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**POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSFORMATION:  
Discourses of difference in organisational communication**

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I set out to create an interdisciplinary location from which to address the relationship between gender and communication in an organisational context. I draw on feminist and post-structuralist theory to ask the question: How is 'difference' constructed in organisational communication? I use the term 'difference' here to indicate that I am interested in how 'gender' works in relationship with other kinds of difference, especially in relation to ethnic difference.

My thesis is intended as a contribution to feminist communication theory, and specifically, to the emerging field of feminist organisational communication. Because of the approach I take to 'communication', this project addresses broad issues of identity, agency and discourse in organisations. In this sense, I also see the thesis as a contribution to organisational studies, and particularly to the study of organisational discourse, which opens up new relationships between 'organisation' and 'communication'. Interdisciplinarity itself is a key issue in my thesis, as I set out to create connections between disciplinary fields in the service of contesting them, rather than seeking to create new boundaries. A second key focus is the development of theoretical sophistication in the field of gender and communication. I draw on feminist/post-structuralist theory, especially feminist readings of Michel Foucault's work to generate this development. My third key focus is the issue of agency, which I see as central to theorising organisational transformation, and also as central to re-thinking communication theory.

My writing strategies demonstrate my commitments to reflexivity in developing feminist/post-structuralist research epistemologies, and I experiment with ways of paying attention to issues of authority throughout the thesis. This thesis is divided into two main parts. In Chapters 2 to 6, I set up a theoretical framework for feminist/post-structuralist accounts of gender and ethnicity, and weave this theory through the literatures of 'gender and communication', 'cross-cultural communication', and 'organisational communication'. I set out to produce an 'autocritique', an opportunity to draw on developments in post-structuralist theory to think differently about feminist 'organisational communication', putting it within a broader framework of 'difference'.

In the second part of the thesis, Chapters 7 to 12, I put issues generated by this theoretical framework in a specific organisational context, asking: How are gender and ethnic differences constructed in the discourses of Equal Employment

Opportunities (EEO) and Biculturalism in New Zealand government organisations? Chapters 7 and 8 introduce my field studies methodology and research subjects, and provide background narratives which frame the historical and cultural context in which they were carried out. In Chapters 9 to 12 I carry out a discourse analysis of interviews with EEO and Biculturalism practitioners, and also analyse published and unpublished documents associated with 'difference' in employment policies. These accounts of field studies are intended as a series of experiments with theorising 'organisational communication' in different ways. I complete the thesis with a 'Review' (Chapter 13) in which I reflect on key theoretical threads, and on further questions that emerged during the project.

**DEDICATION**

**To Conrad Bollinger**

**1929-1975**

**Trade unionist, journalist, scholar, teacher, human rights advocate**

**Memento mori**

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**E hara taku toa i te toa taki tahi  
Engari he toa taki tini e**

**Mine is not the strength of one alone  
But the strength of many**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

What is philosophy today, I mean philosophical activity, if it is not work which is critical of thought itself? And what is it if, instead of legitimising that which we already know, it does not consist in finding out how and how far it might be possible to think differently? (Foucault, 1992, pp. 8-9).

### 1. Possibilities of transformation

In this thesis I set out to create an interdisciplinary location from which to address the relationship between gender and communication in an organisational context. I draw on feminist and post-structuralist theory to ask the question: How is 'difference'<sup>1</sup> constructed in organisational communication? I use the term 'difference' here to indicate that I am interested in how 'gender' works in relationship with other kinds of difference, especially in relation to ethnic difference.

My thesis is intended as a contribution to feminist communication theory, and specifically, to the emerging field of feminist organisational communication. Because of the approach I take to 'communication', this project addresses broad issues of identity, agency and discourse in organisations. In this sense, I also see the thesis as a contribution to organisational studies, and particularly to the study of organisational discourse, which opens up new relationships between 'organisation' and 'communication'. Interdisciplinarity itself is a key issue in my thesis, as I set out to create connections between disciplinary fields in the service of contesting them, rather than seeking to create new boundaries. A second key focus is the development of theoretical sophistication in the field of gender and communication. I draw on feminist/post-structuralist theory, especially feminist readings of the writings of Michel Foucault, to generate this development. My third key focus is the issue of agency, which I see as central to theorising organisational transformation, and also as central to re-thinking communication theory.

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<sup>1</sup> On my use of quotation marks in this thesis other than for attributed quotations: 'The effect of the quotation marks is to denaturalize the terms [within quotation marks], to designate these signs as sites of political debate' (Butler, 1995a, p. 54).

In this introduction I discuss my research questions from various perspectives, putting my theoretical framework in place and explaining its relationship to my field studies. I set out to establish a relationship with readers, by locating myself in terms of my epistemological and political commitments, and setting out a basic theoretical vocabulary. I also introduce the 'voice' that I use in writing the thesis.

My thesis title is drawn from Michel Foucault's claim that the analysis of discourse opens up the 'possibility of transformation' (Foucault, 1972, p. 120). In this project I am concerned with the 'possibilities of transformation' in two senses. First, I am interested in the possibilities of transforming the academic discourses of difference and communication. In my original thesis proposal, I asked how gender and ethnicity in organisational communication could be theorised in the light of what I saw as a 'crisis of representation' in the social sciences in which 'the foundations of communication itself are being questioned' (Boyne and Rattansi, 1990, p. 12). The opportunities which I saw at that time have since been opened up by writers in communication theory generally, in the fields of gender and ethnicity and communication, in organisational and management theory which addresses questions of difference, post-modernism and post-modernity. My discussion of these theoretical literatures follows in Chapters 2 to 6.

My key analytic approach is what feminist philosopher Judith Butler calls a 'denaturalizing critique' (Butler, 1990). This is a strategy of interrupting assumptions about 'natural' identities, in order to open up possibilities for change: 'only from a self-consciously denaturalized position can we see how that appearance of naturalness has been constituted' (Butler, 1990, p. 110). In this case I question the naturalization of identity - especially gender and ethnic identities - in the communication literatures. This critique opens up the possibility that the discipline of communication can be transformed to create a space in which the construction of identity can be studied.

Secondly, I am interested in communicative practices which create possibilities of transforming identities in organisations. In particular, I consider identity within organisations in the context of feminist theories of equality and difference. On the level of practice, this means an interest in how feminists in organisations set out to intervene strategically in discourses of equality and difference through organisational change programmes such as Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO). How do they see the possibilities of

transformation? What does the process of transformation tell us about how difference is created in organisational communication? Again, I use a denaturalizing critique of organisational discourses. I look at how certain identities come to be taken-for-granted as 'natural', and at how this seeming naturalness is both reproduced and contested by feminist projects. The second half of the thesis consists of an inquiry into possibilities of transformation in organisations through a variety of experiments in analysing interview texts and documents collected during field studies. In the New Zealand context, various forms of 'Biculturalism'<sup>2</sup> programmes work alongside EEO programmes in government organisations to specifically address agendas of difference and equality. I have chosen to focus on these as key organisational sites where discourses of difference are overt and explicit. In my interviews with 28 practitioners, I focused on their organisational change strategies as communicative practices. I talked with them about how they saw themselves as agents of communication intervening in discourses of difference in their organisations.

This thesis is theory-driven. Rather than using the more traditional thesis format of splitting an exposition of 'theory' from its systematic 'application' to field studies, I prefer to see theoretical questions as implicated and elaborated throughout the thesis. I see the denaturalizing critiques of the literature, and of organisational texts, as experiments in trying out various aspects of my theoretical inquiry. I am inspired by Foucault's description of his work as "'propositions", "game openings" where those who might be interested are 'invited to join in', rather than 'dogmatic assertions' (Foucault, 1991a, p. 74). I like his idea of 'philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems' (ibid.). In this chapter, I introduce my research questions, and my key theoretical resources. These include feminism and anti-racism, post-structuralism and post-modernism, and theories of discourse analysis. I go on to discuss my approach to writing the thesis, and conclude with an outline of the thesis chapter by chapter.

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<sup>2</sup> In the New Zealand context, 'Biculturalism' has specific meanings in terms of government policies and programmes dealing with issues of ethnicity. These are outlined in Chapter 8, and discussed extensively in Chapters 12 and 13. In this thesis I use the capitalised version of 'Biculturalism' to indicate this specific context, and 'biculturalism' with no initial capital to indicate a more general reference.

## **2. Research questions for re-thinking 'difference' in organisational communication**

In this section I work through my research questions (see Table 1) in the context of my theoretical assumptions and research design. I raise many issues that I will return to in detail later in the thesis, and I flag these as I go. I see this thesis as an account of my own re-thinking of 'gender and communication'. In the 25 or so years since I first studied 'sex differences in language' from a sociolinguistic perspective, my experiences as a communication practitioner in organisations, and as a feminist activist and teacher, have given me a much more complex perspective on 'difference', and on how it is played out in specific ways in organisational life. On returning to academic work in the late 1980s, I found that feminist/post-structuralist writings opened up a series of opportunities to 'think things differently'. I argue in this thesis that these perspectives, while often written in genres that seem alien and esoteric to practitioners, can be of great practical value to feminists.

My intention in designing this project has been to re-think the gender and communication debates from a feminist/post-structuralist point of view. In particular, I have drawn on the work of Judith Butler, in which gender is seen as performative, as constructed in discourse, rather than as a pre-given identity which provides gender as a 'variable' in measuring communication differences. (See Chapters 2 to 5 for my discussions on gender and ethnicity as performative.) Because I see difference as an effect of discourse, my key question, then, applied to the specific research field, becomes:

How are gender and ethnic differences constructed in the organisational discourses of EEO and Biculturalism in New Zealand government organisations?

In developing my inquiry process, I focused on two key theoretical questions. The first is:

How can the topic of 'communication and difference' be re-thought from a post-structuralist perspective?

## KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is 'difference' constructed in organisational communication?

*Applied to the research field, it becomes:*

How are gender and ethnic differences constructed in the organisational discourses of EEO and Biculturalism in New Zealand government organisations?

*To develop my research question further, I elaborate it in these terms:*

### **Theoretical questions**

How can the topic of 'communication and difference' be re-thought from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective?

What is the relationship between communicative practices and identity?

### **Methodological question**

What methods of discourse analysis take communication perspectives into account?

### **Key questions in field studies**

What communicative strategies are employed by EEO practitioners?

How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with each other?

How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with other discourses in government organisations (especially discourses of bureaucracy and managerialism)?

**Table 1. Key research questions**

To answer this question, I needed to re-think both 'communication' and 'difference'. As I discuss below, the particular 'version' of feminist post-structuralism that forms the basis of most of my re-thinking' is a foucauldian one. (I use a small 'f' here to indicate various re-readings of Michel Foucault's work, as well as texts authored by Foucault.)

Foucauldian concepts of subjectivity are clearly a key issue here in linking discourse with identity, and I developed a research question to address them more specifically:

What is the relationship between communicative practices and identity?

I see the re-thinking of a given academic field in feminist/post-structuralist terms as a contribution in itself. In developing a feminist/post-structuralist research agenda for 'communication and difference', and in showing how it converges with developing feminist agendas in organisational studies, I set out to generate a broad range of research possibilities (Chapters 5 and 6). In the second part of the thesis I experimented with just a few of these possibilities in a specific historical field. I did this to demonstrate to myself and others that feminist/post-structuralist approaches to organisational communication offer useful ways for practitioners to reflect on their own practice. I was interested in how practitioners theorised their own activities, and in making connections between this theorising and the kinds of theoretical questions I was interested in. I set out to develop an analytic process, rather than to write a thesis 'about' EEO or Biculturalism. In Chapter 8 I give some basic background on how EEO and Biculturalism work in a local context, so that my later field studies 'experiments' make sense to readers. Primarily, I see my account as a narrative arising from local conditions, to be read in connection with other narratives by those with interests in similar fields.

A central issue in my research agenda was to find ways to investigate communication processes as performative, using some version of foucauldian discourse analytic methods. As I discuss in Chapters 4 to 6, foucauldian discourse analysis work in communication studies has tended to focus on communication as representation, rather than on communication as process. This methodological question then formed the basis of my discourse analysis work:

Which methods of discourse analysis take communication perspectives into account?

As a researcher, I saw myself as a facilitator of a conversation between me and practitioners about their own communicative practices in their field. I wanted to know how they theorised their own communicative interventions, and how this theorising related to their own autobiographies (identities) and their change strategies (their political frameworks). The relevant research question in terms of field studies was:

Which communication strategies are employed by EEO practitioners?

I analysed practitioners' accounts in terms of a map of organisational discourses in two main dimensions: historical (diachronic) change; and differences across the boundaries of contemporary discourses (synchronic). The way I initially identified discursive boundaries was in terms of boundary conflicts, although in later analysis convergences also became very important. The relevant field studies questions were based on teasing out the relationships between gender and ethnicity (here signified roughly as EEO and Biculturalism), and between EEO, Biculturalism and the dominant organisational discourses (bureaucracy and managerialism) :

How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with each other?

How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with other discourses in government organisations (especially discourses of bureaucracy and managerialism)?

### **3. Introducing terms**

I like Wendy Brown's feminist image of the 'post-modern' as 'a global intifada of the margins against the center' (Brown, 1991, p. 63). Here we can see feminism as one of the forces storming the Pentagon of modern rational thought, the centre of all knowledge and authority, while perhaps at the same time the Pentagon itself is disintegrating from within, its confidence in its own authority crumbling. In this section I do some sorting and spelling-out of how I use a basic vocabulary of theoretical terms such as 'feminism' and 'post-modernism', while also pointing out that the problematising of many of these terms is part of the work of the thesis.

This thesis is based on the premises of feminism, in terms of epistemology as well as theoretical focus and political commitments. Feminism in the 1990s is strongly contested and fragmented. I take feminism to be a discourse: that is, specifically historically and culturally located. Anna Yeatman describes it as 'one of the central emancipatory movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', and, as such 'seeks to end a particular type of power relationship' (Yeatman, 1995). Here feminism is clearly located as a modern movement, but as Vicki Kirby points out, 'monolithic representations' of feminism suppress the differences within it, and put it in 'agonistic confrontation' with other categories such as post-modernism - incidentally casting post-modernism as 'equally monolithic' (Kirby, 1993, p. 21). (In Chapter 2, I set out some of the modernist/post-modernist discussions within feminism.) Kirby, an Australian feminist, argues for the values of local versions of feminist discourses, and commends the way that Australian feminists have 'been engaged in grafting, re-reading and recycling these exotic imports - [post-modernism, Anglo-American feminisms] - into products with different and local use values' (ibid., p. 21). In New Zealand we do the same, within our own context of 'post-colonialism', and our history of gendered and ethnic relationships. For instance, the relationship between Pakeha<sup>3</sup> feminism and issues of Maori<sup>4</sup> sovereignty is unique, and flows through my discussions of feminist and anti-racist discourses. For the purposes of my thesis, I draw, where possible, on local texts, while acknowledging the powerful influences of Anglo-American texts and, via feminist-post-structuralism, French texts.

Associated closely with feminism for me - in both theory and practice - is a commitment to anti-racism. This seems to me to be a key issue for feminists in New Zealand, as elsewhere, and many feminists have been actively involved in anti-racism work (see D. Jones, 1992). Feminist theories of racism tend to bring it into a framework with other 'interlocking oppressions' (Yeatman, 1995). In Chapter 3, I make a different kind of connection between feminism and anti-racism, via post-structuralist theory. Here I take anti-racism to be a discourse which provides a critique of racism, which I see in turn as a discourse which categorises according to frameworks of 'race' which create and reproduce power differences. Like feminism, I see anti-racism as having local and specific forms.

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<sup>3</sup>'Pakeha' here refers to a non-Maori New Zealander, usually of British descent. I discuss the politics of this term in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup>Maori are the indigenous people, or Tangata Whenua, of New Zealand. I discuss designations of Maori identity in more detail in Chapter 3, and in Chapters 8, 11 and 12.

In the New Zealand context, for instance, Paul Spoonley argues that the term does not cover Maori politics of self-determination, although there may be some converging agendas (Spoonley, 1993, p. 99).

Although I see gender and ethnicity as only two of various identity designations which are commonly addressed in critical social theory, I focus on these two because they are highly salient and explicit in organisational discourses of difference, and because their relationship works well in generating complex accounts of difference. By excluding designations such as class, sexual orientation, age or disability, I have no intention of saying they are less 'important', or that I am attempting to give a 'complete' account of equality and difference in organisations. I do refer at times to various theoretical frameworks in which gender and ethnicity are categorised in various ways in theorising inequality. For instance, to call a political perspective 'critical' tends to refer to versions of neo-marxism, although it may be taken to include versions of feminism (Best and Kellner, 1991); references to politics of 'social justice' may imply a more liberal account which includes versions of liberal feminism and anti-racism (Young, 1990). Both often refer to some version of 'interlocking oppressions', employing a structural (Young, 1990) or radical structuralist (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) account of power and identity. This is a sociological account, and Anne Game's *Undoing the social: Towards a deconstructive sociology* (Game, 1991), is a good example of 'undoing' it in feminist/post-structuralist terms. In Chapter 10, I analyse the inequality frameworks within which EEO practitioners theorise their representational practices. My main point here is that the 'structural', or 'structuralist' analysis of power in critical theory is - rather confusingly - not the same 'structuralism' of 'post-structuralism'.

Anthony Easthope points out that 'the prefix "post-" is serious not casual for post-structuralism gets its intellectual force by being both *after* structuralism and *because* of it, because of the limitations discovered in structuralism's project' (Easthope, 1988, p. 23, author's italics)<sup>5</sup>. The 'structuralism' of 'post-structuralism' is centrally concerned with language and representation. It is a formalist position that contests the functionalist idea that language is a 'tool' of humanity, arguing instead that language contains its own structure and so its own 'level of intelligibility' which can be hermeneutically discerned 'underlying' human consciousness (Poster, 1989b, p. 139). While post-structuralists are also

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<sup>5</sup> I prefer to use a hyphen in 'post-' words for this reason; however, I follow the usage of authors cited where this differs.

vitaly concerned with language and representation, the main break made 'after' post-structuralism is to reject the link between an underlying 'truth' of language, and the individual reason or consciousness which can gain access to it. In this sense post-structuralism is, as Dreyfus and Rabinow put it, 'beyond structuralism and hermeneutics' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). In her feminist reading of post-structuralism, Judith Butler makes the point, in an explicitly political framework:

that power pervades the very conceptual apparatus which seeks to negotiate its terms, including the subject position of the critic; and further, that this implication of the terms of criticism in the field of power is.... the very precondition of a politically engaged critique (Butler, 1995a, p. 39).

Butler also points out that 'post-structuralism', and 'post-modernism' are frequently 'conflated with each other and with deconstruction, and sometimes understood as an indiscriminate assemblage' of recent critical theory (Butler, 1995a, p. 36). My aim here is to acknowledge that post-structuralism and post-modernism are discourses, and to indicate as specifically as possible why and how I draw on them in my own writing. For instance, I avoid the term 'deconstruction' because of its association with Derridean critique, with which I am not familiar. While my emphasis is on feminist post-structuralism, I do cite other versions of theoretical terminologies where these are used by other authors: for instance, recent feminist theoretical debates are frequently characterised in terms of feminism/post-modernism (Nicholson, 1990; Benhabib et al., 1995); and I draw on work by 'deconstructive' psychologists (Parker and Shotter, 1990).

Where I do find the concept of the 'post-modern' useful in my analysis, is in the attention that it draws to the assumptions of modernity. In particular, I draw on Lyotard's argument that there is a distinctive epistemology in the 'postmodern condition' which rejects the 'grand narratives' [also called meta-narratives] of modernism (Lyotard, 1984). This 'crisis of representative authority' (Williams, 1993, p. 51) subverts the essential authority of a range of seemingly widely diverse 'grand narratives' based on modernism, including feminism, marxism, science and capitalism. Defining the post-modernism in terms of representation also puts in the same frame a series of terms such as the 'linguistic turn' (Canning, 1994) or the 'rhetorical turn' (Brown, 1994), that have come to characterise the application of post-modern critical practices to social sciences and social theory. From this perspective 'knowledge is.... "made" by human

communicative action that develops historically and is institutionalised politically' (Brown, 1994, p. 229). In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 I discuss the implications of the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences for the discipline of communication studies and its characteristic epistemologies.

One of the problems with the concept of the 'post-modern' is its totalising tendencies. The 'moment' of the post-modern may be characteristic of certain aspects of Western late capitalism, but have no lived reality for those in other cultural spaces, or may be resisted as the latest version of colonisation (D'cruz, 1994). The term 'post-colonial' carries the tension between a historicising reference to previously-colonised cultures (such as New Zealand), and a post-modern problematisation of culture and identity in the wake of colonisation. In Chapter 3 I discuss 'post-colonialism' in the context of 'theorising ethnicity'.

I have found the terms 'foundationalist' and 'post-foundationalist', as used by feminists such as Yeatman (1991) and Butler (1995a, 1995b), valuable in challenging the 'presuppositions of modernist and modern discursive foundations.... presuppositions which ground the validity of knowledge claims with reference to some a priori ground of truth, beauty, justice' (Yeatman, 1991, p. 30). Here Yeatman, like Lyotard, highlights the connections between the grounds for political claims, such a justice, and the grounds for epistemological claims to truth. The term 'post-foundationalist' is effective for me, at many points of analysis, in that it does not commit to a specific theory of a post-modern era, and it is broader than 'post-structuralism' in the way it addresses political claims. Butler captures this usage for me when she argues that 'democratic contestation' requires 'a way to bring into question the foundations it is compelled to lay down', to contest 'the foundationalist move' (Butler, 1995a, p. 41).

A crucial element for me in the design of this thesis was the insight - first encountered in Patti Lather's work on feminist pedagogy (Lather, 1989, 1991) - that 'feminism' is a discourse, which, like other discourses, generates its own power relations, its processes of normalisation and marginalisation. Lather and other feminist post-structuralists argue that the point is not to try and remedy these contradictions by attempts to 'purify' feminism (Kirby, 1993), but rather to draw on post-structuralist critical methods to open it up to contest - to what Poster calls an 'autocritique' (Poster, 1989a, p. 5).

Chris Weedon's feminist readings of Foucauldian post-structuralism have emphasised this approach:

The least that a feminist poststructuralism can do is explain the assumptions underlying the questions asked and answered by other forms of feminist theory, making their political assumptions explicit. Poststructuralism can also indicate the types of discourse from which particular feminist questions come and locate them socially and institutionally. Most important of all, it can explain the implications for feminism of these other discourses (Weedon, 1987, p. 22).

In particular, a feminist use of post-structuralism brings into relief the culturally and historically specific roots of feminism in modernist and western assumptions: that 'feminism' does not come from 'outside' patriarchal discourses, but is always complicit with them. This issue of 'complicity' - epistemological and political - recurs constantly in various ways in this thesis. A feminist post-structuralism supplies some tools to, in Weedon's words, 'explain the implications' of the ways that feminism converges and comes into conflict with other discourses in specific sites (Weedon, 1987, p. 22).

In this context, feminism, while problematised, continues to set its own agendas. As Jana Sawicki points out in her discussion on Foucault and feminism, the value of the Foucauldian approaches will consist in their 'practical implications' in terms of 'the exigencies of feminist practice' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 109). Just as the term 'post-structuralism' refers to 'the limitations discovered in structuralism's project' (Easthope, 1988, p. 23), a post-structuralist critique furthers discussion of 'limitations discovered' in feminism:

Feminists have been only too well aware of the 'absences'... which have been at the heart of many forms of universalism, and the exclusions that are their sub-text. They have become increasingly aware of the fact that that 'nothing is innocent', that apparently 'liberatory' ideals can only too easily be recuperated or undermined by that against which they seem to be struggling (Grimshaw, 1993, pp. 68-69).

Here Jean Grimshaw is identifying concerns in feminism that have affinities with Foucault's critical project. (Like many feminist critics of Foucault, she goes on to enumerate feminist concerns ignored by Foucault). There are debates about whether Foucault's early work is 'structuralist' or 'post-structuralist' (e.g., Haber,

1994; Poster, 1989a). Rather than being concerned with whether Foucault 'is or is not' a post-structuralist, my focus is on the relevance of specific aspects of Foucault's work, and their relationship to feminist theory and to my research questions. As Foucault invites his readers to do, I use 'one analysis or another, as [I] would a screwdriver or a monkey wrench' (Eribon, 1991, p. 237). His texts offer new ways to think about familiar philosophical and political problems, so that 'instead of legitimising that which we already know... [we can find] out how and how far it might be possible to think differently' (Foucault, 1992, pp. 8-9).

Although Foucault's own work does not specifically problematise gender, feminist/post-structuralist scholars have appropriated aspects of his critical method to do so. Foucauldian discourse analysis provides theoretical and methodological possibilities for emphasising the constructedness of gender in specific historical and cultural contexts. There are three main groups of ideas that I draw on from Foucault's work: his notions of subjectivity, of discourse, and of governmentality. Here I briefly introduce these notions as central to my thesis.

Feminists, especially in the 1980s, have struggled with an 'identity crisis in feminist theory' (Alcoff, 1988), in which the designation 'woman' struggled to include a wide range of disparate political claims, and oscillated between 'difference' and 'sameness' as bases for equality with men. In her influential 1988 paper, Linda Alcoff described feminists as 'borrowing' the 'articulation of the problem' of identity from post-structuralists. This 'articulation' was in terms of discourse and subjectivity, and Alcoff cites Foucault (1983) in framing the 'mechanism of power' that constructs a subject as 'a discourse that weaves knowledge and power into a coercive structure that "forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way"' (Alcoff, 1988, p. 413). Here the 'identity problem' is framed in terms of a contrast between a 'humanist' and a 'post-humanist' account of the subject. The 'humanist' subject is assumed to have 'a unique essence of human nature' (Weedon, 1987, p. 80). In liberal humanism, this 'essence' is rational consciousness. The 'humanist' subject is seen as either the same as, *identical* with others (as in social categories such as 'woman') or the same as, *identical* with the self (an essential and unitary consciousness). A 'post-humanist' account proposes a subject who is *the same as* or *different from* others (classified only by discursive processes) and the self (multiple and constituted in discursive processes). This issue of 'same and different' provides the basis for political claims of equality, and so is central to feminism. Foucault's use of the term 'subject' 'helps us to conceive of human

reality as a construction, as a product of signifying activities which are both culturally [and historically] specific and generally unconscious... it "decentres" consciousness' (Sarup, 1993, p. 2).

Judith Butler's denaturalizing critique centres around this concept of subjectivity, and hence identity, as an effect of discourse. As an aspect of identity, gender is seen as performative, something that is done, the result of repeated practices, not something that essentially 'is' (Butler, 1990). This concept - which I discuss in detail in Chapter 4 - does not mean the end of political agency, but a new version of it, in which identity is open to re-signification. This refusal of naturalized identity is not exclusively a self-consciously intellectual activity: the 'art of reflective indocility' (Foucault, in Eribon, 1991, p. 67) is practiced in every site where people challenge the 'truth' of identity. However, the practice of foucauldian discourse analysis is privileged as the critical activity which explicitly challenges these truths: its work is to 'characterize... their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but, more generally, in the administration of scarce resources' (Foucault, 1972, p. 120).

Foucault's concept of discourse is a radical break from the way that 'discourse' is usually considered in a sociolinguistic or communication studies context. As Easthope puts it, 'communication is only one special and particular effect... of what it means... to be able to function in discourse' (Easthope, 1990, p.76). In Chapters 2 to 5, I discuss Foucault's notion of discourse and its relation to subjectivity, and in Chapter 6, I consider ways to connect foucauldian discourse theory with the theory of organisational and interpersonal communication. Because Foucault's move was to decentre individual consciousness, it subverts traditional communication theories based on a humanist unitary subject. I draw on the work of 'deconstructive' social psychologists (Burman and Parker, 1993b; Henriques et al., 1984a; Hollway, 1989; Parker, 1992; Parker and Shotter, 1990) to re-think the 'subject of organisational communication' (Chapter 6).

The subject of organisational communication is centrally concerned with theorising the relationship between 'organisation' and 'communication'. Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' reconfigures this relationship in terms of the ways in which institutional and organisational discourses create and reproduce power relations. I draw specifically on Foucault's notions of 'normalisation' and 'surveillance' to analyse how the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism operate in an organisational context to naturalize or denaturalize

gender and ethnic differences. Again, discourse analysis is the technique for 'shaking [the] false self-evidence' of practices which seem 'an altogether natural, self-evident and indispensable part' of organisational 'reality' (Foucault, 1991c, p. 75). Associated with Foucault's 'governmentality' is a radically different and non-structural notion of power relations. Power relations are seen as inseparably implicated with knowledge and subjectivity in discourse formations. From a foundationalist feminist perspective, this model inverts or at least problematises the oppression/resistance model of power. In my field studies chapters (9 to 12), I draw on these ideas in a number of ways to look at how EEO practitioners theorise their work as change agents within the context of organisational discourses.

#### 4. Constructing the 'author'

The author function... does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call the 'author' (Foucault, 1984a, p. 110).

