the opportunities and challenges they faced in social service manager roles. When undertaking research regarding leadership competencies, management role and social work management identity, qualitative instruments are largely the preferred method (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Shanks et al., 2015). This is due to the aim of gaining participants' experiences, directly rather than discretely (Blaikie, 2010).

This chapter will outline the theoretical perspectives which underpin this study, discuss the research design and explain the participant recruitment process. It will go on to describe the data collection and analysis process used by this study and will conclude by outlining the study's ethical considerations and limitations.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

The following section will outline the overarching theoretical perspectives adopted, and the choice of a subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology are explained.

#### *Ontology*

Ontology is the study of being or reality; it studies how we, as humans, view reality and discerns whether we see it from a subjective or objective paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When considering the ontology of this study, a decision had to be made regarding which paradigm suited its aims: was testing a hypothesis and measuring statistical data the focus, or was understanding people's stories and their perceptions more closely aligned? An objective paradigm sees reality as made up of solid things that can be measured and tested. Whereas, a subjective reality comprises perceptions

and interactions of living subjects (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, it became apparent that the historically and culturally located accounts of reality, that is the subjective paradigm, were best suited to be the underpinning ontology.

O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) describe the subjective perspective as the assumption that reality is created by the understanding of individuals or groups as they interact with each other and their environment. They go on to explain that people’s background influences how they distinguish things in life, so that even when two people are party to the same phenomenon, there is no singular experience (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). A subjective perspective was in line with this study’s aims, as it seeks to locate and explain behaviours, attitudes, experiences and interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Social Work is a profession which has its emphasis on people and positive social change (Payne, 2005). However, due to the social and political changes of the 1980s and 1990s, management and leadership in social services were forced to adapt in order for organisations to survive (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017). Due to the major change evident in social service management and leadership, the researcher was interested in exploring management education, values, identity and practices when operating in the social service field. The subjective paradigm fits well within the study’s aims of uncovering the transferable skills and the opportunities and challenges of social service managers who hold qualifications external to social work.

### *Epistemology*

Epistemology concerns our view of how we might obtain valid knowledge, it is the study of knowledge. Epistemology interacts with ontology, as how we conceptualise knowledge goes hand in hand with how we will discover knowledge (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). This study considered two epistemological positions: the positivist approach and the interpretivist approach. Each was weighed against the subjective ontological paradigm and the study’s aims in order to find a good fit. The positivist approach explains principles and laws, it is a rigid approach that explains the observed reality. Whereas, the interpretivist approach, interprets and seeks to understand



relationships (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). An interpretivist approach is unable to ignore the individual voice and intends to discover how people interpret their world (Walliman, 2016). It suggests that you can never truly have an up to date answer under this approach as humans are constantly changing and this affects this perception and interpretation of their world (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). In essence, the interpretive approach looks at multiple realities, perspectives of different individuals, and couples this with contextual understanding, interpretation of data and the phenomenon under investigation. It then establishes and considers the impact of the researcher’s involvement on the data collected (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015).

In summary, this study explored the perspectives of a group of managers, and the opportunities and challenges they faced in their roles when they are not a social worker themselves. It considered what transferable skills these managers possessed and sought to understand what additional knowledge was required in order to be successful managers of qualified social workers. This type of study is exploratory and inquisitive at its core. It required an approach that brought together history, context and experiences in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation. In order to glean personal accounts, personal perceptions and understand personal realities, a subjective ontology and an interpretivist epistemology approach was required. These key theoretical approaches underpinned the way in which the study was designed and guided the selection of appropriate research instruments. The following section will outline the chosen research design and explain why qualitative methods were best suited to this study.

## **Research Design**

The following section will explain this study’s research design. It will describe what qualitative research is, and why this study adopted this form of research as ‘best fit’.

### *Qualitative research*

Qualitative methods begin with experiences first and usually does not assume a hypothesis (Alston & Bowles, 2003; Tolich & Davidson, 2011). It seeks to grow knowledge throughout the research process and concentrates on understanding information as it presents itself (Punch, 2006). The interpretivist epistemology chosen for this study and qualitative methods work well alongside each other due to their shared values of seeking people's perspectives, understanding experiences and expecting researcher impact (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015; Prasad, 2005). Unlike quantitative methods which plan surveys and collects outputs, the qualitative approach chosen in this study utilised conversational instruments in order to gently extract information from participants. This approach also allows for rich dialogue and additional disclosures by participants, which the researcher may not have thought to ask about (Prasad, 2005). This study has adopted qualitative methods to work in conjunction with a subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology, as they are complimentary and seek the same ends (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Utilising a qualitative approach brings considerations and restrictions, for example: there is no way to exclude researcher impact within data collection, it is regularly a costly exercise and as it often takes a micro perspective, it can ignore larger social or political issues of the day (Alston & Bowles, 2003; Vivar, McQueen, Whyte & Armayor, 2007). Qualitative methods include the researcher as part of the data collection, there is no anonymous participation or anonymous observation (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This means that the values, beliefs and mannerisms of the researcher will impact on how the participants interact with data collection. In order to minimise this disturbance, the researcher was aware of their potential impact and spent time prior to the commencement of each interview purposefully preparing. This preparation was not able to exclude all bias but achieved some level of neutrality by the researcher 'parking' their own values and assumptions prior to the interview, then 'picking' them back up at the conclusion. Qualitative methods can be costly, this is due to the need for either the researcher or participant to travel in order to conduct the interview and finding and paying for the use of appropriate public spaces. In an effort to reduce the costs generated by this study the researcher limited the participants' geographical

location to the lower North Island of New Zealand. Additionally, the researcher sought free or low-cost public spaces to meet, including libraries. However, it became apparent during recruitment that most participants wished to engage in this study in their own space, and therefore the costs associated with location were greatly reduced. Due to the specific nature of the study's aims and the choice of qualitative methods, the study was at risk of ignoring wider social issues. This occurs when the aims of the study and data collected are so specific that there is little room for understanding outside of this. This study sought to explore experiences of a systematic change, this in itself helped to situate the study in both a micro and macro worldview. The gathered data and its interpretation were not only informed by the experiences of the participants, but also shed light on the wider systematic shift within social service management.

This section outlined the qualitative approach adopted by this study in order to appropriately meet its aims. The next section will describe the participant recruitment phase of this study. It will explain the planned approach and the amendments that were required in order to attract sufficient participants. It will outline the participant group, sampling method, invitation process, selection criteria and the need for the study to employ a secondary recruitment process.

## **Participant Recruitment**

The following section will describe the participant recruitment phase of this study. It will outline the participant group, sampling method, invitation process, selection criteria and the need for the study to employ a secondary recruitment process.

O'Leary (2017) advises to clearly define the population group in order to ensure accurate data. In this study, participants were sought who were managers/kaiwhakahaere of non-government social service organisations, who held qualifications external to social work, with at least two years' management/leadership experience. They were also required to manage a multi-disciplinary team with at least

one qualified social worker and be available to interview in the lower North Island of New Zealand. A study approval questionnaire was developed to ensure all potential participants met the criteria prior to setting an interview (Appendix 5).

Selection of participants followed the availability convenience sampling method, within the parameters stated above. This method allows anyone who is suitable to participate and available to take part, be approved as a participant (Tolich & Davidson, 2011; Schreier, 2018). It was utilised for this study due to the time and resource restraints on managers of social services.

Initial invitation letters (Appendix 2), information sheets (Appendix 3) and consent forms (Appendix 4) were sent to umbrella organisations in order to disseminate the study's information effectively. Umbrella organisations including but not limited to Drug and Alcohol Practitioners' Association Aotearoa New Zealand, Community Networks Aotearoa, and the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services were contacted to this end. The researcher provided a brief resume as part of the study's information sheet, in order to acquaint potential participants with their academic qualifications and management experience. This was designed to create a positive rapport and reduce any potential negative impact on the researcher/participant relationship (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston, 2014).

Potential participants were invited to contact the researcher and register their interest in taking part in the study. Following the written invitation to take part, potential participants contacted the researcher. The first three interested parties who met the participant selection criteria were recruited into the study. A total of five potential participants contacted the researcher to discuss the study further from the initial recruitment process. However, due to either not meeting the selection criteria or ceasing communication with the researcher, two of the potential participants were not recruited into the study.

The researcher was unable to attract sufficient participants during the initial recruitment phase, and the decision was made after discussion with supervisors to undertake a secondary recruitment phase. Additional umbrella organisations were contacted, with a focus on large nation-wide faith-based social services and, as before,

were asked to disseminate the study's details throughout their networks. Snowball sampling was also employed as a way of identifying additional potential participants by referral from participants already involved in the study (Corbetta, 2003; Schreier, 2018). Managers, as part of their community development role, have strong links in their own field and therefore were able to refer the researcher to other potentially suitable participants. Unfortunately, snowball sampling garnered no additional appropriate candidates. However, convenience sampling by way of umbrella organisations offered two additional candidates who were approved to be part of the study. A total of five candidates were approved for this study, a small number but a number deemed sufficient after discussion with supervisors.

To summarise, this section has discussed the selection requirements for this study and has gone on to describe the convenience sampling method employed during the first recruitment phase. Additionally, it has outlined the need for a secondary recruitment phase, the additional contact to umbrella organisations and the snowball sampling method utilised in order to garner five suitable participants. The following section will discuss how this study undertook data collection.

## **Data collection**

The following section will reflect on the data collection phase of this study. It will discuss the use of semi-structured interviews and an interview schedule, managing research impact and how member checking was employed to ensure the participant voice remained the focus.

### *Interviewing*

Interviews were arranged between the researcher and each participant and initially were to occur in public spaces, with one being undertaken at a public library. Due to time restraints on the part of the participants and their management roles, most participants asked to be interviewed in their own office spaces. This request was

discussed and approved by the research supervisors and the interviews proceeded. At the beginning of the interview the researcher drew the participant's attention to the Consent Form, and the information outlined in the Information Sheet. These documents described the study as voluntary, and explained clearly the consent process and how to withdraw consent. Each participant agreed and signed a consent form prior to the interview progressing.

A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 6) was used to facilitate the interviews. This approach is a flexible interaction and it is similar to an everyday conversation but has a clinical technique designed to tailor the conversation to discuss topics loosely set by the researcher (Gomm, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This study's interview schedule contained prompts for the researcher and a list of questions, the order of which was tailored in each interview to encourage an uninterrupted flow of conversation (Gomm, 2008). A level of rapport was built between the researcher and participant in order to facilitate disclosure of information. Participants were able to answer in their own words and had the freedom to provide unexpected answers (O'Leary, 2017; Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

### *Researcher impact*

The researcher's involvement in facilitating the discussion will have had an effect on the way in which data was volunteered during the interview (Gomm, 2008). Their worldview and professional skills influenced the interview structure, a phenomenon true of all subjective research and one which has an unavoidable impact on data collection. Additionally, the researcher had an asymmetrical power relationship in the semi-structured interview setting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher and participants were not equal partners in the interaction due to setting the agenda, and the researcher's involvement determined the way in which the interview was carried out (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, measures such as prepping, debriefing and member checking via way of transcript release were taken in this project to minimise any data distortion.

Preparation sessions were engaged in by the researcher before each interview. This was a self-reflective exercise which aimed to assist the researcher to shed their own

beliefs and values of managers and focus on the study's aim. This was a crucial step in the data collection phase so that the researcher could be present in the interview, and cause the least amount of intended or unintended impact on each participant. De-briefing sessions between the study's researcher and supervisors occurred mid-way through the interview phase and at the conclusion. These sessions occurred during standard supervision meetings and were designed to be reflective and challenging for the researcher. They provided an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on their mannerisms, and the language used within the interviews in order to consider the impact these were having on the participants, and therefore the data collection. Additionally, these sessions gave an opportunity for early hypothesis to be considered and provided shape to the remaining interviews (Gomm, 2008; O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015).

### *Member checking*

While only one researcher conducted the interviews, there was a member checking protocol in place to ensure validity with regards to the data collected. Member checking was employed in order to ensure that participants were content with the view of the research (Creswell, 2003; Gomm, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A collaborative reflection relationship was fostered with each participant to ensure they confirmed and approved their interview transcript, which in turn ensured accurate data collection (Creswell, 2003). Member checking takes results of the research back to the participants to make sure they think it is accurate (Creswell, 2003). This affords participants a chance to engage in the findings of the research, and ask questions of the study so that the account resonates with others, not just the researcher (Creswell, 2003; Ritchie et al., 2014). Additionally, member checking is a crucial element to undertaking any research with Māori participants, as there must be no part of the data collection that has not been seen and approved to ensure the notions of protecting Mana and Tino Rangatiratanga are respected (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

For the purposes of this study, member checking was achieved by the researcher emailing each participant their verbatim transcript and providing participants the opportunity to review, edit and clarify their transcript. Once the transcripts were

finalised, each participant signed the Review of Transcript Release Form (Appendix 7), which allowed the transcript to be used for data analysis and reporting. Weight was given to the member checking process within this study as it was understood that once the research was published it would be in the public arena, unable to be recalled by the researcher or the participants (David & Sutton, 2004; Ritchie et al., 2014).

Qualitative research has its strength in validity, and the validity of this research project has come from ensuring that the data collected was accurate from the point of view of the participants (Creswell, 2003; Gomm, 2008).

To summarise, this section has provided an account of this study's data collection methods. It has explained the use of semi-structured interviews and a loose interview schedule in order to ensure participants were able to provide robust and sometimes unexpected answers. It went on to discuss the impact of the researcher within the data collection phase and outlined the prepping, de-briefing and reflection techniques employed in order to minimise this impact. Lastly, it reflected on the member checking protocol this study has employed and explained the importance that this study has put on ensuring the participant voice has been carefully and truthfully portrayed throughout the course of this thesis. The following section will highlight the data analysis phase and explain the type of analysis undertaken in this study.

## **Data Analysis**

The following section will provide an explanation of the data analysis phase undertaken for this study. It will discuss the researcher's involvement in reflective practice and examine inductive data analysis and its use in this study. It will go on to explain how this study employed basic coding to aid in its thematic analysis of the collected data.



### *Reflective analysis*

At the conclusion of the first three interviews, the researcher took part in a reflective analysis session with the study supervisors. This was intended to assist the researcher develop an insight regarding the researcher's interactions with the participants thus far, and the impact they had personally had on the process. In this session, the researcher reflected on their role in the interview process and the participants' willingness to engage with the interview schedule questions. Furthermore, the researcher discussed the interesting nature of the conversations and reflected on how each interview was similar or different from the others.

The reflective analysis session gave opportunity for the researcher to identify initial themes and consider the direction of the remaining interviews by seeking a tentative hypothesis (David & Sutton, 2004). A strength of the qualitative approach rests in the ability to constantly compare latest findings with tentative explanations from earlier findings (David & Sutton, 2004). Tentative hypothesis was utilised throughout the interview phase to add depth to the analysis process. Once all interviews were completed, the voice recordings were transcribed verbatim for data analysis; additionally, all handwritten notes taken by the researcher were partnered with the appropriate transcript.

### *Inductive data analysis*

Inductive data analysis builds an understanding of the relationships within a dataset by engaging with the data and looking for patterns (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). It is different from a deductive style of analysis, used often in quantitative studies, to find variables and outcomes (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). Inductive data analysis suggests that it has found the truth, and attempts to interpret and theorise its findings free from pre-existing theoretical interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was an important difference for this study, as the aim was to reveal personal experiences and understand opportunities and challenges free from the researcher's views. Inductive data analysis undertaken within this study by multiple readings of the interview transcripts gave the researcher an opportunity to locate patterns within the data

collected. This study sought to reveal, interpret and, from this interpretation, develop recommendations for real life application.

### *Basic coding*

Basic coding is a shorthand description that you apply to different parts of your collected data in order to provide a quick reference to themes. This was used alongside thematic analysis in order to track themes as they were drawn out by the researcher (David & Sutton, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Described as setting up an uncomplicated view of analysing data, basic coding was employed to scrutinise themes, look for causes/explanations, and relationships among people and emerging constructs (David & Sutton, 2004). Decisions were made reflectively throughout the analysis process regarding what counts as evidence towards each theme.

Basic coding was first employed during the interview phase as a way of denoting 'speculations and hunches' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A short example transcript was fully coded at the commencement of the analysis phase, so that the researcher had a standardised moderation tool (Gomm, 2008). The researcher was then able to code each transcript, with the aid of their observation notes and example transcript, a process which provided a rich and reliable set of codes.

### *Thematic analysis*

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, thematic data analysis was chosen in order to draw out both obvious and covert themes. This type of analysis grows a framework during the process in which to compare and contrast data (Gomm, 2008). Themes are things that people think, feel and act out in most situations. As they are constant, they are able to be relied upon to suggest beliefs and behaviours in different contexts (Gomm, 2008). A theme captures something important within the data in relation to the research question and is replicated in some form of pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen for this study in order to extrapolate and define patterns into a well-ordered and accessible summary.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as creating a thick explanation of the data. They go on to explain that due to the analysis not being beholden to a

particular theory, it allows for social and psychological interpretation and generates unanticipated results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conversely, the disadvantages of thematic analysis include: not providing enough evidence for a robust analysis, the analysis process not aligning to the overarching values of the study and a tendency to summarise key questions used in the interview phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These disadvantages can be seen as primarily instigated by the person conducting the analysis. It was crucial for the researcher of this study to properly understand the process of thematic analysis in order to provide a robust and well-evidenced analysis of the data.

Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse and report patterns. It must follow a structure in order for others to understand the analytical approach taken and be able to compare it to other studies (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study utilised a six-phase thematic analysis process, described by Braun and Clarke (2006), in order to interpret and present its findings in a clear and concise way. Phase one concerned itself with transcribing and posing initial ideas, while phase two began early coding and gathered interesting features. Phase three collated potential themes and gathered relevant codes into these themes whereas phase four checked to ensure these themes appropriately built into a thematic map. Phase five refined the themes and sought to draw out a data story and finally phase six selected vivid extracts, and related the analysis to the study’s research question and literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To summarise, this section has outlined the data analysis phase undertaken for this study. It has explained how the researcher engaged in reflective practice, alongside the research supervisors and the use of inductive data analysis in this study. It has also discussed how basic coding helped the researcher clearly denote emerging patterns whilst engaging in the process of thematic analysis. The following section will discuss ethical issues relating to this study and how these were managed.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This section will discuss ethical considerations which have been assessed and managed within this study. It will explain ethical issues raised and how these were analysed, and will conclude by reflecting on the cultural advisory sought in order to undertake a safe and supportive research process.