Writing and research are inseparable. Research is constituted *as* writing. This section is intended to orient the reader to my writing tactics, and also to prefigure more substantial discussion on theory and method, which are inseparable from issues of writing. Here I outline some key issues at stake in writing my thesis, and the writing choices that I have made. These choices implicate my theoretical commitments, issues of epistemology and research design, as well as the requirements of the thesis genre. I have chosen to introduce questions of epistemology and method here, rather than leaving them to a 'method' chapter, because I want to signal, from the start, a reflexive approach to writing this thesis. This reflexivity permeates my writing about theory, as well as about field studies. I also hope to orient readers to my writing voice as soon and as easily as possible. (In Chapter 7 I discuss the epistemology and methodology that shaped my fieldwork)

The question of authorship, problematised by Foucault in 'What is an author?' (Foucault, 1984a), must be addressed in any piece of academic writing which places itself in the context of post-structuralism. The importance of the question of authorship for this particular thesis is intensified by the fact that it is in a sense *about* authority, about how people in organisations are constituted discursively as the authors of their communicative practices and organisational positions. The

creation of 'expert power', of authority in an academic field, is the *raison d'être* of a dissertation. The academic genre requires the production of an academic subject who is 'authoritative, certain... seemingly invulnerable', as Barbara Townley puts it in her discussion of writing in organisational studies (Townley, 1994b, p. 25). This call for certainty and positive knowledge is perhaps at its most insistent in the doctoral thesis, in which academic authority is formally established, and where the construction of a credible academic subject in writing is thus a crucial centre of anxiety. The paradox is that a feminist post-structuralism sets out to contest 'that ruse of authority that seeks to close itself off from contest' (Butler, 1995a, p. 41).

The effect of this paradox is, in effect, a feminist/post-structuralist version of 'authority' which stays alert to the political implications of authority in a given context. For women, and others who may have been repeatedly denied authority in academic discourses, the ability to textually create and claim authority may be a crucial discursive move. At the same time, feminist writers are concerned with questions of exclusion and complicity, with whether or not, by positioning oneself in a patriarchal discourse, for instance, an author takes up practices which marginalise others. Jana Sawicki asks:

What is the price of the authority that we do attain?

How is it constituted?

To what extent does it require identifying ourselves with capitalist or patriarchal forces? Does it reproduce and legitimise patriarchal discourses and practices?

Does it suppress other voices? (Sawicki, 1991, p. 107).

I return to the same questions in Chapters 9 and 10, where I discuss how EEO practitioners are authorised in the context of their work. The issue in writing this thesis is to recurrently contest the authority of the academic and political discourses that I am setting out to re-think and re-write. Australian feminist Meaghan Morris argues that, if all writing is inevitably interdiscursive - that is, must be a re-writing of existing texts - the point for feminist scholars must be 'to argue how and why a particular event of rewriting might matter' in feminist terms (Morris, 1988, p. 5). This re-writing process means using 'strategies of reference', to re-write existing texts in producing a new speaking position in a 'particular political, critical and publishing context' (ibid., p. 6). This exercise is not 'a matter of inventing a "personal voice" for "me"', but of 'developing enunciative strategies' within the existing discourses' (ibid, p. 7). I argue that my

're-writing' matters in feminist terms because I set out to re-think 'gender and communication' in a way that requires working across traditional disciplinary boundaries in 'communication studies' and 'organisational studies'. As I argue throughout the thesis, it matters to feminists to develop new forms of critique that engage with familiar problems of organisational change through focusing on communicative strategies.

There is an established genre of 'post-modernist' writing based around a style that Sarah Williams describes, in terms of her own writing, as deliberately 'difficult, problematic':

The denseness, the packing and layering of extensive quotation, the word play, the putting into conversation of disparate voices - the materialities of language itself - are sites of labour for alternate forms of representation and ways of being (Williams, 1993, p. 48).

This style, particularly characteristic of cultural studies, marks the central significance of language in representing knowledge by continually drawing attention to language itself. It contests the functionalist assumption that language should or can be transparent, clear, separable from the realities it describes. As Williams points out, part of the problem of this kind of language is that it is typically experienced - except by those who use it - as 'inherently alienated and alienating' (ibid.). While I can respect the theoretical commitments that drive this style, I have been concerned (see in Chapter 2) about the ways that post-modern discourse reinstates itself as a new kind of expert authority through narrow inaccessibility, and, in practice, raises the question 'does it suppress other voices?' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 107). My commitment is more to creating possible conversations between practitioners, activists and theorists, by developing what Pakeha feminist Alison Jones calls a 'tentative and accessible feel' which opens up a text up to alternative readings, so that readers are able to consider the author's ideas from their own perspectives, taking her partiality into account (A. Jones, 1992, p. 20). This kind of reflexivity does not - as in interpretive epistemologies - make the author's 'subjective' approach a gauge of the truth. It is a reflexivity which acknowledges that, as anthropologist Renato Rosaldo puts it, 'all interpretations are provisional; they are made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others' (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 169). This means finding a way to put 'yourself' in the text: as feminist theorist Teresa De Lauretis puts it, the 'modes of enunciation and address' in academic writing which create the 'expert' are 'so well-established that, paradoxically, the

only way to position oneself outside of that discourse is to displace oneself within it' (De Lauretis, 1990, p. 9). The task is to openly declare the 'presence' of the author 'in' the text - abandoning the pretence of an objective view from nowhere - while at the same time acknowledging that the 'presence' of the author in the text, whether a 'subjective' or an 'objective' presence, is a fiction created in the discursive possibilities of the text itself. It is also an art to put yourself in the text without being grandiose and boring the reader with personal details (Soler, 1994).

I therefore mostly use 'I' in the text, rather than the passive construction, to claim my ideas and readings. I also acknowledge that I am a 'positioned subject'. For instance, I refer to my commitments to feminism and anti-racism, which underpin my choice of theoretical perspective and of topic. I also refer to my long-term involvement in the Public Service, where my field studies are located. At the same time I do not imply that there is a simple causal link between a fixed identity and the type of text produced by someone who shares that identity. In my analyses of the discursive positions of my research subjects I talk about 'accountability' as the communicative relationship in which one speaker is 'accountable' to others within discursive contexts. Authority often depends upon it. I like Townley's idea that explicit 'accountability' is the basis for an openly partial form of academic writing which is open to contest (Townley, 1994b). She suggests that this strategy would include a statement of the problems that are being addressed, and why; the approaches the author finds valuable, and why; the advantages and disadvantages of the approach taken; how it was helpful and how it might be helpful to others; and the problems that the author still does not understand. 'Accountability' here means a kind of reflexivity that is open about what works and what doesn't.

I add to this a writing format that while not 'difficult' in Williams' sense, interrupts the familiar expectations about hypothesis/theory (or 'literature review')/method/data ('results')/discussion/conclusions. A 'messy text', which is marked by 'its resistance to [a]... too -easy assimilation of the phenomenon of interest by given, analytic, ready-made concepts' (Marcus, 1995, p. 567), allows room to experiment with new approaches, without a requirement to produce a unified statement of knowledge at its 'conclusion'. Such a text is always operating within the relevant genre but shows what US anthropologist George Marcus calls '*symptoms of struggle within given formats*' (ibid., p. 568). As well as the tentativeness I have already mentioned, such 'symptoms' include 'messy, many-"sited"-ness', 'openness as to the boundaries of the object of study', and

concern with explicit positioning historically/culturally (ibid., p. 567). I see my thesis as many-sited in its pursuit of theoretical questions across a range of 'field studies' which are theoretically related more like a series of hyper-text links than a sequence of cases which build up an argument. Within topics I switch back and forth from epistemological to politically strategic issues, asserting their implication in each other. My interdisciplinary movements from one site to another are intended to open the 'the boundaries of the object of study', as well as messing up disciplinary boundaries. I constantly refer back to the historical and cultural location of my field studies, but also of my theoretical sources.

Alison Jones (A. Jones, 1992) suggests that the accessibility of a text refers not only to writing, but also to reading practices: the traditional 'literature 'review'. The idea of a 'canon' of knowledge in a given field, a body of expert knowledge which 'everyone' in the field should know, is contested by her idea that writers 'make explicit' the process by which other texts are found and/or chosen, that is, why, like re-writing, re-reading matters. This approach puts scholarship in its historical and cultural contexts:

Why not ask first and foremost how any theory or any writing speaks specifically to us - to our situated social and individual selves - from where we are in our actualities, our cultural differences, our circumstantial positionings and diversely mediated backgrounds?' (Trinh, 1994, p. 19).

In my own accounts of reading, I centre on the texts that have been most influential for me during the research period, and often mention how and why they have mattered. This may seem obvious, but in fact it works against the practice of trying to have read 'everything'. For instance, recent texts which became available to me fairly late in my thesis process may be suggestive or validating in terms of my ideas about future directions for the field, but they have not been critical in producing my text. As I have already discussed, I privilege the writings of local theorists, and where I know the national origin, disciplinary background or ethnicity of writers, I frequently cite these when they are first introduced. In this way I draw attention to the various specific locations of texts, and to movements across disciplinary lines. This kind of explicit reference to re-writing and re-reading challenges the idea that the 'contribution' of any academic work, including a thesis, depends on a mastery of all relevant existing knowledge and the 'discovery' of something 'new': 'But what is new?

There are no new objects so to speak; rather there are new relationships that one can draw from things' (Trinh, 1994, p. 9).

## 5. Thesis structure

This thesis is divided in two main parts. In Chapters 2 to 6, I set up a theoretical framework for feminist/post-structuralist accounts of gender and ethnicity, and weave this theory through the literatures of 'gender and communication', 'cross-cultural communication', and 'organisational communication'. In effect, I set out to re-think feminist 'organisational communication' in feminist/post-structuralist terms, putting it within a broader framework of 'difference'.

In the second part of the thesis, Chapters 7 to 12, I put issues generated by this theoretical framework in a specific organisational context. These accounts of field studies are not intended as a series of case studies so much as a series of experiments with theorising 'organisational communication' in different ways. Chapters 7 and 8 introduce my field studies methodology and research subjects, and provide background narratives which frame the historical and cultural context in which they were carried out. I complete the thesis with a 'Review' (Chapter 13) in which I reflect on some 'answers' generated by my research questions, and on further questions that emerged during the project.

I have linked the theoretical chapters to the field studies chapters by numerous cross-references. I think of these as like hypertext links, in creating relationships of meaning laterally, rather than in a linear sequence of argument.

In Chapter 2, 'Theorising gender', I introduce key theoretical arguments about gender as both 'identity' and 'difference'. I discuss the 'identity crisis' in feminism, and ways in which post-structuralist writings have been appropriated by feminists to theorise identity and difference in terms of subjectivity, agency, authority and equality.

In Chapter 3, 'Theorising ethnicity', I extend a feminist/post-structuralist critique of identity to theorise ethnicity. I tease out distinctions between the terms 'ethnicity', 'race' and 'culture', and introduce some of the unique ways that ethnic difference is played out in the post-colonial context of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In Chapter 4, 'Theorising 'gender and communication'', I re-think the 'gender and communication' literature within a feminist/post-structuralist theoretical framework. I use Judith Butler's *Gender trouble* (Butler, 1990), as a central text to relate a post-structuralist account of identity and difference to the concepts of 'discourse' and 'communication'. I re-frame the 'gender and communication' literature within the concepts of 'performativity' and 'representation', and I propose a research agenda for 'gender and communication' based around the issues of interdisciplinarity, greater theoretical sophistication, and agency.

In Chapter 5, 'Theorising communication and difference', I bring ethnicity into the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 4. I re-read the literature of 'cross cultural communication', comparing its premises and topics with the 'gender and communication' literature, and again use 'performativity' and 'representation' as re-framing concepts.

In Chapter 6, 'The subject of 'organisational communication'', I move my discussion into the specific context of organisational communication to create the basis for a feminist/post-structuralist 'organisational communication'. In re-considering the field of 'organisational communication' I discuss both 'communication studies' and 'organisation studies' from feminist/post-structuralist perspectives. I draw on Foucault's notion of 'governmentality', and consider the ways that this form of power works through organisational discourses to regulate organisational identities and practices. I propose an account of feminist organisational communication which challenges the boundaries between 'organisational communication' and 'organisational studies'.

In Chapter 7, 'Field studies', I work within the theoretical framework established in chapters 1 to 6 to give a reflexive account of my field studies. I discuss how I designed my field research in the context of my research questions, how I carried out my interviews, and how I analysed my field studies texts. I have paid particular attention to the 'truth values' that inform my epistemology, and to specific issues in the process of discourse analysis.

In Chapter 8, 'Local knowledges', I present three related narratives of historical and cultural change in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the period from 1984-1994, creating an interpretive context for my field studies. The three narratives are all oppositional, that is, they oppose the 'official' narrative of recent New Zealand

history, and are explicitly generated from critical, feminist, and anti-racist discursive positions.

In Chapter 9, 'Change agents, double agents, secret agents', I present EEO practitioners as agents of organisational communication. I considered how their discursive positionings are related to their identities as feminists and as organisation change agents, and to the sources of authority that they draw on to intervene in organisational discourses. I characterise practitioners as 'double' and 'secret' agents in exploring their complicity in organisational discourses, and the tensions of their status as feminists within government organisations.

In Chapter 10, 'Feminists seize the panopticon', I explore the ways that feminists have 'seized the panopticon' to gain access to organisational power in order to create compliance with EEO programmes. I draw on Foucault's theory of power and resistance to re-think these complex power relationships in the context of the discursive changes that were occurring in the New Zealand Public Service at the time of my field work. I analyse practitioners' accounts of 'persuasion' and 'coercion' as they seek to re-signify organisational discourse of difference and to normalise equality.

In Chapter 11, 'What counts as difference', I focus on problems of representation: how difference is represented in EEO discourse, both in the sense of representation as 'depiction' and representation as 'speaking for' (Gunew, 1994). I present several examples of the ways that difference works in given organisational contexts: here, 'normalised' discourse of difference privilege the interests of some 'EEO groups', marginalise others, and have the effect of silencing certain political accounts of difference. My examples include the ways that Pakeha feminist EEO practitioners 'speak for' other EEO groups; the demographic account of difference constructed in the 'new hermeneutics of the workplace' (Yount, 1993); and the resistance from Maori at being represented as just another 'EEO group'.

In Chapter 12, 'Managing diversity', I provide three readings of 'managing diversity', a new vocabulary of difference that was emerging in the EEO community at the time of my field work. In this chapter I set out specifically to draw in a wide range of EEO voices, comparing the accounts of Pakeha EEO practitioners with the accounts of Maori and Pacific Island practitioners, and trade unionists. I consider 'managing diversity' in the context of three different

discourses: a discourse of equality, a discourse of exploitation, and a discourse of difference.

In Chapter 13, 'Review', I look back over the thesis in terms of three key issues: interdisciplinarity; theoretical sophistication; and agency - the issues central to my research agenda. Treating the thesis 'as an open site', I trace some key theoretical 'threads' (Marshall, 1992), and draw attention to the questions that 'have not yet found answers' (Foucault, 1970, p. xii).

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORISING GENDER

Gender is a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (Butler, 1990, p. 33).

#### 1. Introduction

The concept of 'difference' is the key problematic of feminism. It is inseparably implicated in the concept of 'identity' - sameness - that makes one group cohere, and makes it distinguishable from other groups. While feminist discourse centres around gender difference, feminist theorisations of difference also explicitly implicate other differences. In the EEO context these are, for instance, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability. While my key focus is on gender difference, my research also takes as a central theme the inseparability of gender from other forms of difference, both theoretically and in organisational and political practice. In particular, I compare ways that gender and ethnic differences work. Feminist/post-structuralist theory generates ways of analysing the discursive practices that *make* the difference: In this context, gender consists of 'acts' which produce 'the appearance' of natural identity. Gender is performative: it is a way of doing, not a way of being.

In this chapter I draw on feminist/post-structuralist theory to lay the groundwork for theorising gender as a discursively constructed difference. Some of the key problems of feminist/post-structuralist political theory are traversed in this thesis. They include the problem of the subject of feminism (the 'identity crisis' in feminism); the problem of agency; and the problem of unsettling the 'binary logic', as Kirby (1993) puts it, of our formulations of equality and difference.

## 2. 'Feminism/postmodernism'

This thesis originated within a series of debates designated as 'feminism/post-modernism' (Nicholson, 1990). Kirby argues that the 'feminism/post-modernism' debates have been staged in terms of a supposed 'contamination' of the 'purity' of 'feminism' by 'post-modernism' (Kirby, 1993, p. 21). In the time that I have been writing this thesis, these debates have become increasingly complex, and it seems decreasingly appropriate to even use the term 'feminist/post-modernism'. For instance, in her introduction to *Feminist contentions* (1995), an important recent collection on 'the topic', US feminist theorist Linda Nicholson struggles to even be able to state that the book is 'about' feminism or post-modernism:

Articulating the content to this volume is a particularly challenging task... For one, this volume is not an anthology on the present state of feminist theory. In 1995, for a collection... written by four white women from the United States who come out of a certain tradition... to claim to represent 'feminist theory' would represent a kind of arrogance... Nor even does [this volume] claim to provide a state-of-the-art discussion of 'the relationship between feminism and postmodernism'... [because] disagreement soon emerged over the usefulness of the term 'postmodernism'... Thus, a major source of the difficulty I, as introducer, face in telling you, the reader, 'what this volume is about', is that partly defining this discussion are differing views on 'what this discussion is about' (Nicholson, 1995, p. 2).

This almost disabling tentativeness - an effect of developing scepticism about introducing closure to any discussion of either 'feminism' or 'post-modernism' - is in contrast to the tone of the introduction Nicholson wrote for her 1990 edited collection of writings on what is called confidently *Feminism/postmodernism*.

The designation 'woman' has been a key focus of these debates. Kirby argues that *all* difference is created by discursive processes of norming and repression, appropriating Foucault's terms (Kirby, 1993). She points out that while feminists have long worked to destabilise the binary logic of classification - male/female, white/black, rational/irrational, good/bad, true/false - feminist theory also tends to be drawn back into the denial of certain differences. She draws attention to the processes of 'norming and repression', of 'denial of a difference', *within* feminist discourses (ibid., p. 23). Arguing that is impossible for feminism

to 'deliver on its redemptive promise' to *transcend* difference, Kirby stresses 'the inevitable complicity that all discourses share with masculinism's binary logic' (ibid., p. 25). The question of 'inevitable complicity' is central to this thesis. A sensitivity to the processes of norming and repression means recognising that 'the very categories we use to liberate us may also have their controlling moment' as Linda Nicholson puts it (Nicholson, 1990b, p. 16). There can be no pure feminism outside 'masculinism', to use Kirby's term; and there can be no equality that 'transcends' difference.

Butler argues that it is pointless to treat the debates in terms of 'the "pursuit of the reasonable"', that is a 'reasoned set of rejoinders' to 'the complaint' about 'the entry of poststructuralist discourse into feminist theory' (Butler, 1995b, p. 127). Instead:

The question of whether a position is right, coherent, or interesting is... less informative than why it is we come to occupy the territory that we do, what it promises us, from what it promises to protect us (ibid., pp. 127-128).

For instance, 'post-modernism' could be claimed as a product of feminism, rather than as a threat to its purity. Meaghan Morris produces a long list of feminist writers who she wants to retrospectively re-claim as 'post-modern', arguing that 'feminism has acted as one of the enabling conditions of discourses about postmodernism', and that 'it is therefore appropriate to use feminist work to frame discussions of postmodernism, and not the other way around' (Morris, 1988, p. 16). This feminist 'gesture of changing frames' (ibid.) makes 'post-modernism' and 'post-structuralism' accountable to feminism.

Another possible reading of the relationship is important to my own work: the post-modern moment in Western thought could be seen strategically by feminists as opening new doors for feminism. Feminism may gain new entry points within the Trojan horse of post-modernism. It allows us to speak of the patriarchal nature of knowledge in a way that has new credibility, as white Western intellectuals lose faith in claims to universal truths. Psychologist Erica Burman warns that feminists should avoid feeling a necessity to 'defer to a theoretical framework such as deconstruction simply because it lends some credence and legitimacy to our demands' (Burman, 1990, p. 213). Burman's warning raises the question of 'complicity', strategic or unwitting, that recur in this thesis. As ever,

the possible strategic gains are dependent on context. To whom is a feminist accountable?

I see no problem in joining what Somer Brodribb calls 'ragpickers in the bins of male ideas' (Brodribb, 1992, p. xxiii) to generate feminist discourses. I am wary of what Morris calls 'the position of faithful reader to the great male philosopher' (Morris, 1988, p. 12). Thus, my rag-picking of Foucault's work takes place within a feminist agenda, or, as Morris puts it, a feminist 'gesture of changing frames' (ibid., p. 16). In a review of Nicholson's (1988) *Feminism/postmodernism* collection, Andrea Nye pointed out that many feminists are intrigued by the possibilities offered by post-modern thought, but refuse to let post-modern agendas set the terms of debate, and so refuse to either abandon the attempt at abstracting themes from experience *or* to accept this as an unproblematic process: 'No canonical "method", post-modern or other, can replace the subtle and difficult interweaving of historical or experiential analyses and theoretical work that has always been a characteristic of feminist scholarship' (Nye, 1991, p.232). This talk of post-modern agendas within a feminist frame, however, presupposes that we know the answer to the question that post-modernism subverts: What is feminism?

### 3. The subject of feminist politics

It is very difficult to speak of liberation without some notion of a subject whose life will be improved in some way, or to envisage political change at all without some idea of who will bring it about and why. As a philosophy of liberation, feminism has often appealed to the powers of agency and subjectivity as necessary components of struggle (Ferguson, 1988, p. 66).

I am intrigued by Butler's argument that it is not necessary to have a pre-given or 'ready-made' subject in order to have agency and politics (Butler, 1995a, p. 47). In fact, she argues, the fact that a subject is constituted means that it is *not* determined: 'for what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of social and cultural relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked, resisted?' (ibid.). In this thesis I consider the conditions in which such a process of 'reconfiguration' is enabled.

Many of the feminist complaints about 'post-modernism' centre around the question of the subject of feminist politics. Christine Di Stefano asks suspiciously, as do a number of other feminist critics, 'Why is it just at the moment in Western history when previously silenced populations have begun to speak for themselves and on behalf of their subjectivities, that the concept of the subject and the possibility of discovering/creating a liberating "truth" become suspect?' (Di Stefano, 1990, p. 75). In response I would argue, as I have argued above in relation to ethnic identity, feminist post-structuralism need not always mean decentring the subject, regardless of context. I also agree with Caroline Ramazanoglu's proposition that conflicts between foucauldian theory and foundationalist feminist theories - for instance, in theorising power and the subject - need not necessarily be resolved, but they create productive gaps which open up 'fundamental problems of explaining power relations which social theory has failed to resolve' (Ramazanoglu, 1993, p. 5).

Di Stefano asks:

[Can] the critical deconstructive insights of postmodernism be explicitly, defensibly and plausibly harnessed to a progressive and substantive feminist politics? (Di Stefano, 1990, p. 77).

Part of the work of this thesis is to address this question in the specific context of communication: not so much asking *whether* communication can be usefully theorised from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective, but considering *what sorts of readings* of communication theory and communication processes can be produced from this perspective, and *what are the political stakes* in producing different readings? If political grand narratives are no longer tenable, we are brought back to an emphasis on practice, to 'the courage to think and act within an uncertain framework', as feminist educationalist Patti Lather puts it (Lather, 1991, p. 13).

If the subjects of dominant versions of post-modern discourse have been, typically, a 'constituency of white, privileged men of the industrialised West' (Sawicki, 1991, pp. 105-106), the subjects of feminist discourse have typically been 'white privileged women of the industrialised West', to shift Sawicki's claim. It is not only the patriarchal discourses of science of law or religion that serve the interests of the few while claiming universal truths. Feminist discourses too, while claiming truths for and about 'women', have in fact represented the

perspectives of the white, Western and middle class. As Donna Awatere put it back in 1984, 'the goals of feminism reflect class and race privileges. These privileges are being held on to like grim death by white "educated" women' (Awatere, 1984, p. 45). When Wendy Brown figures post-modernism as 'a global intifada of the margins against the center', she refers not only to the onslaught of feminism against the patriarchal centre, but to 'Europe's decentering' as she puts it (Brown, 1991, p. 63), to the realisation that, in Awatere's words, 'white people's protest is done within the boundary of the western capitalist culture which is their heritage' (Awatere, 1984, p. 35).

Teresa de Lauretis points out that much of the 'typologising' process by which feminist theory has been formed during the late 1980s was based around discussions of the concept of 'essentialism' (de Lauretis, 1990). She describes the use of 'essentialism' as a kind of litmus test, creating 'an ascending scale of theoretico-political sophistication', as a 'red herring' for feminist theory (ibid., p. 256). She argues that the uses of various forms of essentialism are best discussed in terms of their political effects in specific circumstances. These 'circumstances' include 'the particular history of feminism, the debates, internal discussions, and polarizations that have resulted from its engagements with the various institutions, discourses and practices that constitute the social, and from its self-conscious reflection on that engagement' (De Lauretis, 1990, p. 264). It is in the context of the 'particular history of feminism' in this country that I consider the feminism/post-modernism and particularly the 'essentialism' debates. In New Zealand, for instance, Maori women have pointed out that it is they who have been the repressed 'other' of Pakeha feminism, and that the invocation of the subject 'woman' as the basis of a feminist politics has inevitably denied the complexity of their subjectivity as both Maori and women - differences that make a difference in different ways.

The 'identity crisis' in feminism (Alcoff, 1988) is generated by two main problems. One is that any political claims based on the idea of essential masculine/feminine differences - even counter-versions where the feminine is dominant - tends to re-write the received identity of 'woman', 'crowded with the overdeterminations of male supremacy' (Alcoff, 1988, p. 405). For instance, my thesis focuses on the discursive processes by which claims of equality and difference are made in the context of organisational and state policies. Whenever we want to talk about equality from a feminist perspective, we want to talk about 'women'. But to invoke 'women' is dangerous. Women's demands on issues

such as childcare and maternity leave within an equality agenda can, as Alcoff puts it, 'reinvoke the cultural assumption that these are exclusively feminine issues and can reinforce the right-wing's reification of gender differences unless and until we can formulate a political programme that can articulate these demands in a way that challenges rather than utilises sexist discourse' (ibid., p. 435). This is exactly the challenge confronted by the EEO practitioners in my research.

The second pressure on identity from within feminist discourse is the practical impossibility and theoretical indefensibility of regarding 'women' as alike in their concerns, interests and politics. As Butler explains, 'the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category' (Butler, 1990, p. 4). In 'borrowing' post-structuralist theories of subjectivity to 'articulate' the identity problem, Alcoff takes as their central theme the claim that 'the self-contained, authentic subject conceived by humanism to be discoverable beneath a veneer of culture and ideological overlay is in reality a construct of that very humanist discourse' (ibid., p. 415). The problem she has with this conception of identity is the crucial one of political agency: that in her view 'post-structuralists deny the subject's ability to reflect on... discourse and challenge its determinations' (ibid., p. 417). I will return to this argument about agency in my discussion of subjectivity, below.

#### **4. Being a subject/being subject**

We use 'subjectivity' to refer to individuality and self-awareness - the condition of being a subject - but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these - the condition of being subject (Henriques et al. 1984a, p. 3).

To analyse how difference is constituted in discourse, it is necessary to theorise subjectivity. I take the position that the subject is not pre-given but is constructed, and that the process of construction is not ever 'complete'. In particular, I focus on the discursive processes by which individuals are constructed as the same as themselves or others (individual and group identities) and as different from others (group identity). I do this by considering ways in which subjects are produced as gendered and racialised 'selves' within an

organisational context. In considering the process of organisational communication, I consider not only how the subject is produced by discursive processes, but also how the subject of communication can be understood as an agent in discourse. In practice, how does an individual engage with discursive possibilities? How does a subject intervene communicatively in discourse? Even to ask these questions brings to life a host of contradictions, because the focus on individual agency assumes the very kind of humanism that Foucauldian discourse analysis subverts. Here I outline a theory of the subject which will form the basis for my future discourse analysis.

I draw primarily on the work of 'deconstructive' social psychologists who relate Foucauldian discourse theory to key questions about the subject in discourse: questions with which Foucault was not concerned. As Wendy Hollway puts it, 'post-structuralism is weak... on theorizing a psychological subject - a person - in relation to discourses and signification' (Hollway, 1989, p. 47). (Signification is defined here as 'the process of making sense', and is clearly distinguished from the concept of 'representation', which carries the unwanted implication of some referent to be represented (see Henriques et al., 1984b, pp. 97-98).

The work carried out by 'deconstructive' social psychology looks first at how psychology itself functions as a discourse which produces a certain modern subject. This genealogical analysis develops Foucault's work on medical discourse by examining 'the emergence of psychology's object: the individual' (Henriques et al., 1984b, p. 92). The genealogical analysis of psychology 'enables us to escape the assumption of the fact or naturalness of the individual' and to 'step outside this assumption in theorizing the subject' (Henriques et al., 1984c, p. 203). In my later discussion of organisational communication theory, I will consider more specifically the way that psychological discourses work in an organisational context to produce a certain kind of organisational subject, 'both as the object of its study and as a site for social administration and regulation' (ibid.)

The second task of deconstructive social psychology is to think the subject of psychology 'otherwise': to develop theories of the subject that extends Foucault's work to address the traditional questions of psychology about the self. I have drawn particularly on the work of social psychologists who have re-theorised as difference; on the discursive construction of gendered and racialised selves. *Changing the subject* (Henriques et al., 1984a), a collection produced in Britain by

a group of two black men and three white women, has been widely read across disciplines and influential in setting the terms for discourse analysis which allows a focus on the individual in action. In this thesis I draw on Henriques et al. (1984), together with more recent specifically gender-oriented work by one of the authors, Wendy Hollway (1989), to set out a model of subjectivity. Later I draw on these authors and on the discourse analysis work of other deconstructive psychologists, Burman and Parker (1993b), Parker (1992), Parker and Shotter (1990b), and Shotter (1989), to form the basis for my theories of communication and discourse, and of a discourse analysis method. This method allows me to analyse subjects' accounts of their own communicative processes.

The definition of subjectivity used by Henriques et al. signals both their debt to Foucault and their departures from him. Unlike Foucault, they want to discuss 'individuality and self-awareness', and like Foucault, they depart from psychology's traditional humanist subject by framing the subject as 'always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these' (Henriques et al., 1984a, p. 3). Their theory of the subject is also, unlike that of traditional psychology, a political one. They see Foucault's 'vital contribution' lying not in the fact that he directly addresses the constitution of subjects (although from the point of view of psychology this is valuable), but in the way that he subverts structuralist and functionalist social theories in which 'power and the social domain' are regarded as monolithic and unitary. Instead, Foucault's post-structuralism 'enables us to make links between a diverse and contradictory social domain and the diverse and contradictory subject' (Henriques et al. 1984b, p. 92).

The diverse and contradictory nature of the subject arises because the 'subject [is] no longer coterminous with the individual' (Henriques et al. 1984b, p. 203). In other words, subjectivity is always *positioned* - it consists a series of diverse and contradictory positions provided by discursive practices in specific contexts. I am not 'I' unitarily across every site and discourse in which I am positioned at a given moment. An example given by Henriques et al. demonstrates that the theoretical point is strongly relevant to my thesis. They cite research which indicates that 'there is no *general* discrimination against women in taxation and welfare practices' in the United Kingdom (ibid., p. 117, my italics). The power of women as taxpayers and beneficiaries depends on specific positionings produced by specific discursive practices within the relevant systems: for instance, whether they are seen as 'mothers', 'single women', 'married women',

and so on. But this difference '*does not negate the fact of the differential treatment of women [compared with men] across these agencies*' (ibid., my italics). Similarly, Australian feminist sociologists Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, in their ground-breaking study *Gender at work* (1983), present a number of accounts of gender differences in different industries, framed within the proposition that 'there is nothing inherent in jobs that makes them either appropriately female or male. If anything remains fixed, it is the *distinction* between men's work and women's work' (Game and Pringle, 1983, p. 15). While gender assumes a protean variety of forms across different industries, the gendering of occupations persists, and with it the lower value accorded to whatever is coded - for historical reasons - as 'women's work'. As Game and Pringle point out, gendered subjectivity works always within a binary logic: 'we are talking about *relations*: if masculinity and femininity are *socially* constructed, they are also constructed in *relation* to each other' [authors' italics] (ibid., p. 15). Wherever she or he works, the subject is always positioned as a woman or a man.

This conception of subjectivity also implicates a foucauldian perspective on power: there is no stable identity for a static condition of powerlessness or powerfulness to be attached to. In this analysis 'we are neither totally powerful nor powerless, but fragmentary and positioned and repositioned from one moment to the next' (Henriques et al., 1984c, p. 225). We experience contradictions as we move from one site to another or within one site. It is normative practices that 'fix' us as unitary individuals. Henriques et al. (ibid.) draw on psychoanalytic theory to frame the subject as non-rational, as repressing the contradictions and tensions which threaten the notion of a unitary self, and as invested in certain subject positions via desires which are unconscious and themselves discursively produced. Their reading - and development - of Foucault in terms of individual subjectivity is focused on their central concept of 'the formation of power-knowledge relations through the positioning of subjects within discursive practices, itself simultaneously producing relations of desire' (ibid., p. 223). The question of 'desire' matters, because it can help account for how change can occur.

## 5. The subject of change

Wendy Hollway (Hollway, 1984) has developed a specifically feminist account of the construction of subjectivity. Her key theoretical question is: 'How can we understand gender difference in a way which can account for changes?'

(Hollway, 1984, p. 237). In discussing Hollway's account in terms of the possibilities it creates for my project, I draw on a critique of Hollway's work by Teresa de Lauretis (de Lauretis, 1987). Her critique draws attention to some problems in relating Hollway's approach to individual change to questions of broader social change. Like Hollway, I am interested in the question of how we understand gender difference in a way which can account for changes. If we *are* trapped within the 'binary logic of masculinism', in Kirby's words (Kirby, 1993, p. 25), we are trapped within the pattern of difference, a pattern within which gender is naturalized, woman is always 'other' and always of lesser value. Being able to account for change allows the 'possibility of transformation'.

Hollway's field studies context is different from that of my project - she looks specifically at how gender positions are reproduced, resisted and changed within intimate heterosexual relationships. By contrast, I am considering how EEO practitioners can intervene as agents in organisational domains to produce transformations in discourses of gender and ethnicity. EEO practitioners contest in various ways the representation of 'women' in organisational discourse, primarily through an overt problematisation of issues of gender in discourses of equality. In order to intervene, they must contest or rework existing discourses. They are therefore acting consciously as agents of organisational change. By contrast, Hollway looks at how women and men reproduce *themselves* as gendered subjects in the discourses of heterosexual relationships. What is common to Hollway's project and to mine is the concern with the process of gender-differentiation in the subject through the adoption of gendered discursive positions. For instance, Hollway points out that Foucault has failed to account for the way that specific sexual practices might 'signify differently for men and women, because they are being read through [sic] different discourses' (Hollway, 1984, p. 237). In other words, the subject positions made available to men and to women in discourse are differentiated by gender. Similarly, I am concerned with the way that organisational subject positions are made differentially available to men and women. For instance, much of that material on 'women and management' concerns itself with the idea that the subject position of 'manager' is gendered as masculine. In the communication literature, for instance, there is contest over whether women should try to communicate more the way men do ('be more assertive' for instance) or differentiate themselves communicatively as women (for instance, the idea that women are more sensitive and inclusive communicators). The woman manager is therefore in a kind of twilight zone, negotiating between the subject positions 'woman' and 'manager', mutually

exclusively gendered. It is this kind of tension between subject positions - and the question of the possibility of changes in the subject positions available - that the discourses of equality seek to address.

Hollway identifies a further 'gap' in Foucault's account of the subject: 'he still does not account for how people are constituted as a result of certain truths being current rather than others' (ibid., p. 237). To address this 'gap' Hollway attempts to, in the words of de Lauretis, 'reconceptualise power in such a manner that agency (rather than choice) may be seen to exist for the subject' (de Lauretis, 1987, p. 16). Hollway uses the term 'investment' to explain why subjects, 'offered' a number of possible subject positions in a given situation, take up one rather than another. I explained earlier that Henriques et al. draw on psychoanalytic theory to frame the subject as non-rational, to frame 'the positioning of subjects within discursive practices, itself simultaneously producing relations of desire' (Henriques et al, 1984c, p. 223). Hollway's notion of investment draws on this psychoanalytic discourse to answer the question of 'how is it that people take up positions in one discourse rather than another?' (Hollway, 1984, p. 237). Hollway rejects the terms of traditional psychology: 'motivation' and 'drive' both reduce to biology; 'choice' implies a rational modern subject. As she points out, 'when the forces propelling peoples' actions have not been theorised as reducing to biology or society, they have been seen as the product of rational decision-making' (ibid., p. 238).

It is important to note here too that Henriques et al. (1984c) do not use the model of socialisation, based on the ideas of 'roles' and 'conditioning', that is familiar to much feminist psychological theory, and to feminist communication theory which it underpins. In another paper, Valerie Walkerdine, one of the *Changing the subject* group, makes this distinction (Walkerdine, 1989). In discussing the possibility of changing gendered subjectivity, framed as 'sex roles', she rejects the notion that 'these roles can be peeled away like the layers of an onion to reveal a repressed core, a true self, which has been inhibited, repressed by the layers of social conditioning which obscure it' (ibid., p. 267). Sex role theory draws on a humanist model of the subject to explain gender as a developmental and psychological process originating externally to the authentic self. The idea of 'social conditioning' constitutes one attempt to explain the irrational nature of gender, and the 'motivations' associated with it. Hollway's psychoanalytic explanation takes another path. Her notion of 'investment' involves some sort of 'reward', 'not necessarily conscious or rational' - in taking up a particular

discursive position in a particular situation (Hollway, 1984, p. 237). A crucial point here is that Hollway sees the desires that are satisfied as *produced* by discourses. Hollway's proposition here is one of a number of feminist attempts to explain why/how women can be seen to be 'choosing' subject positions that seem to - on the face of it - be complicit with 'oppression'. For instance, Sawicki's feminist/foucauldian analysis of women and reproductive technologies explores the processes of normalisation by which women are positioned as certain kinds of subjects: fit mothers, unfit mothers, infertile women, and so on - within 'new norms of motherhood' which are produced by medical discourses (Sawicki, 1991, p. 85). Sawicki questions *both* a liberal concept of rational agency and choice, *and* a feminist idea of 'false consciousness' by which women are 'conditioned' or 'brainwashed' into powerlessness. Instead she suggests that Foucault's notion of normalisation as opposed to violence represents a major advantage of the disciplinary model of power.

If patriarchal power operated primarily through violence, objectification and repression, why would women subject themselves to it willingly? On the other hand, if it also operates by inciting desire, attaching individuals to specific identities, then it is easier to understand how it has been so effective at getting a grip on us (*ibid.*, p. 85).

De Lauretis' critique of Hollway is relevant to issues of organisational change, because she questions whether it is possible to change gendered discourses from *within* them. She argues that change from 'inside' can only occur 'in the direction of more or less 'equality' of women *to men*' (de Lauretis, 1987, p. 25). De Lauretis proposes that the 'subject of feminism' should be a movement '*back and forth*' [my italics] between the space of the 'male-centred' version of gender relations presented by Hollway, and what de Lauretis calls 'space off' This 'space off' includes practices developed 'in the margins' of master discourses and 'in the interstices of institutions' (*ibid.*, p. 26). Foucault says that power is 'always already' there, that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 141). I read de Lauretis to be suggesting that the 'margins' are not outside power, but outside specific master discourses. In Chapter 9 I return to the questions of whether and where feminists can find 'space off' from which to move in and out of organisations, so that change can come from 'outside' as well as 'inside'.

## 6. The subject as agent

This urge to have philosophy supply the vision that will redeem life, that will make life worth living, this urge is the very sign that the sphere of the political has already been abandoned. For that sphere will be the one in which those very philosophical constructions - those without which we imagined we cannot take a step - are in the very process of being lived as ungrounded, unmoored, in tatters, but also, as recontextualized, reworked, in translation, as the very resources from which a postfoundationalist politics is wrought. Indeed, it is their ungroundedness which is *the condition of our contemporary agency*, the very conditions for the question: which way should we go? [my italics] (Butler, 1995b, p. 131).

In this thesis my concern is focused around my 'subjects' as agents of communication; on how they theorise about their work 'in the very process of being lived', and on their strategic interventions in the organisational discourses of difference. Butler suggests above that feminist concerns about the possibility of political agency for the post-structuralist subject are un-founded. She proposes instead an agency which is enabled by the very uncertainty of the post-structuralist subject: this uncertainty makes subjectivity itself negotiable and re-negotiable. The uncertainty of post-structuralist political narratives similarly generates the possibilities of new political possibilities, and requires the 'courage to think and act within an uncertain framework' which is 'the hallmark of a liberatory praxis in a time marked by the dissolution of authoritative foundations of knowledge' (Lather, 1991, p. 11).

A post-structuralist re-working of 'agency' has implications not just for political theory, but for sociological description based around a 'structure/agency' dualism. In a post-structuralist re-formulation of sociology, *Undoing the social* (1991), Australian sociologist Anne Game argues that:

[Foucault's] conception of power/knowledge configurations as constitutive of the subject suggests a way out of the dualisms that inform sociological approaches... the subject and the social, the subject and power, are not understood to be in a relation of separation (ibid., p. 35).

Butler's claim that 'discourse is the horizon of agency' (Butler, 1995b, p. 135) means not merely or even primarily that discourse constrains agency but that it also *produces* agency - agency as located in a specific context, at a specific address. In her commentary on Butler, Linda Nicholson points out the importance of Butler's question: 'What are the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible?' This question can produce, as Nicholson says, many 'accounts of the possibility of agency', accounts grounded in historical and cultural contexts, not just one account (Nicholson, 1995, p. 11). This plurality marks what Butler distinguishes as a question about 'concrete conditions', a 'very different question than the metaphysical one' which seeks single unitary answers about 'human nature'.

At the beginning of this chapter I quoted Butler's proposition that gender is 'a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler, 1990, p. 33). I will develop her argument further below in terms of 'theorising communication and difference'. However, here I will mark the importance of the question of agency, and its relation to formulations of difference, by pointing to Nicholson's distinction between the possibilities of 'transformation' and of 'repetition' suggested in Butler's work. If gender is performative, that is, a 'set of repeated acts', Butler also argues that this performance can be transformed, can be resignified. For Nicholson, the important point is then that this way of thinking about gender 'not only... enables us to distinguish those performative acts from those which function as transformations, but that it also moves us to distinguish the conditions which support one as opposed to the other' (Nicholson, 1995). This repetition/transformation distinction is a powerful way to analyse how subjects operate within discourse to either reinstate or disrupt gender boundaries.

My questions about agency relate to the subject, or agent, of communication. In relation to my research, I am interested in how it is possible for subjects to actively intervene in discourses of equality and difference, to disrupt and re-work how we represent identity categories such as ethnicity and gender. The question of agency is clearly related to that of authority. Foucault's formulation of 'authorship' can also apply to the agent of communication as 'the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call the "author"' (Foucault, 1984a, p. 110). In terms of a communication process, Butler's questions about the possibility of agency produces question such as: What are

the 'complex operations' by which the agent of communication is constituted? What are the conditions under which agency becomes possible for the subject of communication? To these can be added Jana Sawicki's feminist question: 'What is the price of the authority that we do attain?' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 107).

Authority derives from discursively-created identities, identities which allow or constrain agency in given contexts. Sawicki's questions emphasise the power relationships implicit in relationships of authority, and challenges feminists to consider power issues related to their own agency and authority. For instance, when EEO practitioners become authorities in certain organisational contexts do they do so at the expense of others? In other words, do they constrain the possibilities of agency for others? I return to this issue in Chapter 10 where I consider the processes of normalisation and surveillance that are put into play by EEO discourses. These questions will form part of the framework of my discourse analysis.

A person is an agent - has a capacity to act - through being constituted in discourse as an agent. Nicholson underlines the importance of this point: that subjects are 'constituted, not merely situated' in discourse (Nicholson, 1995, p. 7). While 'situation' is capable of a structuralist reading, to represent the subject as *constituted* in discourse emphasises the mobility of subjects across discourses, rather than fixed at specific social sites. The range and quality of agency is bounded within the horizon of discourse.

This thesis is based around the discourses of equality and difference in organisations. For feminists acting as EEO practitioners in this environment, 'agency' defines their ability to effectively intervene in these discourses. In the next section I discuss feminist debates about 'equality' and 'difference' as frameworks for addressing gender and power relations.

## 7. Equality/difference

We, the peoples of the United Nations,  
Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,  
which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...  
Reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of  
the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations  
large and small.

Charter of the United Nations (United Nations, 1968).

I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom,  
conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: - it is my spirit that addresses  
your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at  
God's feet equal - as we are!

Jane Eyre to Mr. Rochester (Bronte, 1847/1966).

The term 'equality' has been invoked in the most intense of social and personal situations to create the possibility of relationship without domination or oppression, and of human worth which transcends binary logics of more and less value. At the same time, it conceals power relationships that are always already written in the very terms by which equality is sought. In this section I discuss some of the key feminist issues in the debate over equality and difference. These debates frame the literature on gender and communication, and then cross-cultural communication. They also set the terms of reference for analysing organisational discourses of equality and difference.

The concepts of 'equality' and 'difference' are interwoven with the historical development of feminism as a discourse, and refer out to wider political questions of identity, such as ethnicity, class and religion, in specific contexts. Introducing their 1992 collection, *Beyond equality and difference*, Gisela Bock and Susan James emphasise the relationship of female subjectivity to the concepts of equality, difference and justice (Bock and James, 1992). Rather than attempting to engage in a kind of abstract philosophical debate, a grand universalised narrative about what 'equality' might be, feminists more recently are focusing on contextualising equality and difference in specific sites, on the kind of 'flexible

notion of women's disadvantage' (ibid., p. 11) I have suggested earlier. This contextualisation draws on women's re-presentations of their own subjectivity in specific situations, such as the organisational contexts, for instance, in which discourses of equality and difference are played out.

In talking about going 'beyond' equality and difference, Bock and James refer to the constant feminist attempts to find a 'space off' ('beyond') from which to re-signify masculine discourses of equality and difference. The questions in practice for feminists became "'Equal to whom?" and "Different from what?"' (ibid., p. 4). These discourses offer the Hobson's choice of, on one hand, a 'gender-neutral' world of the seam, drawn from a historical discourse of 'equality' which, in practice, assimilates women to men, or, on the other, a notion of sexual difference which historically has generated a differentiated set of power relations which work against women. Weaving through the debate is the 'problem of identity',: the claims for the notion of 'woman' which seem required by discourse of both equality and difference, but which suggest an identity within the category 'woman' which is highly problematic in practice.

Nicola Armstrong provides a useful discussion of the issues in the context of EEO in New Zealand (Armstrong, 1994a). I use her discussion as a starting point in draw out some of the theoretical issues which link equality/difference to the EEO debates in a New Zealand context. This is not an account of what EEO 'is' in New Zealand, but an account of some of the ways that it has been theorised here. Armstrong presents 'poststructuralisms' as an alternative to what she calls the 'unhelpful binary opposition' which is the 'heart of the dilemma' of debates over equality and difference in EEO, in the context of the political terms of the 'liberal versus radical' debate (Armstrong, 1994a, p. 189).

Armstrong locates liberal discourses in sixteenth and seventeenth century European social contract theories, which claim equality for the universalised masculine subject - all men [sic] being equal - based on their alleged equal rationality. This equal, rational subject is located in the economic metaphor of the 'marketplace', an inherently competitive space in which individuals seek economic advantage over others. Implicit here is a kind of anthropology and psychology in which it is assumed that a pre-given 'human nature' seeks economic advantage above all else. In this power/knowledge system, action which does not maximise economic self-interest is considered 'irrational'. Liberal discourse is identified with the term 'equality', with an assumption that everyone

must be seen as the same to have access to rights. However, as Jane Flax puts it, 'the need to see everyone as the same in order to accord them dignity and respect is an expression of the problem, not a cure for it' (Flax, 1992, p. 193).

In this context, the 'problem' is defined as discrimination, i.e., choice on the basis of perceived difference, which puts 'barriers' in the way of some groups. *Lack of neutrality* is seen to introduce 'distortions' in the market place. EEO then seeks to remove barriers, to introduce the 'level playing field'. The perception of difference must be removed in order for individuals to be seen as such, to be treated on the grounds of their own individual merits. In an anti-interventionist discourse, 'discrimination' can be seen as an undesirable intervention. Thus liberal versions of equality are expressed in the language of 'removing barriers' and creating a 'level playing field' in which competition between 'free' agents can take place without hindrance.

Armstrong characterises the radical perspective on EEO as defined by its emphasis on the political nature of difference. While Walsh and Dickson (1994) see the radical model in terms of labour market outcomes for groups, Armstrong, while also privileging groups over individuals in terms of difference, also invokes here shades of the radical or 'cultural' feminist model (see Alcoff, 1988) in which difference is seen as 'enriching the social and cultural diversity of the workplace' (Armstrong, 1994a, p. 193). Neutrality - created by an attempt to erase difference and objectify individual merit - is seen as both undesirable and impossible. Equality is seen as an outcome - often termed as 'equity' - rather than as an attempt to treat people as if they are the same.

It is widely acknowledged now that accounts of 'liberal' versus 'radical' perspectives do not offer a description of EEO work that 'fits' its complexities, and, in my view, even the attribution of 'equality' to liberal perspectives and 'difference' to radical perspectives cannot be consistently maintained: as Bock and James point out (1992, pp. 4-5), some regard equality/difference as 'dichotomous', while others see difference as a starting point and equality as a goal, or vice versa (see also Cockburn, 1991; Sayers, 1994; Walsh and Dickson, 1994). But the interaction of equality/difference continues to be worked and re-worked in feminist theory as well as organisational practice.

What do 'poststructuralisms' offer to the discussion of equality/difference? As I have suggested above, the 'going beyond' of feminist/poststructuralism draws

attention to what effects are produced or constrained by operating within a binary system. Armstrong draws on US theorist Joan Scott's (1988<sup>1</sup>) 'deconstruction' of the equality-versus-difference debate to point to specific possibilities offered by post-structuralist ideas. Scott uses the equality/difference debate as exemplary of the contributions that 'the body of theory referred to as poststructuralism' can make to feminist theory. Her discussion of language and of discourse analysis is especially relevant to my thesis. For Scott, the analysis of language as a 'meaning-constituting system' provides

a crucial point of entry, a starting point for understanding how social relations are conceived, and therefore - because understanding how they are conceived means understanding how they work - how institutions are organised, how relations of production are experienced, and how collective identity is established (Scott, 1994, p. 283).

This 'point of entry' is strongly related to what Scott calls the theory that 'feminism needs' - theory that will 'break the conceptual hold' of patriarchal philosophy, that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them, and 'that will be useful and relevant' in practice (ibid., p. 282). Scott sees analysis of language as the 'point of entry' that avoids imposing existing conventional binary models, by asking about the specificity of how meanings are created, how they emerge, disappear and are changed, in order to 'open up interpretive possibilities' (ibid., p. 284).

Scott highlights Foucault's work with discourse as an analytic technique that allows such deconstruction, because he shows in various contexts how the power of truth regimes 'comes from the way they function as givens or first premises for both sides of an argument, so that conflicts within discursive fields are framed to follow from rather than question them' (Scott, 1984, p. 285). One of the assumptions of the equality/difference debate, for instance, is that masculine subjectivity is the norm within which feminine identity must either be subsumed (to become the 'same') or must deviate from. Scott's work then supports my project in highlighting the equality/difference debate as one which is central to feminist theory, and which 'requires' the kinds of contributions that post-

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<sup>1</sup> Armstrong cites Scott in its 1988 version: I use the re-published version, Scott, 1994.

structuralist discourse analysis can provide in order to open up new 'interpretive possibilities' or, in Foucault's words, 'possibilities of transformation'.

Discourses of EEO and of Biculturalism are discourses of difference. They produce possibilities of difference within given organisational and policy contexts. Here I have set out some frameworks for looking in more detail at how gender and ethnic 'difference' can be produced, gender and ethnic 'equality' can be produced.

My project is 'locating' the communicative production of gender and ethnic difference within the various discourses of organisational policies and programmes. As Maori feminists Johnston and Pihama point out, 'the difficulty of defining a politics of difference is the difficulty of bringing together an assortment of ideas and beliefs about what "difference" is' (Johnston and Pihama, 1993, p. 3). My intention here is not to ask what difference 'is' so much as to ask what, within a given discursive context, difference *does*: as Johnston and Pihama suggest, considering 'what counts as difference'.

## 8. Gender in a field of difference

In this chapter I have covered some critical issues in theorising gender from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective: the relationship between feminism and post-modernism and post-structuralism; the question of the subject of feminist politics and the problem of 'essentialisms'; ways of conceptualising gendered subjectivity and its relationship to agency and change. I have discussed new 'interpretive possibilities' (Scott, 1994, p. 284) that post-structuralism brings to questions of gender as equality and/or difference.

In my next chapter, 'Theorising ethnicity', I look at feminist and post-structuralist perspectives on 'ethnicity', drawing on feminist theories of racism, and on post-structuralist accounts of subjectivity and race. Questions of terminology are central to theorising ethnicity, and I tease out some distinctions between 'ethnicity', 'race', 'culture' and 'colonialism'. I set out a framework for a 'politics of difference' in which the differences between types of difference - ethnicity, gender - can be considered from a feminist point of view.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORISING ETHNICITY

The oppressor avoids confronting the role they play in oppressing others. White feminists do this by defining 'feminism' for this country and by using their white power, status and privilege to ensure that their definition of 'feminism' supercedes that of Maori women (Awatere, 1984, pp. 42-43).

#### 1. Ethnicity and the refusal of feminism

Questions of ethnicity encounter feminism, and emerge within feminism, as concerns for equality and difference converge and collide. The 'refusals' of Maori women, for instance, to accept the category 'woman' marked the categorising process as generated by a 'white', Western feminist discourse.

The premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category (Butler, 1990, p. 4).

This 'refusal' and this resignification of 'feminism' created a crisis for Pakeha and Maori feminists both in terms of questions of political practice - who to work with? how to work together? - and questions of theory - how/can the category of 'woman' be sustained while accounting for differences of ethnicity?

First, a note on terminology. Much of the political writing on ethnicity uses the term 'race'. Later in this chapter I specifically discuss some distinctions between the terms 'race', 'ethnicity', and 'culture'. The race/ethnicity distinction roughly parallels the sex/gender distinction in raising and opposing the categories of nature and culture, biological and cultural difference, within the binary logics. While questioning this distinction itself at various points during the thesis, I have chosen to use the general term 'ethnicity' in parallel with the term 'gender'. However, I repeat the term 'race' when it is used in specific literatures I am discussing.

My thesis and its readings of equality and difference are located in a post-colonial context. In saying this I take on the periodising and historicising concept

of Aotearoa/New Zealand<sup>1</sup> as a post-colonial place. I also take on post-colonialism as locating questions of race, ethnicity, culture and nationality within a post-modern theoretical frame, in which identity is problematised. I adopt feminist readings of post-colonialism. The context for these feminist readings is the powerful encounter between 'white' feminism and challenges from its 'others': Maori women, black women in Britain and the US, Third World women.

In this chapter I discuss the intersections of feminism and ethnicity with two key purposes. First, I draw ethnicity into the discussion of subjectivity and gender that I have set out above, in order to create the basis for re-thinking communication and difference (Chapters 4 to 6); and, secondly, I provide a framework for my discussion of the intersections of gender and race in the discourses of Equal Employment Opportunities (Chapters 9 to 12). I do this primarily through setting out theoretical propositions, but I also include aspects of a historical account of intersections between feminism and racism in feminist theory and practice.

## **2. Pakeha feminism**

Like many Pakeha feminists, I have found the question of feminism and ethnicity central to the practicalities of politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Any Pakeha person with a concern for social justice has been powerfully confronted during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s with Maori challenges, primarily focused around the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>2</sup> The campaign against the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour catalysed feminist/anti-racist coalitions in opposition to apartheid. But well before that time, Pakeha feminists had been repeatedly challenged by Maori women, both in their refusals to prioritise gender over race as an organising category of activism, and in their claim that racism and colonialism were implicated in the universalising tendencies of white feminism (see Awatere, 1984; Evans, 1994).

Another note on terminology is needed here. I would like to note here that the terms 'women of colour' and 'black' are used, sometimes to draw distinctions, sometimes with overlapping meanings, in the British and American feminist literature, but in Aotearoa we talk mainly about Maori and Pakeha, although this creates what Annamarie Jagose calls 'that gap between the two, that black hole

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<sup>1</sup> Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand. It is used alone or spliced with New Zealand to emphasise Maori or bicultural versions of nationality.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, is the primary document of Maori-Pakeha relationships. I discuss the Treaty in Chapter 8..

in which nothing can be seen and from which nothing can be heard', for women who are neither (Jagose, 1988, p. 31). The American phrase 'women of colour' has been adopted by Jagose and others in New Zealand to refer to these women, neither Pakeha in the sense of European descent, nor Tangata Whenua. In this thesis I refer as specifically as possible to ethnic identities, e.g., Maori, Pakeha, Pacific Island. I will use the word 'white' to refer to feminists of European descent, and Pakeha for those who live in Aotearoa.

I have identified the feminist debates on race as having three main dimensions (Jones, 1994). First, there are critiques of white feminist theory and white feminist activism by Maori women, black women and women of colour; there is the development of feminist theory by Maori women, black women and women of colour; and thirdly there is the development of radical feminist and socialist feminist theory by white feminists to include an account of racism, or to further include accounts of racism. Here I am concerned primarily with the last point, that is the development of theory by white feminists who include an account of race. In fact, it is very much intertwined with the other two debates.

In discussing issues of representation and ethnicity, I continue to take a 'white' - and specifically Pakeha - feminist position as my starting point. A particular concern associated with this position is the anxiety of white feminists that 'non-white' women have been relegated to the margins of feminism, just as women have been relegated to the margins of masculinist political theory and practice. The issue I am concerned with here as a feminist scholar, parallels the kinds of issues faced by my Pakeha research subjects: whether and how to 'represent' others within feminist agendas. When I say 'white' here I am invoking an 'international' feminist canon of sorts, primarily but not exclusively an academic one. I provide readings of the white, Western English-speaking feminist tradition in which I live - the feminism I see as my 'home'. In particular, I have drawn for years on the work of British, American and New Zealand white feminists. My specific interest is of course in colonial/post-colonial relationships in Aotearoa/New Zealand as they are played out in government organisations, primarily in the encounter between Equal Employment Opportunity and Biculturalism. This interplay is strongly resonant with local feminist struggles over issues of ethnicity and colonialism.

Two recent New Zealand readings of 'post-colonialism' evoke some of the issues at stake in the use of the term. First, 'post-colonialism' is about what Pakeha sociologist Paul Spoonley calls 'a critical engagement with colonialism... a project

by those who want to critique and replace the institutions and practices of colonialism' (Spoonley, 1995a, p. 49). In this thesis I share Spoonley's commitment to a critical post-colonialism and link it to the project of 'anti-racism'. Unlike 'anti-racism', 'post-colonialism' draws attention to the historical and global themes in issues of racism/anti-racism. Secondly, 'post-colonialism' has a specific discursive history that does not map neatly in to the situation in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pakeha feminist Lynn Alice makes the useful distinction between colonial relationships and the situation of indigenous people - as in this country - and the situation of 'diasporic intellectuals living in the West' who have been the key originators of the academic discourses of post-colonialism (Alice, 1993, p. 29). In particular, issues of nationalism and identity work quite differently for indigenous people in a post-colonial situation, and I discuss the issues involved in my readings of 'EEO Maori' and of Biculturalism. Alice also makes a useful distinction between on one hand readings of post-colonialism in literary theory, and on the other post-colonialism in a sociological context, with its focus on 'unequal power relations surrounding identity and self-determination' (ibid., p. 28). Post-colonial literary theory tends to stress 'hybridity' in deconstructed ethnic identities, but, as Alice points out, 'this is an erasure of any chance of self determination by indigenous peoples' (ibid., p. 29), whose political claims are based on specific historical indigenous identities.