### *Ethics issues and analysis*

This study was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) in August 2018. It was carried out in accordance with the Massey University Human Ethics Committee's (MUHEC) Code of Ethical Conduct (Massey University, 2018d) and the Massey University Postgraduate and Research Guidelines Handbook (Massey University, 2018e). Additionally, as the researcher is also a Registered Social Worker, the Social Work Registration Board's Code of Conduct was also adhered to in regards to minimum professional standards for a research-based project (SWRB, 2018b).

### *Ethics Committee process*

The researcher began assessing and analysing the risks and ethical issues relating to this study during the design phase. Particular care was taken to consider the cultural, psychological and physical needs of potential participants and building a foundation for fostering a good working relationship. The MUHEC application form was filled out and revised multiple times with the assistance of the study supervisors prior to sending it to the Committee for review in late June. The Committee provided feedback to the researcher in early July and stated that the study had been granted provisional approval, subject to a few minor amendments and the consideration for a consultation period with Māori.

The amendments were made and the researcher undertook a one-week long consultation period, comprising of four meetings, with a local Māori cultural advisor, agreed upon with the study's supervisors. The ethics application was then returned to the MUHEC Chairperson for review in early August. This study was reviewed by the MUHEC, Northern Committee on 10 August 2018 and approved (Appendix 1).

### *Informed consent, and conflict of interest*

Participant involvement in this study was set on the foundation of informed consent. Each participant was a free and willing contributor, and this was ensured by offering both verbal and written explanations of the study's purpose and process. Participants were provided opportunity both prior to the interview and at the commencement of the interview to discuss all aspects of the study, including the collection, storage and presentation of their data. A consent form (Appendix 4) was signed by each participant prior to interviews occurring. Participants were reminded that they could continue to discuss the study itself, and their involvement in the study, with both the researcher and the study's supervisors at any time.

As the researcher has been in the social service field for a decade, and has relatives also working in the sector, it was important to be particularly mindful of conflict of interest. The researcher ensured that each participant was not known to them prior to being involved in the study. This was done in order to protect the participant, the researcher and the study's validity. Additionally, as part of the study approval process, the researcher assessed with participants for any known conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest arose during this process, or throughout the course of the study.

### *Participant rights, confidentiality and data management*

Participants in this study were charged with being in control of their process. They were advised that they could decline to answer any question and could have the audio recorder turned off at any time. It was made known to the participants via the Information Sheet, and within the interview introductory statement that they had the right to full access to their data and could choose to rescind part of or all of their data any time, up until publication of the study.

Participant confidentiality was a central aspect of this study. Managers of NGOs hold a range of professional and personal relationships which required safeguarding throughout the process. Participants were given an alias in order to allow them to share freely while also ensuring specific indicators relating to people, places and organisations were removed from the presented thesis. The researcher was bound

under their own professional code of ethics which promotes the protection of privacy and confidentiality (SWRB, 2018b). This study had two supervisors; participants were notified at the commencement of their involvement that both the researcher and the supervisors would have access to their data but would only breach confidentiality if there was risk of harm to a participant, the researcher, or a third party.

An important aspect of maintaining confidentiality is managing all forms of collected data. Participants were notified in the Information Sheet that their data, both electronic and paper-based, would be collected for the express purpose of this study. It stated that their electronic data would be kept in password protected files and paper-based data would be kept in a locked location with back-up information stored similarly in a different location. Participants were advised that following examination of this thesis all data both electronic and paper-based would be deleted or physically destroyed, except if they wished to have their audio recordings returned to them. Additionally, during the member checking protocol participants signed an Authority to Release Transcript document (Appendix 7).

### *Cultural considerations*

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, or The Treaty of Waitangi, is largely seen as the founding piece of bi-cultural social policy in New Zealand (Ruwhiu, 2001). There is ongoing contest regarding the differences between the Māori and non-Māori versions. However, it continues to be a crucial platform for promoting partnership, participation and protection for Maori. This study was committed to being culturally aware and honouring both Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Maori people of New Zealand.

To this end, consultation was undertaken with Mr. Athol Raika. Athol is from Ngāti Raukawa and Te Rarawa descent. He holds a Certificate in Social Services from Te Wananga o Aotearoa and is a voluntary cultural advisor for The Lighthouse, a social & charitable organisation on the Kapiti Coast. Prior to the commencement of the consultation period, the researcher referred to the matrix for appropriate consultation found in A brief introduction to: Te Ara Tika (Massey University, 2018f). Athol is Tangata Whenua, involved in a social service at an advisory level, and has key

relationships within his community. Additionally, he has served in a cultural advisory capacity on community roundtables and was willing and able to engage in the process.

The consultation was undertaken across the span of one week, allowing Athol to have time to read, understand and ruminate on the aims, processes and ethical considerations of this study. The consultation process included a brief face-to-face conversation to obtain consent to be consulted, which was then followed up with a written summary of the project for Athol to consider and report back on. Follow up face-to-face meetings were held with Athol where discussion centered on ensuring he understood the study, and culminated with his suggestions to ensure that the underpinning values and practical outworking of this study was culturally appropriate.

Athol believed that the researcher had good foundational tikanga Māori knowledge and was able to engage Māori participants in an appropriate manner. Athol described the following principles as crucial for this study in relation to working alongside Māori. Manaakitanga, the care of participants in a holistic way. Whakakitenga, never presume and always clarify to gain illumination. Kaitiakitanga, have the utmost respect for people and their stories. Te Whakapono, being aware of the participants' beliefs and the influence the researcher's beliefs have on the process. Nga Ture, the researcher's actions are to be morally and ethically right and honorable. Athol noted that each of these principles were either already incorporated into the design of the study or could be revised in a reflective session with himself in the event that there were Māori participants involved in this study (A. Raika, personal communication, July 12, 2018).

In summary, this section outlined how ethical issues were analysed and managed within this study. The use of both university-led and sector-endorsed codes of conduct and research handbooks provided a clear framework from which this study ensured appropriate ethical behaviours. Ethics approval was granted by the MUHEC Committee in August 2018, and this study continued to engage in analysis and management of potential ethical issues throughout its tenure (Appendix 1). This section highlighted the importance of informed consent and managing conflict of interest, confidentiality and data management, and reflected on this study's involvement in cultural advisory; all crucial aspects of a legitimate and valid project. The next section will explore the

limitations that this study encountered, and what was done to minimise those limitations.

## **Study Limitations**

The following section aims to reflect on the limitations that this study has encountered. It will outline key issues including cost, methods used, size of the study and the study's success. It will go on to suggest how these limitations were minimised, or managed.

### *Cost*

Qualitative research tends to be more expensive to undertake than quantitative. This is due to the desire to be face-to-face and engaging with participants. Costs incurred by the researcher included mileage, parking, room hireage, postage, refreshments. Childcare costs and the opportunity cost of being away from home and family responsibilities were also shouldered by the researcher. In order to reduce the cost associated with this study, the geographical parameter was set as the lower North Island of New Zealand. This meant that the researcher was able to drive to and from each interview on the same day rather than incurring motel fees or the cost of lengthy travel. Free or low-cost public spaces were sought for interviews, and as most participants requested their interview take place in their own space this reduced the cost of room hireage significantly. This study was granted resources by the Graduate Research Fund (GRF), administered by Massey University; this was used to offset some of the costs of undertaking the project.

### *Qualitative methods*

The use of a qualitative framework has disadvantages, including researcher impact (Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007; Vivar et al., 2007). The researcher made every effort to prepare and debrief during the interview phase in order to refrain from negatively impacting on participants overtly or unintentionally. The use of semi-structured



interviews has its own set of limitations. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) explain that the researcher and participants operate in a power imbalance; it is a manipulative relationship and the researcher has the monopoly of interpreting the data. The researcher spent considerable effort to build a quick and positive relationship with each participant, in order to attempt to equalise this imbalance and used member checking in order to assure valid data.

#### *Size of study*

Data collection and analysis is harder to define within qualitative research, this leaves the findings of a small exploratory study, like this one, unable to be generalised (Gomm, 2008). However, this study has its strength in offering a particular group of participants an opportunity to voice their perspectives and to illuminate their perception of the study's issue at hand. This study has made all attempts to ensure that every piece of data gathered has been appropriately presented, in the way in which it was given by participants, in order for its findings to be considered valid. While it is a small study, it provides a strong foundation and direction for additional research into this area.

#### *Study's success*

The interpretivist methods used in this study to obtain information regarding the knowledge and experience of the participants were well suited to the subject and purpose of the study's enquiry. The recruitment and unreserved cooperation of the participants is a positive reflection on the overall design and implementation of the research. Most of the participants displayed a high level of interest and strong sense of purpose that is evident in many of their responses. Their willingness extended beyond the reach of the interview phase and the researcher was pleased to have the assistance of many participants in attempting to locate additional participants via snowball sampling.

On a personal level, the researcher was thrilled to find that potential participants were interested in the study's aims and eager to take part. Additionally, the personal accounts that the participants volunteered during the interviews were of much

interest and encouragement to the researcher as a senior social worker and hopeful senior manager of the future.

In summary, this section provided an insight into the limitations that this study encountered and how these were managed. While there was a need to balance both fiscal and personal costs, these were greatly offset by the assistance granted by the GRF. Admittedly, this was a small study, however particular focus was placed on creating a transparent and power neutral environment for participants to engage in. This allowed the participant voice to be prominent and unrestricted, and created an opportunity for both participant and researcher to gain a positive experience.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the subjective and interpretivist theoretical perspectives which this study adopted. The research design was explained and the qualitative instruments utilised were outlined. This chapter also discussed the recruitment of participants and the semi-structured interviews chosen for data collection. Thematic data analysis was emphasised as the most appropriate mechanism to gain results and ethical considerations were outlined and discussed. Lastly the study's limitations were highlighted and the successes of the study were noted.

The methodology and methods enabled the researcher to systematically follow the design throughout the course of the study's duration. No changes were required in order to ensure the ethical and cohesive completion of the study and this was a credit to the initial design and its compatibility with the study's objectives. The following chapter will present the study's findings, which were highlighted through the use of thematic data analysis.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### **Introduction**

This study set out to understand the experiences and perceptions of social service managers who held qualifications external to social work, and had social workers in their team. It aimed to uncover the transferable skills that they brought into their management role, as well as consider the challenges and opportunities they experienced. This chapter presents the participant's perspectives, and also identifies the major themes which emerged from the data.

Five participants were recruited into this study, and semi-structured interviews were carried out over a span of five months. The interviews were transcribed and thematic data analysis was utilised to extrapolate key themes from the transcripts. Six major themes emerged: (1) the management journey, (2) external influences, (3) internal influences, (4) social work knowledge and interest, (5) transferable skills and (6) advice for future managers. In addition, unexpected themes emerged including: points of difference; group focus; and reflection-appreciation. These are captured in a seventh theme (7) unanticipated findings.

This chapter is organised under headings in line with the themes identified above. However, first the profiles of the participants are presented.

### **Participant Profiles**

The following section will introduce the participants of this study, by way of overarching demographic data, educational background and management experience.

The participant group was comprised of four females and one male, all identified by their own gender markers. Participants were aged between 51 and 61 years of age, and all held an undergraduate degree in varying disciplines. Three of the five participants held undergraduate qualifications in areas adjacent to social work,

including social policy, nursing and community development. While the remaining two participants held undergraduate qualifications in music and environmental science. Four of the five participants held post-graduate qualifications, two of these qualifications were in management. One participant had not completed a post-graduate qualification. However, they had undertaken extensive internal management training in a previous role.

Four of the five participants self-identified as being Pakeha. Whereas, while the remaining participant noted Scottish ancestry, they advised that they identified strongly as being Māori. All five participants held higher level management roles including General Manager and Regional Manager at the time of being interviewed. These roles are different to middle management or team leadership roles in that they have specific management administration tasks and report directly to their organisation's board. The participants involved in this study had a minimum of 11 years and a maximum of 30 years' experience in the management field.

This section presented the participant group by discussing their demographics, education history and engagement in prior management roles. It has provided an understanding of the type of participants who engaged with this study. The following section will discuss the first major theme that emerged from this study: the participants' management journey.

## **Management Journey**

The following section will explore the first major theme which emerged from this study, the participants' management journey. For the purposes of this study, the phrase 'management journey' is described as each participant's individual experiences prior to becoming a manager in the social services, how they moved into a management role, and their personal and professional growth since taking on a social service management role. When considering their individual management journey, participants reflected on their qualifications, work and life experience, passion and

drive as well as their identity, style and values as a manager. Participant answers contained both personal values and goals, as well as professional interests in being effective for their communities. This was a self-reflective exercise which garnered a variety of responses, the following section will present these responses.

### *Qualifications*

When analysing the qualifications of participants, it was noted that all have undertaken undergraduate programmes and most have completed post-graduate programmes. This would suggest that the level of management that they engaged in required at minimum an undergraduate degree, and additionally a post-graduate qualification, or significant life and work experience to meet the demands of the role. Almost all participants made mention of completing a number of short courses over time.

### *Work and life experience*

When analysing participants' responses, it became clear that all had experienced different work and life events, but that they ultimately shared similar values and goals for their communities. It was these values, coupled with their positive and less positive life experiences which led them into the roles they held at the time of their interview.

Several participants spoke of their long-standing involvement with community boards, school associations and various local initiatives. It was apparent throughout the interview period that participants had been heavily involved in management functions within their local area prior to taking on a management role within the social services:

So, since my babies were born, I've been on every damn committee. And chaired most of them. So, I've always pointed towards the leadership end of things (Participant X).

Most participants discussed their journey in, and towards, management roles as intertwined with family responsibilities and other personal interests. After careers pursuing interests external to social work and social services, the participants predominantly cited their values, wish to return home, work in their own communities

and enjoying a new challenge, as their primary reasons for moving into social service management roles:

I took a reduction by two thirds in salary to come here, but it was coming home that was the important bit (Participant V).

It's a small NGO, and it feels very comfortable, it's sort of where I belong (Participant Z).

Only one participant disclosed coming into management roles early on in their career, within 18 months of graduating their undergraduate degree. The remaining four participants engaged in various roles and vocations for a substantial part of their careers prior to taking on their current high-level social service management roles.

#### *Passion and drive*

As part of revealing their management journey, the participants in this study disclosed what their personal drivers were and their passion for their current role. Participants were unilaterally enthusiastic about what they did, how they did it, and the positive impact it had on their communities. They spoke freely and positively regarding how their personal lives and career progression led them to their current roles. Of particular note was the theme of personal values, and how these have shaped the participants' motivation to take on management roles in social services. Many of the participants specifically mentioned their desire to create positive change and how much they appreciated having the opportunity to outwork their love of supporting people in their roles as managers:

And I was looking around, and I have to say I am very... work is really important to me, my values are really important to me, so I wanted something that really expressed them on a daily basis (Participant W).

During the interview, participants were asked to talk about why this type of role captured them. Whilst some confessed to not planning on being in management, the theme of 'I could do that better myself' wound through the interview dialogue. Some participants self-reflecting that they had been in roles previously where they had reported to persons who were not well suited for management in various ways. It was

working under this type of unsupportive or disorganised management that spurred some participants on towards taking on roles in management:

The only reason I applied for a manager's job was because the guy who was my manager was crap (Participant V).

All participants indicated that they felt a connection to, and responsibility for, their communities. While some had worked in their community in various roles for many years, others were returning home to offer their skills, knowledge and experiences to a group of people who were important to them:

...a community I've had you know, a lot of, I have a huge heart for and also have spent quite a lot of time here... (Participant W).

Yeah, cause you know, my values are grounded in community and I've always been interested in how organisations like this can survive, and how good work can happen (Participant X).

Additionally, one participant prior to moving into this type of role had plans to take their skills and knowledge overseas to help developing countries. However, they had a change of heart when they reflected that there was much work to be accomplished here on home soil:

And actually, you know, if you weren't prepared to work in your own community to try and make things better then you probably shouldn't be going to anyone else's community that you're just not even ever going to understand and try to tell them what they should be doing (Participant Y).

### *Identity, style and values*

When discussing their identity, the question posed to the participants was "do you identify as a manager first and a (insert previous profession here) second, or the other way around?". The participants responded with an array of answers, however a general theme of being connected to people came to the fore. While some participants spoke convincingly of being a leader first and a manager second, another suggested they were 'part of the team' first and a manager second. One participant very clearly

stated that they were a manager and explained that they had never engaged in their profession in the same way as others due to coming into management so early on in their career. They felt so strongly about their identity as a manager that they had considered disconnecting themselves from their original profession's regulatory practices:

Yes, I'm a manager, absolutely. And I even considered you know do I really need my practicing certification (Participant Z).

An opportunity was provided during the interviews for participants to reflect on their style of management, with reference to theories or concepts that they may model their style from. Participant X had delved into this more fully due to their board Chairperson putting them through specific training to discover their style. They were able to articulate their panache for vision, relationships, collaboration and integrity while highlighting their need to grow in areas regarding strategy and decisiveness. They, along with Participant Z, described themselves as consultative, which they suggested could be seen as frustrating to their teams when they wanted a decision made quickly:

Yeah, so um, lots of vision, but yeah kind of like the biggest feedback probably from the, my direct reports is she just needs to make a decision more quickly. I come from the union movement you know (Participant X).

Participant Y noted that their way of working has become a combination of styles due to the nature of their small team and their need to juggle many managerial administration tasks and a practice leadership role. In contrast to this, Participant V noted that they don't draw their management style from any particular theory, or written concept. Rather, they've gleaned what they appreciate from other people's styles and incorporated that into their own:

Not in terms of theory, or, or anything like that I've read or learnt. It's pretty much, I guess it's about the people I've met along the way (Participant V).

When discussing their values, Participant X did divulge that they had considered a Master of Business Administration in the past. But on reflection decided that the



corporate, for-profit nature of that type of qualification would not serve her values or future career path well:

Yeah, coz you know, my values are grounded in community and I've always been interested in how organisations like this can survive, and how good work can happen (Participant X).

Participant W explained hearing her staff speak of their manager as having high standards, they agreed that this was the case for both staff and themselves. Additionally, they noted that thinking globally, or systemically was something that they often impressed on their staff. Participant W was clear throughout the length of the interview that they were motivated and guided by their internal values within their work:

Yeah, yeah, I would say the two that probably stand out for me are one: social justice, you know and how that is expressed in terms of how we work with individuals and also two: client led, strengths-based work (Participant W).

This section discussed the first major theme that emerged from this study: management journey. Participants' experiences within both their careers and home-life, were central themes as they spoke of who they were as managers and how they worked on a daily basis. All participants had engaged in various forms of academic study and professional development, which provided them key skills and knowledge. However, participants distinguished that their love of people, and desire to support, encourage and bring about positive change within their communities is what has brought them into their social services roles. The following section will discuss the second major theme that emerged from this study: external influences participants encounter within their roles.

## External Influences

The following section will explore the second theme emerging from this study, external influences. For the purposes of this study, the phrase 'external influences' is described as any influence, both positive and negative, on their management role, or their ability to successfully undertake their management role. Participants were asked to reflect on what opportunities and challenges they faced from external influences, and to describe the impact these influences had on their roles.

### *Funders and contracts*

Four out of the five participants cited their first and most pressing external influence was contracting and funding. While one participant mentioned they did not find funding to be an issue, they did note that there was a balance between various funding sources and keeping within a deficit agreed upon with their national office. Between government grants, community grants and individual donors, all of the participants described obtaining and reporting on monies received as taking up a considerable amount of their time and energy. While only one participant noted that they had a staff member allocated to the role of fundraiser, all participants reflected that the responsibility of building and maintaining these funder relationships ultimately fell on their shoulders:

No, no, they're looking at getting some kind of magical person, which would be nice. Coz that takes up a lot, its time consuming (Participant V).

Several of the participants described their need to raise upwards of two hundred thousand dollars per year, over and above their government contracts, in order to keep their service open. Participant V described that seeking funding locally has become more challenging, even within the past two years. Stating that the amount of money available within their community has significantly decreased in that timeframe. All of the participants described the type of services they offered as being in high demand, with no expectation of this decreasing. While all participants were grateful to receive the funding they had, each also relayed the amount of work their staff

produced annually was easily 150% or more of what the contracts funded them to achieve:

And, yet our volumes are huge, in terms of our, what we deliver, huge. Like we could almost double it, our contractual levels and, and I feel a bit aggrieved about that actually (Participant W).

One participant described reporting structures as being an interesting tool, as without donors coming to see what they do on a daily basis, reports are effectively only one way to understand success. Additionally, another participant discussed the recent changes in Ministry of Social Development reporting structures effectively doubling the amount of administration that is required to retain the same types of contracts:

Right, well it has to, I mean the biggest one is the contract requirement. You know, so the reporting requirements to MSD, the, for instance the reporting has just gone from six monthly to quarterly (Participant X).

Securing funding, whether internally generated or obtained via contracts or grants, is required in order to sustain social services. However, this is just one part of a complex role that managers of social services have to balance alongside human resources, ensuring appropriate clinical leadership and community engagement. Participant W stated that due to the level of reporting and administration tasks that need to be completed in order to retain and gain new contracts, important sections of their role have not had the amount of effort and time spent on them as preferred:

I haven't actually had the space to step outside and go, from a strategic point of view, where should we be developing our services to better meet our client's needs (Participant W).

### *Community perspective*

When working with and in a local community, the good reputation of the organisation and recognition of the work it is trying to achieve is a crucial element in community engagement. Participants were asked to reflect on what they believed their communities thought of their organisations, and how this directly impacted their ability to do their role well.

Two of the participants, who manage faith-based social services, described the longevity of their organisations both locally and nationally. They explained that their organisations had good standing within their community and that this made seeking donors and contracts easier as they had a positive history to rely on:

Well, \*\* is quite well known in our community, and that's been a positive. And throughout New Zealand, and has a good reputation (Participant V).

Participant W, who also managed a faith-based social service, described a lack of congruence between what the community believed about their service, and their own personal values. Their organisation was built on the idea of Christian serving, however Participant W indicated that they would have preferred a 'hand-up' ethos rather than a 'hand-out' expectation:

Um, so, community perspective I think um, I think the way we are seen is probably a wee bit of a charity model, yeah and I guess coz I am uncomfortable with that model. So, ah, um, I, I haven't been able to do much about that actually coz you do really get caught up with the needs of reports and funding and contractual arrangements and things like that (Participant W).

Participant Z spoke less about their organisation, and more about the people and the core issue that they as an organisation were trying to support. Their dialogue was around the community as a whole changing their understanding of the issue in more recent years, and the impact that was having on their ability to do their job well. They also described the opportunities that were coming from both the community and local authorities through the increased understanding of this core issue:

So, one of the good things is that people are starting to realise that dementia is a major challenge that we all have to be responsible for... That's a huge, huge opportunity for us and so working with things like libraries and museums and those sorts of places (Participant Z).

### *Collaboration*

When discussing the opportunities that came from external influences, collaboration was a key focus for all participants. Discussions regarding collaboration with other

community groups wove their way throughout the interview phase. It was made clear to the researcher that social service managers rely on each other to share resources, skills and knowledge in order to best support their staff and advocate and serve their clients:

So, you know, the, my natural tendance is to network and connect and collaborate. So, huge opportunities. So, I kind of pool those external factors in to help us get to where we need to go (Participant X).

Additionally, in the role of manager, participants expressed that a heightened level of community clout was afforded to them. One participant spoke of the opportunities they've had to engage in community wide initiatives that they otherwise would not have had the chance to. In particular they spoke of being in a working group to help combat the prevalence of synthetic cannabis affecting their community:

Um, I often think, yeah there are opportunities to sort of, to get involved in local issues. So, so things like that if I notice that there is more of something coming through that need's attention, then I've got the ability to do it (Participant W).

In this section the second major theme uncovered in this study, participant reflections regarding external influences, were discussed. Common themes of difficult funding and contractual obligations emerged, and participants discussed the time-consuming nature of these obligations and the negative impact they had on their ability to do the entirety of their role. However, they also proposed that without this funding, their services would be unable to sustain themselves. Participants reflected on positive external influences including enjoying good standing within their communities and supportive local relationships which they were fortunate to engage in. All participants reflected that their jobs were easier to do because of these types of relationships. The next section will discuss the third major theme that emerged from this study: internal influences that participants encounter within their roles.

## Internal Influences

This section will outline the third major theme which emerged from this study: internal influences experienced by the participant group. Participants in this study are managers of social services, and as they balance the external influences stated above, they also face internal influences from within their organisations'. Participants were asked to reflect on the internal influences, both positive and negative. The following will discuss their experiences in regards to their organisation, staff diversity, and from the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) environment.

### *Organisation*

Participants discussed a number of matters relating to their organisation's way of operating, and the values that are held. From operational policies to organisational culture, participants conveyed a number of both positive and less positive impacts their own organisations have on their ability to do their work. One participant, who had a history of working in government or local authority roles, spoke about questions asked of them in their interview regarding what they don't like, and the reality of their role now:

And I said bureaucracy. You know, I'm not a fan. For the sake of it, and they looked at each other and went ahhhh. So, I would say that the amount of paper I have to deal with is nonsense (Participant W).

Participant V discussed their trepidation when taking on their current role, due to the organisation's cultural background and responsiveness being so different from their own. They suggested that the organisation's long standing, Western-based philosophy would be difficult for them to work within, and therefore set out to navigate some changes:

So, early on I talked to the Chief Executive and the General Manager about, how about we do this project where we can drag \*\* into the Māori world (Participant V).

While other participants spoke of issues that arose from the disconnection between their own personal values and the organisation's, Participant Z suggested that their internal struggle came from the size of their organisation. While they enjoyed the close-knit team that they had assembled, they also lamented that due to their size and funds, recruiting professional team members was difficult with the wages they were able to offer:

...and the other pressure too has been, our ability to recruit suitable staff. So that been a bit of an issue, we've, it's difficult coz of being a community organisation we don't pay well (Participant Z).

On the whole, participants spoke highly of their boards or governing groups. While some were afforded boards with members who held a range of health and social service backgrounds, others had oversight by members who had years of top-level management experience:

...because I am very fortunate to have an extremely good board (Participant Z).

One participant mentioned the balance that they need to be mindful of with their board. Due to the fact that they are all volunteers, and it is a small organisation they have to be aware of keeping expectations of the members to a suitable level. Additionally, they mentioned that their board can be quite pedantic, which they have found to be frustrating at times:

And it's a fine line between how much you can expect from them and also, they're not thinking they are running a billion-dollar organisation (Participant Y).

### *Staff composition*

This study engaged participants who were managers and leaders of non-government social services. The organisations that are represented within this study are either faith-based organisations, under a larger national umbrella, or community services which link into national networks doing similar work. Due to the similar nature of supporting work these organisations undertake, they had a similar staffing

composition in terms of administration, clinical professions, support staff and leadership roles.

All participants managed some form of front-line administration staff and dedicated finance staff. One participant noted that they had a dedicated fundraiser, while another mentioned that they may be looking at acquiring a new staff member to assist with fundraising. All but one organisation had counsellors and/or therapy professions as well as staff in support roles that did not require a professional qualification to undertake:

Yeah, and then one has a qualification but isn't in a job that requires it, yep, and I think that there's about two or three of them (Participant W).

One organisation, which engaged with clients due to a medical diagnosis, had both clinical health professionals and allied health professions within its team. Staff employed to facilitate educational programmes were present in two organisations, who had a focus on engaging with families and providing inter-generational support. Additionally, one participant discussed their involvement in family mediation and the skills that they themselves, and their staff acquired, in order to offer this service:

So, we just have to do the accreditation part of it, which is good because there are lots of men and women out there who don't get on but have kids in common (Participant V).

Each participant noted that they had one or more qualified and registered social workers on staff. Some also had additional staff who were in the process of gaining their registration, and one participant had recently taken on new social work graduates. Participant Z had a working-life history in a clinical professional field, and due to this they explained that they have an appreciation for the standards and expectations set for health professionals. They revealed a lay-person staffing issue they encountered upon commencing their current role. Participant Z explained that the additional time, effort and risk management required in order to keep both the staff and organisation safe far exceeded what they would have expected from having registered professionals in those roles:



And when I first started in the role, we had two members who were not health professionals and they needed a lot of management and supervision and guidance and they kept veering off into breaching professional boundaries and all sorts of stuff (Participant Z).

While some participants had newly qualified staff, each participant impressed the importance of having staff with experience in order to balance out their staff teams. Whilst some lamented that it was their highly experienced staff that could sometimes become set in their ways, it was also these staff members that participants themselves drew on in order to navigate complex practice and ethical issues. It was also noted that just because someone did not have the current standard of qualification required to become registered, it did not mean that they did not bring a wealth of knowledge to the staffing team and to their roles:

...social worker we brought on just after I got here had 20 years of experience. Hadn't, has now, finished her social work degree, and has she's just finished her cultural supervision certificate as well (Participant X).

Four of the five organisations represented by this study had clinical team leaders; they were the direct line managers for social work and counselling teams respectively. All the participants spoke about having the right people in the right jobs, particularly people who were in leadership positions. They reflected on the positive effect that this has on their ability to lead and manage their organisations. More than one participant relayed a situation where either the candidates applying for a vacant post were not suitable, or a current employee was not coping with their role. They stated that waiting for the right person to be appointed, even though this meant additional strain on the current staff in the short term, was always preferable. The lasting effects of employing an unsuitable person reverberated throughout the staffing team, and effected the way in which the organisation could take on new opportunities:

And that really, and it also comes down to the right team. I know it sounds obvious from a management perspective but don't just employ anyone coz you need someone, you've got to have the right people. (Participant Y).

### *Multi-disciplinary teams*

One of the criteria required to engage in this study was that participants were managing and leading multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs). When discussing the composition of their teams, and in the internal opportunities and challenges of their teams, participants relayed positive aspects to team-working such as shared passion and negative aspects including managing professional isolation.

A shared theme throughout all interviews was the participants' positive views on their teams, and the confidence that they had in their ability to do their jobs. A shared vision, value base and willingness to get on with the work were key components to participants' fondness for their teams:

People's willingness, people get what we are trying to do. They understand that, you know, our mission if you like. And they may have different ways of achieving it but there's no doubt that they are here to the, they're here for the right reason, yeah, and I have no doubt out of all of the staff that is true (Participant W).

Collaboration, both externally and internally, came through as a key motivator for all participants. It was noted by Participant Z that while the team was comprised of a variety of professions, they were all here to do the same job by supporting their clients and the clients' families:

I am not employing you to be an occupational therapist, I'm employing you to be a \*\* advisor (Participant Z).

Participants noted that inter-professional clashes can occur within their teams. Issues, such as having the team heavily weighted towards a specific profession, can cause daily activities to naturally gravitate towards that profession's modality. Participant Z was particularly aware of this in their own team due to in the past having multiple experienced nurses, and one some-what isolated social worker:

It's already been weighted to the nursing model and we don't want that. And we are aware of that as a team, we talk about it quite a lot (Participant Z).

Additionally, having a number of professions who believe in their way of working as being the 'right' way to properly support a client and their family can cause friction. Most participants didn't find that their teams were particularly combative, however some did mention that on occasions the differences in ways of working could cause a block in the productivity of the team as a whole. Communication and understanding of personal and professional world views were suggested as ways to assist the team to work collaboratively and harmoniously:

Trying to build that communication up and understanding. Coz I know that, there are occasionally clashes coz they are different modalities (Participant Y).

Two participants spoke specifically about themselves as being part of the MDT, not above or separate from it. One joked about being mistaken for being the van driver due to their interest in ensuring that they are involved in simple tasks as well as strategic and decision-making tasks. Another participant spoke of their culture of joint decision making, particularly when it came to budgetary decisions and sourcing appropriate resources. Their management style supported transparency in those areas. This ensured that the professionals who were needing the resources to do their jobs were able to be involved in understanding what was possible, and prioritising what was most important:

Absolutely, and also so that they actually have an opportunity to, to um, participate in the decision making as well (Participant W).

This section reflected on the third major theme arising from this study: internal influences experienced by the participant group. A combination of organisational policy and culture, various staffing issues and requirements alongside the management of their MDT, arose as key aspects for the participants. The following section will explore the fourth major theme arising from this study: the participants' knowledge and interest in the social work profession.

## **Social Work Knowledge and Interest**

This section will discuss the fourth major theme that emerged from this study: social work knowledge and interest. Social service management in small NGOs often comprises both management administration and clinical oversight. With this in mind, participants were asked to reflect on their roles, how management administration and clinical leadership were outworked in their organisations, and what their personal interest was in the social work profession.

In particular, participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of social work and where this information was gleaned from, along with what 'gaps' they may have in their knowledge due to their qualifications and work history being external to social work. Participants were asked to consider how they protect the social work profession, and professionals within their organisation, and to imagine what their social work staff's expectations were of them as a manager. Additionally, participants discussed the need to balance both administrative tasks and clinical oversight, as well as conflict and resolution in relation to their social work staff.

### *Understanding of social work*

The participants involved in this study do not hold a qualification in social work; however, they all shared a working knowledge of social work. One participant has gained some of their understanding of social work by working alongside social workers while in direct nursing practice. Whereas the majority of the participants have come into their management roles with a preconceived idea of the social work profession, but have learnt the most about the profession from their social work staff.

Some participants described their understanding of social work prior to coming into social service management as 'what the media portrays'. And described it as somewhat of a culture shock to understand the breadth and depth of social work practices. There was a general feel across all participants that they had learnt more about social work over a span of time:

Yeah, yeah, right at the beginning Suzanne I'll be honest with you, I sat in meetings and thought to myself what the heck are they talking about, coz I've got no idea. Two years down the track and I know the jargon, and I know the acronyms (laughter) and that sort of stuff, so yeah (Participant V).

While participants do not hold social work qualifications, they each impressed on the researcher their alignment to the caring aspect of the profession. Participants made special mention of how their personal passions and values aligned to social work ideals. While two participants specifically outlined their value base as shying away from charity, and rather promoted empowering people:

I do, I guess there is that alignment into that, into that caring and supporting and hand-up rather than hand-out sort of a thing, um, so yeah (Participant Y).

Most participants discussed their gaps in social work knowledge; they advised that they were aware that standing outside of the profession meant they were missing pieces in their clinical knowledge:

Yeah, when there were tricky bits and pieces she would come and talk to me about it, but where it was going to be an issue for her. Then she would have to explain to me what actually she was asking for, you know, and how I could help to manage that (Participant V).

Each of the participants understood this gap in their knowledge and set up protocols to ensure that both their staff and themselves were able to tackle complex clinical issues appropriately.

The researcher understood from the interview dialogue that social services and therefore social service managers and leaders are under a great deal of strain to ensure their social workers perform high quality practice within tight budgetary constraints. This prompted an opportunity to ask participants what it was about their role that they really appreciated. Some suggested that they enjoyed the opportunity to make a difference, at a high level of professional management. They relayed that they could see the difference a systematic approach in their community can make. One participant discussed the joy they have of seeing their staff enjoy successes with their

clients. While another reflected on their thoughts and feelings after taking on a social service management role. They concluded that the highlights and positive experiences of both clients and staff far outweighed the impressive pay rise they would be afforded if they went back to their previous profession:

It's really great, so that, when I first started working here, I thought God, is this the sort of work that I want to do? Yeah, I'm convinced that it is (laughter)  
(Participant V).

Yeah, people are always talking about making a difference, and you really do, in an organisation like this (Participant V).

### *Protection of the profession*

When asked to discuss how they protect the social work profession within their role, participants reflected on practice protocols, ensuring appropriate clinical supervision and hiring professional staff. All participants discussed the importance of having their social work staff both qualified and registered. Although, it was noted that for social workers who had been in the sector for decades, their qualifications would look different to new graduates. One participant mentioned that they have used the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics as a starting point when writing new organisational policy. And that it was this document alongside organisational policy manuals that were utilised when a complex case or issue arose:

Well, I'll go and grab our policies sometimes, if assuming it's something you know, abuse or whatever, we have got really great robust policies (Participant Y).