In feminist accounts, ethnicity is always politicised, always problematised. 'Race' as a categorising discourse carries with it the implications of 'racism' as an oppressive structure and/or source of political division, and anti-racism as resistance to it. In 1980s feminist writing, accounts of ethnic identity in the context of anti-racism tended to fix ethnicity in terms of structural analyses that linked difference to grand narratives of class or gender, 'socialist' and 'radical' feminisms. In fact, differences between accounts of racism were used to sort feminist theory (Bourne, 1983; Guy, 1986; Jones, 1992; Murphy and Livingstone, 1985; Simpkin, 1994). These frameworks have left their traces in feminist discourse into the 1990s, and, as I will show later, contribute to the analytic strategies of EEO practitioners (Chapters 11 and 12). For instance, references to 'structural' inequalities recur regularly in my interview subjects' accounts. In particular, they are used as a counter-point to liberal individualist accounts of difference. A very clear distinction is made here between a liberal idealist approach to racism as an attitude or prejudice, or some kind of psychological problem, and a materialist approach which sees it as the product of material conditions (Elvidge, 1987). This tension between the 'psychological' and the 'material', addressed quite differently in foucauldian accounts of subjectivity,

also occurs in debates among EEO practitioners over 'education' (attending to the psychological) and 'enforcement' (attending to the material), or changing 'attitudes' as opposed to 'behaviour'. I discuss this debate in Chapter 10.

Another tension point is the question of whether white women benefit directly from racism *as white*, or whether their white privilege is conditional on the favours of white men (Frye, 1983). In this analysis, once white women see the 'male-as-norm-divide-and-conquer-trap' (Trinh, 1987, p. 18), they will see that it is also in their interests to resist racism. This tension between white women as beneficiaries from racism yet, at the same time, as natural allies of the racially oppressed, also finds its way into discourses of EEO, where it is argued by Pakeha EEO practitioners that 'a win for one is a win for all'. In my discussion of EEO discourses I will point to situations where Pakeha feminism dominates EEO discourse, and comes into conflict with Maori and 'other' ethnic minority agendas (Chapters 11 and 12).

### **3. Post-structuralist accounts of ethnicity and race**

My entry points into post-structuralist accounts of ethnicity were the writings of Julian Henriques (Henriques, 1984), a British-based black psychologist; and of Trinh Minh-ha (Trinh, 1987), a US-based feminist scholar. I have already cited Henriques' work on subjectivity in Chapter 2. Henriques addresses the connections between subjectivity, discourse, and ethnic identity; while Trinh focuses on 'the theme of difference' (Trinh, 1987, p. 18) in terms of gender and ethnicity.

Henriques' contribution on race in *Changing the subject* introduced me to post-structuralist theories of the self which account for 'subjective' as well as 'objective'. forms of racism and racial identity. Henriques argues that theorising difference in terms of historical and socio-economic differences 'cannot alone explain white racism or black subjectivity' (Henriques, 1984, p. 89). He talks about a Foucauldian-derived 'theory of subjectivity which recognises differences as a social or historical production', but 'no less real for that' (Henriques, 1984, p. 89). Henriques suggests that the political stakes of various ways of representing race need to be spelt out in their specific contexts. For instance, he suggests that while, in the past, the only progressive response to biological determinist theories of racial difference may have been to deny the difference, this denial of difference is now having serious political effects: to deny differences between blacks and whites means that it is impossible to frame the

effects of racist discourses and to intervene in them. For instance, in New Zealand at present the claim that 'we're all people/New Zealanders' can be used to deny the reality of both racism and cultural difference (Spoonley, 1995b).

Henriques' theory of racial discourses contests the binary between racism as individualised prejudice, and racism grounded in material advantage. For him, 'racism reproduces itself not only mechanically at an economic and social level but also through the power relations between white and black people and the subjectivities which these produce and reproduce in both (Henriques, 1984, 89). Henriques' argument is that the neither the denial of difference in liberal psychologies of ethnicity, nor the neglect of the material in traditional psychological accounts of 'prejudice' provide adequate theorisation of the subjectivity of racism and ethnic identity. His advocacy of a post-structuralist approach to difference argues for a kind of strategic concept of ethnicity which allows racism to be distinguished. I return later to Henriques' work in discussing the question of 'prejudice', as conceived in conventional psychological discourses, is deployed in interventions by EEO practitioners (Chapter 10).

While Henriques argues for the strategic uses of discourses of racial difference, Trinh Minh-ha draws on French feminist theory to argue strongly against 'the very theme of difference' (Trinh, 1987, p. 18). Her example is not the liberal denial of difference, but the violence of 1980s South African apartheid. 'With a kind of perverted logic', she says, white racists 'work towards your erasure while urging you to keep your way of life and ethnic values within the boundaries and borders of your homelands... "Difference" is "division" in the understanding of many. It is no more than a tool of self-defense and conquest' (Trinh, 1987, pp. 6-7). She evokes what she calls the 'French feminist' proposition 'to destroy the notion of differences between the sexes', and extends it to all 'difference':

The very theme of difference, whatever the differences are represented to be, is useful to the oppressing group. The search and claim for a female/ethnic identity-difference today can never be anything more than a move within the male-as-norm-divide-and-conquer trap. As long as words of difference serve to legitimate a discourse, instead of delaying its authority to infinity, they are... noteworthy only as decorations' (ibid., pp. 18-19).

The 'male-as-norm-divide-and-conquer trap', or what I have framed in Vicki Kirby's words as 'masculinism's binary logic' (Kirby, 1994, p. 25), serves only to

legitimate oppressive discourses, whether of gender or of race. This strong version of the post-structuralist argument against difference could be seen, in its own way, as being as reductionist as Elvidge's argument that all accounts of racist subjectivity are 'really' a mask for narrowly-conceived materialist (read economic) imperatives.

Trinh's and Henriques' arguments, counter-pointed, create the possibilities of considering discourses of ethnicity, and discourses of gender in terms of the political stakes of varying accounts of identity, not in terms of 'truths' about identity. This possibility exists within a feminist/post-structuralist politics of difference which recognises the inter-implications of 'difference/s', and concerns itself with the political implications of differences in context. Australian feminist Sneja Gunew argues that:

Working for social justice is not necessarily at odds with a commitment to critical theory 'even' in its post-modern variants. It is necessary to state this in the face of consistent critiques which suggest that social justice issues inevitably translate into firmly entrenched binary positions, which are hierarchically positioned and involve mutual homogenization and reductionism... This is not to deny the fact that political manoeuvrings sometimes set these categories against each other... But this does not mean that we have to accept the terms of such manipulations. If we have a specific role as intellectuals it is precisely that of scrutinising and, if need be, redefining the conceptual terms of these debates (Gunew, 1993, p. 1).

This sort of scrutiny is part of the project of my thesis. I do not argue politically 'for' or 'against' the use of certain 'conceptual terms' or 'political manoeuvrings' per se. Rather, I draw on discourses of EEO and Biculturalism to look at some examples of how practitioners intervene communicatively, and suggest through my readings which political issues are at stake.

#### **4. The politics of difference**

A feminist account of a 'politics of difference' sets out to create a framework for addressing a range of difference/s. Here I draw on the work of Gunew and Yeatman in theorising such a framework (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a).

Introducing their collection *Feminism and the politics of difference* (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993b), they propose that the discourses of post-colonialism and post-

structuralism can provide the theoretical framework for disassembling what Trinh calls the 'male-as-norm-divide-and-conquer trap' (Trinh, 1987, p. 18), so that 'it is possible to admit difference, not simply as the self-confirming other, but as the admission and recognition of incommensurabilities' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a, p. xiv). (I note here that 'post-colonialism' is taken by Gunew and Yeatman to assume a critical approach to difference in a particular historical and cultural context. Here and elsewhere in the literatures that I draw from in the thesis, 'post-colonialism' implies a political agenda, and becomes a kind of re-working of the term 'anti-racist' which implies a post-structuralist account of ethnicity).

Gunew and Yeatman have three specific suggestions for their project. First, they take up Denise Riley's proposition (Riley, 1988) that a 'spirit of deconstructive irony' must be 'an inevitable characteristic of a contemporary politics of difference' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a, p. xiv). I see this as a reflexive stance from which feminists can use, re-work and re-use foundationalist discourses of difference, while at the same time refusing to accept them as essentially 'true'.

Secondly, Gunew and Yeatman emphasise organising around 'local allegiances' - a strategy which allows the dismantling of 'universal models' which 'confirm the old power structures' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a, p. xiv). After Foucault, they privilege local struggles and local knowledges. Agreeing as I do with this proposition, there is some irony here for me as a Pakeha woman, as Gunew and Yeatman's writings in this collection privilege an Australian conception of 'multiculturalism' over a 'Biculturalism' that is identified with New Zealand, and with a 'self-defeating' and 'simply-defined activism' (ibid., p. xv). I refer to this issue in discussing local struggles over 'multiculturalism' and 'biculturalism' (Chapters 11 and 12).

Thirdly, they suggest 'thinking in terms of interested universalisms'. They resist the idea that an ethical or universal component to political vision must always be in contradiction with an 'interested' component. They claim that politics contains both: it 'concerns the contestatory and conversational dynamics of how these two components enter into the ways in which we work with shared conditions of plurality and alterity' (ibid.). This is a useful caution in terms of discourse analysis (as well as political activity). For instance, as Gunew demonstrates in her discussion of social justice above, to invoke a term such as 'social justice' does not necessarily indicate immediate consignment to the trash-can of unreflexive foundationalism. For instance, feminist philosopher Jane Flax

suggests talking in terms of 'justices' rather than 'justice' rather than abandoning the concept of 'justice' (Flax, 1992).

Gunew and Yeatman name a number of 'key questions' which need attention within the framework of a 'feminist politics of difference'. The first is 'the nature of the intersection of race and ethnicity'. I now turn to this question, adding in the associated question of 'culture'.

## **5. Reconceptualising 'ethnicity', 'race' and 'culture'**

In this section I assume post-structuralist readings of ethnicity, and consider in more detail what might be at stake in distinguishing 'race', ethnicity, and culture, as categories of difference. As well as elaborating some theoretical concerns, I create a further framework for my analysis of ethnicity as a category of difference in the context of discourses of EEO and Biculturalism.

The term 'race' evokes a kind of biological reductionism which seems uniquely offensive. There have long been attacks on the term. Henry Gates, in his introduction to the collection *"Race," writing and difference*, invokes scientific rhetoric to describe race as 'a fiction' in terms of 'a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences' (Gates, 1986, p. 4) This typical rejection of a biologically determinist representation of 'race' in itself raises new questions. Is 'race' primarily a question of 'fact' or 'fiction'? As Avtar Brah points out, 'no matter how often the concept is exposed as vacuous, "race" still acts as an apparently ineradicable marker of social difference' (Brah, 1992, p. 126). The question then arises: 'What makes it possible for the category to act this way?' (ibid.) This is a crucial question, whether we see markers of difference as invoked in racist or anti-racist contexts, as in 'discrimination' against a minority or as in affirmation of a suppressed cultural identity. This question brings us back to scrutinising the power relations implicit in every act of categorisation; to, as Biddy Martin puts it, an 'insistence on analysing power in terms of its local, discursive and specific formations' (Martin, 1988, p. 16). This is a question that should also be applied to the categorisations of 'ethnicity' and 'culture'.

While the idea of 'race' has been widely discredited, that of 'ethnicity' as an objective category has not. This still-legitimated category is widely used in public policy contexts. For instance, Paul Spoonley's definitions of ethnicity (Spoonley, 1988) were used by the New Zealand Department of Inland Revenue in their 1992 EEO plan (Department of Inland Revenue, 1992). This type of ethnic

categorisation treats ethnicity as 'a characteristic of an individual or a group', rather than stressing that ethnicity is a 'socially constructed relation', and one which has to be negotiated, as Skutnabb-Kangas has pointed out (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990, p. 92). In making this distinction in the context of research on 'ethnic' difference, Skutnabb-Kangas argues that the construction of ethnic groups by researchers can lead to new, more sophisticated forms of racism, in spite of the absence of the term 'race'. Skutnabb-Kangas advocates that the primary object of study of race issues should be instead 'the power relationships between the parties in the definition process' (ibid.)

The categorising term of 'culture', like 'ethnicity', may seem to escape the determinism of 'race' but often in fact carries the traces of 'race' with it. Black US scholar Paul Gilroy asserts that 'the especially crude and reductive notions of culture that form the substance of racial politics are clearly associated with an older discourse of racial and ethnic difference which is entangled with the history of the idea of culture in the modern West' (Gilroy, 1992, p. 188). For this reason, Gilroy argues strongly against what he calls the 'spurious invocation of ethnic particularity to... ensure the tidy flow of cultural output into neat, symmetrical units' (ibid., pp. 196-197). And he stresses that 'this applies whether this impulse comes from the oppressors or the oppressed' (ibid., p. 197). However, Gilroy is careful to contain his discussion within a particular cultural context - what he calls the 'black Atlantic world' (ibid., p. 196). His critique of 'ethnic absolutism' and the notions of culture that go with it may or may not apply in the context of an indigenous people fighting for cultural survival. (I will return later to this argument in considering the opportunities and perils of framing Maori identity claims in terms of the themes of ethnic 'hybridity' which characterise much of the literature of post-colonial criticism (Mohanty, 1995).

This issue of 'ethnic absolutism' is a key one in considering the nature of Maori challenges to EEO, as the rhetoric of these challenges often includes strong appeals to Maori cultural identity. Leonie Pihama has pointed out that while it may further the process of decolonisation to 'decentre' white identities, it is quite another matter for white theorists to destabilise the identities of those whom we have colonised (Pihama, 1994).

An emphasis on asking how a given process of categorisation works, and in whose interests, is, in my view, necessary to take us beyond the perception that identity is not an essential category, and towards confirming or reformulating political strategies. James Donald and Ali Rattansi, in their review of race,

culture and conflict in contemporary Europe, argue for a 'critical reappropriation of the concept of culture' (Donald & Rattansi, 1992, p. 4). Such a concept must avoid, on the one hand, the dangers of a 'new racism' based on 'the supposed incompatibility of cultural traditions' - a recuperation of colonial attitudes (*ibid.*, p. 2). On the other hand, it must avoid a 'diversity' approach which avoids addressing issues of power and resources. As Donald and Rattansi put it:

[a critical reappropriation] means that culture is no longer understood as what expresses the identity of a community. Rather, it refers to the processes, categories and knowledges through which communities are defined as such: that is, how they are rendered specific and differentiated (*ibid.*, p. 4).

I explore ways in which ethnic groups 'are rendered specific and differentiated' by looking at the production of 'target groups' in EEO discourse (Chapter 11). By framing ethnic and cultural difference this way, I reject any claims to 'ethnic absolutism'. At the same time, my discussion below suggests that, for many Maori, culture, even race, is identity. In this context, identity is seen to be based on land, ancestry, and what Maanu Paul has called a 'continuity of consciousness' between historical and contemporary identities, 'which has its roots in our memories of thousands of years of existence in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa [the Pacific]' (Paul, 1991, p. 3).

To critically reappropriate concepts of cultural and ethnic identity, it is not enough just to evoke the spectre of a theoretically de-legitimated 'essentialism', out of the political context in which such essentialism may be deployed. The point is to ask who makes particular identity claims based on land and ancestry, who disputes these claims, and why. In a New Zealand context, to 'deconstruct' such claims in the context of the Treaty of Waitangi could be to undercut the Tangata Whenua status of the Maori, and their claims to sovereignty based on their indigenous status. This is a hazardous enterprise.

Also hazardous is what Maori feminist Donna Matahaere calls the 'uncritical adoption of essentialist notions of race and identity' (Matahaere, 1995, p. 16) in order to 'function progressively in some contexts' (*ibid.*, p. 17). For Matahaere, 'the extent to which Maori continue to use the language of "race" with which to articulate their "difference" reveals an active complicity rather than the lack of agency that a passive and naive duplicity would imply' (*ibid.*). Matahaere raises important questions of complicity and agency, to which I will return in my

discussion of EEO categories, especially in relation to Maori Treaty discourses. Taking a strong line against 'difference', similar to the argument made by Trinh (1987), she argues that 'alliances based on complicity' with essentialist notions of 'identity-authenticity' may seem strategically necessary, but eventually 'may work against the interests of a greater number of people'. However, she is contradictory in her statements about whether she sees the notion of authentic Maori identity as having been taken on in an 'uncritical' way or 'as a tool of survival' (Matahaere, 1995, pp. 16-17). How would a 'critical' adoption of essential identity work, one taken on in the 'spirit of deconstructive irony' advocated by Gunew and Yeatman? Alternatively, does Matahaere run the risk of applying a post-structuralist notion of identity in a cultural context where it does not necessarily translate? (see Pihama, 1994). Gunew and Yeatman suggest that a 'politics of difference' creates the possibility of 'the admission and recognition of incommensurabilities' (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993, p. xiv). If the idea of cultural difference is admitted at all, then there is the possibility that readings of issues of identity do not necessarily translate from one culture to another. Can certain Maori notions of identity, such as the one articulated by Paul, be simply translated as uncritical essentialism? I will return several times to this question of 'essentialisms' in specific communicative contexts.

## **6. Communication and difference**

In this chapter I have looked at some feminist accounts of ethnicity in the context of racism, where the main focus of interest is the connections between ethnicity and gender. Converging these with post-structuralism accounts of ethnicity, I have discussed a feminist politics of difference which draws on post-structuralism and post-colonialism. Issues of 'representing' difference are inseparable from the process of writing about ethnicity, and I have recurrently addressed issues of terminology, and argued that the important questions are those which ask what these designations 'do' in specific contexts. In the next two chapters I weave my theorisation of difference into the literatures of 'gender and communication' and 'cross-cultural communication'. I then draw them together in terms of 'communication and difference'.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEORISING 'GENDER AND COMMUNICATION'

One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one (de Beauvoir, cited Butler, 1990, p. 8)

#### 1. Introduction

My next step is to re-think the 'gender and communication' literature within a feminist/post-structuralist theoretical framework. That is, to analyse this literature with a view to 'possibilities of transformation'. In the preceding chapters I have set out the terrain of feminist/post-structuralist accounts of difference and subjectivity. In this chapter I use Judith Butler's *Gender trouble* (1990) as a central text to draw together my theorisations of subjectivity, discourse and difference in the thesis so far, and to relate them to re-thinking the 'gender and communication' literature. Butler's denaturalizing critique combines feminist scepticism about the naturalness of gender ('one is not born a woman') with a foucauldian interest in the processes by which the appearance of natural identity is created (how a woman 'becomes one'). I carry out a denaturalizing critique of the literature, with particular emphasis on 'the identity problem' in feminist theory.

Butler's work has provided a crucial starting point for me to make the connection between feminist/post-structuralist theories of subjectivity, and questions of gender and communication. Recent reviews of 'language and gender' have cited the growing importance of feminist/post-structuralist theorising (Freed, 1995; Mills, 1995b) and have called for 'a more sophisticated theoretical approach' (Cameron, 1995a, p. 44). Issues of subjectivity and signification ('making meaning'), and an emphasis on communicative practices in specific situations (as against 'sociolinguistic universals' (Holmes, 1993)), have emerged as key issues in the interdisciplinary 1990s project of 'gender and communication' (Cameron, 1995a; Crawford, 1995; Freed, 1995; Mills, 1995a, 1995b; Rakow, 1992a), and I place my work in this context.

Butler's book *Gender trouble* (1990), eloquently articulates the concerns of a body of feminist/post-structuralist theorising in which gender itself is problematised, rather than taken as given; which concerns itself with creating 'gender trouble', asking: which is the 'best way to trouble the gender categories that support gender

hierarchy...?' (ibid., p. x). Butler provides a strong feminist reading of Foucault's theories of discourse and subjectivity. More recently I have also drawn on her contributions to the feminist/post-structuralist 'philosophical exchange', *Feminist contentions* (Butler, 1995a), and her book *Bodies that matter* (Butler, 1993), both of which advance the theorisation of her 'denaturalizing critique'. Butler's formulation of gender as a discursive practice opens up two important issues. As well as problematising gender, Butler draws attention to discursive practices in the context of regimes of signification, a connection which requires re-thinking 'communication' as discursive practice. In this chapter I re-frame 'communication' as 'discursive practice' by re-framing the literature in terms of the concepts of representation and performativity. I complete the chapter by proposing a feminist/post-structuralist research agenda within which I locate my specific concerns in this thesis. I want to stress that this agenda is not limited to issues that I go on to take up in my field studies in this thesis (Chapters 9 to 12). Rather, I am interested in the broader theoretical project posed by my research questions (Chapter 1): How can I 're-think' gender and communication'? How are communicative practices and identity (subjectivity) related? What kinds of discourse analysis are specifically relevant to communication studies?

## **2. Gender in communication: a 'variable' or an 'effect'?**

In most of the last twenty years of research on gender and communication, gender has been treated as a kind of controlled or static variable; as a quality somehow separable from communication, as a determining factor in communication differences, or as a quality reflected in communication differences. While the field is now becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, it has been split historically into the literatures of 'women and language' - drawing largely on sociolinguistics - and 'gender and communication' - drawing largely on interpersonal communication literature with a social psychology base, on rhetoric, and on gender in the media. (A number of other formulations of the 'field/s' are available: 'women's communication' (Carter and Spitzack, 1989), 'language and gender' (Mills, 1995a), 'feminism and linguistic theory' (Cameron, 1990).) From here on I will refer to the field/s as a whole as 'gender and communication', except where I want to specify a sub-field. I will tease out some of the interdisciplinary issues later, both in terms of future directions for 'communication and difference', and in terms of issues in communication theory more broadly. Here, though, I argue that the great majority of the literature, whether 'gender and communication' or 'women and language', has been positivist in its assumptions about the relationship between gender and communication. As US communication scholar

Lana Rakow summarised the situation in 1986: 'gender has been operationalized as a pre-given category that can account for measurable differences in women's and men's speech, interaction and mass communication behaviour' (Rakow, 1986, p. 11).

Rakow's 1986 review of gender research in communication provided an original link for me between Butler's theoretical propositions and the literature of 'gender and communication' (Rakow, 1986). Rakow's review was located within the US 'communication studies' context, which comprehends a range of communication contexts, from interpersonal to mass media. As a result, Rakow's review was influenced by cultural studies perspectives in the mass media literature, which have been shaped over a long period by post-structuralist theory. Although Rakow's review was not based in post-structuralist theory as such, her argument for a constructionist account of gender in communication studies resonated strongly for me with Butler's account of gender as a discursive practice. In a later, 1992, review (Rakow, 1992), she comments that 'while early research by feminists sometimes assumed... that gender was a pre-given biological fact..., [they] have come to theorise the differences between women and men as the product of language and interaction' (ibid., p. 10). In this chapter I pursue some of the implications of this shift to a social constructionist perspective, and distinguish some of the theoretical issues that are at stake.

The concept of gender as a variable in communication has produced a range of extremely useful findings. It has been, like other questions of gender and difference, a point of resistance and challenge in a context where masculine behaviour has been assumed to be the universal standard, and feminine difference is either obscured, ignored or marginalised. It has allowed scrutiny of the representation of women in both spoken language and in mass media. It has provided a kind of index of masculine dominance by showing its manifestations as interruption, silencing and invasion of personal space. The rhetoric of quantification itself has seemed to pose irrefutable arguments that women have used widely to mark and contest their silencing - most famously, in the work of Dale Spender (Spender, 1989). Much less familiar is the feminist criticism of Spender's work, which addresses her reductionist conflation of 'data', her essentialist theorisation of 'male' and 'female' meanings, and her assumption that feminists need to simply step outside the language system - from which they are separate - in order to change it (Black and Coward, 1990; Cameron, 1995a; Gatens, 1991).

Work such as Spender's has been widely popular because it has been seen as politically valuable to feminists (Cameron, 1995a; Frazer and Cameron, 1989). Before the 'linguistic turn' in academic women's studies (Canning, 1994), when post-structuralist theory became important to feminism, language was already a 'feminist issue' (Cameron, 1990, p. 1). Feminism has 'placed language on the political agenda' (ibid.), in a way that is distinct from any other aspect of communication inquiry. Reviewing the 'feminist critique of language', British feminist sociolinguist Deborah Cameron names the three key themes of this critique as: silence and exclusion of women's voices; representation and 'naming'; and behavioral differences in language, in relation to male dominance and female culture (ibid., p. 3).

The pair 'difference/dominance' echo the difference/equality binary, and recur in the feminist/post-structuralist account of language, but with new twists (see Thorne and Henley's original formulation, Thorne and Henley, 1975; and for recent re-workings, Coates, 1995; Cameron, 1995a; Freed, 1995). I will return to them in their re-worked forms below. In line with broader developments in feminist theory, many feminist language and communication scholars have become sceptical of work such as Spender's, which takes positivist epistemology and gender categories for granted, and recklessly globalises in its claims about 'men' and 'women' in language, without historical or cultural context.

The problem with empiricist approaches to gender research, whether difference or dominance is stressed, is that the designation 'gender' itself remains largely unexamined. Rakow proposed instead that 'gender research should mean being engaged in questions about the role of communication in the construction and accomplishment of a gender system' (Rakow, 1986, p.12). In other words, we should examine the ways in which 'communication creates genders who create communication' (ibid., p. 23). Rakow's argument has major epistemological implications, although she does not spell these out herself. By advocating an inquiry into the way that 'communication creates genders', she is moving towards a theory of identity/difference as a communicative process. For me this provokes a re-theorisation of identity and thus of subjectivity, as well as a re-consideration of the nature of communication as somehow producing the self, rather than the more traditional assumption that communication is a tool or expression of the pre-given self.

Another implication of Rakow's challenge is the subversion of foundationalist epistemologies of 'gender and communication'. While Rakow's discussion seems to assume a realist account of how 'communication creates genders', the possibility she creates, that communication creates identity, also is subversive of a realist account of research in which the rational autonomous subject simply 'describes' communication practices. Instead, her questioning of 'gender', and therefore of 'communication', as 'variables' and 'pre-given' categories opens up the prospect that all research constructs, and the researcher too, are 'created by' communication. I emphasise the possibility here of this double epistemological displacement, because it seems to me that there is the opening here for a post-structuralist account which takes Rakow's project of re-thinking feminist/communication research in new directions. The destabilisation of gender un-fixes the taken-for-granted of epistemology, 'interrogating that ruse of authority that seeks to close itself off from contest' (Butler, 1995a, p. 41). The 'ruse of authority' lies in foundationalist epistemologies, as much as in the theories of identity which are implicated in them. I argue in this chapter that much of the 'social constructionist' re-theorising of 'gender and communication' studies maintains the 'ruse of authority' by maintaining - albeit re-worked - modernist theories of identity and of research epistemology. In this way they re-inscribe gender/identity, rather than exploiting more radically the transformative possibility that Butler advocates, of making 'gender trouble'. As researchers on 'gender and communication' we can frame our own research questions, and re-frame the existing literature, in terms of 'the very signifying practices that establish, regulate, and deregulate identity' (Butler, 1990, p. 147).

Placing the discussions on 'gender and communication' within this transformative frame, the most interesting questions become: those which interrogate the processes by which language creates gender; and those which ask how the categories of gender are or could be disrupted. These are very different from the questions typically posed in the 'gender and communication' literature, as for instance, in UK sociolinguist Jennifer Coates' question: 'Do men and women talk differently?' (Coates, 1986). I am not suggesting simply rejecting these kinds of discussions, but rather I propose that we can retrospectively re-read them from a post-structuralist perspective. I will suggest possible such re-readings below, via the concepts of performativity and representation.

### 3. The 'identity problem', again

In Chapter 2 I set out a number of issues at stake in attempts to establish a stable subject of 'woman'. In the 'gender and communication' literature, this unitary subject creates the same exclusions found elsewhere in feminist literature. It is still unusual for 'gender and communication' research to be carried out with culturally diverse populations (see Freed, 1995, pp. 7-8; Houston, 1992; Houston, 1995). Research models which address these exclusions are usually based on the kind of structural sociological approaches found elsewhere in feminist research, setting out 'interdependent systems of oppression' (Kramarae, 1989, p. 327; see also Freed, 1995; Miller, 1995). This more inclusive approach to identity still has the effect of naturalizing both identities and power structures., rather than 'locating the political in... signifying practices' (Butler, 1990, p. 147).

A denaturalizing critique focuses on a another critical concern: that taking gender as a given leads us back into re-writing fixed differences between men and women, whether the difference is framed as 'cultural 'or 'natural'. Communication differences between men and women then become a kind of manifestation or even proof that men and women are different. In popular culture, best-sellers such as linguist Deborah Tannen's *You just don't understand* (Tannen, 1990) and John Gray's *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus* (Gray, 1992), present gender difference within a model of intractable cultural difference (Tannen) and even species difference (Gray). The huge success of these books indicates the power that writing of gender discourses as 'difference' and 'miscommunication' has in addressing 'gender trouble'. In Chapter 5 I consider some implications of Tannen's work for conceptualising 'cross-cultural communication' as well as 'gender and communication'<sup>1</sup>.

### 4. Gender as representation

I propose a re-framing of 'gender and communication' that can be carried out using the two concepts of representation and of performativity. 'Representation' has long been on the 'gender and communication' agenda in the sense of dealing with media representations of women, and with what we have called 'sexist language' in both speech and writing (see Cameron, 1990; Miller, 1995). From a post-structuralist point of view, the term 'representation' is problematised,

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<sup>1</sup> For some feminist critical reviews of Tannen, see Freed (1992), and Cameron (1995a, 1995b). Both of these pieces discuss other reviews and Tannen's responses to these. Cameron (1995b) and Crawford (1995a) critique both Gray and Tannen.

implying as it does a split between an 'object' and its 'representation', the signified and the sign. For this reason, the *Changing the subject* group prefer the term 'signification', defined as 'the process of making sense' (see Henriques et al., 1984b, pp. 97-98). But because the term 'representation' has been central to the ways that the field of communication and difference has been conceptualised, for me it provides part of a possible framework for re-conceptualisation. Rather than assuming 'representation' to be unproblematic, I instead prefer to consider ways of re-considering and re-thinking the term, through addressing the ways that it is problematic, both in communication theory generally and in relation to issues of difference more specifically. For instance, I draw later (Chapters 11 and 12) on the work of Australian feminist Sneja Gunew to further consider how academic and political 'representations' of difference intersect, particularly in relation to ethnic and cultural difference. Gunew distinguishes representation as 'depiction' and on the other as 'delegation' or 'speaking for' (Gunew, 1994b, p. 87).

Here I want to analyse the ways that issues of representation occur in the literature of gender and communication. I do this by dividing them into two categories: the representation of gender differences; and the representation of gender differences in communication. These two categories are created by splitting Rakow's formulation that:

Communication creates genders who create communication (Rakow 1986, p. 23)

*'Communication creates genders': representing gender differences*

The first category concerns the ways that people talk about gender difference. This means a focus on discourses where differences such as gender and ethnicity are explicitly represented. While there has been a great deal of work done on how gender is represented in written and mass media, there is still little on the representation of difference in spoken interaction, in interpersonal communication. (This gap may be explained at least in part by the theoretical split between 'langue' and 'parole': see Chapter 6.) Where spoken language is addressed, it is generally in terms of language systems - in terms of semantics (e.g., Schulz, 1990), 'andocentric' grammar (e.g., Bodine, 1990) and lexicon (Kramarae and Treichler, 1990). Much less research is available on spoken communicative practices where gender difference is explicitly represented. (By comparison, there is a significant amount of research on what might be called the 'language of racism' (Potter and Wetherall, 1992; Van Dijk, 1987).)

If we stretch the interdisciplinary boundaries of 'gender and communication', we can include in this category feminist discourse analytic work which draws on transcripts of spoken discourse. Hollway's work on heterosexual relationships, analysed in terms of how her subjects represent differences between men and women, could fit here, for instance (Hollway, 1984, 1989). For communication scholars, the emphasis would be centrally on how the differences are represented. Analytic texts might include interview transcripts, such as Hollway's, or transcripts of 'natural' linguistic interaction. An example of the latter is the work of British sociolinguists Elizabeth Frazer and Deborah Cameron on girls' talk about gender and sexuality (Frazer and Cameron, 1989). Their research is based on recordings of school-girls discussing sexuality, representing both themselves and other school-girls. This is a topic area in which representations of gender are highly salient, and in their analysis Frazer and Cameron specifically address the contradictions in the ways that the speakers position themselves and others as gendered sexual subjects. By tracking these contradictions linguistically, Frazer and Cameron analyse their subjects' positioning in various discourses of sexuality. This process involves inevitably positioning the self in relation to 'others' within the economy of sexual categories. While Frazer and Cameron draw on sociolinguistic methods to map discursive positionings, US organisational communication scholar Nina Gregg (Gregg, 1992, 1993a, 1993b) specifically invites her subjects to represent their own positions in multiple and contradictory discourses of identity - gender, race and class - and to relate these to their accounts of themselves as agents in organisational life. She inquires into how women 'make meaning' of 'the ongoing realities of their lives' in terms of the 'discursive configurations' available to them (Gregg, 1992, p. 264). What Gregg is honing in on here is their accounts of what counts as difference in the organisation, and the discursive resources they draw on to make these accounts.

*'Genders create communication': representing communication differences*

My second category of representation covers the second part of Rakow's proposition: how we represent the ways that 'genders... create communication'. As Rakow has pointed out, the work of the 'gender and communication' literature has centred around establishing gender differences in communication. In contrast, I am interested in how these differences are represented, particularly in the academic literature. What is the discursive 'will to truth' that pervades a particular claim of difference? What do we make these apparent differences mean? These communication differences are always represented within the

'binary logic of masculinism', in Kirby's phrase (Kirby, 1993, p. 25). The themes of 'dominance' (inequality) versus 'difference' have provided an enduring framework in the 'gender and communication' literature (Cameron, 1990). For instance, in arguing that women have 'better' communication skills than men, there may be an implied trade-off of the more prestigious side of the binary, i.e., numeracy skills. There is no 'truth' to these types of claims outside power/knowledge regimes. I argue that the valuing processes implicit in any representation of difference should be a crucial research focus, rather than a taken-for-granted framework for analysis. This argument has important epistemological implications. I referred earlier to a 'double epistemological displacement'. This extends the proposition that 'gender is created by communication' to look at how the subject of knowledge - the researcher - is also created by communication. In Foucauldian terms, she is located as a subject in gendered academic discourses.

Representing communication differences between men and women goes on in daily conversation, and it is also intertwined with our academic explorations and their epistemological assumptions: First, we can take 'representing communication differences' as an object of knowledge, as a research topic. This means a focus on the processes in everyday life in which people make meaning out of what they take to be communication differences. For instance, 'even when female leaders receive positive evaluations for their individual performance, group members fail to generalize those expectations to future expectancies' (Pearson, Turner and Todd-Mancillas, 1991, p. 223). One response by feminist communication scholars might be to try and establish an 'objective' communication standard - say, of leadership - against which these perceptions can be measured for 'bias'. I argue instead that there can be no 'objective' standard to run 'bias' against, that there is no 'mis'-representation of communication differences. Rather, there is a range of contested representations occurring in discursive contexts where values are already in-built. An alternative approach is to look at how these values are constructed: to see how 'gender' and 'leadership' are discursively related, for instance. This approach could parallel work done in feminist science education, where researchers concentrate on how gender and 'being good at maths' are discursively related, rather than trying to 'prove' that 'girls can do maths' (Walkerline, 1989; Weedon, 1987). Claims about what 'women' are good at tend to loop back into fixing not only 'the truth of women's nature once and for all' (Weedon, 1997, p. 135), but also standards of 'merit' or 'competency'. As Weedon argues, feminist discourse is 'trapped' when we try to fix identities and values, but political room to move opens up when instead we develop 'an understanding

of how discourses of... difference are mobilized, in a particular society, at a particular moment' (ibid.).

'Representing communication differences' is also an epistemological issue within the regimes of knowledge in which we ourselves are implicated as scholars and researchers. This framework allows us to carry out a denaturalizing critique of the research on 'gender and communication' itself, looking at the ways that it represents difference. For instance, I have referred above to the critical work done on Deborah Tannen's representation of gender difference in communication. Similarly, psychologist Mary Crawford's *Talking difference* treats the 'gender and communication' literature as 'an archive of cultural assumptions and self-representational strategies, a resource that can be deconstructed' (Crawford, 1995, p. 18). From this perspective we can ask: how do certain gendered communication practices come to be seen as central? How are they represented by scholars? What are the implications of the answers in terms of 'denaturalizing' or 're-naturalizing' the gender system? This reflexive approach draws on the epistemological implications of post-structuralism, and highlights the political stakes of 'gender and communication' theory and research within specific models of dominance and difference. For example: as a researcher I might decide to focus on how it happens that when a woman communicates 'assertively' (as I see it), she is represented by others in her workplace as 'aggressive' (Crawford (ibid.) teases out some of these issues in terms of assertiveness and communication). I am not interested here in setting up some kind of measuring instrument of 'aggressiveness' or 'assertiveness' in order to show that she is 'not really' or 'really' aggressive, but in the discursive processes by which this difference is defined and valued by others. In Foucault's terms this is 'to analyse a discursive formation' by 'weigh[ing] the "value" of statements' (Foucault, 1972, p. 120).

## 5. Gender as performative

The concept of identity as 'performative' cannot be completely severed from that of identity as representation: you could even see 'performativity' as a kind of self-representation. I refer to 'performativity' in the sense that Butler sees gender as performative. For her 'the notion of [gender as] an abiding substance is a fictive construction produced through the compulsory ordering of attributes into coherent gender sequences' (Butler, 1990, p. 24). Gender, then, as an effect of discourse 'is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence... gender proves to be performative - that is constituting the identity it is purported to be' (ibid., pp. 24-25). Her notion of

performativity extends Foucault's key proposition that discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Butler's notion of performative identity can be extended beyond gender to theorise any identity as performative: occupational identities, for instance, as well as ethnicities, nationalities, sexualities. The key idea here is of identity as not what one is but what one does; it is derived from (repetitive) practices, not essential qualities. The idea of gender as achieved rather than pre-given, of 'doing gender', is not new in social constructionist readings of 'gender and communication' (Cameron, 1995a; Crawford, 1995; West and Zimmerman, 1991). I see Butler's work as giving rigour and precision to the concept, and locating it within the context of post-structuralist discourse theory.

As Jeffrey Nealon has pointed out in a review of Butler's 1993 text, *Bodies that matter* (Nealon, 1994), the 'crucial distinction' to be grasped in her work is that between 'performance' and 'performativity'. Nealon points out that 'much of *Bodies* is devoted to correcting or complicating certain (mis)readings of *Gender trouble*, especially those readings that took it to be arguing for an understanding of gender as performance' (ibid.). In terms of the field of 'gender and communication', I think this (mis)reading is as important as the distinction itself. It points out that certain key issues of subjectivity, agency and discourse are conflated or blurred in broadly 'constructionist' understandings of gender: what Nealon calls 'the platitudinous understanding that "everything is socially constructed"' (ibid). Butler's work calls for delicacy and specificity in re-thinking what 'construction' is and how it works. In pointing out that 'the reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake', (1993, p. 234), Butler distinguishes between a broadly interpretive approach and a post-structuralist one.

Butler's work on performativity draws on Derrida (1978) and Sedgwick (1990) as well as Foucault, and I do not make space here to discuss her theorisation in detail, although I believe it has much mileage for further work on gender and communication. What is important to me here is the distinction between identity as a performance and identity as performative. The metaphor of 'performance' evokes theatricality and artifice, as well as that of achievement or failure. 'Performance' can imply putting on the unreal, as in theatre, or enacting behaviour to a certain standard, as in notions of competence. These metaphorical echoes do, I think, inform Butler's notion of the performative, but they break down to the extent that they imply a split between the 'real' self and the 'performance', the dancer and the dance, the subject and discursive practices. This split implies a

kind of agency which allows the subject to choose whether and when to perform a certain identity, and which identity to perform. As Butler puts it, if gender were a performance 'that could mean that I thought that one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the garment as of choice, donned that gender for the day, and then restored the garment to its place at night' (Butler, 1993, p. x ).

The concept of performativity makes it possible to take further the discussion of agency in communication (raised in Chapter 2). Butler makes clear that performativity - seen as signifying practices - also means that such practices can be resignified, that change and alteration is part of the very process of performativity. In Linda Nicholson's words, Butler's proposition is that: 'discourse is the horizon of agency, but also, performativity is to be rethought as resignification' (Nicholson, 1995, p. 10). Nicholson provides a very useful critique and gloss of this proposition, by pointing out that in itself it provides no way to distinguish re-signification from repetition. As she points out, change does seem to occur both historically and in the course of individual life narratives, and feminist theory must account for this. She re-reads Butler's account by pulling out the distinction Butler makes between agency as 'metaphysical'; and agency as 'historical': so that she highlights Butler's proposal that questions should be directed in terms of "'what are the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible?'" (Nicholson, p. 11). This question allows a distinction between 'performative acts which function as repetitions from which function as transformations' (ibid). There is not a single 'metaphysical' account of what agency 'is', but many accounts of agency in given historical and cultural circumstances. Nicholson also points out that other kinds of explanation of re-signification may be offered. For me, the kind of post-structuralist developmental theory outlined in Chapter 2 above gives a further account of ways that 'personal' agency is enabled by discourse. Nicholson's point is that one universalised theory of processes of development and change can never be enough. It seems to me that 'gender and communication' studies which emphasise the way that discourse works in processes of interaction can provide some interesting answers to the question: 'What are the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible?' (Nicholson, 1995, p. 11). I address this question in various ways in Chapters 9 to 12.

## 6. Changing the subject

I want now to relate the ideas of gender as representation and as performative to current work on gender and communication. This literature (and that of interpersonal and organisational communication more broadly) continues to be based on traditional humanist models of the subject, drawn from mainstream social sciences - social and cognitive psychology in particular. I argue in this thesis that re-theorising the gendered subject of communication in post-structuralist terms requires making the link between gender as 'an effect of communication', and a post-structuralist psychology which proposes a re-worked model of the self as constituted in discourse.

My extensive discussion above of the work of the *Changing the subject* group (Henriques et al., 1984) is intended to explore the possibilities offered by a post-structuralist psychology for a new post-structuralist perspective on gender and communication. I work with aspects of this new psychology, and argue for its importance as an areas of theoretical development in the future. In Chapter 2, I introduced the distinction between sex-role theory and a post-structuralist view of subjectivity. I now distinguish a post-structuralist approach to the subject of communication from one which is based on sex-role theory. While feminist communication scholars talk broadly about gender as 'socially constructed' in communication, it is usually very unclear whether or how this process of 'construction' involves a re-thinking of the humanist subject and/or of the concept of 'language' and 'communication'. For instance, in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz's interdisciplinary 'social constructionist' collection *Gender articulated: Language and the socially constructed self* (Hall and Bucholtz, 1995b), references to 'postmodern musings on the discursive construction of gender identity' (Hall and Bucholtz, 1995a, p. 7) evoke the possibilities of this kind of re-thinking, but they are not developed. More specifically, for example, Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet's chapter 'Constructing meaning, constructing selves' a sociolinguistic account of gender, class and communication in a US high school, refers to 'language' as 'a primary tool people use in constructing themselves and others', so that 'social categories are human creations' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1995, p. 470). The conception of agency here is unproblematised: humanist subjects use language as a 'tool' for self-creation. My concern here is not so much that the authors do not take a post-structuralist position, but that this 'social constructionist' position leaves important theoretical issues - identity, subjectivity, language and discourse - out of the picture and so unquestioned.

This kind of 'social constructionist' theory often takes for granted, or else explicitly relies on, 'sex role' theory to model gender and subjectivity. I use as my example here Julia Wood's text on gender and communication, *Gendered communication* (Wood, 1996). I take it as typical of contemporary authoritative mainstream writing on gender and communication. Because Wood actually spells out her theoretical model of gendered subjectivity, her book is valuable to me as a text for comparative purposes. I use it here to distinguish the 'sex role' model of gender from a post-structuralist one. I found educational psychologist Valerie Walkerdine's work helpful in providing a way into re-thinking 'sex role' theory (Walkerdine, 1989). A member of the *Changing the subject* group (Henriques et al, 1984), Walkerdine has discussed the inadequacy of the 'sex role' model in the context of her work on 'femininity' in the classroom. In discussing the relationship between the performance of femininity and of mathematical competence in the classroom, Walkerdine (1989) draws attention to the requirement for the repetition of discursive practices that constitute gender, and thus the possibility of re-working them. As Nealon (1994) puts it, 'the necessity of repetition opens the possibility of repeating these codes with a difference'. This sense of gender as 'performance' is distinguished by Walkerdine from the idea of 'sex roles'. She rejects the notion that 'these roles can be peeled away like the layers of an onion to reveal a repressed core, a true self, which has been inhibited, repressed by the layers of social conditioning which obscure it' (Walkerdine, 1989, p. 267). From a post-structuralist point of view there is no 'true' self to which 'social conditioning' is then applied. 'Sex role' theory maintains the traditional humanist split between the subject and 'society'.

Wood (1996) draws on sex role theory to lay down a theoretical foundation for her discussion of 'Gender, culture and communication'. She begins her account with a familiar dichotomy between 'sex' and 'gender', nature (or biology) and culture (or the social). 'Sex' is presented as 'the less complex concept' (ibid., p. 23), innate and enduring, while gender is 'acquired' and 'changes over time' (ibid., p. 26). Gender is 'socially and psychologically constructed' (ibid., p. 23), created by 'investing biological sex with social significance' (ibid., p. 27). Wood goes on to talk of 'socialisation', 'learning', 'social structures', 'stereotyping' and 'roles' as concepts to account for gender: the 'natural' is shifted from 'gender' to 'sex'. Wood does seek to de-naturalize gender, in a sense: she argues that although social definitions of masculine and feminine 'may seem natural to us' (ibid., p.33), they are not. This sex/gender, feminine/female, nature/culture distinction, enshrined in modernist psychology, sociology and anthropology, is precisely the

one that Butler contests, especially explicitly in *Bodies that matter* (Butler, 1993). In her argument, there is no residue of the natural, even in 'sex'. Foucault's work on the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1986, 1990b, 1992) has been very important here, in proposing that identity is written on the body, that the nature/culture distinction is itself discursively constituted. While Wood rests her case for 'more choice than we sometimes realise in how we define ourselves and each other as men and women' (Wood, 1996, p. 26) on the distinction between gender (mutable) and sex (immutable), Butler sees the possibility of transformation not in removing the idea of fixed identity to the realm of biology, but in contesting it altogether. The question here, as always, is of the political effects of definitions. (Crawford points out that the collapse of the sex/gender distinction may, instead of removing difference from biology altogether, reinstate the problem by reframing 'gender' as biological (Crawford, 1995, p. 9).) In *Bodies that matter* Butler foils this move by referring to 'sex', rather than 'gender', but 'sex' always as discursively constituted *and* material (Butler, 1993).

I have compared the idea of the performative with Wood's broadly social constructionist approach to identity. I want now to look briefly at how Wood deals with gender as an issue of representation, and its relationship to issues in communication theory. I argued earlier that the term 'representation' has been rejected by some post-structuralist theorists because it implies a split between an 'object' and its 'representation', the sign and the signified. I argued that for my purposes here, I prefer to consider ways of reconsidering and re-thinking the term, through acknowledging the ways that it is problematic. In considering how gender is represented in the media, spoken discourse and in institutional practices, Wood draws on a symbolic interactionist definition of communication as: 'a dynamic, systemic process in which meanings are created and reflected in human interaction with symbols' (Wood, 1996, p. 28). Here the signifier and the signified are split: 'symbols are... ways of representing phenomena' (ibid., p. 31). Again nature - what is' - is separated from culture - what it 'means'.

Problems in Wood's approach to 'culture' and communication appear in her (mis) use of Chris Weedon's work on feminism and post-structuralist theory (Weedon, 1987). Wood cites Weedon to authorise her definition of 'culture' by drawing on Weedon's definition of discourse. Later Wood cites Weedon in splicing together 'discourse, or communication' as 'one of the primary practices that structure society' (Wood, 1996, p. 26): in Rakow's terms, 'communication that creates gender'. Wood's agent of communication is a humanist subject who can 'step outside social meanings for gender' (ibid., p. 28). I have already discussed (in

Chapter 2) how feminist agency is problematised by the foucauldian perspective in which the subject is not 'outside' discourse, but is always located within and between discourses. Here I am concerned to point out how different Wood's version of 'gender and communication' is from Weedon's post-structuralist feminism. Given that Weedon's case is precisely to show how foucauldian readings present a post-structuralist perspective which contests the usual ways in which 'culture' and 'discourse' are conceptualised (Weedon does not mention 'communication'), the problem in Wood's work is not, in my view, simply the result of an attempt to simplify her account for textbook purposes. Rather, I argue that Wood's work presents a common confusion between interpretive and 'post-modern' perspectives in a kind of ill-defined 'social constructionism'. In particular, issues of discourse, subjectivity and agency need to be thought through more carefully in theorising both gender and communication.

I do not argue that Wood or others 'should' take up a thorough-going post-structuralist position, but rather I draw attention to the kinds of distinctions that I think are useful in the various feminist formulations of 'language and the socially constructed self' (Hall and Bucholz, 1995a). Butler constantly reminds readers that the political is at stake in what we choose to regard as fixed and what we see as mutable. By making a gesture of closure in relegating identity and difference to the biological, we constrain possibilities of transformation, and we close aspects of difference to question or disruption. Further, change does not reside in a humanist model of 'choice' in which, in Wood's terms, the individual can assert herself against culture or 'ideology' which rules the non-biological realm (Wood, 1996, p. 27), or, in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's terms, subjects 'constitute themselves' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1995, p. 503). The subject is herself the product of codes of signification, and therefore, in Nealon's words, cannot 'simply enforce a critical distance between itself and these codes' (Nealon, 1994).

My argument is two-fold: against a vague melting-pot approach to 'social constructionism' in 'gender and communication', and for the deployment of the post-structuralist formulations of subjectivity and discourse, where their political and epistemological differences from structuralist and humanist frameworks are explicitly addressed. In the broad social constructionism of some recent 'gender and communication' literature, post-structuralist conceptions of 'discourse' and 'subjectivity' are thrown into the theoretical pot with neo-marxist terms such as 'ideology' and 'hegemony', and psychological discourses of 'consciousness', 'perception', 'roles' and 'socialisation'. It is unclear how these writers themselves see the relationships between these terms, and where or whether they position

themselves as writers in terms of foundationalist/post-foundationalist perspectives. Wood argues that:

Different theories are not in competition with each other to produce the definitive explanation of gender... as we survey alternative theoretical approaches, the goal is not to pick the best or the right one. Instead, we want to identify the limitations and appreciate the particular insights each theory yields (Wood, 1996, p. 47).

What might it mean to 'identify the limitations and appreciate the particular insights each theory yields?' For me, the bottom line would be to show an appreciation of the complexity of the issues invoked by key theoretical terms, and to openly position oneself in relation to them, rather than in a non-located relativist space. Crawford (1996), for instance, sets out for herself a 'social constructionist' stance that is explicitly radical-structuralist, anti-essentialist and reflexive. Her clear statement of the theoretical issues opens up useful debates - whether, for instance, the contradictions raised by an anti-essentialist stance can be contained within structural analyses as she suggests. Her reflexive approach to her own theorising and to the theoretical issues at stake open up 'possibilities of transformation' in the 'gender and communication' literature.

## **7. Re-framing 'the difference' as 'doing gender'**

We can re-frame any of the research that seeks to answer Coates' question: 'Do men and women talk differently?' (Coates, 1986) as illustrating aspects of gender as performative, that is, as 'doing gender'. More traditional research on gender and communication, in which gender is 'operationalized' as a variable, can be read in their specific contexts as representing gendered processes; in Butler's terms, as repetitive practices which produce 'the appearance of substance'.

As I have argued in the previous section, such re-framing requires more than to wrap the concept of gender as 'socially constructed' around the traditional variables, without re-thinking the theory. Strains have increasingly been occurring in research which attempts to establish 'the difference', and fewer and fewer claims to universality are being made (see Freed, 1995, pp. 8-9). These 'differences' now appear by no means as straight-forward as they once seemed to be: Staley and Shockley-Zalabak (1989), in a review of twenty years of research in the field, characterise the research results as 'fragmented, mixed and controversial' (p. 242; see also Wilkins and Anderson, 1991). Their call for

'converging methodologies', however, does not address theoretical problems of identity and epistemology. The problem of 'wash-out' - 'the tendency for increased empirical study to stifle the original gender effects' (Bird, 1998, p. 3) - has proliferated in gender difference research in many disciplines. As contextual factors have been more and more carefully considered in follow-up work, early dramatic results are harder and harder to replicate. In a feminist review of 'difference' research in psychology, New Zealand feminist psychologist Lise Bird points out that, in this research tradition, 'much more weight is given to testing of small-scale hypotheses than to deeper conceptual analysis. This tends to leave the big questions raised by feminists out of the picture' (ibid). Researchers are trapped, 'sandbagged into a corner' (ibid., p. 6) by ever more elaborate attempts to demonstrate essentialised gender differences. The answer here is not ever-more 'sand-bagging' - refined variable definition, or more rigorous 'triangulation' (Staley and Shockley-Zalabak, 1989) - but a re-think of the research questions.

The 'big questions' that are excluded by quantitative 'difference' research include these: How can we think about gender as a signification process rather than an identity category? How (if at all) can we get 'outside' or re-work the inferior status of all that is framed as the 'feminine'? It is the inevitably invidious comparison constituted in the male/female binary that Butler wants us to subvert when she incites us to make 'gender trouble'. If the naturalization of gender depends on the production of what seems like a coherent identity, we can create different political effects by moving our focus from communication 'difference' within the existing binaries to what Butler calls 'the dissonant play of attributes' that do not fit the coherent gender effect, that 'call the effect into question' (Butler, 1990, p. 24). If, for an effect to seem 'natural', its process of construction must be concealed, we can by way of opposition evoke its constructedness.

## 8. Troubling the boundaries

'Gender troubles' may appear as points of strain in the 'lines of coherence' (Butler, 1990, p. 24) which maintain the effects of gender, evoking the 'frightening possibility of stepping over the great divide' (Walkerdine, 1989, p. 276). For instance: the literature on women's communication in the workplace paints pictures of a world in which the very existence of women as managers troubles boundaries. If she talks like a manager she is transgressing the boundaries of femininity: if she talks like a woman she no longer represents herself as a manager (see for instance Pearson et al., 1991). As Susan Chase puts it, for the woman 'professional', 'identity as a woman cannot be taken for granted..., but is subject

to standards for action and speech' (Chase, 1988, p. 276). The literature of 'assertiveness' in the workplace is just one index of the anxiety experienced by women as they attempt to perform as managers in this twilight zone. Here we see that 'lines of coherence' are threatened when the subject is positioned in two or more contradictory discursive positions. These positions may be related to specific sites ('work' and 'home') or historically distinct formulations of gender or occupational subjectivity. Subjects' accounts of this kind of boundary trouble can be of strain and corresponding attempts to control, as in the literature of assertiveness. Subjects may see themselves or be seen by researchers as deliberately resisting the regulation of gender by deliberate transgressions. The growing interest in the 'gender and communication' literature in the ways that women 'resist and subvert hegemonic notions of gender' (Hall and Bucholtz, 1995a, p. 13) raise (but most frequently do not address) problems of agency. What makes it possible for women to 'resist'? Do speakers somehow stand outside language and use it as a 'tool' of resistance? Does resistance consist of reversals within existing binaries of difference, or do they re-work those binaries? In Chapters 9 to 12 I consider how 'resistance' is intertwined with 'complicity', as EEO and Biculturalism practitioners struggle to create forms of equality within organisational discourses.

## **9. A feminist/post-structuralist research agenda for 'gender and communication'**

Part of my project in this thesis is to locate myself in terms of wider feminist communication agendas, and to develop my own agenda. Below I outline an agenda in 'gender and communication', drawing together the issues I have covered in this chapter and in Chapter 2. I set out my agenda in terms of three key issues: interdisciplinarity, increasing theoretical sophistication, and agency. In discussing this agenda, I refer to some aspects of my field studies which I see as carrying out projects within the agenda. However, the agenda is intended to address much broader possibilities than I cover in the second part of the thesis.

### *Interdisciplinarity*

Feminist scholarly practice poses a challenge to disciplinarity merely by existing... We must work on becoming a truly interdisciplinary endeavour, to move beyond borrowing theories and methods, in jigsaw fashion, and to engage in real interference: the crossing of borders, the overcoming of obstacles, and the visualization of a relationship between personal

experiences, social processes, our research and the public sphere (McLaughlin, 1995, pp. 144, 158).

Lisa McLaughlin argues forcefully for 'feminist communication scholarship... as a transdisciplinary force' which can 'influence the academy and the world through a transformative presence in the public sphere' (ibid., p. 145). The pursuit of 'The Women Question' has always taken feminist scholars across the disciplinary boundaries of knowledges which 'take on the appearance of coherence' as McLaughlin puts it (ibid., p. 144), echoing Butler's 'lines of coherence' (Butler, 1990, p. 24) that constitute gender as 'the appearance of substance' (ibid., p. 33). 'Communication studies' as a disciplinary formation has struggled within the forms of institutional knowledge to institute itself as a 'coherent' disciplinary formation, against the background of resistance from the old 'humanities'/'social sciences' disciplines. At the same time the force of post-modern theory has disrupted the old designations of 'humanities' and 'social science', and within 'communication studies' there has been resistance to its instatement as a coherent and discrete entity. I see this attempt as a waste of energy. The opportunity is, as McLaughlin suggests, to 'engage in real interference': to take the emergence of 'communication studies' at various sites in knowledge institutions as an opportunity to problematise the whole issue of disciplinary formations. Similarly the 'transdisciplinary force' of women's studies has informed 'gender and communication', and I dispute calls by scholars in the field for more 'integration' and 'coherence' for the same reasons (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Gal, 1992, pp. 153-154).