Each of the participants were resolute in the need for their social work staff to have appropriate external supervision, even when considering the financial cost this had on a small organisation. Having the opportunity for their staff to engage with a clinical leader gave both staff and the participants an avenue to utilise when facing a difficult situation. Additionally, each participant spoke of peer supervision groups within their organisation; some of the participants have been the ones to set these groups up. They advised that they understood the usefulness of colleagues being able to support each

other and discuss cases and workloads, in generating a cohesive multi-disciplinary team. One participant noted that on their arrival to the organisation that internal clinical supervision was lacking:

...because I arrived here a year ago and found that there wasn't any practice management that I could see. Um, so even though I am not a social work, um qualified social worker, I actually recognised that, that, that absolutely, and needs to be put in place (Participant W).

When considering protecting the social work profession, one participant explained the need to ensure that professional staff were employed to undertake professional roles. In their organisation, staff are out in the community most of the day, and are required to be self-motivated and clinically adept in order to meet the needs of the day. It has been their experience that non-professionals or lay-people did not hold the same clinical background, education or experience in order to successfully carry out these roles without requiring micro-management:

And I need to know that my team when they are out and about doing their job, that they are doing it in a safe way and that our clients are safe (Participant Z).

#### *Expectation on managers*

Participants were asked to consider what the expectations are on them, from their social work staff. Most spoke freely regarding their "open-door" policy, that their team could come and speak with them about any issue or concern they held at any time. Although it was also noted that when reports were due in for funding that often those doors would be closed, except for emergencies, in order for the managers to complete their timebound tasks:

So, we do laugh about my open-door policy, coz we'll often say, I think we'll have a locked door policy (laughter) (Participant Y).

All of the participants discussed their role, in so far as their social work staff, as being a support role. They were there to ensure that their team had what they needed, when they needed it, in order to successfully complete their daily work:

Yeah, like really, but I guess I see myself as, well not just me, but every manager's job is to help their staff, get the resources that they need to actually help their clients (Participant W).

Once participant mentioned that a big part of their role was to ensure that they backed up their staff's clinical decisions. They believed that this was important for the cohesiveness of the team as well for the individual staff member's confidence in their roles:

I guess what I see as really important is being their, um you know, being their security, getting their backs (Participant Y).

When considering complex cases or clinical issues that have been raised by staff several participants spoke of their collaborative approach. When faced with a difficult issue their practice is to get the multi-disciplinary team together to bring differing clinical views, and come up with potential solutions as a group:

I tend because, because we employ experienced health professionals, and I do have a consultative collaborative approach. I would consult with the whole team; I would get other people in the team involved (Participant Z).

However, as useful as a team approach can be in brainstorming ideas, almost all of the participants noted that at the end of the day, due to their role as overall caretaker of the organisation, clinical responsibility for the service sat on their shoulders. All participants stated that it was their role to ensure that the safety of clients, staff and the organisation was kept in mind, each and every day:

And that quite an interesting role isn't it. Because I'm, they're asking my advice, and I am an absentee, in absence of a practice manager, I am it (Participant W).

### *Balancing organisational management and clinical leadership*

With the realisation that all of the participants engage in some form of clinical leadership within their organisations, questions were posed around how they balance the management administration tasks alongside a clinical leadership role. Participants reflected on their staff composition, number of staff and continuously full workloads.



Most suggested that their teams could benefit from additional social work staff to meet the need, but then also were aware that even if they could find the money to employ additional staff, that the need would likely swell to absorb these additional staff. When considering the amount of work required by each staff member, to keep on top of the needs in their communities, participants made it clear that resourcing was always an issue:

Too much demand, not enough staff, not enough space (Participant X).

Participants spoke of how they utilise the multiple professions within their organisation's walls to assist them in the clinical leadership of their staff. Whether it be peer supervision, a risk management meeting or engaging practice leaders in other branches, participants were adept at sourcing people to assist in complex issues:

So, its recognising my gap, so we've got ah, a couple of practice managers around the place so, so I'll sort of say to them, look can you give \*\* a ring and talk it over with her (Participant W).

And while they may not have social work backgrounds, all participants have a personal history in engaging with people. Additionally, each suggested they held good communication, analytical and problem-solving skills which they drew upon to assist their clinical staff to safely and ethically support their clients:

So, someone who's been working hard out with clients and that sort of stuff, absolutely not, but I see patterns often and can kind of just reflect those back and have knowledge of you know sort of, world experience and all of that stuff (Participant W).

### *Conflict and resolution*

Participants were asked to reflect on any conflict that they have had to manage, either between them and staff, or between various staff members.

One participant relayed a situation that they witnessed when a previous practice leader left, and a new, somewhat unsuitable practice leader was appointed. They

explained that the previous practice leader had been a clinical professional, but had blurred the lines between professional leader and 'mother-hen':

She had run it like a big co-council and group and there were inappropriate boundaries around, you know (Participant Y).

When the new practice leader was appointed, the majority of the office was grieving for the loss of the previous person, and the way they did things. A new practice leader with different priorities, and expectations created an abrasive environment, not helped by the fact that they spent most of their work day distracted by domestic issues. Shortly after, the organisation underwent a restructure, six positions were lost, including the practice manager. But in the long term, it appears that this was ultimately an unexpected solution to the team's problems, as the unsuitable practice leader and the majority of the 'old guard' moved on into other roles, outside of the organisation. And the organisation, along with its new culture was able to move forward.

Participant Z identified the person who caused conflict in their organisation was their social worker. A person who worked hard and achieved really good outcomes, but was the most resistant to change. Finding a way to understand and manage this person has been a task for participant Z, but they noted that the person's knowledge and experience was an asset to the organisation:

I mean it has been, she has, I find her difficult to manage. We've had to work on our communication. Because she is very competent and has been in the organisation the longest... (Participant Z).

Interestingly, one of the participants suggested that they had not seen conflict within their team since commencing their role, something which they were surprised about. On reflection they suggested that this has been something that they had challenged their team on due to the nature of social work and the need for strong advocacy skills:

So, it's kind of like, actually you need to get a bit, feisty, because it's a, passionate field. And there are strong views about the way that you do things (Participant W).

In summary, this section explored the fourth major theme that emerged from this study: social work knowledge and interest. Participants reflected that their knowledge of social work was rudimentary prior to taking on a social service role, and that working alongside social work staff had helped participants to grow their knowledge of the profession. Participants recognised the gaps in their clinical knowledge and discussed broadening their own knowledge while also ensuring social work staff had appropriate clinical support. Participants noted that in their role they had multiples 'hats' that they needed to wear, juggle and manage, and that while promoting good social work practice was crucial, it wasn't the only concern taking up their time. They also discussed the need for good support when managing MDT environments, so that each staff member was empowered to reach their potential both individually and as part of the team. The following section will reflect on the fifth major theme that emerged from this study: transferable skills.

## **Transferable Skills**

This section will outline the fifth major theme that emerged from this study: transferable skills participants brought with them into their first management role in the social services. Participants were asked "What skills did you bring into your manager role from your qualification external to social work?". However, as the interviews progressed it became apparent that it was difficult for participants to separate what was life experience and what was knowledge acquired by study, as several of the participants had been in leadership or management roles outside of the social service for many years. So, the question was extended into "What skills did you bring into your social service manager role, from your qualification and experience external to social work?".

Ten areas were proposed for participants to reflect on, these were 1) social and public policy, 2) public relations and marketing, 3) planning and strategic direction, 4) financial management, 5) human resources, 6) advocacy, 7) governance, 8) programme development and responsiveness to community, 9) evaluation 10) communication.

Each participant was asked to think back to when they first took on a social service management role, consider and self-rate how competent they felt against the ten transferable skills relayed by the researcher. Of note, participants tended to indecisively describe their competence as low. However, after further discussion with the researcher agreed that their skills and knowledge deserved more positive consideration, which was documented.

#### *Social and public policy*

Due to their professional backgrounds, two participants rated themselves as highly confident whereas, one participant suggested that their qualifications did not focus on this area, and rated themselves as marginally confident. The participants reflected that they felt very confident in the area of social and public policy when they first took on a social service management role.

#### *Public relations and marketing*

Three of the participants rated themselves as very confident when reflecting on their previous public relations and marketing skills and knowledge. One participant rated themselves as marginally confident, while one said they had not learnt anything regarding these topics prior to entering social service management. The participant who had a background in the union movement rated themselves as highly confident, as this had been a large part of their role prior to coming into social service management. Participants reflected that they were confident in their ability to engage in public relations and marketing successfully.

#### *Planning and strategic direction*

Participants provided a wide range of ratings for planning and strategic direction. While three participants rated themselves as highly confident, one participant

suggested they had some skills and knowledge but had not been confident due to the length of time since they had engaged these skills. Another participant advised that they had very little to do with strategic planning previously, and therefore had no confidence in that skill base when they commenced their social service management role. On average participants reflected that they were moderately confident in this skill area.

#### *Financial management*

Financial management was described as something that was crucial to the participants' role. When considering how confident they were at this prior to entering into social service management three participants advised that they were very confident. One participant suggested they were not confident at all, while another cited the different nature of financial management that is required of a general manager or chief executive officer, and scored themselves as marginally confident. On average participants reflected that they were moderately confident in this skill area:

And so, I'm feeling slightly inadequate in resources management, other than my justification is, it was kind of a, I mean we had to stay open, I mean if the doors are closed it doesn't matter that your building is falling apart (laughter) (Participant Y).

#### *Human resources*

When reflecting on their ability to manage people prior to coming into social service management, all participants suggested that this was something they could do well. Due to their work and life experience, each participant felt prepared to successfully manage their staff teams. Three participants said they were very confident, while two suggested they were extremely confident in human resources. Most participants reflected that they were highly confident in this skill area:

Oh yeah, we did do that... that's right, yep that was big (Participant Z).

### *Advocacy*

Advocacy was considered by participants as something that they were very good at, consequently it was highly scored across the participants. Three participants scored themselves as very confident, while two others scored themselves as extremely confident. Participants suggested that this was due to a combination of their personal values, and the work that they had engaged in prior to taking on a social service management role. Participants rated themselves as very confident in this skill area:

Yeah that was strong too actually (Participant Z).

### *Governance*

When considering what they knew about boards, their role and responsibilities, and how to engage with them, participants provided a wide range of responses. While three participants suggested they were very confident, the remaining two participants reflected that they were either marginally or not at all confident in this skill area. On average, participants rated themselves as moderately confident in the area of understanding and engaging with governance structures when starting their social service management role:

Yeah, different ways isn't it, but um I understand governance, management like all that, I get that bit (Participant W).

Of note, there were two participants who discussed difficulties with their boards. While they said that the people themselves were lovely, one found it troublesome figuring out who to speak to about different matters, due to the organisational system. While the other found their board to, on occasion, be pedantic in some small things and ineffective in larger issues:

I was just, I was surprised at how ineffective they were...and so what I eventually realised what that I've just got to tell them I think you have to do this, oh ok (laughter) (Participant Y).

### *Program development and responsiveness to community*

Bar one participant who suggested they were mildly confident, the majority of the participants scored themselves as highly confident in their abilities around development and community responsiveness. Participants reflected that they were moderately confident in the ability to successfully engage in program development and be responsive to their community's needs:

That came through in my interview, but when you think about it, when I first came here, I thought why would they give me a job. It was around that community involvement... (Participant V).

### *Evaluation*

While three participants advised that they were highly confident in the area of evaluation, one participant suggested they were moderately confident while the other said they were not confident at all. The two participants who rated themselves lowest noted that they had not been involved in evaluation in the way in which social services needs to be, prior to entering social service management. Additionally, they reflected that they continue to learn how to do this effectively in their roles at the present time. Participants were moderately confident in the area of evaluation:

Yeah that's a real learning area for me... (Participant X).

### *Communication*

Communication is a key requirement of any type of management, but particularly so in social services where key work is person-based and external relationships help services to keep their doors open. Participants consistently reflected that their skill level in communication was either high or extremely high when first taking on a social service management role. Several participants noted throughout their interview that it was their skills in communicating with their teams and with external stakeholders which held them in good stead with their board and the community. On average, participants reported they were highly confident in the area of communication:

Yeah... that was brilliant (Participant Z).

In summary, this section outlined the fifth major theme that emerged from this study: the transferable skills participants brought with them into their role. Participants self-rated as being most confident in the area of interpersonal and leadership skills, and felt moderately confident when considering skills relating to management administration. The following section will explore the sixth major theme that emerged from this study: advice for future managers.

## **Advice for Future Managers**

This section will cover the sixth major theme that emerged from this study: advice participants would give to people coming into social service management with a qualification external to social work. In some cases, participants reflected on what they wish they had known, or what they would tell themselves if they could go back and prepare their younger selves for social service management. The purpose of this question was to give the participants an opportunity to consider what skill and knowledge gaps they felt they may have had coming into their role and to reflect on what they have learnt 'on the job'. Themes such as policy, team dynamics, financial management, external relationships and recognising one's own skill and knowledge deficit were highlighted by participants.

### *Policy*

Almost all of the participants cited policy and planning as being one of the key issues they wished they knew more about, and would tell new managers to get to grips with this as soon as possible. A key point made by several participants was that without clear planning and direction it is difficult to be clear with your team about what can and cannot be offered by the service:



Make sure as the manager that you're aware of it, and then ideally making sure that the staff, so that everyone is on the same page, this is what we do. Um, and so therefore extrapolate out of that what we don't do, and just really help, those clear boundaries are really important, yeah, hmm (Participant Y).

A follow-on point was made by two other participants who discussed once you know what you are about as an organisation, then you are also able to set the standards and accountability measures with which you expect to deliver your services:

If you don't have clear policy then you can't hold people to account. Really get your head around policies, setting, well agreeing standards at the start that we are all going to adhere to. Coz if you don't, then it's very hard to manage (Participant X).

#### *Financial management*

One participant discussed the need for new managers coming into this type of role to really understand finances and budgeting. In a role where you have to manage contracts, grants, donations, and the ever-pressing needs of your staff for additional resources, understanding financial requirements is crucial:

Financial management is probably the biggest thing. Budgets (Participant Z).

#### *External relationships*

The social service landscape, at community level, survives best outside of isolation. Two participants spoke of the need to be active and enthusiastic about building and nurturing external relationships. Participants discussed the importance of networking, as funders expect this to be a standard practice for non-government organisations. One participant suggested that it can be those external relationships, particularly with other similar organisations, which afford your clients more support when working in collaboration:

So, always be curious about what others are doing because that can help you get your clients further than, than thinking we can solve it ourselves (Participant W).

### *Team dynamics*

Most participants highlighted the need for good team management, that the success of their organisational vision is dependent on a collaborative approach. One participant relayed a story of where they have experienced the abrasiveness of combative personalities in the workplace and the impact that can have on the wider team and their ability to manage their service:

It's like, watch those teams just have a go at each other. So, um, that inter-team stuff is just, so brush yourself up on how to deal with that (Participant X).

Another participant spoke of the importance of making sure that your team has the same values as the organisation, and the cultural reflexivity that the organisation expects. They discussed the issues that can arise from hiring someone who doesn't align to the organisational values and ways of working:

They've got to understand and be comfortable to work within whatever that framework is.... yeah exactly, yeah you know coz we use Te Whare Tapa Wha as our assess, evaluation assessment so you know if you weren't comfortable to use that as a framework then this is not the place to be (Participant Y).

One participant spoke of the joy that they experience when you have the right people, with reflective attitudes, in your team and the positive difference that makes to the team as a whole. They reflected that it also has a positive impact on your ability to encourage and bolster your staff group:

...so that would be, and in terms of social work always, always I guess instil that reflective practice aye. That they [are] always passionate about their work, and that you, that they know that you support what they are trying to achieve with clients, yeah, and that you've always got their back, you know, yeah, yeah (Participant W).

### *Clinical deficit*

Some of the participants noted that understanding their own gaps in knowledge regarding social work specifically, and other managerial knowledge was crucial to

being able to find ways to meet those gaps. One participant, who had worked primarily in the Department of Corrections, spoke of their need to understand more fully the differences between various professions:

For me, it would have been really helpful, or maybe not, to know what a counsellor is really about. Or what a social worker is all about, coz you know we have a social work team and a big counselling team. And even quite a reasonable sized administration team, not one of them are even remotely alike (Participant V).

Some participants noted that there is an expectation within the social services that staff will be reflective within their practice, they suggested that managers and leaders also need to be reflective. It is this reflective practice that shows the staff team that their managers and leaders are ready and willing to learn, and creates an opportunity for the various professions within a team to share their knowledge and experience to form a more cohesive and professional team:

Also knowing what your deficit, in terms of knowledge is, and where to find it. Phone a friend, this is a doozy, and don't panic (Participant W).

This section discussed the sixth major theme which emerged from this study: advice participants would give to people coming into social service management with a qualification external to social work. Participants reflected on understanding policy, managing their team and staff composition and the importance of understanding financial management within the social service environment. They encouraged new social service managers to build and maintain external relationships as a matter of organisational survival and to bolster clinical practice strength. Furthermore, they discussed their clinical knowledge gap upon entering a social service management role and encouraged potential managers to seek to close this gap with ongoing learning. The next section will outline the seventh and final major theme that emerged from this study: unanticipated findings.

## Unanticipated Findings

This section will discuss the seventh major theme that emerged from this study: unanticipated findings. While analysing raw data from the five interviews undertaken for this study, it became apparent that there were themes emerging which didn't fit into the themes arising from the literature. Specific points of difference that each participant had brought to their organisation, and the group-focussed way in which they spoke when asked an individualised question, were not considered at the commencement of this study. Additionally, the imposter syndrome that some participants felt, and the positive reflections by participants about the study process had not been foreseen. The following section will discuss these unanticipated findings.

### *Points of difference*

Of particular note, it transpires that each manager had achieved something quite special, something that made a specific difference to the work of their team and to their organisation. Participants X and Y were brought in to take the place of previous managers who were social service professionals, because they held a range of specific campaigning and business skills that were required to bring those organisations back from the brink of extinction:

For instance, when I got here there was a little list in comic sans of about eleven people that was our friends list. And it's up to about 800 now. Yeah, so we've grown donations from \$9,000 to \$97,000 in the last year (Participant X).

Participant W entered their role with a wealth of knowledge around research and policy development. They were able to work alongside a professional staff member to develop a framework, which ultimately helped the staff member to fully understand and appreciate their role:

Actually, it was one of the things, if I think about the successes that I managed to do here was help her do that. It was, her feedback to me was amazing, it was, coz we really worked hard at it (Participant W).