What interdisciplinarity as 'interference' does is to contest old disciplinary formations and so make opportunities to transform knowledge and open it up to more voices. It also provides a space in which these voices can listen to each other and inform each other's practice. This mutual informing does not require either integration or coherence. The field of 'gender and communication' has always been 'interdisciplinary' in the sense of drawing on a very wide range of disciplines - sociolinguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary theory, cultural studies, rhetoric, media studies. But the field has not been particularly interdisciplinary, if I take 'interdisciplinary' to mean that various disciplinary sources have been informed by each other. In reading for this thesis I found, in particular, a schism between the literatures of sociolinguistics - drawing primarily from sociology as well as linguistics - and the 'communication' literature - based more in social psychology. These literatures are both based on positivist epistemologies. Perspectives from cultural studies have historically informed

media studies, but have not contributed significantly to studies of interpersonal communication. (In the next chapter I consider these intersections further in the context of organisational communication.) More recently, however, there is some evidence that these fields of 'gender and communication' are becoming more genuinely informed by each other (Freed, 1995; Mills, 1995a; Rakow, 1992). While interdisciplinarity keeps on being important to 'gender and communication', and indeed to all feminist/women's studies, it is also important as communication scholars to ask more specifically what communication scholarship has to offer. Do we want to distinguish it from discourse analysis generally, from all the versions of the 'turn to language' that are percolating through the social sciences? For instance, in her analysis of 'women making meaning' of their identities in a situation of workplace organising, Gregg argues that 'understanding meaning-generating activity' is a key aspect of feminist communication theory (Gregg, 1992, p. 264). My own position is to place the study of communication within the framework of 'understanding meaning-generating activity', but to claim the process of communication as the central topic. In this thesis, for instance, I look at how EEO practitioners make meaning specifically of their own communication activities in their organisational context. This claim does not mean that it is simple to frame 'communication', especially in a post-structuralist context, and I attend to some of the problems involved in Chapter 6. Here I want to make a distinction between studies of, and by, 'women making meaning', as Rakow (1992) puts it, and studies of 'gender and communication'.

*'A more sophisticated theoretical approach'*

In calling for a 'more sophisticated theoretical approach' to what she calls 'feminist linguistics', Cameron (1995a, pp. 43-44) wants to combine a complex understanding of how language works with an analysis of power - technical and political sophistication. The 'more sophisticated theoretical approach' that interests me would place both of these considerations within a feminist/post-structuralist frame. This means a re-thinking of communication as well as of feminist political premises. One of my research questions asks: How can the topic of communication and difference be 're-thought' from a post-structuralist feminist perspective? In this chapter I have discussed my concerns with aspects of the social constructionist trends in the 'gender and communication' field. Weedon talks about the capacity of feminist/post-structuralism to explain 'the assumptions underlying the questions asked and answered by other forms of feminist theory, making their political assumptions explicit... [and] explain the implications for feminism of these other discourses' (Weedon, 1987, p. 22).

Weedon advocates a form of genealogical analysis, in Foucault's terms, whereby discourses are historicised. Working in an interdisciplinary field like 'gender and communication' allows for what Mills calls the 'defamiliarising' effect (Mills, 1995a) of placing a range of knowledge regimes side by side and considering the political effects of each. Taken-for-granted can be disrupted. The 'theoretical sophistication' required here consists of an awareness of differences between the theoretical implications of various discourses of difference and communication. This avoids the temptation to throw them all together as 'post-modernism' or 'social constructionism'.

I am interested in how a more developed post-structuralist perspective can add value to the trends already evident in the 'gender and communication' field. For instance, in her interdisciplinary review, Sarah Mills identifies a trend towards 'suspicion of the very terms we use when we describe both language and gender identity' (Mills, 1995b, p. 259), and a move away from generalisation towards highly context-specific studies (ibid., p. 257; see also Freed, 1995). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet propose the slogan 'Think practically and look locally' to draw attention to gender as 'meaning' different things and showing up differently across a range of linguistic contexts (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 91). This contextual specificity is linked with greater attention to a range of types of 'difference' in communication.

### *Agency*

Agency is a central item on my research agenda, because it is the theoretical opening for 'possibilities of transformation'. As US literary scholar Carolyn Heilbrun puts it: 'Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter' (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 18). Creating access to discursive agency is necessary to create discursive transformation. In terms of communication studies specifically, the concept of agency draws attention to the agent of communication: the subject who has access to discursive power through specific communicative practices. The EEO practitioners who are the subjects of my field studies are positioned as agents of change through their interventions in organisational discourses of difference - gender and ethnicity. I draw on their accounts of their communicative strategies, as they define their specific discursive contexts and their political implications. To do this I need to theorise 'agency' from their perspective, as well as drawing out the post-structuralist account of 'agency' that I have outlined.

I have discussed above how agency occurs as a theoretical problem in the 'gender and communication' literature when writers consider ways in which resistance to gendered discourse is possible. For instance, Cameron suggests that individual subjects 'negotiate' masculinity and femininity by making 'varying accommodations to those styles in the process of producing themselves as gendered subjects' (Cameron, 1995a, p. 43). Hall and Bucholtz talk about 'women as agents who may defy or embrace gendered expectations of language behavior for their own purposes' (Hall and Bucholtz, 1995, p. 13). Both these formulations of women as communication agents seem to assume a humanist choice-making subject whose 'purposes' are separable from external gendered communication 'styles' or 'expectations'. In Chapter 2 I have set out a feminist/post-structuralist formulation of the subject who is neither fully self-determined nor fully determined by language, and I draw on this in my analysis.

I have drawn extensively on the work of Judith Butler, who emphasises agency as discursive. Discourse analysis in these terms asks the question: 'What are the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible?' In this thesis I consider how EEO practitioners derive agency from specific discursive positionings. I also draw on a Foucauldian concept of 'authority' to link agency and communication processes. This concept highlights the processes of authorisation which legitimate certain types of statements, and thus generate agency as authority.

## **10. Communication and difference**

In this chapter I have drawn on feminist/post-structuralist accounts of identity and discourse to re-think 'gender and communication' in terms of 'representation' and 'performance'. From this position I have re-read and critiqued aspects of the literature, and I have proposed a feminist/post-structuralist research agenda based around interdisciplinarity, greater theoretical sophistication, and the issues of agency. My next chapter, 'Communication and difference', is similar to this one in that I draw on a re-theorised version of identity - in this case, ethnicity, as discussed in Chapter 3 - and I weave it into the relevant communication literature - in this case, the literature of 'cross-cultural communication'. I have titled it 'Communication and difference' because my agenda is a politics of difference, in which I look at how varying accounts of difference might be seen in relation to each other.

### THEORISING COMMUNICATION AND DIFFERENCE

Foucault is not arguing for a racial discourse of generic form... No one 'theory of race' functioned as the particular thesis for one group against another. Foucault talks of a racial 'coding' ('codage') that provided an 'instrumental space, at once discursive and political' in which each group could infuse a shared vocabulary with different political meanings' (Foucault, 1990, cited Stoler, 1995, p. 72).

#### 1. Introduction

In my previous discussion of 'ethnicity', 'race, and 'culture' (Chapter 3), I emphasised 'the strategic mobility of racial discourses' (Stoler, 1996, p. 13); the ways that 'differences' coded as 'ethnic', 'cultural' or 'racial' recur and recur, regardless of how often the biological bases for racial comparison are rationally or politically 'discredited'. Similarly, I have argued that designations of sex/gender recur to the biological. Post-structuralist writers move the question from what 'ethnicity' really is to what the designation 'ethnicity' really does. In this chapter I re-read the literature of 'cross-cultural communication' within the feminist/post-structuralist framework I have created in the preceding chapters. This framework both problematises identity and proposes a new version of the relationship between 'identity' and 'communication' in terms of foucauldian discourse theory.

In her book *Race and the education of desire*, US anthropologist Anne Stoler draws on Foucault's lectures on 'race'<sup>1</sup> to theorise 'race' as a 'coding' of existing vocabularies by particular groups, rather than a 'generic' phenomenon (Stoler, 1995). The 'strategic mobility' of this coding refers to Foucault's argument that this 'racial coding' was a tool of resistance as well as a tool of dominance. This argument exemplifies what Stoler characterises as a 'sustained concern' in Foucault's work with the 'tension between rupture and recuperation' in discourse (Stoler, 1995, pp. 38-39). That is, Foucault was concerned with how new forms of discourse emerge, and also with how they are recuperated. In this chapter I outline a version of 'cross-cultural communication' which emphasises the

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<sup>1</sup> These lectures are unpublished in English. Stoler uses the Italian text *Difendere la societa* (Foucault, 1990a).

'strategic mobility' of 'race'/'ethnicity/culture' as it is constituted in various discursive contexts.

I title this chapter 'theorising communication and difference' because I want to draw both ethnicity and gender together within a broader framework for addressing issues of 'difference' in communication studies. Like 'gender', 'ethnicity' works as a designation which assigns identities within communication research. In the field of 'cross-cultural communication', 'race' and 'ethnicity' are explicitly written as culture, rather than nature. Like the 'sex'/'gender' distinction, the 'race'/'culture' (or 'ethnicity') distinction can seem to move 'difference' from the realm of nature to culture, but ends up fixing the difference in a new way, rather than dispersing it. 'Culture' may fix identity in the social rather than in the biological, but identity is still fixed, rather than problematised. Re-reading the literature of 'cross-cultural communication' from a feminist/post-structuralist/position is not a question of simply mapping 'gender and communication' on to 'culture and communication'. The two literatures have developed quite differently in many ways, but the two areas are 'enhanced by recognizing each other's primary concerns' (Gonzalez and Peterson, 1993, pp. 273-274). Acknowledging these differences, and their political implications, I draw again on the concepts of representation and performativity to relate the 'cross-cultural communication' literature to my theoretical framework.

Mainstream 'cross-cultural communication' research characteristically uses what Victoria Chen calls 'a paper-and-pencil measurement approach' (Chen, 1992, p. 226). She points out that a reductionist approach to 'culture' as a variable in communication misses out on the 'complexity and richness of any individual's life story' (ibid.), the discursive processes whereby gendered and racialised identities are created in specific but constantly shifting contexts. As I have already argued in terms of the 'gender and communication' literature, treating identity as a 'variable' in communication research tends to reduce and fix it. Marsha Houston points out that even where 'cross-cultural communication' researchers consider gender, and 'gender and communication' researchers include ethnicity, their separation as 'variables' obscure the ways in which ethnic difference is gendered, and gender difference is ethnically accented - the 'complexity and richness' of identity (Houston, 1995). The power of a communication perspective on questions of difference is in its capacity to analyse how differences are constructed in communication practices. I argue that ethnicity, like gender, should be seen as 'the appearance of substance', created through discursive practices. I propose a definition of 'cross-cultural

communication' as 'the communicative practices which constitute ethnic or cultural difference'. This definition addresses communicative practices as both performative and representational, and pushes the disciplinary boundaries of the field to allow new questions to be asked and answered within it.

If, as Brown argues, the post-modern can be seen as 'a global intifada of the margins against the center' (Brown, 1991, p. 63), we can see the 'gender and communication' literature as generated from the margins, while the 'cross-cultural communication' literature is typically located at the colonial centre. While both literatures have shared a legacy of empiricist theorising, which tends to fix identity as a variable, the feminist impulse in the 'gender and communication' field serves both to critique mainstream communication theory and to create an actively change-oriented body of knowledge. I begin my re-reading of the 'cross-cultural communication' literature by raising the question that is foregrounded in the literature of gender and communication, but strangely absent from the literature of cross-cultural communication: the question of power.

## 2. The question of power in 'cross-cultural communication'

For a reader familiar with the feminist literature of 'gender and communication', the omission of the question of power is a loud silence in the literature of 'cross-cultural communication'<sup>2</sup>. A quick comparison between mainstream texts in each field makes this absence clear. 'Gender and communication' texts address communication within the problematic of male/female power differences (e.g., Ivy and Backlund, 1994; Pearson et al., 1991; Stewart et al., 1990; Wood, 1996). By contrast, in the 'cross-cultural communication' literature, a plea for understanding takes the place of a demand for a change in power relations.

The literature of 'cross-cultural communication' sets out to address 'the difficulties imposed upon us by cultural diversity and its impact on the communication process', according to Porter and Samovar, editors of a widely-used US 'cross-cultural communication' text, (Porter and Samovar, 1997, p. 8). In their introduction, they propose that, through understanding, we can 'face and attempt to conquer' these problems (ibid.) Similarly, Gudykunst and Kim's US text, *Communicating with strangers* (Gudykunst and Kim, 1992), emphasises 'intercultural effectiveness', defined as: 'minimising misunderstandings when people from different cultures communicate' (Gudykunst and Kim, 1992, p. 14).

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'cross-cultural communication' to include what is sometimes called 'intercultural' or 'interethnic' communication.

Joan Metge and Patricia Kinloch's *Talking past each other* (Metge and Kinloch, 1978), still the key New Zealand text on 'cross-cultural communication', focuses on the 'misunderstandings and tensions' that arise from unrecognised cultural differences (ibid., p. 8). 'Misunderstanding', then, rather than power relations, is the problematic in the 'cross-cultural communication' literature. By comparison with the 'gender and communication' literature, the ways in which cross-cultural communication practices maintain or contest power relations are rarely addressed.

This is not to say that social or political issues are completely absent in 'cross-cultural communication'. Their presence, absence and implications are related to their discursive framework. For instance, many of the 'mis-communication' models arise from liberal political agendas in which, as in Metge and Kinloch's model, cross-cultural communication is assumed to be based on mutual goodwill. In other cases, a commitment to 'respect and accept one another', as Porter and Samovar put it (1997, p. 8), is argued as separable from, but a pre-condition of, effective 'cross-cultural communication', and a counter to 'racism and ethnocentrism' (ibid.). While Samovar and Porter's most recent reader pays increasing attention to political factors in communication (see Collier, 1997; Martin, 1997; Ribeau et al., 1997), power issues remain on the margins in terms of theorising 'cross-cultural communication'. Samovar and Porter's proposition is that while 'all sorts of difficulties' are created by the cultural variations in people's 'communication repertoires', 'through the study and understanding of intercultural communication... these difficulties can at least be reduced and at best nearly eliminated' (p. 21). 'Problems' are referred back to a psychological model, where ethnocentrism is defined as a cognitive problem, and 'the message' can be separated from culture and politics so that it can be seen as translatable. From this perspective power relationships are external to communication, are 'barriers' or 'noise', or contextual factors.

There is some recent critical work which raises the question of power in 'cross-cultural communication'. Inevitably, epistemological issues are raised with it. For instance, John Baldwin has suggested that the development of 'cross-cultural communication' within a social psychology discourse has constrained the kinds of questions that it can generate (Baldwin, 1995). He draws attention to globalisation as a central driver in the development of 'cross-cultural communication', and argues that social psychology frameworks do not provide the tools for a critical perspective on the issues of 'cultural hegemony' that globalisation invokes (ibid., p. 438). He argues that managerial accounts of

'cross-cultural communication', developed for 'international' business people, present it as a tool of business interests, and ignore what he frames as issues of 'critical ethics'. Baldwin's proposed solution - the importation of perspectives from cultural studies and mass communication research to give a critical perspective - highlights the marginality of the critical resources available in the fields of interpersonal and organisational communication. An alternative is to re-frame the 'cross-cultural communication' field to include work carried out in cultural studies. For instance, there is a significant amount of research on what might be called the 'language of racism' (e.g., Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Van Dijk, 1987), with an emphasis on negative representations of 'race' in spoken interaction. This language-of-racism work tends not to be included in reviews and collections of 'cross-cultural communication' literature.

Eric Peterson generates another perspective on the regimes of knowledge within which 'cross-cultural communication' is produced in his critique of how difference appears in the field of interpersonal communication (Peterson, 1995). He argues that the implicit assumptions about identity and difference in the field of interpersonal communication have produced what he calls a 'new racism'. Identifying the slip from difference-as-biology to difference-as-culture, he sees the discourse of 'diversity' in the interpersonal communication literature as fixing cultural identity in a new form of racism, where difference is marginalised and contained by the same discursive processes that refer to it. In the US context, 'diversity' in communication is represented by a homogenised 'American' centre, while 'others' are positioned in the margins by culturally fixed 'difference'. Like 'gender difference', cultural 'differences' in interpersonal communication texts tend to be represented by 'special textbook sections, supplementary readings, and anecdotal illustrations' (ibid., p. 43). This 'difference' is contained by the displacement of any reference to historical and political issues by the concept of 'prejudice' - again, a concept drawn from social psychology. What is missing is what Peterson calls 'the lived reality of racism' (ibid., p. 42), of 'doing race'. He advocates a re-thinking of 'interpersonal communication', which moves away from the 'methodological individualism' at its theoretical core (ibid., p. 42), and engages directly with the communicative relationships between the margins and the centre.

Baldwin and Peterson raise the question of power in 'cross-cultural communication', in both a global and a local context. Communication theorist Syed Rahim takes the argument further (Rahim, 1989), arguing for a post-structuralist account of what Peterson calls 'doing race'. Rahim has emphasised

that the 'production and reproduction of cultural identity are continuing processes of struggle, and [that] modes of communication play a distinctive role in those processes' (Rahim, 1989, p. 431). For him the 'main question' for 'cross-cultural communication' research is the one of power: 'how [is] cultural hegemony of a dominant class, or race, or ethnic group... established and maintained, and what role [does] communication play in the process?' (ibid., p. 432). To re-frame the field of 'cross-cultural communication' from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective is to foreground issues of power and to problematise questions of difference. In this context, I define the process of 'cross-cultural communication' in terms of the communicative practices which constitute ethnic or cultural difference. This version covers both 'representing ethnicity' and 'doing ethnicity', and allows for re-framing the usual data of 'cross-cultural communication'. It also relates the interpersonal level of 'cross-cultural communication' to the production and representation of difference in a wider range of social practices which are 'played out in power struggles', as Nkomo puts it (1992, p. 507). 'Cross-cultural communication' then addresses question such as: Who defines 'ethnic' or 'cultural' groups? Who represents their identities and needs? Within which discourses are these categories and needs constructed and in whose interests?

### **3. Cross-cultural communication as representation**

In this section I repeat the schema of difference as representation and as performativity that I set up in discussing the 'gender and communication' literature. Again I pursue a denaturalizing critique in which I ask: 'What are the processes by which identities take on 'the appearance of substance?'" I have argued above that difference cannot be collapsed into equivalence, that gender cannot be simply mapped on to ethnic difference. In assimilating 'cross-cultural communication' within the categories of representation and performativity, I also draw attention to the ways that the emphases and gaps in 'cross-cultural communication' differ from those in 'gender and communication'.

I have cited Peterson's and Baldwin's arguments that a critical perspective on 'cross-cultural communication' is largely missing from the field, and that scholars need to go outside the assumptions of the field for theoretical resources that will enable critique (see also Young, 1996). In a specifically feminist context, the 'gender and communication' field has been politicised, but largely within a conventional empiricist context. Keya Ganguly forcefully repeats the argument that debates over representation, so intense in other areas of cultural analysis,

have been largely absent in communication studies 'because of the field's reification of "objective" knowledge' (Ganguly, 1992, p. 75). She argues that feminist communication scholars must draw on other disciplines 'to shift debates on representation from the terrain of truth or transparency to a consideration of "regimes" of representation' (ibid., p. 71), in order to draw attention to the colonising tendencies of feminism. 'Accounting for others' is not just a question of dropping in the ethnicity variable, but of 'a specification of the machineries and discourses that constitute both the possibility of representing an "other" and the criteria by which such representations function in the world of knowledge' (p. 71). Some of the analytic resources for drawing up such 'specifications' are available in the post-colonial forms of anthropology, where questions of representing the 'others' are at the centre of the agenda. While the field of 'cross-cultural communication' has remained generally unreflexive and uncritical, the field of post-colonial studies has been 'saturated' by the analytic impulse of Foucault (Stoler, 1996, p. 1). Ann Stoler describes this impulse across a range of anthropological, historical, and literary locations as characterised by tracking 'the ties that bound the production of anthropological knowledge to colonial authority', in order 'to trace the disciplinary regimes that have produced subjugated bodies and the sorts of identities created by them' (ibid.). In this thesis this impulse shows up in post-colonial perspectives on identity; in post-structuralist anthropologies which have influenced my epistemology and methodology; and in a feminist politics of difference which is wary of representing difference in terms of the 'self-confirming other' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a, p. xiv).

The representation of difference as simply reinstating the 'self-confirming other' is the same move which represents - and so, fixes - the feminine as the 'other' within the binaries of masculinism. The foucauldian frame in colonial studies resists the attempt to fix and tame the 'other' within the binaries of colonialism, to produce the 'other' as the residue of a central but unproblematised colonial (Euro-American) self. I have discussed in Chapter 3 the liberal political contexts in which ethnic difference has been seen as a distortion of an essential human sameness. In traditional 'cross-cultural communication' theory, the essential sameness of identity is represented in the idea of the 'message' which is coded and decoded within specific cultural contexts, but is ultimately translatable. Against this view, Gunew argues that a politics of difference in a post-colonial context must confront difference as something which cannot be completely reduced to the same, completely assimilated, completely translated without violence: 'if one takes seriously the development of "cultural difference" as a

category in all cultural analysis then one must come to terms with the incommensurable or the untranslatable' (Gunew, 1994, p. 93). She cites the Rushdie affair as an example of 'the central impasse of the sacred word' - in that case, the Koran. If there is a 'core of intransigence at the heart of every language, every culture' (ibid.), she argues that this is especially evident when confronted with another culture's concept of the sacred. In this thesis I take Maori discourses of the Treaty of Waitangi as the incommensurable 'heart' of discourses of ethnic difference in my research context, and I consider the political implications of this 'intransigence' within a reframed notion of 'cross-cultural communication'. From a foundationalist point of view (whether functionalist or hermeneutic), finding the 'real', single meaning of a text or message is a key issue, and this single or deep truth is the basis of various foundationalist political claims. By comparison, a post-structuralist view of textuality contests the possibility of finding the single 'true' meaning of a text, and instead compares various readings from different discursive positions. A political stance would be based on considering the power issues at stake in each reading of, for instance, the Treaty. This approach to reading texts cross-culturally draws on the concept of 'the strategic mobility of racial discourses' (Stoler, 1996, p. 13). The various possible designations of differences may at times share vocabularies, but cannot be reduced to essential meanings or to single grand narratives of power, such as class or nationalism. Stoler emphasises too Foucault's interest in the ways that discourses can be repeatedly captured and recaptured by various interests to produce different political results. In the struggle over meaning, the twists and turns of discursive practices elude the desires of political strategists to fix readings once and for all. 'The spectre of recuperation' as Gunew puts it, ever haunts 'the relations between centres and margins' (Gunew, 1994b, p. 87). In my readings of the discourses of 'managing diversity' and of EEO I frame my subjects' accounts of difference in terms of a range of interpretations and a range of possible political results.

Colonial authority is generated in the representation of the (colonised) margins by the (colonial) centre in a process which constantly repeats the move of marginalisation. As Gunew points out, it is the marginal on whom the burden falls of having to clearly express themselves or 'risk suffering the burden of being translated, spoken for, represented in its double sense'. Gunew teases out 'representation' here to include 'on the one hand representation as "depiction" and on the other as "delegation" (speaking for)' (Gunew, 1994b, p. 87). Representation as 'depiction' includes the ways in which regimes of power/knowledge that concern themselves with ethnic difference - anthropology,

history, literary analysis - repeat the processes of marginalisation.

Representation as 'delegation' refers to the explicitly political process by which, for instance, organisational discourses represent the identities and needs of members in such a way as to exclude the voices of the marginalised, or to allow them to speak only through certain processes of translation which assimilate and therefore erase the difference of their perspectives. This is a particularly crucial issue in discussing EEO, because EEO practitioners are designated brokers of difference within organisations, and located within organisational discourses which deal with difference only in translation. I deal with this issue in discussing the discourses of EEO and of 'managing diversity', and the ways in which they come into conflict with each other and with Maori and Pacific Island discourses.

#### **4. Re-framing 'cross-cultural communication'**

In Chapter 4, I used the concepts of 'representation' and 'performativity' to re-think the 'gender and communication' field from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective. In this section I will carry out a similar (less detailed) review of issues in the 'cross-cultural communication' literature within the same framework. Again I look at representation in terms of the reciprocal relationship between communicative practices and identity: 'Communication creates ethnic groups which create communication', to paraphrase Lana Rakow (Rakow, 1986).

##### *Communication creates ethnicity: Representing ethnicity*

This category includes the tremendously broad range of communicative practices by which ethnicity is explicitly or implicitly represented. The critical and post-structuralist academic literature in the field includes post-colonial social sciences and humanities: more specifically, the communication literature is focused on media and cultural studies (e.g., Dyson, 1993; Donald and Rattansi, 1992; Van Dijk, 1987). More recently, organisational texts such as policy documents have been the object of discourse analysis techniques drawn from the humanities and social sciences (Bennett, 1992; O'Regan, 1992; Shapiro, 1992), opening up the possibility of analysing the representation of ethnic difference in policy texts, and their political effects. I draw on policy documents to complement interview texts in my field studies, and there is a strong intertextual reference between organisational documents and the discussion of employment policy issues in my research interviews.

Works of communication, rather than interpersonal communication processes, tend to be the focus of the literature on the representation of difference. *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*, by psychologists Margaret Wetherell and Johnathan Potter (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) has created a breakthrough in this context. Its systematic analysis of spoken discourses of racism draws on post-structuralist analytic techniques and theories. As they put it: 'our general aim is to pursue post-structuralist questions... in a domain of materials which have been most thoroughly explored by ethnomethodologists and conversational analysts' (ibid., p. 89). In addition, Wetherell and Potter work from the location of a 'deconstructive' social psychology, which seeks to relate questions of discourse to questions of 'individual' subjectivity (see also Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This move creates 'real interference' in disciplinary regimes as McLaughlin puts it (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 158), and pushes the boundaries of what can be designated 'cross-cultural communication', putting the political at the centre and problematising ethnic identity as a product of discourse.

In these senses their project is strongly related to mine, especially as their topic is the discourses of racism in New Zealand. (Margaret Wetherell is originally a New Zealander). The key difference in their approach is that, although they see themselves as drawing on foucauldian discourse theory, and especially on Foucault's formulation of subjectivity, they refer ultimately back to a neo-marxist approach which retains the notion of 'ideology'. Rejecting what they see as Foucault's 'nihilist' approach (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 81), they contend that his concept of discursive formations transfers agency to discourse, and makes it impossible to talk about 'who did what to whom and why' (ibid., p. 80). Their central argument is that discourses of race act primarily to legitimise exploitation. More specifically, they argue that liberal discourses of race have the political effect of legitimising racism. Wetherell and Potter's work exemplifies certain critical appropriations of Foucault's discourse theory. Although it addresses tremendously complex material, its framework is a single grand narrative of exploitation. It does not allow for multiple readings from multiple sites, for the 'strategic mobility' of discourse. For instance, it does not allow for the incommensurability of culture in reading ethnicity, or for the inevitably Eurocentric force of marxism. The authors do not take up a reflexive stance, but rather read only the 'racism' in others' accounts of race. They assume for their analysis a neutral descriptive space in which it is possible to distinguish between 'discourse' and its presumably non-discursive context, i.e., what they call 'the material interests already constituted' (ibid., p. 86). I do not agree that the

political use of discourse theory depends on a single reading of a 'direction of domination' (ibid., p. 81); like Butler, I see any reading which forecloses on others as closing down possibilities of transformation. I will return to the issues raised here in my discussion of EEO 'target groups' in Chapter 11, and in my discussion of 'managing diversity' in Chapter 12.

As for 'gender and communication', the representation of ethnicity also includes the ways that communication differences are represented: what readers make them mean. In the literature of 'cross-cultural communication', cultural and ethnic differences are taken as givens, as variables for study, and the representation of these differences is generally not problematised: There is no equivalent to the difference/dominance framework in the 'gender and communication' field. In the New Zealand context, the question of Biculturalism provides many opportunities to consider the ways that Maori-Pakeha communication differences are represented, how they are linked with essentialised identities, and what the effect is in organisational life. For instance, Peterson's use of the terms 'marginalisation' and 'containment', characteristic of how communication differences are represented in the communication classroom (Peterson, 1995), can be extended to an organisational context. Maori-coded communication practices, such as the whanau interview, may be introduced but continue to be marginalised (Jones, 1997). There has been ongoing struggle in Public Service organisations over whether Maori language skills should be recognised in the form of extra allowances (see Chapter 12). Issues of Maori-Pakeha political and cultural difference in organisations are often contained by representing them as 'cross-cultural communication' issues, which can be managed through technical understanding of communication differences (e.g., Baird and James, 1990). Cultural difference is also marginalised by 'ignored', or 'not understood' in organisations. As Marilyn Frye points out, it is possible for those at the (white) centre to be 'ignorant' of - to ignore - the culture of the others, while those at the margins must understand the dominant culture in order to survive (Frye, 1983). Similarly, certain types of cultural difference become prized objects of knowledge, while others are devalued. Marianne Tremaine has pointed out that Maori communication practices are often ignored or discounted by New Zealand managers, while knowledge of Japanese communication practices is valued and pursued (Tremaine, 1990).

In carrying out research in cross-cultural communication, the question of power and representation also works reflexively. However we are positioned as researchers, we are inevitably representing an 'other'. Some of the key issues here

I have already covered: the legacy of colonialism; the contributions of post-colonial theory; its interest in the possibility of representing an 'other' and the criteria by which such representations function in the world of knowledge' (Ganguly, 1992, p. 71). In my chapter on ethnicity (Chapter 3) I have also cited the argument that research is in danger of repeating and fixing 'race' when it uses ethnic and cultural difference categories in a unproblematised way (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). Skutnabb-Kangas proposes that we can turn this process around by making 'the power relationships between the parties in the definition process' itself the object of study (ibid., p. 90). Stella Nkomo has made a similar point in the specific context of organisational communication. She has pointed out that research on 'race' in organisations tends to essentialise it as 'a demographic variable that can be objectively observed and measured' (Nkomo, 1992, p. 506). This kind of measurement has been considered to be an essential basis for EEO programmes, which seek to establish their political claims on the basis of the disadvantage of 'ethnic minority' groups. Similarly, 'managing diversity' programmes rely on the rhetoric of changing workforce demographics. By drawing attention to these processes of categorisation as one of the key representations of 'race' in organisations, Nkomo argues the importance of categorisation as the basis for all representations of difference in organisational life. It can be argued that, while such categorisation may have rhetorical effect in the context of social change agendas, it obscures the processes whereby ethnic difference is in fact produced in organisational processes. In arguing for a 'rewriting of "race in organisations"', Nkomo advocates 'reconceptualising race... as an integral dynamic of organisations' (ibid., p. 506), putting an emphasis on 'race relations played out in power struggles' which makes it necessary to 're-think the very nature of organisations' (ibid., p. 507). In this thesis I take the representation of categories of difference as an aspect of cross-cultural communication, considering how this categorisation is carried out and what its political effects might be. I draw on Foucault's account of the 'calculative practices' through which social groups are categorised and made governable (Rose, 1996, p. 103) to analyse the ways that ethnic difference is 'written' in organisational discourses. These calculations are central to human resource management practices, as well as to organisational research. In my field studies chapters, and especially in Chapter 12, I analyse the 'new hermeneutics of the workplace' (Yount, 1993, p. 197) in terms of organisational representations of difference.

## 5. Performativity: 'doing ethnicity'

In talking about gender and performativity, I have drawn on Butler's idea that the 'appearance of substance', of both identity and difference, is produced through the repetition of discursive processes. I have used 'performativity' (which can also be seen as a kind of self-representation) to emphasise the constructedness, the un-naturalness of identity which is 'performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender [or ethnic] coherence' (Butler, 1990, p. 24). I have argued that the gender difference literature can be re-framed as 'doing gender', and so argue similarly, that 'being ethnic' can be re-cast as 'doing race' (in Peterson's term) or 'doing ethnicity'. How ethnicity is 'done' in is the usual material of 'cross-cultural communication' research, often taking the form of manuals which describe how to 'do it' in a given cultural context. Robert Young's critique (Young, 1996) of Kim's work on 'interethnic communication' (Kim, 1986, 1988), highlights the crucial absences in such empirical work, which aims to be 'objective' and 'free from ideology' (Kim, cited in Young, p. 180). The key absence is a sense of the 'active ontogenetic character of communication' - the sense in which communication can create cultural change through interaction in complex political and institutional contexts (Young, 1996, p. 179). Rather than suggesting that this traditional 'cross-cultural communication' work is of no value, I suggest that it can usefully be re-read in terms of the role communication plays in the process of establishing 'ethnic' identities and re-producing or interrupting the power relations between one ethnic group and another. The way we read texts of 'doing ethnicity' will always depend on discursive context: whether our main interest is, for instance, to find out 'what needs to be addressed' to facilitate the processes of globalisation and local cross-cultural management, as Lee and Thomas describe the task in a review of New Zealand cross-cultural literature (Lee and Thomas, 1995); or to 'expand the range of possible responses to various racisms', as Peterson advocates (Peterson, 1995, p. 44).

To re-cast 'being ethnic' explicitly as 'doing ethnicity' draws attention to the range of domains in which ethnic identity is discursively constituted, including the power relations of racism, in which everyone is implicated in different ways: 'Racism reproduces itself not only mechanically at an economic and social level but also through the power relations between white and black people and the subjectivities which these produce and reproduce in both', as Henriques puts it (Henriques, 1984, p. 89). This perspective questions the boundaries around the

field of 'cross-cultural communication' and focuses on the production of identity and difference.

## **6. Making 'race trouble'?**

If denaturalizing gender makes 'gender trouble', as Butler puts it (Butler, 1990), then denaturalizing race makes 'race trouble'. (In this case, 'ethnic trouble' just does not sound as subversive). Post-colonial critics seek to de-stabilize a stable ethnic or cultural subject (for instance, Gilroy, 1992; Matahaere, 1995; Nkomo, 1992), not necessarily with the intent of de-stabilising political claims based on identity, but of interrupting the representations of the 'other' that are permitted in (neo)colonial discourse. While post-structuralist tendencies within Western feminism may work well as an auto-critique, it is also clear that feminist/post-structuralist epistemologies and politics are quite differently located from, say, Maori identity discourses, and not simply translatable. While feminist/post-structuralism may be deployed to certain ends by Maori, for instance, it also encounters cultural incommensurability (see Matahaere, 1995; Pihama, 1994). Gunew points out that a respect for the unknowableness of another's culture 'must go hand in hand with an understanding and foregrounding of one's own culture and one's positioning within it' (Gunew, 1994b, p. 94). From a Pakeha feminist perspective, 'race trouble' can work as an autocritique to problematise 'whiteness' and its assumptions. In this thesis I focus primarily on the equality discourses represented by Pakeha EEO practitioners, and consider ways in which they are politically limited by their cultural location. These issues are acutely focused for EEO practitioners by practical strategic questions: When/is speaking for others necessary to achieve certain political objectives? What discursive processes authorise one to speak for others?

## **7. Creating new agendas**

In my previous chapter I outlined a feminist/post-structuralist agenda for studying 'gender and communication'. This agenda highlights the issue of interdisciplinarity, the need for more sophisticated theorising within a social constructionist frame, and a focus on agency and transformation. Here I will briefly review its relevance to 'communication and difference'. In terms of disciplinary formations, there are two key issues. First, that creating relationships between 'gender and communication' and 'cross-cultural communication' highlights the lack of critical theory in 'cross-cultural communication', as well as addressing the need for 'gender and communication'

to become more context-specific, more attentive to the complex nuances of the intersections of many kinds of difference in a given communication situation. Secondly, comparing the literatures highlights the ways in which the 'gender and communication' literature is already - and has from its inception - been interdisciplinary under the heading of feminist studies. The convergences of literary studies, sociolinguistics and communication studies that we find in 'gender and communication' have little or no parallel in the 'cross-cultural communication' literature, which has no disciplinary umbrella under which to meet with post-colonial critique generated in the disciplines of literary and cultural studies. Partly because of this disciplinary history, the 'cross-cultural communication' literature is much less explicitly theorised than the literatures of 'gender and communication', although the theoretical resources are clearly available, whether in the form of developments in post-structuralist theories of ethnicity, or other versions of communication theory. The strong 'how-to' emphasis in 'cross-cultural communication', combined with attempts at 'objectivity' which look outdated in view of developments in anthropology, seem to have directed interest away from problematising the field. The issue of agency is also much less evident in 'cross-cultural communication', where, except in the small amount of critical literature, social transformation is not on the agenda except via 'understanding'. Resistance to cross-cultural understanding tends to be framed in terms of psychological constructs such as 'prejudice' and 'stereotyping'. In post-structuralist and critical theories of ethnicity and representation, the discursive possibilities of 'agency' are created and lost through processes of representation, or 'racial coding' in Foucault's terms, in which difference is asserted, marginalised, contained, erased and recuperated. Possibilities of transformation lie in creating 'race trouble' by questioning the stability and authority of ethnic identity, and refusing marginalisation by problematising 'whiteness' as an effect of power relationships.

In the next chapter I present the subject of 'organisational communication' in relation to the same agenda. This means weaving 'organisational communication' in with the themes of difference and discourse. The main threads are feminist organisational studies and post-structuralist organisational studies. I do not attempt to re-theorise these literatures extensively, but rather to locate my research agenda in the context of issues in organisational communication. This theoretical location also identifies the resources I need to go on and analyse the communicative practices of practitioners within specific organisational contexts.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE SUBJECT OF 'ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION'

To analyse a discursive formation... is to weigh the 'value' of statements, a value... which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but, more generally, in the administration of scarce resources (Foucault, 1972, p. 120).

#### 1. Introduction

Foucault characterises discourse analysis as a practice which enables transformation. My particular interest is in how this transformation can occur in discourses of difference within organisations. In particular, I look at the communication processes whereby EEO practitioners intervene to create such transformations. The analysis of these processes involves considering the relative value of statements in their discursive contexts; looking at how their effects change as they move from one discursive context to another; examining how they determine the ways that resources are distributed; and asking where and how intervention is possible to create transformation.

My chapter title, 'The subject of organisational communication' has three implications. First, I consider 'organisational communication' as a 'subject', or discursively constituted disciplinary formation. My objective here is to contribute to ongoing debates about what this field might look like from post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonial perspectives, and to draw on these debates to theorise my field studies.

Secondly, the 'subject of organisational communication' refers to the speaking 'subject', the way that the author or 'speaker' in a communicative act is theorised. In a functionalist model this subject is distinguished from discourse, is seen as the rational agent of communication, who draws on communication instrumentally to achieve her ends. In this thesis I am concerned with how EEO practitioners see themselves as subjects in specific enunciative positions, who intervene in organisational discourses in order to transform them. This is a performative account of what it is to 'be' an organisational change agent.

Thirdly, I look at the subject/object of communication, the subject who is represented in communicative acts. This perspective focuses on how identity/difference is represented. Organisational discourses of difference position organisational members in certain ways. These positionings assign values to gender and ethnic status, to certain ways of working, and to the ways in which members are designated in relation to organisational outcomes. The work of EEO practitioners requires them to intervene in organisational discourses to change these representations.

Feminist 'organisational communication' is still a small and rather marginalised field, although I argue in this chapter that it exists in the intersections of the hot points of several emergingly important disciplinary fields. Dennis Mumby, a central and influential US scholar of critical organisational communication, claimed in a 1997 review of communication studies that 'organizational communication has almost completely ignored feminism' (Mumby, 1997, p. 24). In a feminist review of the 'organisational communication' literature, US communication scholar Marlene Fine argues that little feminist research in 'organisational communication' has been published because both 'organisational communication' and feminist perspectives are still (she writes in 1993) marginal in management and organisational literature (Fine, 1993). Writing in the same year, Connie Bullis talks about the 'silence with which organisational communication has greeted feminism' (Bullis, 1993, p. 144). Fine's point still stands: research focusing on 'gender' or other forms of difference remains marginal in the 'organisational communication' literature. My discussion of the 'subject of organisational communication' takes place at the nexus of a number of theoretical perspectives and disciplinary fields. In this chapter I draw on some of the key theoretical resources that have informed my concept of the 'subject of communication', and I engage with them in some depth in my field studies chapters.

I begin this chapter with the question of 'discourse': of Foucault's conceptions of it, and its relevance to organisational communication studies. I also place my discussion in the context of the proliferating literature of post-modernism and organisational studies. As the value of discourse analysis is increasingly accepted in organisational studies, the disciplinary boundaries between critical organisational studies and critical organisational communication are breaking down. Over the last few years foucauldian analyses of organisational issues have proliferated. While they vary widely in terms of how they have appropriated Foucault's work within explicit or implicit political agendas, they create a space

not only for communication perspectives on organisations, but for feminist/post-structuralist and post-colonial readings of organisational life. The movement in feminist organisation theory from a 'women in management' approach (with a focus on categories of subjects) to an analysis of gendered organisations (with a focus on gendered systems of meaning), allows new approaches to the question of gender in organisations and to gender and organisational communication specifically, and I place my work within this context. There has not been a body of parallel work on ethnicity in organisational analysis, but feminists have begun to make contributions, often via the discourse of 'managing diversity', which I make a key feature of my field studies analysis.

## **2. Discourse after Foucault**

Discourses, in Foucault's work, are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and the relations between them (Weedon, 1987, p. 108).

In my discussion of 'gender and communication' (Chapter 4), I argued that Rakow's claim that gender is an 'effect of communication' is in some ways quite different from Butler's claim that it is 'an effect of discursive practice'. This 'difference' will depend on how the terms 'communication' and 'discourse' are being used. In this section I tease out some of the issues involved in making this distinction. For communication scholars, there is a great deal of interdisciplinary work to do in relating discourse theory to fields such as interpersonal and organisational communication.

First, a note on disciplinary terminology: In my discussion in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, I am unable to make a simple distinction between 'interpersonal' and 'organisational communication', as topics or literatures. As Kovacic points out (Kovacic, 1994), the literature of 'organisational communication' has typically included interpersonal communication topics which are located within organisational contexts, but theorised in terms of 'conceptual grafts' as Kovacic calls them (*ibid.*, p. 1), theories based on the individualised social psychology that are characteristic of 'interpersonal communication' literature. Much of the material described as 'management communication' is of this kind, and it is further distinguished by its managerial orientation. The 'organisational communication' literature also refers to more macro-level analyses, often drawn from versions of sociological theory, of the

intersection between communication and organisational processes (e.g., Cooper, 1987; Taylor et al., 1996). I am interested in both the 'interpersonal and 'organisational' perspectives, and in fact Foucauldian discourse theory problematises just this kind of distinction.

I turn now to the relationship between 'discourse' and 'communication'. Weedon's definition (above) of the Foucauldian notion of discourse was the first I encountered. She deploys this notion in a specifically feminist agenda, where she argues that Foucauldian discourse theory can 'produce politically useful understanding of the production and reproduction of patriarchal forms of power, both institutionally and for individual women and men' (Weedon, 1987, p. 107). Foucault's notion of discourse meshed well for me with the feminist account of the implication of power/knowledge, and with the 'gender and communication' literature in which the interrelationships of identity, language and power were a central problematic. Foucault's discourse theory therefore functioned for me as an 'invitation', as Foucault once said of his writing 'for those who may want eventually to do the same thing, or something like it, or, in any case, who intend to slip into this kind of experience' (Foucault, 1991b, p. 40). The particular advantage that Foucault's work on discourse also offered was, as Weedon pointed out, 'a theory of language and social power which pays detailed attention to the institutional effects of discourse and its role in the constitution and government of individual subjects' (ibid). The 'institutional effects of discourse' are worked through most specifically in Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' and its relation to disciplinary processes, and I focus on these in field studies chapters.

There are many interesting problems in using Foucault's notion of discourse to carry out analysis. He does not always use the term in the same way. Later Foucauldian scholars, like Judith Butler, have pushed the boundaries of the term to allow or enable new analytic approaches to issues such as gender and ethnicity. In Foucault's earlier work particularly, discourse is relatively narrowly conceived (Foucault, 1972, 1991d). This notion of 'discourse formation', based around official written discourse, is a much more limited concept than Butler's reading, for instance, in which 'discourse is the horizon of agency' (Butler, 1995b, p. 135), the condition for all social experience. Her reading is more like that of Foucault's later work, as in the *History of sexuality* (Foucault, 1990b), and later seminars and interviews (Foucault, 1988, 1990a, 1996b), where discursive practices are framed more openly as 'technologies of the self'.

As Mark Poster points out, Foucault problematises the relationship between language and action (Poster, 1990). Central problems here include the distinctions between the discursive and the nondiscursive; and between discourse (discursive formations) and discourse practice. In particular, Foucault's term 'discursive (or discourse) practices' pushes discourse beyond the limits of language alone, to the disciplinary processes of the wide range of social practices and subjectivities: space, time, knowledge, desire. Mark Shapiro identifies the crucial move made by foucauldian discourse theory in this way:

It is not at all obvious to those who wish to get on with the work of analysing sociopolitical relations how to move logically or practically from the analysis of language to the analysis of human relations. Yet a move from the analysis of linguistic or discursive practices to the analysis of human conduct requires little more than the exercise of a perspective, one that rejects a radical distinction between discursive practices and nondiscursive (real, actual, what can we call them?) practices (Shapiro, 1981, p. 127).

It is this 'exercise of a perspective' that I take as the key to Foucault's notion of discourse, problematic though it may be in terms of retaining distinctions between 'discursive' and 'nondiscursive', as Shapiro indicates. As Stoler points out, later researchers giving the notion of discourse 'flesh and blood' in field studies follow a foucauldian impulse, but must inevitably push the boundaries of his terminology (Stoler, 1995). In an organisational communication context, this 'perspective' on discourse links practices and language to produce power relationships and organisational life. The distinction between what is 'said' and what is 'done', between 'rhetoric' and 'reality' is problematised. This is a key issue in organisational change, where the relationship between 'strategy' and 'implementation' is central. As Shapiro points out (Shapiro, 1981), Foucault's concept of discourse is inevitably strategic - that is, it has political effects, whether or not they are intended.

How then can I draw on Foucault's work to theorise the ways that individual agents intervene critically in organisational discourses? As I have pointed out in my discussion of foucauldian influences on 'deconstructive' social psychology, Foucault was not interested in the individual and individual processes, but in how the 'individual' comes to be constituted. Although Foucault's work on authority (e.g., Foucault, 1980a, 1984a) can be extended to thinking about how

individual subjects communicate, Foucault's notion of 'discourse' has to be substantially re-worked and developed to take in the process of interpersonal communication. The key issue here is the way that discourse creates relationships: 'discourses are in effect "practices" precisely because they reflect and guide relationships among persons' (Shapiro, 1981, p. 151). For a statement in a discourse to have meaning it must be made by persons positioned in a certain way, and to ask about the meanings of statements is to ask 'what is the status of the individuals who alone have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?' (Foucault, 1972, p. 50). My analysis of the 'statements' made in organisational discourses of difference - EEO, Biculturalism - refers back to the status of practitioners and the discursive processes by which they are authorised. The concept of 'authority' seems especially evocative in the context of a public service bureaucracy, where the ultimate source of legitimation and leverage is always statute - 'the legislation' - and, following that, the written policies, manuals and reports which deploy the legislative discourse in the bureaucratic context. Policies are not coterminous with discrete discourse formations: as Tom O'Regan points out, they 'become the basis for holding together diverse and even antagonistic projects' and 'help clear the way for a field of possibilities not given in the policymakers' words or intentions' (O'Regan, 1992, p. 523). In his foucauldian approach to policy analysis, O'Regan emphasises 'the significance of enunciation in political and cultural processes' (ibid., 1992, p. 523). The site of enunciation is a central concern in the discursive analysis of policy, a terrain in which, as O'Regan points out, 'the same statements, circulating across diverse institutional sites, could be quite different in their effect and programmatic nature' (ibid.). Part of the service that discourse analysis can provide to practitioners is to tease out the 'diverse' and 'antagonistic' relationships within and between policies, against the grain of bureaucratic strategic discourse, which tends to erase the complex differences between constituencies such as 'EEO groups' and between the political interests of managers and subordinates. It also seems to me that analysis of the 'field of possibilities not given in the policymakers' words or intentions' (ibid., p. 253) in discursive terms can help practitioners reflect on the 'success' or 'failure' of programmes, and to question their 'strategic' basis.

In *The subject and power*, Foucault makes an interesting distinction between three overlapping and reciprocal domains that he calls 'relationships of communication', 'power relations' and 'objective capacities' (Foucault, 1983, pp. 217-218). The 'diverse forms, diverse places, diverse circumstances or occasions'

(ibid., p. 218) in which these three domains are 'welded together' show up as types of disciplines - 'enlarging a little the sense of the word' (ibid., p. 219). For instance, Foucault says that the 'disciplines of apprenticeship' (which I take to include educational processes) give 'preeminence' to 'relationships of communication' (ibid.) He sees the characteristic of modern power as 'more rational and economic' cohesion between these three types of disciplinary forces. While Foucault here stresses the mutual reciprocity of his three 'domains', the effect of his work generally is to privilege an analysis of power. In *Truth and power*, for instance, he specifically refuses 'analysis couched in terms of the symbolic field or the domain of signifying structures' in favour of an analytic model of war or battle: 'relations of power, not relations of meaning' (Foucault, 1980a, p. 114). This privileging of power follows from Foucault's move away from the Cartesian cogito, and from the hermeneutics - whether rationalist or interpretive - that define it. Foucault is interested in questions of what communication *does* rather than what it *means*. He casts his notion of 'relationships' or 'systems' of communication, and the 'production of meaning' (ibid., p. 218) within the framework of discipline, defining it as a component of a three-part disciplinary process. It is in this context that communication scholars can consider organisational communication in foucauldian terms, and can make a distinctive contribution to foucauldian organisational theory. In my research I look at how EEO practitioners work within 'relationships of communication' to produce organisational meanings. Central to this project is the question of how EEO practitioners are authorised as 'enunciating subjects' in organisational discourses, as agents of communication and of change.

Part of my project is to relate foucauldian accounts of discourse - especially institutional discourses - to the literatures of interpersonal communication and 'organisational communication'. As I have argued above, the usual subject of these fields is the humanist subject of functionalist psychology, and I want to replace this subject with the post-humanist subject of foucauldian theory. 'Deconstructive' psychologist Ian Parker describes the subject of discourse in foucauldian terms as 'an individual "subject" glued in place from without by the responsibility of responsible agency (confession) and from within by the apparatus of surveillance (discipline)' (Parker, 1989, p. 60). Foucault emphasises the processes by which the effect of a certain type of individual is produced, a subject who is constituted as an 'I', with an 'inside' that can be accessed through processes of confession and surveillance, the 'mobile sign' of 'I', as John Shotter puts it (Shotter, 1989, p. 140). This 'I' makes us accountable to others within systems and relations of power and identity. This 'accountability' is a crucial

aspect of our construction as agents: it constitutes the audience that we address, as well as the positions from which we may speak, and those to whom we must speak. My interest in agency as a way of thinking about 'what's in people's heads' is not an attempt to recuperate the humanist subject, but to problematise it within the discourse of communication. Here I take the lead of those 'deconstructive' psychologists who, recognising that the traditional object of psychology is exactly 'what goes on "inside" the individual' (Burman and Parker 1993a, p. 1), make their project the deconstruction of psychology itself (Parker and Shotter, 1990). A 'deconstruction' of communication studies is committed to a similar project - to consider the discursive practices by which a certain communicative subject is constructed. Deconstructive psychology is very helpful to us here, because it is from the authority of psychological discourse - derived from medical discourse - that much theorising about interpersonal and organisational communication derives in turn its model of the subject.

British literary scholar Anthony Easthope argues that communication studies should be seen as a subset of discourse theory: 'communication is only one special and particular effect within the whole range of what it means to be human, to be a signifying animal, to be able to function in discourse' (Easthope, 1990, p. 76). He evokes communication as both 'effect' and 'function' of discourse, a distinction that I have paralleled in distinguishing representation and performativity. Easthope describes the task as 'deconstructing the theory of communication' (ibid.), and the interdisciplinary nature of this work is indicated by Easthope's presence, as a literary scholar of post-structuralism, in a collection on *Deconstructing social psychology* (Parker and Shotter, 1990). The field of 'communication studies' has typically been split between a 'semiotic' stream comprising literary and media studies, associated more with interpretive and critical epistemologies, and a 'process school' focusing more on interpersonal and organisational processes of communication, associated with functionalist epistemologies (Fiske, 1990). This binary repeats the disciplinary boundaries that I have traversed in discussing the 'gender and communication' literature, where domains such as cultural studies have dealt typically with issues of representation, rather than processes of communication. This split leaves the field of interpersonal communication largely to functionalism, and absents interpersonal communication from cultural studies. The split can be seen to refer back to the Saussurean binary distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' that has dominated structuralism and post-structuralism, and leaves the communication process marginalised and untheorised within these perspectives - left behind 'in de Saussure's rubbish bin', as Hodge and Kress put it (Hodge and Kress, 1988,

p. 15). In a feminist reading of this binary, Australian linguist Cate Poynton argues that this version of 'high' theory/'low' theory is not just a fluke of disciplinary history, but a gender issue, 'a metaphor... for contemporary gender relations' (Poynton, 1990). The 'marginalising of the interpersonal' and the 'privileging of representation' in semiotic theory is, for her, related to 'the negative value assigned to the emotions, the realm of feeling, in Western culture (ibid, p. 235). She sees this negative value as unavoidably implicated in the valuing of woman's linguistic competence 'in interactive genres', as opposed to men's competence in the representational, the 'telling' of facts or stories (ibid., p. 241). This split then is political in its effects - Poynton shows how the values assigned in a masculinist binary system show up quite clearly in the 'gender and communication' discussions, but are still present (and repressed) in the langue/parole split. Poynton's argument adds force to the political agenda of a feminist approach to discourse which wants to trouble this particular disciplinary boundary. My interest is in theorising the interpersonal and the organisational from a post-structuralist perspective. This is not to repeat the langue-parole split - the intertextuality of spoken discourse, discourse practice and written texts is intrinsic to this conception of discourse, as is the inclusion of the nonverbal. Work done so far inevitably makes an explicit challenge to disciplinary boundaries, pointing out that communication studies cannot survive the crisis of representation unless it is reconfigured (Angus and Lannaman, 1988; Easthope, 1990; Lannaman, 1991; Stewart, 1991;). For the purposes of this thesis, I draw on discourse analytic approaches based in post-structuralist versions of social psychology, in which the emphasis is on interrogating processes of interaction (Burman and Parker, 1993a; Hollway, 1989; Parker, 1992). In this case, it is the communication process that I am concerned with. As Hollway points out, the crucial issue here is a well-theorised relationship between subjectivity and meaning (Hollway, 1989, p. 33), and I locate this relationship in the theoretical work carried out in the first part of this thesis. (I discuss discourse analytic method in more detail in my next chapter, 'Field studies'.

### **3. 'Organisational communication'/'organisation studies'**

The field of critical organisational communication has intersected with critical trends in organisational studies, especially in the 1990s, when post-structuralist and post-modern perspectives are generating links in the form of the 'linguistic turn'. Foucauldian discourse theory provides the resources for a reworking and intersection of critical perspectives in 'organisational communication', and in organisation studies more broadly. In particular, new foucauldian perspectives

on power/knowledge provide resources for re-thinking not only what organisations 'are', but how they are known: *The politics of management knowledge*, in Clegg and Palmer's words (Clegg and Palmer, 1996). This kind of genealogical work, which historicises and locates management and organisational theory (see also Jacques, 1996; Rose, 1990; Townley, 1994a), allows a re-evaluation of the assumptions of the traditional 'organisational communication' discourse and its associated 'pressure of efficiency', derived from economic discourses (Clegg, 1994b, p. 150).

A reworked 'organisational communication' is well-positioned to contribute to current debates in organisation studies. Stewart Clegg, whose work over the last 10 years can be read as a typification of the movement from neo-marxist to post-modernist perspectives in critical organisation theory (e.g., Clegg, 1977, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994a, 1996; Hardy and Clegg, 1995), has proposed that organisation analysis be rethought as 'a branch of cultural studies with the analysis of values at its core' (Clegg, 1994b, p. 149). The linguistic turn has been showing up in an intensified interest in cultural perspectives on organisations: metaphor analysis, story analysis, deconstructive techniques applied to organisational documents and practices (Barry, 1997; Boje and Dennehy, 1994; Boje et al., 1996; Calas and Smircich, 1996; Czarniawska, 1997; Hatch, 1996; Hassard and Parker, 1993; Law, 1994; Mumby, 1993b; Putnam and Pacanowsky, 1983). Stan Deetz's book, *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization* (Deetz, 1992) has marked a 'cross-over' breakthrough between 'organisational communication' and 'organisational studies', providing a book-length work of critical organisation communication which systematically draws on foucauldian discourse analysis. But not all of the text- and discourse-oriented approaches have a foucauldian twist. Clegg makes a useful distinction between foundationalist structural and interpretive theories of organisational power, and post-foundational theory 'which avoids a (Weberian) structuralism' without tipping over into the 'obverse' and 'understructuralised' subjectivism (Clegg, 1994b, pp. 149-150). This new account of power 'should focus on how it is possible that certain structures of subjectivity and modes of what passes for rationality are constituted' (ibid, p. 150). Foucault's influence has been especially strong in fields related to the analysis of human resource management (HRM), where the deconstruction of the discourses of social psychology which underpin HRM has generated new ways to think about the new forms of disciplinary power in organisations (Austrin, 1994; Findlay and Newton, 1988; Jermier, Knights and Nord, 1994; Townley, 1994a; Rose, 1990, 1996).

Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' is important to organisational theorists in linking processes of discipline and power/knowledge to specific 'technologies of the self' in an institutional context. Foucault sees governmentality as the form of power characteristic - 'the only political issue' (Foucault, 1991a, p. 103) - of our era. It is the template of all organisational power, not just of the organisations that we think of as 'government'. This concept of 'governmentality' is closely associated with a certain kind of professional subject experts in the technologies of governmentality. They derive their expertise from their positioning in various powerful discourses. Nikolas Rose has identified the importance of the authority that human resource management discourse derives from the psychological sciences, which have made possible 'new practices of regulation' (Rose, 1988, p. 185). Because psychology is seen as a 'scientific' discourse, it is seen as able to establish the 'truth' of human nature. It uses techniques of controlling individuals based on the powerful claims of science - rationality, control, prediction. In the case of EEO practitioners, it could be said that their positioning in the discourses of human resource management, that is, their 'fusion', in Terry Johnson's words, with the strategies and technologies of governmentality is as important to their authority as their positioning as bureaucrats in government departments (Johnson, 1993, pp. 143-144). EEO practitioners seek to legitimise and give effect to their work through the deployment of 'techniques' or 'technologies' of governmentality are focused around 'apparatuses of security', and processes of 'normalisation' and 'surveillance' (Foucault, 1991d).