Participant Z reflected that they entered into their role with excellent multi-disciplinary team experience and knowledge, and were able to manage and encourage their staff into a cohesive unit against the odds of inter-professional conflict:

There was four of us, and that is the best team I've ever worked in my entire life. And the value of it was the respect that we all had for each other's disciplines... And I've always sort of thought, that is the ideal model (Participant Z).

One came in with no NGO experience, but a wealth of experience in Te Ao Māori and people management. They were able to take the lead in changing the focus of a long-standing mainstream organisation by promoting Māori modes of practice, and championing the instigation of a Māori roopu, Noho Marae and the development of compulsory educational kete:

So, we started that two years ago and now we have um, we have our Māori roopu. And um, we have a number of kete, which all the staff have to do. Yeah, around the Treaty, around the different modes of practice that they use, you know, Te Wheke, Te Whare Tapa Wha. And all of that, so that's been really good (Participant V).

### *Group-focus*

During the course of transcribing and data analysis, the researcher noticed that while questions were asked of the managers personally, they often slipped into talking from a group perspective. For instance, when the researcher asked "Tell me about the external influences that affect your role" they responded with "we have" or "our pressures are things like". Even when clarifying questions were asked, in an effort to redirect the managers to answer from their personal opinion or experience, many found it difficult to separate themselves from the collective group that was their organisation.

### *Imposter syndrome*

Two participants spoke candidly about their trepidation of coming into a social service, having had no social service background themselves. They were concerned about the

way they may be received by the staff and potential conflicts that may arise due to their different approach and different bodies of knowledge:

Yeah, so if there was anything that I was worried about, it would be about how the staff would interact with me. Someone who didn't have that social work background... (Participant V).

One participant made note that it took about a year before the 'imposter syndrome' wore off, and this was due to them being able to reflect on the work that they had done in the previous year, and how it had saved the organisation from closure, and the staff from being made redundant:

Actually, I think I am the right person at the right time... (Participant X).

### *Reflection appreciation*

While all the managers ensured that their qualified Social Workers had provision for reflective practice both internally and via external supervision, none of them set this provision in place for themselves. Each manager made note at some point during the interview that they really appreciated being able to sit still for an hour and talk about themselves and reflect on what they do and why they do it. They expressed that this is something they never have an opportunity to do in their daily work, and it is not a provision that they have arranged for themselves, or has been arranged for them by their board:

Um, no, I don't think I've got anything else to say, I think it's been a really good, it's been a good um, for me to reflect on. You know, so that's sort of why I wanted to do it... (Participant Z).

To summarise, this section discussed the seventh major theme that emerged from this study: unanticipated findings. Participants entered their social service management roles with an eclectic range of knowledge and skills and therefore had specific points of difference to offer their organisation. Participants spoke freely of their experiences, but struggled to separate themselves from their teams, suggesting their collaborative approach was intrinsic. Some of the participants encountered feelings of being an imposter due to their lack of clinical knowledge and practice. However, after a period

of time, realised their eclectic range of skills and knowledge were crucial to the survival of their organisations. Participants reflected on their involvement in this study, and relayed their appreciation for being able evaluate what they do, and why. An opportunity, participants noted, they do not usually have in their roles, but one they found to be beneficial.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter described the participants involved in this study and discussed the seven key themes that emerged during thematic analysis: (1) management journey, (2) external influences, (3) internal influences, (4) social work knowledge and interest, (5) transferable skills, (6) advice for future managers, and (7) unanticipated findings.

Participants expressed a wide range of personal and professional experiences on their management journey. However, they impressed that it was their common love of people, and their wish to support and inspire positive change which ultimately led them to management roles within the social services. Shared experiences involving the constant and time-consuming nature of funding and contracts was a strong theme when considering external impacts on their role. Participants also spoke of supportive local relationships as being positive external influences, and something that allowed them to collectively do more for their communities.

Participants discussed their simplistic knowledge of the social work profession when first taking on a role in the social services. However, they reflected on their drive to understand more fully the role, and how their own social workers were their best teachers. When considering their transferable skills into a social service management role, participants were most adept at interpersonal and leadership skills, with management administration skills following behind. They also discussed the need to close the clinical knowledge gap, and encouraged ongoing learning. Each participant had a specific point of difference to offer their organisations, and this coupled with the underlying values of each participant shone through in the interviews. The following

section will discuss the study's findings in relation to the literature reviewed; it seeks to connect this study to the wider body of knowledge related to this topic.



## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore and document experiences of social service managers, located in New Zealand, with qualifications external to social work and who had social workers in their team. It utilised semi-structured interviews to uncover the opportunities and challenges tackled by the participant group in their effort to be successful in their roles. Additionally, it sought to understand the transferable skills the participant group brought into their respective roles from their prior personal and professional education and experience. Thematic analysis was utilised in order to extrapolate and make sense of the data gathered.

This chapter seeks to connect this study with the wider body of knowledge as it was presented in the literature review in chapter two. It outlines the study's key findings, both anticipated and unanticipated, and compares these findings to the wider knowledge reviewed in this topic area.

### **Key Findings**

Seven major themes emerged from the data analysis phase, these were: (1) management journey, (2) external influences, (3) internal influences, (4) social work knowledge and interest, (5) transferable skills, (6) advice for future managers, and (7) unanticipated findings. Each of these major themes encapsulates a collection of interrelated themes, which will be more broadly discussed below.

## **Management Journey**

In the past, both domestically and internationally, social work managers often came into their roles after period of time in direct practice (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Patterson, 2015). This allowed practitioners or direct workers to progress into higher levels of responsibility, take on clinical leadership roles and engage in a wider system of helping professions. Due to their tenure in direct practice, they were able to bring to their leadership roles the knowledge, spirit and values of the social work profession (McGivern, Currie, Ferlie, Fitzgerald & Waring, 2015). With the advent of managerialism and New Public Management (NPM), business administration skills were prized by funding bodies and created a culture change within the social services (Coulshed et al. 2006). Responsibilities of social work managers were transformed and additional skills were required to be learnt or brought into social service agencies in order to meet the new demands (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Germak, 2015; Peters, 2017). In consideration of the changing nature of social service management, participants in this study were asked to reflect on the path that brought them to management in the social services field. The answers given have been described as their 'management journey' and encompassed personal and professional reflections both prior to and since taking on their current role. The participants identified the following key areas, which attributed to their management journey: qualifications; work and life experience; passion and drive; and identity, style and values.

### *Qualifications*

Participants in this study appeared to all be part of the transformation of social work management. They are a group of managers which have not spent much or any time in direct clinical practice, but who hold key skills including excellent communication, understanding social and public policy, and human resources which are required in order to manage a social service. Participants involved in this study came from a wide academic background. While all participants held undergraduate qualifications, the qualifications were varied including environmental science and music. However, most participants had completed some form of post-graduate level qualification in management, while the remainder had engaged in short courses and had acquired 'on

the job' experience in previous management roles. In congruence with Wuenschel (2006), participants reflected that their prior management education and experience was crucial to successfully securing their role in a competitive market. Additionally, it was their transferable management skills, coupled with their personal interest in the social services, that allowed them to stand out as the best candidate for the role.

#### *Work and life experience*

Shanks et al. (2015) reflect the view that it is not possible to lead and manage social services effectively if you have not been engaged in direct practice. They suggest that important clinical knowledge and values congruent to social work are inherent only within workers who have engaged in front line social work practice. Additionally, Healy (2002) suggests that without a social work background, managers compromise their ability to exercise effective leadership and decision-making. While, in contrast, Menefee and Thompson (1994) argue that the changes to social work management have been so profound that direct practice alone cannot meet the demands of management roles in the present context. The participants involved in this study reflected on their work and life experiences and, within this, what situations had ultimately brought them into their current roles. It became apparent during the interview and analysis phases that each participant had encountered many positive and less positive experiences in their personal and working lives. However, it was their shared values and interest in their communities that bolstered their resilience and grew their passion for effecting positive change through their employment. While Healy (2002) and Shanks et al. (2015) suggest that it is inadvisable to lead social services without a direct practice background, several participants reflected that their skills in financial management and organisational promotion proved crucial to the survival of their organisations.

#### *Passion and drive*

Knee and Folsom (2012) and Patterson (2015) suggest that social workers who are promoted into management roles from direct practice bring their professional understanding of social work beliefs, values and practice issues. They do not however, suggest whether there are positive values and skills brought in by managers external to

the social work sector. Whereas, while Coulshed et al. (2006) acknowledge that professional managers have skills and knowledge to bring to social service organisations, they describe an incongruence between managerial expectations and a person's interest in alleviating distress. In contrast to this, while the participants involved in this study had not engaged in direct social work practice, they all expressed a passion and drive to support, advocate and empower individuals and their families, and a clear devotion to providing excellent support services to their communities. All participants acknowledged that there were gaps in their clinical knowledge and skills, yet this study found that all participants had strong values which are based in alleviating distress and empowering people to lead positive lives. Additionally, while participants were well-versed in managerial administration tasks, they reflected that the time-consuming nature of these tasks sometimes hindered them from being able to effect a more positive result for their staff and clients.

#### *Identity, style and values*

The purposeful push of the neo-liberal agenda in the 1990s gave rise to the claim that managers of social services did not require a social work background or social work qualifications themselves (Coulshed et al. 2006). Clinical and managerial roles began to separate, and generic management qualifications became more highly prized (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Coulshed et al., 2006; Peters, 2017). Business principles emerged as most crucial for the survival of social services in the neo-liberal climate, principles that Hunt (2016) argued opposed the collective and just mandate of social workers and the profession. When considering their professional identity, most participants in this study described themselves as leaders first, or as part of the team with the 'buck stopping here'. One participant described themselves as a manager first, and explained this was due to entering into management so early on in their career and having remained in management roles since. Participants in this study reflected that they saw their role as cultivating and leading their team to reach successes both personally and professionally. All participants used collective terminology when discussing their teams and described their approach to management as consultative and team orientated. When considering their values, participants reflected that their values of supporting people, seeing positive change, expecting high standards from their staff and

preserving dignity were the drivers that brought them into the social services, and that it was these principles that sustained them in their roles.

Participants agreed with Hunt (2016), describing the neo-liberal agenda as being in contrast to social work values, they mentioned that the impact of policy and funding structures could constrain social services. Participants made it clear that in their experience, non-government organisations are often impacted greatly by the Government's change in policy and political agenda. However, without the funding that they receive from various government departments, they would not be able to hire appropriate staff and support as many clients as they do. This balance between policy, funding and grass-roots organisations appeared to be a tight-rope that social service managers had been experiencing for an extended period of time (Hunt, 2016; Rank & Hutchison, 2000).

In summary, in the midst of uncovering the participants' management journey, themes including academic qualifications, personal life experience and prior career paths came to the fore. However, it was the shameless and proud declaration of being value-driven and passionate about uplifting the human condition that shone through as the key marker of how the participants came to be doing what they do, and why.

Participants expressed their core values as being social justice, human rights, cultural respect, empowerment and advocacy. Values which are in congruence with Hunt's (2016) suggestion of what lays at the heart of the social work profession. After understanding this key knowledge about the participants, the study then moved on to uncovering the experiences of the participants within their current roles. The next section discusses the external influences that provide opportunities or create challenges for the participants in their daily role as a social service manager.

## **External Influences**

Wuenschel (2006) describes some of the change associated with the advent of NPM. Suggesting that the combination of an historical lack of education for the

administration role of social work, coupled with fast growth in the sector and the proliferation of business-like contracts has resulted in insufficient dual social work and administration trained managers. Organisations increasingly required management administration support in order to survive, and ultimately found this by appointing professional managers into social service management roles. This is reflected in the growing business administration tasks faced by social services due to the neo-liberal and marketisation agenda. Wuenschel (2006) goes on to discuss the importance of getting key management appointments right, and highlights external pressures such as contracting and market competition as areas direct social workers are not usually acquainted with. When discussing their roles, participants reflected on the opportunities and challenges they experienced which were generated externally to their own organisation. The participants identified the following key external influences: funding and contracting, community perspective, and collaboration.

#### *Funding and contracting*

Almost all participants stated that funding was their primary external influence. The theme of finance was prevalent for all participants, with all of the participants' organisations holding government contracts of some description. While they were contracted specifically for certain services, and for a certain number of clients, participants stated that their work covered a much wider range of needs and surpassed what the contracts accommodated. All participants engaged with auxiliary funding by way of community grants and donations. Most participants stated that it was these grants and donations that were pertinent to ensuring their organisations were able to tackle the ever-increasing demand for services. All participants were required to maintain positive relationships with their various funders and donors. Some participants mentioned that it was the effort that they put into these relationships that ensured the voluntary donations continued. While some participants came into social service management roles with knowledge of funding and government processes, others entered with specific skills for re-creating and bolstering their organisation's profile and promoting donations. Participants' reflected that all of these skills were required in various social service management roles. However, two participants noted that their specific set of skills and experience in this area was the

difference between the survival or closure of their organisation upon their arrival into their respective roles.

Neo-liberal policies have impacted on the way government contracts are structured, and have increased the breadth of accountability processes (Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Hooley & Franko, 1990; Shanks et al., 2015). Most participants discussed the weight of contractual expectations and obligations on their role. They stated that while they required contracts to ensure service provision, they also felt the burden of each contract's responsibility. Most participants noted that the amount of time obtaining, reporting on and retaining the funding they required was a cumbersome and unrelenting task. Additionally, two of the participants reflected that they knew very little about financial management tasks when they took on their first social service management role. Others mentioned that their previous study and experience had not prepared them for the level of knowledge and skill that they required in order to be financially proficient. In both circumstances additional learning was required in order to be successful in this area of their roles.

#### *Community perspective and collaboration*

Social service managers hold a variety of roles both within their organisation and external to it. Within their role is a need to bolster the organisation's community presence to ensure that everyone who requires assistance is able to locate it, and anyone who wishes to donate towards it, is aware of their good work. Wimpfheimer (2004) suggests that it is a combination of dedication, credibility and community relationships that mark the success of a manager. This notion appears to have a difference emphasis than NPM which relies on efficiency and competition between providers (Lane, 2000). When reflecting on the community's perspective of their organisation, each participant suggested that their organisation held a good reputation for the work that they did. Some participants noted that their long-standing faith-based organisations provided a positive history which they appreciated and were able to add to. However, it was noted by one participant that they found that the community's expectation of their organisation as a charity was contradictory to their values of 'hand-up not hand-out', and that this was something that in their busy role

they had not had time to consider changing. Additionally, one participant reflected that the particular issue that they worked to support people with, was experiencing a rise in knowledge and understanding from the community at large. They were pleased with this change, as this was something that was creating more opportunities for their service and directly impacting their work in a positive way.

Frahm and Martin (2009) suggest that cultivating and sustaining external collaborations and creating opportunities to partner with others is a crucial part of modern-day management. Participants discussed the collaborations that they enjoyed with their community, both with other organisations and individuals. All participants had close local networks with whom they collaborated with for a variety of reasons. Additionally, many engaged in nation-wide networks, interlinking with similar services across the country in order to learn about new initiatives and share knowledge. Participants spoke positively about the inter-organisation relationships that they held, and explained that these relationships impacted well on their staff and clients alike. Additionally, in agreement with Frahm and Martin (2009) and Wimpfheimer (2004), participants reflected that collaboration with other local organisations was a key part of their role. In many cases these relationships were a contractual obligation, something that they as managers were required to cultivate, manage and report on.

To summarise, when reflecting on the external influences that both challenged and created opportunities for them, participants highlighted funding, contracts, community perspective and collaboration as key areas of interest. While the literature suggests that it was the increased need for business skills that has led to non-clinical social service managers (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015), it is interesting to note that not all of the participants were financially proficient when they first took on their management role. Key skills regarding relationships, external collaborations, both within funding and community arenas, have been highlighted by the literature as being crucial to the success of a manager (Frahm & Martin, 2009; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Participants have reflected that in these areas, their interpersonal skills, love for their community and obligation to source funding and resources to fill the pressing needs have been positively put to work in their roles. Following on from this, the focus of the study switched from external to internal



influences. The next section will outline the internal opportunities and challenges that the participants face in their roles as social service managers.

## **Internal Influences**

Klikauer (2015) states that managerialism posits more similarities than differences between organisational types. He goes on to explain that by-in-large, the core management skills of planning, organising, leading and controlling are transferable and that holding specific knowledge regarding the organisation's core business is not key to being successful (Klikauer, 2015; Peaucelle & Guthrie, 2015). Easton (2019) describes the 'cult' of the generic manager as something that has occurred due to managerialism suggesting that these managers were better suited than clinical professionals to operate services efficiently. It is this ideology, coupled with NPM's application of business principles inside a neo-liberal environment that has encouraged the appointment of non-clinical managers in the social services.

This study sought to understand participant experiences, and therefore participants were asked to consider the skills and knowledge they required in order to balance and manage their teams successfully. In particular, they were asked to reflect on the internal influences, positive or negative, that impacted their ability to carry out their roles effectively. Participants highlighted the following key internal influences: their organisation's context, staff composition and the nature of their multi-disciplinary teams (MDT).

### *Organisational context*

When considering the impact that their own organisation had on their ability to carry out their role well, all participants suggested that there were aspects of their organisation that could afford some improvement. In line with Pierson (2011), one participant mentioned the increase in bureaucracy and paperwork that created barriers to effective service delivery. The sheer amount of 'red-tape' required in order

to achieve something impacted greatly on their ability to make plans and allocate resources. Another was conscious at the commencement of their role that the organisation's bi-cultural engagement appeared to have limits. These limits had the potential to impede the participant's ability to organise and set bi-cultural policy within the organisation. Additionally, these limits were at odds with the key social work value of cultural connectedness (Akhtar, 2013; Payne, 2005). One participant spoke of the limits of having a smaller organisation, they specifically had trouble affording professional clinical staff, a financial issue that had a direct impact on service delivery. The financial limitations encountered by this participant meant that they found it difficult to organise sufficient staffing and therefore lead their team to reach their organisational goals. Most participants spoke positively of their boards or higher management teams, stating that they had cultivated good relationships with them and felt supported. However, one participant noted that they felt they were sometimes doing a balancing act when it came to their board, and on some occasions had to guide them in their decision-making.

While all of the participants encountered various trials in regards to their organisation's expectations, each participant was confident to tackle those trials head on. Although changing a long-standing bureaucratic system felt unlikely for one participant, they had cultivated relationships with their management team in order to effectively communicate the team's needs (Feit & Holosko, 2013). Another participant was able to engage national leaders of their organisation to start making positive inroads into integrating Tikanga Māori into daily practice. This highlights two positive initiatives by managers with different backgrounds, demonstrating an unwavering connection and commitment to the people of their communities (The Network for Social Work Management, 2018).

### *Staff composition*

Staff composition was reflected on by participants as having a large impact on their ability to carry out their role successfully. It was stated by many participants that their job was to empower and equip their staff to do their work well. And it was by having the right staff composition, and supporting them well, that the overall vision of the

organisation would be met. All participants spoke fondly of their teams and the various personalities that were part of their staff. Each participant had both clinical and non-clinical staff members, however, most participants had a dedicated clinical team leader position within their organisation. The separation between social work clinical leadership and managerial administration roles that is evident in the literature was relayed clearly across the participants' experiences (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Coulshed et al., 2006; Peters, 2017). But interestingly, while most participants may not have been the first tier of clinical leadership for their professional staff, they were always expected to be available to assist with complex cases. In this respect, they worked alongside their clinical staff when making complicated decisions stating that they held the overarching clinical responsibility for their organisations.

Participants spoke of the balance that they needed to maintain within their staffing team, particularly within their clinical roles (Carpenter et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2016; Rubin et al., 2018). They reflected on the need to balance the number of new graduates and highly experienced staff, and the importance of having only clinical professionals in clinical based roles. More than one participant suggested that it was crucial to wait for the right person for the role rather than filling a role in haste due to a crisis. Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds, and they expressed a vast appreciation for the professional roles within their teams. In particular, some stated that they now realised that social work had a much broader scope than they imagined when they started their role. Others reflected that they appreciated the skills and knowledge that social workers held, and the importance of having qualified and registered staff in their social work positions.

### *Multi-disciplinary teams*

Managers of MDTs are expected to support, empower and equip their various staff members both individually and as a collective in order to form a cohesive unit. This in turn aids in successful attainment of the organisation's goals (Rubin et al., 2018). All participants in this study managed a multi-disciplinary team (MDT). These teams comprised both clinical and non-clinical staff members including: social workers, counsellors, group facilitators, support workers and administration staff who support

each other in actioning of the organisation's vision. Managers are the caretakers of the organisational vision, and MDTs have become the preferred way to encapsulate the range of skills and knowledge required in order to reach such a vision. Within this team environment, there are different perspectives, worldviews and experiences which when artfully managed can contribute positively to the group (Bamford & Griffin, 2008). However, in congruence with the literature, participants did encounter engrained hierarchies, power struggles and clashing professional identities within the team which created a challenge for management (Hudson, 2002; Roberts, Ward, Patel, York & Partridge, 2018).

A mutual reflection by the participants was that there was a clear, shared passion by all staff members, managers included. Participants noted that their current staff were willing contributors to the team environment, and that it was their eagerness to share their skills and knowledge in a positive and productive way that made managing them enjoyable. Some participants mentioned that the collaboration across clinical and non-clinical staffing lines afforded all team members opportunity to gain a fresh perspective on an issue they were facing. However, in agreement with Hall et al. (2016) and Fry (2010) it was reflected that having a heavy weighting of one type of profession within a team was difficult to manage, as the team would naturally be skewed towards the dominant profession. Additionally, having members of staff that were staunch about their profession holding the 'right' answers was seen to be something that was problematic to manage. Multi-disciplinary teams are prevalent in the social service sector, therefore, managers must have a focus on collaboration and innovation in order to combine the team's many needs, identities and expectations (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Roberts, Ward, Patel, Yorke & Partridge, 2018). Participants spoke freely regarding their fondness for each role within their organisation, and promoted the importance of each role in the wider organisational purpose. In agreement with the literature they reflected that innovation and communication were key when managing the potential for inter-staff disagreements (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Frost, 2017; Roberts, Ward, Patel & Partridge, 2018). Additionally, they suggested that transparency across the whole team appeared to assist in bolstering a productive and harmonious team environment.

In summary, participants emphasised organisational context, staff composition and the nature of MDTs as key issues from internal sources that impacted their role. Aronson and Smith (2011), Chandler, Bell, Berg and Barry (2015), and Hooley and Franko (1990) all state that it was managerialism and NPM that influenced the change towards a business style management of social services. However, it is interesting to note that each organisation represented in this study had its own idiosyncrasies that proved influential on the ability of each participant to do their job well. Internal bureaucratic systems, bi-cultural deficiencies and managing expectations of organisational culture have been faced by most participants. A strong theme of collaboration wove through the participants' narrative about their MDT, and balancing the needs of both clinical and non-clinical staff members was seen as a key part of their role. It was noted by all participants that transparency, communication and a reminder of shared values were important in order to successfully manage their services. As this study has a specific focus on social work, the next section will outline the participants' knowledge and interest in the social work profession, and in the social work professionals they manage within their organisations.

## **Social Work Knowledge and Interest**

Participants were asked to consider what they knew about social work prior to entering into a social service management role, and to reflect on why they were attracted to a role where they were managing social workers. Various themes emerged from the participants' dialogue including their understanding of the social work role, protection of the profession and expectations of them as managers of social workers. Additionally, the need to balance clinical leadership and organisational management as well as conflict and resolution emerged as key points.

### *Understanding of the social work role*

Frahm and Martin (2009) and Wuenschel (2006) indicate that managers who have come into the social services have a number of key skills that are required for their role

in the present-day social service climate. However, there is a tendency within the literature to suggest that managers with a social work background may be better suited to the role due to their experience of practice issues and their affinity to social work values and beliefs (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Patterson, 2015). Several participants agreed that their understanding of social work practice was initially somewhat lacking. However, each participant was acutely aware of their strengths and weaknesses and reflected that they had worked hard to bridge the knowledge and skills gap. Participants worked closely with their social work staff, practice leaders, and colleagues in the community, to ensure they understood the professions that they were managing. Shanks et al. (2015) propose that non-social work managers do not share the same value base as promoted social workers. Whereas, this study found that participant values and beliefs were very much in line with social work values including empowerment, promotion of dignity, advocacy and cultural connectedness (Akhtar, 2013; Payne, 2005). When considering the gaps in their clinical skills and knowledge, the researcher noted an unwavering interest by the participants in understanding the social work profession. There was great effort from each participant to ensure that social work staff had appropriate clinical direction from various sources, this also provided an opportunity for the managers to learn more about the social work worldview on a case by case basis. When asked to consider their interest in managing social workers, participants reflected that they felt that in their role they were able to make a tangible difference in their communities, that they enjoyed the ability to take a systematic approach and that the joy of hearing the clients' positive experiences were the key successes that they basked in.

#### *Protection of the social work profession*

Participants were asked to consider how they upheld the social work profession within their agency. Some participants were quick to note that they are aware of and utilise ANZASW Code of Ethics, both in managing day-to-day work and also when writing new organisational policy. All participants spoke of the need for their social work staff to hold qualifications recognised by the Social Work Registration Board. Additionally, the participants expected their social work staff to be registered professionals, something that at the time of interviewing was not yet mandatory. Reflections were made

regarding the registration process, as it was then,<sup>1</sup> and the additional learning that both the staff member and the manager needed to undertake to successfully apply for registration. Participants also noted that it gave them a sense of security knowing they had qualified and registered social workers with a baseline of knowledge, skill and external accountability. Each participant made mention of their provision for external supervision for all of their clinical staff, social workers included. Some even arranged supervision for non-clinical staff, of whom they believed would benefit from the additional support. External clinical supervision was seen by all participants as both necessary and expected for social work staff, which was in line with sector expectations (ANZASW, 2017; SWRB, 2018b). Participants reflected that this level of supervision was important for the staff member individually. As well as part of the clinical support that the managers put in place in order to meet their own clinical knowledge gap. While the participants agreed with Austin (2002) and Patterson (2015) who highlight the differences between business management tasks and clinical leadership, they each felt that their skills, knowledge and experience was also valuable to social work staff.

#### *Expectations on management, from social work staff*

When asked what their social work staff expect from them as a manager, participants reflected on their role as a support system. As a person that would back up their clinical decisions. Several participants spoke about being part of their team, that this was highlighted by their open-door policy, and reflected their management style of collaboration (Coulshed et al. 2006). In regards to complex cases, most participants spoke of not being the one with all of the answers. Rather, participants preferred to utilise the skills they had within the organisation, via MDT and clinical leads in other branches, in order to come up with collaborative and well thought out solutions. Participants did, however, state that they were the risk managers within their organisation and that while they sought to engage clinical support, the final overall responsibility rested on their shoulders (Austin, 2002; Feit & Holosko, 2013; Trevithick, 2014). This study did not engage social work staff, and therefore was only able to uncover the expectations that participants felt their staff had for them in their role. Additional research engaging direct social work staff would provide more information.

### *Balancing clinical leadership and organisational management*

While most participants had team-leaders employed within their staff composition, they were still expected to be involved in clinical leadership, particularly for complex cases or situations that could put staff members or the organisation at risk. Therefore, to a lesser or greater extent, each participant was involved in the day-to-day clinical leadership of their staff. This study was curious to understand what interest the participants had in this clinical oversight role. Hughes and Wearing (2017) describe business management tasks as including budgeting, communication, human resources and legal requirements. Whereas, Wonnacott (2012) suggests that clinical leadership includes clinical supervision, sector leadership and promoting professional development. In line with these descriptions, participants reflected that they were involved in both business management and clinical leadership due to the size of their organisation. Having insufficient funds to have a specialised clinical manager employed was also given as a reason in some cases. Coulshed et al. (2006) suggest that balancing the two roles, can create a difficult environment. They state that the needs of contractual obligations and keeping the organisation running efficiently rubs abrasively against the clinical needs of social work staff, and the ultimate goal of relieving clients' stress and anguish. While participants agreed that there were key differences, they also spoke about their ability to use these business tasks to strengthen their organisations, and enhance their ability to serve their communities. Each participant described their organisations as engaging in government contracts. They adhered to strict expectations regarding staff competence and maintained organisational structures in order to support safe and effective practice.

Participants in this study spoke freely about their values, as well as their expectations that their involvement in their organisation would contribute to the overarching goal of seeing peoples' lives changed for the better. With this in mind, they outworked business administration tasks proficiently, but with the agenda that these tasks were required in order to provide the staff the resources they needed to do their jobs well. Participants highlighted that their own analytical, problem-solving, and communication skills were often in high demand in order to discuss, examine and assist staff in making good clinical decisions. Ultimately, their interest in engaging in the clinical leadership



of their social work staff combined their risk management responsibilities as a senior leader, and their passion for promoting high quality practices which would positively affect both staff and clients.

### *Conflict and resolution*

As managers of MDTs, the participants were involved in managing more than just social workers. With this in mind, discussion moved towards the potential for conflict and resolution within the team environment. Social workers are known to often work within an MDT setting, however, due to competing demands and the desire to protect one's own profession they can experience an increased level of conflict (Carpenter et al., 2003). This study was interested in uncovering how participants managed the needs of social work staff within the MDT setting. In line with Reeves et al. (2010) most participants spoke of the need to monitor the professional balance within their teams, in order to ensure staff members were not becoming isolated. One participant noted that the conflict that they felt dominated their team was the lines the team leader had blurred between clinical practice and personal relationships. This conflict ultimately came to a head when the team leader moved on and the new leader appointed, operated differently. At that point, the team appeared to collapse on itself, unable to manage their own professional and personal boundaries. One participant reflected that it was their social worker that appeared to be causing the conflict, rather than experiencing it, due to feeling vulnerable to surrendering their professional identity (Hudson, 2002). On the other hand, another noted that they had not experienced any conflict within their team. Consequently, they often challenged their team on this as they believed that in the sector in which they worked, challenging the status quo was an important part of creating positive change. Participants noted that while this study was interested in the plight of social workers, as good managers of an MDT they had to ensure that each and every staff member was adequately supported in order for the team to thrive (Bamford & Griffin, 2008; Hall et al., 2016).

In summary, participants spoke about their understanding of social work upon entering the social service sector, and how they intentionally grew their knowledge experientially once in a management role. Participants highlighted their understanding

of the ANZASW code of ethics and promotion of clinical supervision as vitally important for both social work staff and themselves in their role as managers. They reflected on their management of an MDT and the conflict management that is key within their role. Additionally, they noted the importance of every clinical and non-clinical role being afforded an equitable place in the team, a culture set by them as the manager. The literature reviewed in general agrees with Shanks et al. (2015) when it describes general managers as having a lack of experience in clinical matters, and absence of social work values and beliefs. Participants in this study agreed that there were gaps in their clinical knowledge, however, they each reflected that their personal and professional values and beliefs aligned strongly with the social work profession. It was found that participants had a keen interest in the social work profession, and in particular, their own social work staff. They worked tirelessly to ensure that their social workers had the clinical leadership and resources they required in order to safely and competently do their jobs. The next section will highlight what skills are considered necessary for a social service manager, and consider what transferable skills the participants brought to their current roles.

## **Transferable Skills**

Hunt (2016) and Shanks et al. (2015) suggest that social service managers carry a large clinical deficit if they have not engaged in direct social work practice. However, Frahm and Martin (2009) explain that the political landscape has changed to such a degree in recent decades that managers with a purely social work background no longer meet the expectations of the wider business environment. It was in this middle ground that the researcher sought to uncover what transferable skills the study's participants held upon entering social service management roles and, therefore, what gaps in their skills and knowledge they were able to identify.

Participants self-identified how confident they were in each of ten management skill areas: (1) social and public policy, (2) public relations and marketing, (3) planning and

strategic direction, (4) financial management, (5) human resources, (6) advocacy, (7) governance, (8) programme development and responsiveness to community, (9) evaluation, and (10) communication.<sup>2</sup> Austin (2002) and Feit and Holosko (2013) describe non-clinical social service managers as being proficient in achieving business tasks, managing risks and making time-pressured, yet controlled, judgements. However, in this study it was found that the participants felt most confident in the area of interpersonal and leadership skills. This sub-theme included skills such as communication, advocacy, community development and responsiveness, human resources and public policy. These areas could be seen as generic management skills, however, it was the value that each participant placed on these skills that reflected their alignment with social work ideology. Communication and advocacy, both within their organisation and in their communities, were utilised in order to bolster staff spirit and to bring about positive change for the organisation's client group. Community development and responsiveness, while important for raising funds, were tasks primarily focussed on better serving the communities in which they resided. Human resources and public policy were two areas where participants showed an interest in employing and empowering clinical staff. As well as engaging in national initiatives, for example, the Social Work Registration Legislation Act 2019.

This study found that participants were only moderately confident in the area of management administration skills. This finding was in contrast to literature that suggested these were key skill areas, which encouraged non-clinical managers to be employed (Frahm & Martin, 2009; Menefee & Thompson, 1994; Wuenschel, 2006). Participants agreed with Southard (2016) that strategic direction and planning was a key part of their role. However, they expressed a wide range of prior experiences in regard to this skill and each participant had added to their learning while in their management role. Feit and Holosko (2013) suggest that public accountability is a role for clinical leaders, however, participants reflected that this was an area they were responsible for in their organisation. Several participants had little experience in public relations and marketing, and found these skills tested upon entering a social service management role. Financial management was discussed on several occasions throughout the interviews, with participants agreeing with Hughes and Wearing (2017)

that this was an extremely important skill to have and to hone. While three of the participants suggested that they were highly confident in this skill area, the others were not nearly as confident. Again, these were skill areas in which participants stated they required further training and experience in order to do their jobs well. While Martin, Pine and Healy (1999) and Scottish Government (2017) suggest that evaluation and governance are required skills for social service managers, participants in this study reflected that these were two areas they were least confident in. All participants agreed that the list of transferable management skills that were discussed in this study, were critical within their role. However, most advised that they did not have all the relevant education or experience required in order to be proficient in these areas when they took on their first social service management role.

To summarise, when considering the transferable skills that participants brought to their social service management role, this section discussed the participants' confidence in ten key areas. It is interesting that the transferable skills Germak (2014) and The Network for Social Work Management (2018) suggested were key management skills, were not necessarily skills that the participants held at the time they first took on a social service management role. This appears to be in contrast to what Rogowski (2011) and Wuenschel (2006) stated was the point in hiring non-clinical managers over promoting social workers. Additionally, Shanks et al. (2015) suggested that only managers who had engaged in direct clinical work were able to assimilate social work values into their managerial role. However, this study has found that participants were fastidious about their work being value driven, and consequently appears to align quite closely with social work ideology. The following section will discuss the advice participants had for managers entering their first social service management role.

## **Advice for Future Managers**

After considering their own skills and knowledge upon entering a social service management role, participants were asked to reflect on what advice they would have for people with backgrounds external to social work coming into social service management. The themes suggested by participants were: policy, financial management, external relationships, team dynamics, and personal skills and knowledge.

### *Policy*

In agreement with Feit and Holosko (2013), knowing and understanding organisational policy, planning techniques and being clear on what the organisation vision and values are, were cited as being extremely important by almost all of the participants. Participants noted skills regarding strategic planning and direction were important in relation to being accountable to their boards. Additionally, in line with Southard (2016) and Wimpfheimer (2004) participants expressed a keen desire to ensure planning was intertwined with executing positive and pragmatic goals for the organisation as a whole, together with their community's needs.

### *Financial management*

Participants reflected on their responsibility to ensure the organisation's financial future. Participants stated financial management to be a key part of a social service manager's job. They agreed with Chandler, Bell, Berg and Barry (2015) that without it, they would not be effective in regards to contracts, managing internal budgets and engaging with financial stakeholders. While financial management is a business administration task, some participants noted that managing in the for-profit sector was different to managing a non-government organisation. Specifically, they described being value based and people driven, rather than executing strategic goals that were predominantly financially risk driven. This reflection is somewhat in contrast to Aronson and Smith (2011) and Hunt (2016) who suggest that business models within social services leave very little room for the values of the social work profession.

### *External relationships*

Social work is well known for being collaborative and relational, with social services historically having followed suit (McDonald, 1998; Pierson, 2011). Contracting expectations have, in recent years, included a proviso to ensure that local community organisations are working alongside each other and with obvious and productive relationships. All participants stated that positive external relationships are crucial to the survival of their organisations. This statement was supported by Frahm and Martin (2009) who suggest that these relationships increase accessibility clients. While cultivating and maintaining external relationships can at first appear as only a business administration task, participants reflected on the clinical leadership role they held within their agencies. Participants agreed with Wonnacott (2012) in that it was these relationships that afforded each of them opportunities to be involved in sector leadership.

### *Team dynamics*

Alongside external relationships, participants spoke freely about the importance of having people with the right skills and similar values as the organisation, in order to manage the multi-layered team dynamics. Members of MDTs bring a variety of skills and knowledge to the table. In order to work cohesively, members are required to step out of their individual identity and take on the communal focus and vision of the group (Frost, 2017; Hudson, 2002). Several participants spoke of challenges they had faced with ill-fitting staff members, and encouraged managers coming into the social services to ensure that new staff are both appropriately skilled and similarly value-driven. They reflected upon appointments that had been quickly made due to the stress on caseloads and noted that waiting for the right person to come along was much better for the team, and therefore themselves, in the long run.

### *Personal skills and knowledge*

Lastly, some participants reflected on their own skill and knowledge shortfalls. Easton (2019) and Hunt (2016) describe 'generic managers' as being appointed in order to increase efficiency in an organisation, but suggest they lack the values or conviction to

carry the organisation's true vision to fruition. Conversely, participants in this study spoke about their love for their work, interest in seeing their communities empowered, and feeling proud to be part of an organisation doing 'good works' in their area. They also spoke about how much they have learnt, from both a clinical and business administration perspective, while in a social service management role. Peters (2017) explains the notion that people with qualifications external to social work have been more readily appointed to social service management roles in recent years due to their skills in business administration. However, it is interesting to note that participants involved in this study did not arrive in their roles with every single business skill required. They did, however, bring a range of personal and professional skills and their keen interest in being involved in continual learning. With these values in mind, some participants spoke about their need to reflect on the things they do well and the things they could improve on, in order to be a better support to their staff, clients and community as a whole. Their commitment and passion to manage their organisation in the best way possible for the betterment of people, shone through the length of this study.

To summarise, participants were asked to reflect on what advice they would have for people with backgrounds external to social work coming into social service management roles. During this process participants outlined a combination of business administration, leadership and reflexive practice skills that they felt were necessary in order to succeed in their role. In contrast to Chandler, Bell, Berg and Barry (2015) who suggest business administration skills as the reason people have been brought into social service management roles, many participants noted that they wish they had had a wider breadth of planning, policy and financial management skills at the commencement of their role. Leadership skills, specifically managing team dynamics and engaging positively and collaboratively with their communities, were viewed as crucial areas of their roles. Interestingly, none of the participants suggested that they wished they had direct practice experience in order to understand their social workers' role better. However, they were all openly committed to working alongside their multi-disciplinary teams in order to support them in their various clinical and non-clinical roles. Throughout the course of this study, a range of themes emerged that were

congruent with the literature, the following section highlights themes that were uncovered which did not neatly fit into the literature described in Chapter two.

## **Unanticipated Findings**

This study set out to discover and record the experiences of social service managers who held qualifications external to social work, and had social workers in their team. It aimed to seek out the challenges and opportunities they experienced in their role, as well as consider their transferable skills as managers coming from a background external to social work practice. Within the literature reviewed, there was a general tendency to highlight this group of managers as being required for their business acumen within the neo-liberal climate (Aronson & Smith, 2011, Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017). However, some authors spoke harshly against this group of managers stating that, due to not engaging in direct practice, they lacked the key skills, values and underpinning beliefs found within the social work profession (Easton, 2019; Hunt, 2016; Rank & Hutchison, 2000; Shanks et al., 2015). This study found that the participants held a range of crucial transferable skills, supported by strong personal values, which aided them in being successful in their management roles. In addition to this revelation, the study uncovered four unanticipated themes.

### *Key points of difference*

Peters (2017) argues that with the increase in neo-liberal ideals, social service managers have had to take on additional responsibility in regard to business administration tasks. While participants agreed that their roles involved a wide array of business management tasks involved, it was each individual's particular combination of business skills, leadership skills, values and personal experiences that created specific points of difference. Some participants were able to utilise their financial and planning skills in order to revive their organisation from the point of collapse. Whereas others drew on previous experiences within government organisations and their interpersonal skills to work alongside staff to create practice frameworks. Additionally,



one participant brought with them a wealth of knowledge regarding tikanga Māori and set to work involving their national body in discussions around bi-cultural practice and mandatory training for Māori models of practice. Elofsson et al. (2016) earmark managers without direct practice experience as being only interested and effective in managing the business administration aspects of their role. However, an unanticipated theme arising from this study was the job success that each participant enjoyed and the specific points of difference that they brought into their organisation. These positive outcomes were due to the combination of business skills, leadership skills and various personal and professional backgrounds each participant held.

### *Collaborative management*

Easton (2019) describes managers without direct practice experience as unable to properly engage with their clinical staff. While Shanks et al. (2015) argue that the core values of social work cannot be replicated or imbibed without direct practice. In contrast, this study found that each and every participant was a collaborative, value-driven, passionate person who exalted advocacy and empowerment within their personal and professional lives. These underpinning values lie at the very core of social work ideology (Hunt, 2016), and have assisted each participant in aligning themselves to their organisation's vision and their staff's professional needs. All participants spoke of being a collaborative manager, and this was most keenly apparent when they highlighted themselves as part of the team. Participants maintained that the responsibility for the organisation ultimately lay with them, however, they made every effort to be collaborative in reaching final decisions. The passion that participants showed for the work that their organisations does, and their commitment to creating an empowered workforce, was clearly represented in their inability to separate themselves from the collective group.

### *Imposter syndrome*

Each of the participants involved in this study managed an MDT. Carpenter et al. (2003) suggest there are a wide range of challenges for managers responsible for guiding a mix of professionals. Nonetheless, they have little to say about managers understanding each of the professions they lead. Bamford and Griffin (2008) describe

challenges for MDT members including accountability tension, understanding of each other's contributions and organisational limitations. However, they fail to identify the challenging aspect managers face, as they reflect on their own skills and abilities in relation to their teams. One participant described this challenging reflection as 'imposter syndrome'. In particular, two participants divulged they felt some anxiety when taking on a social service management role due to not being part of the social services sector historically. The primary concerns identified were not being readily received by the already established teams and potential conflict due to their different backgrounds and viewpoints. Although some participants discussed their initial trepidation about entering a social service management role, they also reflected on the work that they had achieved since that time. All of the participants within this study felt that they had been able to add value to their organisation, both relationally and task-related. Participants reflected that it was their positive and specific contribution that ultimately alleviated their initial feelings of imposter syndrome.

#### *Reflection appreciation*

While this study highlighted many themes, both anticipated and unanticipated, it was also able to provide a mechanism for participants to sit, reflect and consider the management journey in which they had been on - both external to and within the social services sector. All participants mentioned their appreciation of making a specific time to consider what they do, why they do it and how it impacts themselves, their teams, their organisation and the communities they serve. While this study was designed to understand the participants' experiences, it was a joy for the researcher to hear that by being part of the study the participants were able to enjoy a positive and reflective environment.

In summary, within the literature (Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017; Southard, 2016) there is an abundance of information regarding the reasons why the rise of managerialism has required managers without clinical backgrounds to step into social service management roles. What this study could not have anticipated was the sheer passion, dedication and personal reflection that all participants showed towards their staff, their organisation and the communities which they sought to empower and

support. This persistence and devotion were clearly articulated as participants spoke about their specific contribution to their organisation, the importance of collaborative leadership, and their appreciation of encountering a reflective space when engaging with this study.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This section explored the study's findings in relation to the literature review compiled in Chapter two. These were: (1) management journey, (2) external influences, (3) internal influences, (4) social work knowledge and interest, (5) transferable skills, (6) advice for future managers, and (7) unanticipated findings.

Participants in this study were senior managers in non-government social service organisations. They managed at least one social work staff member, led an MDT and held qualifications external to social work. Participants held a range of undergraduate qualifications and had each engaged in higher learning in the subject of management. Each participant had an eclectic combination of skills and values that served their organisation and community in a particularly unique way. They held deep-seated values that closely aligned to the social work profession and all participants described being passionate about the work they were doing. Participants were aware of their strengths, worked collaboratively and were interested in continual learning regarding the professions they managed. Participants in this study appeared to all be part of the transformation of social work management, yet self-identified that they did not have all the required business administration skills required upon entering their role.

Literature suggests that neo-liberal ideals and managerialism has opened the doors for hiring managers with a set of business skills, over promoted social workers (Rogowski, 2011; Trevithick, 2014). However, it does not account for the sheer passion, devotion and alignment to social work values that participants of this study clearly articulated. While managers with qualifications external to social work may have to dedicate themselves to understanding the intricacies of the social work profession, this can be

taught. Intrinsic values, beliefs and passion are something that people carry inside them and this is what has drawn this study's participants to the social service sector. The following section will provide a conclusion to this study. It will highlight the study's key themes and explore how these relate to the study's primary aims.

<sup>1</sup>Prior to legislation change in 2019, registration with the Social Workers Registration Board, was in part decided upon after successful completion of a competency assessment.

<sup>2</sup>Germak (2014) and The Network for Social Work Management (2018)

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

### Introduction

Historically social service management roles were predominantly filled by the promotion of social workers, who were grounded in social work ideology (Shanks et al., 2015). However, with the advent of managerialism and New Public Management (NPM), management in this sector has experienced a change towards generic management processes and drivers of efficiency (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Klikauer, 2015; Lane, 2000; Rogowski, 2011). The skills required from social service managers began to outstrip what a qualified social worker was trained for, and an emphasis on business administration skills came to the fore (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Germak, 2015; Knee & Folsom, 2012; Martin, Pine & Healey, 1999; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). In order to survive in this new environment, organisations required managers who were adept in these specialist areas. A trend of appointing managers with qualifications external to social work became a consequence of this adaptation. (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Chandler, Bell, Berg & Barry, 2015; Peters, 2017; Staniforth, 2015).

In light of these political, societal and therefore social service sector changes, this study's primary aim was to:

Investigate what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess, and what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as manager.

This involved:

- 1) Exploring the managers perceptions of their role
- 2) Determining the opportunities afforded to/created by managers with qualifications external to social work
- 3) Determining the challenges experienced by managers with qualifications external to social work
- 4) Exploring what transferable skills are possessed by managers with qualifications external to social work

- 5) Establishing what additional knowledge managers with qualifications external to social work consider to be required in order to successfully manage social workers.

This study employed a qualitative approach and undertook semi-structured interviews to gather participant experiences. Thematic analysis was utilised to draw out key findings to answer the research questions. The following chapter summarises the key findings and outlines the researcher's reflections on the research process. Additionally, it considers implications of this study for practice and policy and suggests areas of interest for further research.

## **Key Findings**

After engaging in a wide breadth of literature surrounding the study's topic, the researcher expected that the participants would most likely be highly-qualified in business administration, struggle with understanding clinical practice and therefore, be somewhat disconnected from the ideology of the social work profession. This study uncovered that each and every participant engaged in the social service sector because they are value-driven and wanted to help make a positive change. Due to the focus on lack of direct practice, it appears that previous studies have missed the passion, drive, values and determination that this group of managers possess. In this way, this study suggests that social service managers with qualifications external to social work may have been misrepresented and therefore possibly undervalued.

The following section will provide a brief summary of this study's key findings: role perception, opportunities, challenges, transferable skills, and additional skills considered required in order to successfully manage social workers, when you are not one yourself.

### *Role perception*

Participants discussed their senior social service management roles, and how they managed the eclectic needs of their teams. They reflected on their mantle as manager and expressed feeling the weight of that responsibility. Each of the participants spoke fondly of their staff group, and emphasised that it was their role to equip, empower and support each of their clinical and non-clinical staff members. While participants reflected on a myriad of positive and negative situations that can occur within a multi-disciplinary team environment, they stated it was their commitment to transparency, collaborative communication and shared values that assisted them to manage their teams successfully.

Participants noted that they were involved in both management administration and clinical leadership within their organisation to a greater or lesser extent. This was partly due to the size of their organisation, and partly due to their overall responsibility as head of the organisation. Participants spoke of their use of the ANZASW code of ethics, and the importance of having both qualified and registered clinical staff members. They strove to create an environment where workers were expected to be competent and where each manager could feel secure in their staffs' abilities. Participants reflected on their range of skills upon entering a social service management role. Each spoke of their management skills, their personal values and their passion for the work as creating a unique situation for tackling the issues their organisation faced.

### *Opportunities*

Participants reflected on their role as manager, and considered areas of their work that created opportunities for both themselves and the organisation. Participants stated that in order for their organisation to be successful, they were required to maintain a positive rapport with the community at large, as well as maintain quality collaborative relationships with other social services. Participants suggested that collaboration and positive rapport with their community was a contracting requirement. However, they also noted that these relationships offered shared resources to clients and afforded them the opportunity to be involved in sector leadership.

Each participant managed an MDT, containing of a range of clinical and non-clinical staff. They spoke of celebrating the differences within their teams, and enjoyed the range of skills and experiences that benefitted the team as a whole, and the people they served. Within their work managing MDTs, there were situations that created interesting challenges for each participant. However, it was their unwavering commitment to their work and their communities that spurred on creative solutions and saw potential weaknesses turned into strengths.

### *Challenges*

In considering the challenges they faced within their roles, participants reflected that financial management and clinical knowledge were key impact areas. Each organisation was funded by at least one government contract, but additionally engaged in a range of auxiliary funding activities in order to meet their financial needs. Participants reflected that within such a competitive contracting environment, it was their campaigning, networking and excellent relationship building skills that ensured the financial future of their organisation. Participants reflected that their previous management roles had not prepared them for the breadth of financial skills and contracting knowledge they would need in a social service environment. Each participant required additional on-the-job learning, in order to be successful in their role.

While most participants were fortunate enough to afford employing some form of clinical lead for their clinical teams, they also found themselves involved in complex case management. Participants reflected that the health and wellbeing of the organisation was ultimately their responsibility so they expected to be involved in high profile or high-risk cases for the safety of all involved. While there is some concern in the literature regarding whether non-clinical managers are able to appropriately offer clinical leadership, participants in this study stated their eclectic range of skills often assisted their staff to see a wider picture of the situation. When considering their clinical teams, participants discussed the different opinions of various professions. They reflected that there was a need to carefully balance teams so that they were not heavily weighted with a single profession. Additionally, participants spoke of being



collaborative leaders, and that they endeavoured to create an environment within their teams where it was safe to shed professional identity and band together as one group under one vision.

### *Transferable skills*

Participants in this study had an opportunity to reflect on how and why they came into social service management, and what skills and knowledge they brought with them into their first role. They suggested their qualifications, prior experiences, passion and identity were key factors in their management journey. Participants had engaged in a wide range of educative topics at an undergraduate level, while also having undertaken post-graduate qualifications in management or short courses with similar subject matter. None of the participants had spent time in direct social work practice, but had each held management roles prior to taking on a management role in the social services. This study found that participants had experience with a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds, and an eclectic range of skills with a scope wider than social work skills alone. Participants self-identified as collaborative leaders and each held a pronounced set of personal values that drove them to empower, support and advocate in their roles as managers in the social services.

When considering what skills, they had first brought into their social service management roles, participants self-rated their confidence in a range of management skills. Participants reflected that interpersonal and leadership skills, including communication, advocacy, community development and responsiveness, human resources and public policy, were areas in which they felt most confident when entering their role. They stated that they were passionate about strengthening their teams, serving their communities and empowering their clinical staff. In contrast to the literature, participants reflected they were only moderately confident in management administration skills upon entering a social service management role. Participants suggested that while management administration skills were important for their role, their previous management experience did not necessarily equip them with the skills required for a non-government organisation. To summarise, this study found that participants arrived in social service management with high interpersonal and

leadership skills, and only a moderate level of management administration skills. However, subsequently, each participant has been fastidious in filling the gaps in their clinical competence, maintaining their leadership skills and growing their management administration knowledge. All participants have been intentional about their continued professional development and this, coupled with their deep-seated values, has equipped them to be successful in their roles.

#### *Additional skills*

Participants were encouraged to consider what skills and knowledge were additionally required in order to be successful in their roles. This study found that clinical knowledge, policy and planning, financial management, and discernment when appointing new positions were key areas of knowledge. While none of the participants wished they had direct social work practice experience, most reflected on the clinical knowledge gap they held upon arriving into a social service management role. Participants suggested that managers should work alongside their clinical leaders and social work staff to gain a better understanding of the professions and roles within their organisation. Participants of this study reflected that they have intentionally worked to grow their skills and knowledge in order to best serve their social work staff. They also stated that their values and beliefs closely aligned with social work values including empowerment, promotion of dignity, advocacy and cultural connectedness.

Participants discussed the need for new managers to understand organisational policy, planning techniques and ensure they are aligned to the vision and mission of the organisation. Financial management was a key focus for participants. They noted that without skills, knowledge and confidence in the area of gaining and maintaining finances their organisation would have failed. Participants suggested that new social service managers upskill in the area of financial management in order to meet the needs of the role.

Participants impressed the importance of having the right skills and people with similar values within their MDTs. They stated that they sought out people with appropriate skills and experience, but that it was a person's values and commitment to the vision that was crucial in order to develop a cohesive team. Several participants spoke of the

challenging situations they found themselves in when encountering ill-fitting staff members. They suggested that new managers take their time filling roles, as appointing the wrong person was much worse than being one staff member short.

Participants in this study self-identified as being value-driven individuals, which flowed through into all aspects of their work. Some spoke of their concerns when first entering a social service management role as they felt underprepared to manage professions they had not previously led. However, this anxiety was eventually relieved when they realised they held the unique combination of skills and experience needed for the organisation to flourish. Interestingly, the participants in this study felt more confident in their interpersonal skills than their management administration skills upon entering their first social service management role. This experience is contradictory to literature that suggests that generic managers have been appointed into social service roles due to their high-level management administration skills. All participants expressed their connectedness with social work values and the leadership style of collaboration. They each supported the notion that there is strength in a diverse MDT, and that their own personal eclectic skills and experiences were highly valuable to their staff and clients. Participants suggested that new managers being appointed must hold a foundational value-base congruent with that of the organisation. Additional clinical knowledge and management administration skills could both be learnt on the job.

## **Strengths and Limitations**

The following section will reflect on both the strengths and limitations of this study, including: successful recruitment, positive engagement with the researcher, and contribution to the wider topic.

### *Successful recruitment*

The researcher was able, within two attempts, to recruit sufficient participants in order to undertake this study. Each contact the researcher had with an umbrella organisation was friendly, showed interest, and ultimately led to the wide dissemination of the study's information. Each potential participant that made contact with the researcher was highly interested in the study's aims, and some exhibited regret when it was found they did not meet the study's criteria.

### *Positive engagement*

All participants recruited to this study showed a keen interest in the study's aims, as well as supporting the researcher in their academic progression. This interest was carried throughout the length of the study, and the researcher was afforded positive engagement with all participants. Participants made it known during the interviews, and throughout member checking that they had appreciated being involved in a study regarding managers. Ultimately, the researcher was able to operate a successful study, which ran smoothly for participants and researcher alike.

### *Contribution*

This study's main limitation is that of its size. The small size of the sample group, and therefore small size of the study limits its ability to generalise its results. Nevertheless, the successful completion of the study, and its findings, is able to confidently add to the conversation regarding this topic area.

## **Implications for practice and policy**

This study uncovered that the participant group were willing, able and passionate about their work and their communities. Participants noted that they did not commence their social service management role with every skill they needed to do their job. However, they came with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experiences

that they intentionally built on in order to become proficient in their roles. The implications of the findings from this study will now be discussed in relation to both practice and policy.

### *Implications for practice*

The following section will describe implications that this study could have on practice. This includes: involvement in clinical decision-making, the recruitment and development of new managers, and the ongoing development of managers.

#### Involvement in clinical decision-making

Each of the participants in this study reflected on the gaps in their skills and knowledge when taking on their role as a manager in the social services. Some of these gaps were in relation to management administration tasks, however, others were in relation to their lack of clinical knowledge and experience. While managers of social services may not engage in direct practice, they lead staff members who do. In addition, social service managers can be involved in clinical based decision-making. Therefore, it is crucial that organisations are able to effect high quality clinical leadership to support both staff members and the manager. To this end, it is essential that managers ensure there is purposeful clinical leadership within their team, if they can afford a clinical leadership role. Alternatively, ensuring regular external supervision and internal peer supervision is suggested in order to ensure that appropriate clinical decisions are being made.

#### Recruitment and development of new managers

Organisational boards, and governance groups are typically the mechanisms for employing new managers in NGOs. When considering the breadth of the role managers of NGOs are to undertake, it is worth considering what type of candidate these groups are seeking. Along with specific organisational values and an affiliation to the mission and vision, employers also seek to appoint a candidate whose skills and knowledge are a best fit. In relation to this study, it has become apparent that in order to be a successful social service manager in the present day, there are a range of skills required. Alongside interpersonal skills including communication, advocacy and

community responsiveness, stands management administration skills such as financial management, strategic planning and managing risk. However, the fundamental requirement of a social service manager that has emerged is that their values, passion and vision align both to the organisation and to the greater work of helping people. In light of this, it is imperative that the boards of NGOs be made aware of the need for eclectic skills and experiences from their prospective candidates. Individually, management administration, interpersonal leadership, or clinical experience are unable to fulfill the needs of the multi-skilled and value-driven position of social service manager. This awareness could be achieved by the promotion of governance training.

#### Ongoing development of managers

All participants had engaged in some variation of continual learning in regard to management skills and knowledge, however, it was noted by most participants that social service management offered differed in values from for-profit organisations. Participants described for-profit organisations as being concerned with financial driven goals. Whereas, non-profit organisations were described as being concerned with attaining person-centered goals. In particular, participants highlighted the continual and unrelenting task of tendering, monitoring and reporting on both contracts and auxiliary funding streams. Unlike a for-profit organisation, the organisations involved in this study relied entirely on acquiring funding, opposed to selling a product for profit. To this end, it is suggested that managers of social services engage in extensive training regarding funding and contracts as well as campaigning on behalf of their organisation, in order to attract and retain the donations they require to survive.

Most participants came into their role with a macro understanding of the professions in their teams and found that they had to upskill quickly in order to engage in clinical conversations. With this in mind, it is suggested that managers of social services engage in foundational training designed to introduce them to the professions they lead. This training would provide a clear understanding of each profession's ideology, key values, theories and frameworks. It is suggested that this type of training would be

developed alongside each profession's governing body, and could be completed via online tutorials in order to fit in around the demands of the management role.

### *Implications for policy*

The following section will describe an implication that this study could have on clinical leadership policy.

#### Clinical leadership

The results of this study suggest that managers of non-government organisations have some role regarding clinical decisions. Most participants employed the services of either a clinical team leader and/or external supervisor to lead their social work staff. However, participants stated that the accountability of the organisation rested with them and therefore, were also accountable for clinical-based decisions. While most participants stated that they could speak to their board regarding complex decisions, this required having a clinical-based board member to field these types of enquiries. Each participant ensured that their clinical staff had appropriate external supervision, however, none of the participants in this study engaged in regular supervision themselves. With this in mind, it is imperative that social service organisations have a clear clinical leadership policy. This policy would outline the additional support services that are to be put in place for managers in relation to complex clinical decisions. These support services could include an individual external clinical supervisor for the manager and/or a peer supervision group with clinically-experienced members engaged in roles at a management level. Additionally, this policy would outline the foundational clinical training expected of managers, in order to ensure they understand the professions linked to the required clinical decisions.

### **Reflections on the process**

The researcher came into this study with their own life experiences, and it was their involvement in social work, both as a front-line Social Worker and as a Senior Social

Worker, that heightened their interest in the area of social service management. In particular, the research had direct experience working, both domestically and internationally, in organisations that were managed by someone with a qualification external to social work. These experiences caused the researcher to ask what transferable skills were this group of managers bringing to the social services, and what additional skills were required in order for them to be successful in their role.

With the researcher's roots in social work, it was crucial to ensure that the participants' voices were unobscured and allowed to flow freely throughout the study's duration. The researcher sought to understand the participants' journey in social service management and aimed to ensure that their experiences were accurately documented. The researcher found that each participant was willing and eager to be part of the study, and therefore, were forthcoming contributors to the study as a whole. The researcher found that while undertaking the first interview they experienced some anxiety due to being out of the workforce for some time. However, after undertaking a self-de-briefing exercise, the researcher was excited and energised to undertake the remaining interviews.

In the field of social work, there are expected ways in which social workers are to engage with clients/tangata whaiora in order to carefully caretake a person's story. Within this study, the researcher sought to ensure that the same expectations of being treated with respect and upholding mana, tino rangatiratanga and promoting self-autonomy were embedded throughout the process. Each participant appeared to take part without restriction and provided a level of disclosure unanticipated by the researcher. Not only did the participants provide answers to the researcher's questions, they each shared their personal passion for the work that they do. Their eagerness to be involved in this study and their subsequent openness, led the researcher to a richer understanding of social service managers with qualifications external to social work. Therefore, it was the researcher's desire to honour their stories by accurately depicting their experiences as managers of social services and the ways in which they contribute to the wider social service sector.



## **Recommendations for future research**

In light of the implications identified above, two recommendations are made regarding future research:

1. that a larger scale investigation regarding social service manager core competencies be undertaken. This could be accomplished by survey, and followed-up by focus groups.
2. that other staff groups be engaged with in relation to their experiences of having a manager who holds a qualification external to their own. In particular, it would be prudent to engage social workers and social work team leaders who hold social work qualifications. The purpose of this would be to understand the opportunities and challenges they face in their role, when engaging with a manager who has skills and knowledge different from their own.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess, and what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as manager. In particular, it sought to uncover managers' perceptions of their role, the opportunities created by/afforded to this group of managers, and the challenges they experienced. It sought to determine what transferable skills this group of managers brought with them to their social service role, and what additional skills and knowledge they required in order to meet the needs of their role, staff, clients and communities. This study was conducted under the umbrella of the subjective perspective and was underpinned by the interpretivist approach. It employed a qualitative approach and utilised thematic analysis in order to draw out key themes and answer the study's enquiries.

Within the reviewed literature, there was a general tendency to highlight this group of managers as being required for their business acumen while also stating that they

lacked the key skills, values and underpinning beliefs found within the social work profession. The findings of this study demonstrated that while managers with qualifications external to social work came into their roles without direct practice experience, they were willing and able to add to their skills and knowledge base. The salient features that arose from this study were that the participants involved were people with eclectic personal and professional histories, who held deep-seated values which aligned easily with the social work profession. Most importantly, the participants who took part in this study showed a commendable internal drive and unrelenting passion for supporting their staff and clients. This meant that they were driven to increase their working knowledge of the professions they managed and they endeavored to ensure that every decision they made was in line with what was best for the people they served.

This study found that the primary factors for success when undertaking a management role within the social services include: strong personal values and interpersonal skills, aptitude in management administration tasks and a passion for helping people, both staff and clients. It is in amassing this eclectic range of personal and professional skills that will hold social service managers in good stead, and assist them to lead social workers into the future.

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## Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter



Date: 10 August 2018

Dear Suzanne Cocker

Re: Ethics Notification - NOR 18/33 - Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself: Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Human Ethics Northern Committee at their meeting held on Friday, 10 August 2018.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise  
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 F 06 355 7973  
E [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz) W <http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz>

## Appendix 2: Invitation Letter



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HEALTH  
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

School of Social Work, Social Science Tower, Massey University, Palmerston North

### **Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself: Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

To whom it may concern

I am a Master of Social Work student at Massey University. I am interested in the management and leadership of Social Workers and I am undertaking a small-scale research project as part fulfilment of my degree.

This study will explore and document the experiences of social service managers with qualifications external to social work, who manage social workers. It aims to discover the opportunities and challenges they face and to better understand their contribution to the role of social service manager. It will highlight recommendations for additional learning in order for current or prospective non-social work qualified managers to be successful in managing social workers. I plan to consider what transferable skills these managers possess and seek to understand what additional knowledge and skills are required to be a successful manager of qualified social workers.

I am approaching you, along with other umbrella organisations, as you engage in a network of social service organisations. This contact is to ask for your assistance in passing on the details of my research project to your networks. Managers who are interested will then be able to contact me personally in order to show their interest in the project.

I am looking to speak to 6-8 social service managers based in the lower North Island who hold qualifications external to social work. For instance, managers who hold qualifications in administration or health-based professions. Additionally, they would need to have held a management role for two or more years, manage a multi-disciplinary team, manage at least one social worker and work for a non-government organisation.

I have included a copy of the information sheet and consent form with this letter. I would appreciate an indication of your willingness to forward these details to your social service networks. If you have any questions please contact myself or my supervisors in the below mentioned ways.

Suzanne Cocker (MSW Student – Researcher)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Michael Dale or Lareen Cooper (Supervisors)

Phone: 0800 627 739 ext. 83519

Email: m.p.dale@massey.ac.nz

Phone: 0800 627 739 ext. 83522

Email: l.cooper@massey.ac.nz

Kind Regards

Suzanne Cocker

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



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**Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself:  
Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

### Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in the study **Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself: Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

#### Researcher Introduction

My name is Suzanne Cocker, I am a Registered Social Worker. I have worked in the Social Work field in both front line and middle management roles over the past 8 years. My interest in Social Work has propelled me to take up roles in New Zealand, Australia and England in various health, family and cultural based organisations. Currently I am a Master of Social Work student at Massey University, as part of this degree I am currently undertaking a small research study.

#### Purpose of Study

This study will explore and document the experiences of social service managers with qualifications external to social work, who manage social workers. It aims to discover the opportunities and challenges they face and to better understand their contribution to the role of social service manager. It will highlight recommendations for additional learning in order for current or prospective non-social work qualified managers to be successful in managing social workers. The primary aim is to investigate what transferable skills managers with qualifications external to social work possess and what additional skills are considered required in order to succeed in their role as manager.

This is a voluntary study, so you are able to withdraw from the study at any time up until you have returned your approved transcript. The findings will highlight recommendations for additional learning in order for current or prospective non-social work qualified managers to be successful in managing qualified social workers.

#### Participant Involvement

If you would like to take part in this study, and meet the selection criteria as follows:

Work for a non-government organisation; Hold a role as a manager/kaiwhakahaere or equivalent; Held role/s in social service management/leadership for two or more years; Not hold a recognised social work qualification; Manage/lead a multidisciplinary team; Manage/lead at least one social worker who holds a recognised social work qualification; Be willing to sign the study's consent form (Recognised social work qualification as per the Social Workers Registration Board's acceptable list) and live in the lower North Island in Aotearoa New Zealand.

If you meet the above-mentioned criteria and have signed the consent form we would need to be in contact on three occasions. These contacts can occur face to face, by telephone or video call if that is preferable. A total of 1 hour and 40 minutes of commitment would be required of you.

The contacts would be structured as follows:

- 1) Approval screening questionnaire – 10 minutes by telephone
- 2) An interview – 60 minutes maximum, preferably face to face where possible
- 3) Review, amend and accept copy of written transcript – 30 minutes via email



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When meeting face to face, the location and time of the interview will be negotiated with each participant.

**Benefits and Risks**

By being part of the research study, you will get the benefit of increased understanding of research process and the satisfaction of adding your experience and views into the narrative. The study aims to benefit each participant by collating and sharing, via the written report, knowledge specific to your role and sector. Additionally, it aims to benefit the wider social service field by adding to the knowledge base of management of qualified social work staff.

Kawa and mana will be upheld within all interactions with Māori participants. The study seeks to support opportunities for Māori to freely express their experiences, in a way that is acceptable to Māori participants, whānau, hapu and iwi.

There will be no financial cost to yourself, only your time. A koha will be offered to yourself at the conclusion of the study in recognition and appreciation of your commitment of time and expertise to take part, which without the study would not proceed.

**What are my rights?**

During the interview process you are able to decline to answer any question and ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. You have the right to have access to all your own data and can request to see this at any stage by contacting the researcher. You will have the option of receiving the final report electronically via email. Any additional advantages or risks unveiled throughout the process will be communicated to yourself at the earliest availability.

**Data Management**

Your data, both electronic and paper-based will be collected for the purpose of this study alone. Electronic data will be kept in password protected files and paper-based data will be kept under lock and key, with a back-up of all information kept in a safe at a second location. All data both electronic and paper-based will be deleted or destroyed after use. You have the right to have your audio recordings returned to you at the conclusion of the study, if you prefer.

**Who do I contact?**

If you have any queries or concerns regarding the study please contact myself, or one of my supervisors.

Suzanne Cocker (MSW Student – Researcher)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Michael Dale or Lareen Cooper (Supervisors)

Phone: 0800 627 739 ext. 83519

Email: [m.p.dale@massey.ac.nz](mailto:m.p.dale@massey.ac.nz)

Phone: 0800 627 739 ext. 83522

Email: [l.cooper@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.cooper@massey.ac.nz)

**Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 18/33. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix 4: Consent Form



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**Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself:  
Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

### Participant Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

---

Full Name (printed)

---

Signature

---

Date



## Appendix 5: Study Approval Questionnaire



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### Transferable Management Skills:

The opportunities and challenges of managers with qualifications external to Social Work.

## Study Approval Questionnaire

(circle the appropriate answer)

Do you work for a non-government social service organisation?	Yes	No
Are you a manager/kaiwhakahaere or equivalent?	Yes	No
Have you held roles in social service management/leadership for two years or more?	Yes	No
Do you hold a qualification external to Social Work?	Yes	No
Do you manage a multidisciplinary team?	Yes	No
Do you manage a Social Worker?	Yes	No
Are you willing to participate in, and sign the consent form for this study?	Yes	No

## Appendix 6: Interview Schedule



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Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

### Interview Schedule

#### Demographic Data

Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity	
Education level	
Qualifications list	
Job title	
Number of years in management roles	
Professional body affiliations	

#### Management/Leadership Journey

What was your route to becoming a manager?

(journey, identity as a manager, professions you lead, knowledge of staff roles/professions, competency, professional development, clinical leadership)

What are the theories that underpin how you do what you do?

(leadership style; Activist, reflector, theorist, pragmatist, other)

#### External Influences

What external influences do you see as causing a challenging effect on your role? Why are they challenging?

(funders expectations, contractual obligations, community perspective, professional bodies)



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What external influences do you see as creating opportunities for your role? Why are they positive?

(support networks, industry expectations)

**Internal Influences**

What internal influences do you see as causing a challenging effect on your role? Why?

What internal influences do you see as creating opportunities for your role? Why?

**Social Work Interest and Knowledge**

What is your interest in leading/managing social workers?

(understanding of social work theories and values, expectations of qualifications and registration)

What challenges do you face when interacting with your social work staff?

(issues raised, by whom, skills and knowledge useful, social work promotion)

**Transferable Skills**

(Combined from A.J. Germack (2014) and The Network for Social Work Management (2018).

What skills did you bring into your manager role from your qualification external to social work.

Social and public policy issues - Well informed	Advocacy - Lobbying - Representing your social voice	
Public relations/marketing - Research skills - Funder relationships - Media relations	Governance - Responsibilities of the board - Engagement with board members	
Planning - Strategic direction	Program Development - Innovation - Responsiveness to community	
Financial development	Evaluation	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Health of organisation</li><li>- Resource management</li><li>- Contracting</li><li>- Budgeting</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Addressing needs</li><li>- Effectiveness</li><li>- Corrective actions</li></ul>	
Human resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Supervising</li><li>- Advising</li><li>- Hiring</li><li>- Performance management</li></ul>		Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Internal</li><li>- External</li><li>- Social media</li><li>- Risk management</li></ul>	

**Additional Skills and Knowledge**

What would you recommend to other managers or prospective managers as crucial skills/knowledge to have in order to be a successful manager of qualified social workers?

(skills, knowledge, time, resources, constraints)

**Additional Comments**

## Appendix 7: Review of Transcript Release Form



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**Managing and leading social workers when you are not one yourself:  
Opportunities and challenges in non-government organisations.**

### Review of Transcript Release Form

Codename Identifier			
Place of interview (circle)	Workplace	Researchers office	Other (specify)
Interviewed by	Suzanne Cocker, Master of Social Work student		
Educational institute	Massey University, New Zealand		

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read, edit and provide clarification to the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name (Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date