Foucauldian accounts are developing within a wide context of post-modernist critique of organisational theory (e.g., Boje and Dennehy, 1994; Calas and Smircich, 1996). All the organisational readings of Foucault that I have cited articulate his work in one way or another as critical perspectives on management and organisation. It remains to be seen whether the critical impetus of foucauldian theory can ever be assimilated by, or be allowed to challenge or transform, mainstream discourses of management knowledge. Clegg argues, for instance, that 'the illuminative powers of the modernist representation of bureaucracy fade into dusk in our increasingly postmodern organisational times' (Clegg, 1994, p. 151). In his own work he has argued that post-modern culture and new forms of organising require 'quite different' forms of analysis (ibid., p. 172, and see Clegg, 1990). Here 'post-modernism' organisational theory intersects (without always overlapping) with discourses of post-industrialism or post-Fordism (Kumar, 1995): frameworks for new industrial and organisational forms in which 'communication' is privileged as an organisational technology in

new conceptions of telecommunications, 'public relations, 'visioning' methodologies, 'networking' and management 'competencies' (e.g., du Gay, 1996b; Fairclough, 1990; Poster, 1990). There is some indication that post-modernism has unsettled the old epistemologies enough to open doors for 'more theory, more voices and more politics' to organisational studies (Ferguson, 1984). I have found some of this critical and foucauldian material from organisational studies very useful in considering how EEO practitioners operate within organisational discourses, and in particular, in the discourses of human resource management, where the EEO function has increasingly come to be located.

The kind of discourse analytic project that I am engaged in is still relatively new in the field of 'organisational communication'. Putnam and Pacanowsky's collection *Organizational communication: An interpretive perspective* (Putnam and Pacanowsky, 1984) was a break-through in the 'organisational communication' field, in terms of presenting alternatives to the (still) dominant functionalism of the field. Putnam's theoretical essay on functionalism and interpretivism sets out clearly the epistemological issues at stake, as well as the different conceptions of organisation and communication that they imply. She makes a further useful distinction between critical and naturalistic approaches within interpretive approaches to 'organisational communication' (Putnam, 1983). While the term 'critical' could be taken to include feminist communication studies, it is generally not used this way, but refers rather to neo-marxist theorists, of which Dennis Mumby has been the dominant exemplar in the 'organisational communication' field (Mumby, 1988, 1993a, 1993b). Marlene Fine (Fine, 1993) argues that 'critical' perspectives in organisational communication - she cites here Deetz and Mumby's bench-mark work in critical organisational communication, 'Power, discourse, and the workplace: Reclaiming the critical tradition' (Deetz and Mumby, 1990) - typically re-works marxist economic analysis but 'glosses over issues of gender and patriarchy, race and racism' (Fine, 1993, p. 144). This is a typical feminist complaint about critical theory. But more recently, feminism has begun to impact on and overlap with critical organisational communication theory. For instance, Mumby has been working with Linda Putnam on feminist theories of organisational communication, thus opening further doors for the feminist analysis in the field (Mumby and Putnam, 1992; Mumby 1993).

#### **4. Feminist 'organisational communication'**

The feminist 'organisational communication' literature of most value to my project is work which considers organisational relationships in terms of

discourses of difference. Typically, we see in this field another disciplinary split, between feminist organisational studies under the umbrella of 'women's studies'; and similar feminist work carried out under 'organisational studies'. It is only recently that these literatures have begun to 'meet, intersect, and enrich each other' (Brown, 1995, p. 197). The trend in feminist organisational studies towards 'gendering organisational analysis' (Mills and Tancred, 1992) goes beyond simply 'adding gender' as a topic of organisational analysis, or documenting inequality and difference. 'Gendering organisational analysis' means paying attention to the 'patterns of gender difference and subordination' in organisational processes as well as discourses of organisational theory (Acker, 1992, p. 249; Pringle, 1996). This means not only paying attention to gender when gender is obviously salient (as in the discourses of equality and difference that I have focused on in my research), but considering ways in which gender is implicated even where gender seems absent or naturalised 'because the very practices of thinking that we [typically] use are those created within the relations of ruling' (Acker, 1992, p. 249). While not all this work is post-structuralist, the search for explanations of the 'apparently endless reorganization of gender and permutations of male power' (Acker, 1992, p. 248) has turned attention towards constructionist views of gender, and the meaning-making processes by which it is reproduced in association with the production of categories such as ethnicity and class. In this way the feminist theoretical concerns of gender and organisation run in parallel to those in 'gender and communication'.

Turning to the subject of the feminist 'organisational communication' literature, the by-now familiar themes of feminist theory recur - social constructionist accounts of gender, a turn towards discourse - and the distinctions between feminist 'organisational communication' and feminist organisational theory blur (Buzzanell, 1994; Fine, 1991, 1993; Marshall, 1993; Natale et al., 1994). Again we see that feminist research acts as both 'critique and construct' (Gunew, 1990), creating new versions of 'organisational communication' which identify its gaps and preoccupations, and suggest the new possibilities which feminist 'organisational communication' makes available. The feminist 'organisational communication' literature draws on or points to the post-structuralist or post-modern literature, often within broad typologies of feminist theory, but - except perhaps for Gregg (1993b), discussed above - does not exemplify it.

Claims about the size and influence of the field of 'feminist organisational communication' depend on where you put the frame. Here I argue for a larger sense of the possibilities of the field than included in Fine's claim of its

marginality (Fine, 1993), although her claim still stands as an important political point in its disciplinary context. Connie Bullis (Bullis, 1993), for instance, claims that Kathy Ferguson's 1984 work on feminism and bureaucracy (Ferguson, 1984) initiated a feminist organisational communication agenda that has not, in the event, been taken up by organisational communication scholars (or developed by Ferguson herself). In this work, Ferguson has given a feminist twist to 'governmentality', while rejecting other themes of Foucault's work: his concept of discourses, of instance, and key aspects of his analysis of power (Ferguson, 1984, pp. xii-xvi). Her contribution, for me, is her consideration of bureaucratic discourses, and their disciplinary processes in relation to feminist projects of organisational reform. Her key argument in this respect is summarised as follows:

The illusion that liberation will result from the integration of women into existing economic, political, and social organisations has implications that go far beyond the familiar charge of "selling out". Such an approach only expands the process by which women and other subordinate populations have been removed from active and authentic participation in public life by extending it to increasingly large sections of the population (Ferguson, 1984, p. 82).

Ferguson's argument draws on Foucault's work to show the power of bureaucratic discourses to discipline organisational subjects: to 'include' women, she argues, is to extend the processes of bureaucratic subjection to women. She sees alternatives to bureaucratic forms as the only way forward. Ferguson draws on Foucault to tease out the complexities of exercising power within bureaucratic discourses, and I work through some implications of her claims in thinking about the work of EEO practitioners (Chapters 9 and 10). Given the emergence of a wider feminist/foucauldian literature, it is surprising that the subject of feminist organisational theory is rarely a foucauldian one, and, more particularly, that the work on governmentality has been little explored from a feminist perspective.<sup>1</sup>

I want to give two Australian examples to push the disciplinary boundaries of 'feminist organisational communication'. Mumby (1993) points out that Australian sociologist Rosemary Pringle's *Secretaries talk* (Pringle, 1988) is an exemplar of a 'focus on the (communicative) patterns of dominance and subordination that emerge between men and women in organisations' (Mumby, 1993a, p. 156), although it is not regarded as 'organisational communication'

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<sup>1</sup> Townley (1994) includes some feminist questions in her foucauldian analysis of human resource management discourse.

research. Here, Pringle draws on Hollway's post-structuralism analysis of heterosexual relationships (Hollway, 1984, 1989), to theorise communication and power in relationships between secretaries and 'bosses'. In Chapter 2 I have discussed Pringle's later work with Anne Game on gender in the labour process (Game and Pringle, 1983). They argue that 'the sexual division of labour cannot be understood purely in economic terms', but 'must also be fought at the level of the symbolic' (ibid., p. 141). Their work shows how this 'symbolism' works always within the familiar binaries of masculinity: 'If anything remains fixed, it is in the distinction between men's work and women's work' (ibid., p. 15).

Anna Yeatman's account of 'femocracy' in Australian government (Yeatman, 1990a), provides another example of feminist organisational analysis which puts issues of representation at the centre. In discussing EEO in terms of 'the politics of discourse and the politics of the state', Yeatman makes crucial connections between gendered organisational policies and organisational practices in terms of 'a politics of contest over meaning' (ibid., p. 155). While Yeatman's work focuses specifically on state bureaucracies, much of her theoretical framework and analytical method would transfer well to feminist 'organisational communication' analysis in a range of organisational contexts. I draw on her work to analyse the construction of difference in policy analysis.

The feminist 'organisational communication' literature has functioned primarily as a critique of mainstream 'organisational communication', and has not tended to problematise its own feminist foundations. Its thrust has been to create an alternative feminist account of communication and of organisation in terms of gender and power, noting who has been included and excluded from the 'subject' of organisation communication, whose voices have been authorised as writers and as research subjects, and whose have been excluded. It is also seen as a way into analysing feminist organisational change issues in organisations from a new perspective: for instance, Gregg foregrounds the meaning-making processes by which women carry out union organising (Gregg, 1992, 1993a, 1993b); Bingham re-thinks sexual harassment as discursive practice (Bingham, 1994).

In reviews of feminist organisational communication research and its possibilities (Bullis, 1993, Buzzanell, 1994; Fine, 1991, 1993; Marshall, 1993; Natalie et al., 1994; Spitzack and Carter, 1987), feminist 'post-structuralist' or 'post-modern' theory is cited to authorise broadly social constructionist approaches, or the introduction of more diversity, into feminist organisational communication

theory. However, we also see the repetition of the broader 'feminism/post-modernism' debates discussed in Chapter 2, where 'post-modernism' is refused as basis for feminist political action with the claim that it is 'essentially nihilistic' (Fine, 1993, p. 153). Buzzanell presents a reading of 'post-modernism' in terms of social constructionism and the deconstruction of binaries, but does not unsettle feminist grand narrative or humanist notions of agency (Buzzanell, 1994, pp. 348, 350). In short, there is clearly a lot of work still to do in terms of theorising a feminist post-structuralist organisational communication.

## **5. Ethnicity and 'organisational communication'**

Calls for 'diversity' have not produced substantial accounts of ethnicity specifically in terms of 'organisational communication'. While much of the 'cross-cultural communication' literature is actually located within organisational settings, it has not tended to intersect with the 'organisational communication' literature. Accounts of 'difference' in 'organisational communication' textbooks, are marginalised and contained in very much the same way that Peterson (1995) describes the marginalisation and containment of ethnicity in the literature of 'interpersonal communication' (e.g., Conrad, 1994; Miller, 1995).

Sources that could contribute to a reframed feminist 'organisational communication' are literatures of 'diversity' (e.g., Nkomo and Ely, 1996), feminist post-structuralist organisational theories which call for multiple readings and multiple voices (Calas and Smircich, 1987; Ferguson, 1994), feminist readings of cross-cultural communication in terms of 'multiculturalism' (Fine, 1993). I have already cited (in Chapter 3) Sheila Nkomo's review of the meagre material on 'race' in organization studies, and her argument for 'rewriting "race" in organizations' (Nkomo, 1992). Recent work on 'globalisation' in organisational studies (Calas, 1994) from a post-colonial perspective opens new possibilities for post-colonial organisational communication. In this thesis I draw specifically on literatures of 'equality' and 'diversity' to analyse how 'difference' works in organisational discourse. By re-theorising 'communication and difference' in this context, I hope to contribute to the still-marginalised literature of 'ethnicity and organisational communication'.

## **6. Field studies framework**

In this chapter I have completed the feminist post-structuralist analysis of the 'gender and communication', 'cross-cultural communication', and 'organisational communication' literatures that makes up the first part of my thesis. I have set out to argue why I think that particular issues matter politically and epistemologically within a re-thought 'feminist 'organisational communication'.

I now go on to introduce my field studies chapters, where I take my theoretical questions into a specific historical and cultural context. In Chapters 1 to 6 I have made a point of referring often to my field studies for examples of the theoretical propositions I have been developing. My field studies chapters develop these propositions in a number of directions, rather than proceeding through a linear argument. In Chapter 7 I discuss how I went about designing my field research, creating relationships with my research subjects, and obtaining the interviews and documents that constitute my field studies texts.

## CHAPTER 7

### FIELD STUDIES

Postmodernism is... about those threads that we trace, and trace, and trace. But not to a conclusion. To increased knowledge, yes. But never to innocent knowledge. To better understanding, yes. But never to pure insight (Marshall, 1992, p. 4).

#### 1. Introduction

Throughout this thesis I have been explicitly concerned with issues of epistemology and method, with research as a writing practice, with my own authority as a scholar, and with the questions of how authority and identity are given 'the appearance of substance' (Chapter 1). Taking reflexivity as the centre-piece of my method means self-consciously creating a meta-theoretical relationship with my thesis text. Like other feminist researchers, I resist 'the censoring out of the mess, confusion and complexity of doing research' (Kelly et al., 1994, p. 46).

In the first part of my thesis I have addressed from a theoretical perspective the possibilities of transforming the academic literature of 'communication and difference', with a particular focus on the relationship between communicative practices and identity. I now work within the theoretical framework already established to talk about my field studies, that is, the process of creating and analysing an archive of texts in relationship with my interview 'subjects'. In proposing to present my project as a 'messy text', I set out to meet the requirements of the relevant genre (a doctoral thesis), while at the same time drawing attention to the processes by which authority in the genre can be established. I discuss epistemological and methodological texts that informed my practice, as well as how I specifically went about carrying out interviews, collecting documents, and analysing interview and other texts.

My discourse texts consist principally of interviews with practitioners working in aspects of EEO and Biculturalism. I describe these positions in my next chapter. My texts also include published and unpublished organisational and government documents related to the work of practitioners, and I draw on my participant knowledge of the Public Service and my involvement with research subjects in

working groups, conferences, and seminars. The interviews were shaped by my research questions about the communicative strategies used by practitioners, and about the discursive conflicts that they encountered. I have discussed the development of these questions in Chapter 1, and they are summarised in Table 2. below.

The research questions are strongly related to my theoretical discussions of authority and agency, and I derive relevant discourse analysis methodologies from the literature of deconstructive psychology, which is also concerned with questions of 'individual' subjectivity. I also draw on Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' to consider the part played by communicative practices in organisational processes of normalisation and surveillance.

Post-structuralist discourse analysis does not work as a 'take data, add method and stir' technology. As Pakeha feminist researcher Victoria Grace stresses:

the need to develop a method for each specific project... is an extremely creative part of the research process, involving a hermeneutic engagement simultaneously with the research questions, the theoretical agendas, the politics of the research context, and understandings of 'discourse' and what one is doing in text (Grace, 1998<sup>1</sup>; see also Fairclough, 1992, p. 226; Parker, 1992, p. 122).

## 2. Truth values

In my previous discussions of my writing and reading strategies (Chapter 1), of the theoretical commitments that drive this thesis, and of developments in re-thinking knowledge in communication and organisational studies (Chapters 2-6), I have already traversed much of the terrain of an epistemological and methodological framework. In this section I discuss the 'truth values' (Littlejohn, 1996, pp. 38-39)<sup>2</sup> that framed my approach to research design, my relationship with research subjects, and analytic methods.

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<sup>1</sup> This sentence is quoted from a 1997 pre-publication version of Grace's paper, but has been edited from the final version.

<sup>2</sup> I first derived the concept of 'truth values' from the 4th, 1992 edition.

## **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**How is 'difference' constructed in organisational communication?**

**How are gender and ethnic differences constructed in the organisational discourses of EEO and Biculturalism in New Zealand government organisations?**

**How can the topic of 'communication and difference' be re-thought from a feminist/post-structuralist perspective?**

**What is the relationship between communicative practices and identity?**

**Which methods of discourse analysis take communication perspectives into account?**

**Which communicative strategies are employed by EEO practitioners?**

**How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with each other?**

**How do the discourses of EEO and Biculturalism come into conflict with other discourses in government organisations (especially discourses of bureaucracy and managerialism)?**

**Table 2. Summary of research questions**

During the 1990s, a sense of 'shifting certainties' (Armstrong and Du Plessis, 1998) has been the central theme of feminist research, as post-structuralist challenges, and nearly two decades of increasingly sophisticated research practices, have produced an acknowledgment of the plurality of 'feminisms' and the epistemologies, methodologies and methods they deploy (Alcoff and Potter, 1993; Armstrong, 1994b; Armstrong and Du Plessis, 1998; Maynard, 1994; Martin, 1994; Olesen, 1994). There has been a shift towards what Yeatman calls a 'situationalist' theory of knowledge, in which all knowledge claims are evaluated in relation to their specific historical and cultural context, rather than in the context of claims to universal laws (Yeatman, 1991b). Yeatman has characterised this as a 'relational' theory of knowledge because it makes sense in terms of the relationship between the position of the knowing subject and the other positions which surround them. This is different from a relativist approach which claims to have no fixed position, and it does enable feminist/post-structuralist researchers to make contextualised truth claims that are useful to practitioners.

Women's accounts of their experiences have been privileged as the basis for feminist knowledge. A situationalist approach puts these accounts in a new light. Influential early work on 'interpreting women's lives' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989a) was based on two central modernist assumptions: 'confidence in the referentiality of language and a corollary confidence in the authenticity of the self' (Smith, 1987, p. 5). This confidence has meant that women's stories or narratives, privileged in feminist scholarship in terms of an 'insistence on the importance of female experience' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989b, p. 4), have been seen as uniquely suited for 'telling it like it is' (Graham, 1984, p. 105). From a post-structuralist perspective, this confidence is undermined, and different questions about women's personal narratives arise. These questions centre around how the 'narrator' draws on discursive resources in creating herself, asking, for instance: how she authorises or de-authorise herself, or how and whether she presents herself as unitary subject. In interpreting the accounts given by research subjects, I approach interviews as texts for analysis and critique, rather than as the authoritative sources of a foundationalist 'truth' about their organisations or about themselves. I also look for the multiple positions taken by subjects, rather than looking for a unitary or consistent self.

Patti Lather's paper *Deconstructing/deconstructive inquiry: issues in feminist research methodologies* (Lather, 1989, 1991),<sup>3</sup> was the first feminist/post-structuralist material on research I encountered, and, together with her later work (Lather, 1990, 1991), was a primary influence in creating my approach to my research questions, texts and subjects. I summarise here some of the key issues via which Lather's own research served as a model for design and interpretation in my field studies. Lather presents herself as aligned with those who are creating a 'politicized postmodernism' (Lather, 1991, p. 88). She stresses that while critical theorists have long asked questions about the way power shapes knowledge, post-modernism *foregrounds* this concern. This emphasis moves social inquiry to the grounds of discourse, 'where the ways we talk and write are situated within social practices, the historical conditions of meaning, the positions from which texts are both produced and received' (ibid., p. 89). Lather is interested in the practical problem of 'how to do "good" openly value-based inquiry': an enterprise not only given greater legitimacy by post-modern perspectives, as she points out, but clarified by explorations of concepts of discourse.

Lather sets out three key 'shifts' in methodological approaches derived from post-modern perspectives. First, she foregrounds a 'concern with the social relations of the research act' (Lather, 1991, p. 91). This ethical and political concern has been the core of feminist epistemology and method. Feminist research is not only 'about' gender but 'for' women - that is, situated within feminist programmes which shape its topics and methods. While an acknowledgment that 'social relations mediate the construction of knowledge' is not new to feminist research, Lather argues that post-modern perspectives take the point further, that 'who speaks for whom becomes a central issue' (ibid., p. 91). The researcher is no longer a 'Great Interpreter who has privileged access to meaning', as Dreyfus and Rabinow put it (1983, p. 180). This issue is central to the relationship between researchers and research subjects.

From the beginning of my project I have been firmly committed to incorporating a conscious awareness of ethnic difference and the ways it was implicated in my research. I took ethnicity as a central research theme theoretically, and I was aware of debates within feminist theory and research about the exclusion and marginalisation of some women in feminist research, as well as in theory and politics (see Jones, 1992, 1994; Lugones and Spelman, 1983; Reinharz, 1992). Just

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<sup>3</sup> The 1989 paper was later published in a revised version as Chapter 5 of Lather, 1990. I use page citations from the 1991 version here unless particular wordings appear only in the earlier version. .

as Foucault's process of historicisation throws into relief the contingency of a given discourse, so does cultural specificity emphasises the partiality of a given power/knowledge regime. As Kum-Kum Bhavnani has pointed out, it is not methodology alone - cross-cultural collaborative research, adding 'other voices' - which addresses this issue, but the total social and political context of the research (Bhavnani, 1990). In this thesis my choice was to take a self-consciously Pakeha perspective on the research, and I drew on interviews with Maori, Pacific Island, and Indian practitioners to provide critical, alternative accounts of discourses of difference in organisational contexts.

Lather is also concerned with making research relevant to practitioners within the broader picture of the social relations of the research act, arguing that 'the question of action remains largely unaddressed within postmodern discourse' (Lather, 1991, p. 12). She sees a reflexive approach to one's *own* practice as the way to figure out how to 'turn critical thought into emancipatory action' (ibid., p. 13). I argue that a reflexive approach can also work in reflecting on the practice of *others*, either in collaboration or from 'outside', by offering feedback which does not work prescriptively but through 'finding out how and how far it might be possible to think differently' (Foucault, 1992, p. 9).

Lather's second methodological 'shift' is from general theorising to interpretation and description. Assuming that any representation involves selection, transformation and interpretation, an openness about the representational practices of research becomes the mode by which the reader can evaluate the truth values of a research text: as Lather puts it: 'self-reflexivity is the "new canon"' (Lather, 1989, p. 14). While reflexivity is used in a range of qualitative research contexts, feminist researchers Fonow and Cook have suggested that it has particular relevance to feminist research, and define it as 'the tendency of feminists to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically, the nature of the research process' (Fonow, and Cook, 1991, p. 2). In particular, feminists use it 'to gain insight into the assumptions about gender relations underlying the conduct of inquiry' (ibid.). I have discussed issues of reflexivity in this thesis in Chapter 1, and it is linked with Lather's third methodological 'shift' - a new emphasis on the 'textual staging of knowledge, which involves 'turning the text into a display and interaction among perspectives', revealing the 'artifice that produces the appearance of objectivity' (Lather, 1991, p. 91). Lather makes some further specific suggestions that I have used in my presentation of field studies.

First, Lather suggests a re-think of the way that dialogue from interviews is used in qualitative research to 'verify' claims. She suggests that instead it should be seen as 'vivifying' interpretation, rather than 'supporting' or 'proving' its validity. I have used excerpts from interviews in this way, setting out to illustrate connections between my theoretical questions and practitioners' own accounts, rather than to 'prove' propositions from data. Another strategy that Lather employs is to write up the 'results' of her own research in several different styles, illustrating how 'deconstruction creates stories that disclose their constructed nature' (ibid., pp. 23-24). This technique also allows Lather to experiment with different approaches, and to explore her own positioning in different and contradictory positions. In this thesis I have given myself similar freedom in a series of four pieces (Chapters 9 to 12) in which I interpret my field studies texts from different - although related - theoretical perspectives. In my last piece (Chapter 12), I generate three different readings of the vocabulary of 'diversity'. I see these pieces as 'experiments' in trying out the feminist/post-structuralist approaches that I have developed in the first part of the thesis, rather than as the 'data' or 'results' of my field studies.

### 3. Design

In designing my field studies, I saw myself as creating conversations with a range of practitioners in the areas of EEO and Biculturalism, and then carrying out an interpretation of their accounts. If 'all interpretations... are made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others' (Rosaldo, 1990, p. 8), I was 'prepared to know about' issues related to my theoretical questions. This did not rule out the incorporation of new topics raised by practitioners, as long as they fed into my theoretical agenda. I saw myself as a facilitator of 'a running theoretical discussion' with my subjects, as Glaser and Strauss put it, although, unlike them, I did not believe that theoretical concepts were 'out there' to be 'discovered' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 31)

In my field studies and analysis I draw primarily upon interviews carried out with practitioners working in various aspects of EEO in government organisations during 1993-1994. My focus is on the intersections of gender and ethnic difference, rather than on the whole range of EEO issues. I talked with people who deal with these issues particularly, mainly in various EEO units, but also in 'cultural development' positions of various kinds (see the next chapter for

more detail on these positions). I also talked with people who had been in these jobs in the past; to members of 'EEO group' networks; to researchers who had been involved in EEO-related projects; and to some trade union workers who had been involved with EEO in the public and private sectors. My intention was not to gather a 'representative sample' of views in the scientific sense, but rather to create an account which presents a range of voices articulating their positions on EEO. I especially paid attention to the conflicts and changes in these positions during the early 1990s.

Foucault sees modern social science and its techniques as an aspect of 'bio-power', which 'brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 143). In Chapter 11 I will look at how the categorisation of 'EEO groups' can have specific political effects. I use a similar system of categorisation to categorise the research subjects I interviewed (see Table 3., Research participants). Because I already had contacts in the 'EEO community', and because of my own experience in the New Zealand Public Service, I had a number of possible starting points for selecting subjects. I began with a long preliminary interview with a friend who was an EEO practitioner. I was able to discuss my interview schedule with her, begin a list of possible research subjects, and get a briefing on current issues in EEO. I went back to her about half-way through the interviewing process, to talk over issues that had arisen. I used a 'snowball' technique to further my network of contacts (Patton, 1990, pp. 176-177). About half-way through the process, I started to specifically seek out more subjects who were positioned differently from the homogeneous group of female, Pakeha EEO practitioners who were the core of my subject group: trade unionists, Maori, Pacific Islanders, people working in cultural units. Patton calls these 'disconfirming' cases (*ibid.*, p. 178), and they were essential to me in generating the accounts of discursive conflict that I was looking for.

Glaser and Strauss talk about a process of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.111), whereby the researcher will know that the inquiry is complete when the same theoretical categories repeat themselves. I see 'theoretical saturation' as a researcher effect, rather than as indicating that all the possible categories 'out there' have been used up. After talking with 28 subjects (one interview was later unable to be transcribed because of tape

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

N = 27

<b>GENDER</b>	Female = 25			Male = 2		
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	Pakeha = 21	Maori = 3		Pacific Island = 2		Malaysian Indian = 1
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	EEO programmes = 14	EEO policy/research = 6		Unionist = 4		Cultural units/ programmes = 4
<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	Govt. agency = 22		Unions = 4		Local body = 1	
<b>'CORE' GROUP</b>  Total = 13	Pakeha/female/ EEO programmes = 7			Pakeha/female/ EEO policy/research = 6		
<b>'MARGINAL' GROUPS</b>  Total = 14	Unionists = 4		Pacific Island/ 'ethnic minority' = 3		EEO-related policy/ research = 3	
			Maori = 3		Cultural unit/ female/Pakeha = 1	

**Table 3. Research participants**

problems), I felt that I had enough material to generate interesting responses to my research questions.

Many of the subjects I talked with used the term 'the EEO community' and I came to see them as a community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992), networked through practices such as personal friendships, the EEO Practitioners Association, the seminars on EEO run by EEO practitioners at the State Services Commission, and the Maori EEO group. Some of those interviewed had minimal connections, being more strongly identified with their employing organisations than with EEO work as such; others in trade unions (public and private sector), research and policy jobs were also generally less central. Although I have made a distinction between those in what I call EEO practitioner jobs and those in EEO policy jobs, in some cases their organisational functions overlap, and some had worked in both areas. In a few cases I included people who had at the time moved out of practitioner roles - because a number of people suggested I interview them as important to the EEO community, or because I had made contact with them in some other way and they had interesting perspectives on EEO. All interviews took place in Wellington, so that subjects were all located at 'head offices' of their organisations.

The accounts I gathered were mainly Pakeha women's accounts, reflecting the dominance of Pakeha women in the EEO community. I treat EEO discourse as primarily located in this cultural context (see Chapter 12). Because of my interest in the intersection of gender/ethnicity issues, I also sought out non-Pakeha subjects, and/or subjects involved in 'cultural development' jobs of various types. I also interviewed two subjects who were leaders of active official EEO networks in organisations, because of their Pacific Island identifications. One further subject was employed by a local body to deal with Human Resource Management issues related to the Treaty of Waitangi.

It was obvious from my first discussions that a case study approach would make it impossible to maintain confidentiality: Wellington is a small place. I chose instead to speak with subjects across a range of organisations, although in some cases I spoke with a few from the same organisation. Confidentiality remained an important issue, especially as I was inviting subjects to critique the discourse of their own organisations (see Research Agreement, Appendix A).

#### 4. Interviews

I saw the interviews as conversations that teased out issues of language and communication associated with my interviewee's work. They were not primarily 'fact-finding' interviews, but opportunities to cover broad issues that interested me and also the subjects. I set up the interviews by phone, following up with a letter or fax which included the suggested interview topics (see Appendix B). Most interviews were tightly managed for time, and participants were clearly extremely busy. This was definitely not the kind of research where participants have hours to spend chatting to an interested stranger. Interviews lasted usually about 90 minutes (this was the time period I asked for), and this seemed to me the minimum period within which to tease out the concepts that interested me. In a couple of cases, there were shorter interviews which were generally unsuccessful. No interview was the same, and I did not adhere to a standard schedule, although key topics were covered in all cases. I wanted to ensure that there was always time and opportunity for the issues that especially interested subjects, and their topics of special expertise, to be covered. Interviews took place in a venue convenient to the subject - usually their offices - but in some cases at their homes, or where I was staying. Because I was flying to Wellington, interviews were scheduled in a series of blocks of about a week each, all during one year (1993). US feminist communication researcher Bette Kauffman has argued that the process of negotiating research interviews is not just incidental or instrumental, but provides part of the 'data' for noticing how the 'researcher-researched relationship' shapes the research (Kauffman, 1992, p. 187). In this project, planning and making time for the interviews was a central feature which, along with the importance of clarifying organisational confidentiality issues, highlighted the professional aspects of the subjects' participation. While subjects did have some concerns over how I might 'exercise the power of representation' (ibid.) (see discussion below), it was also clear to me that they very much controlled the interview process and, by taking time out of a very busy professional life, were doing me a favour.

I invited my interview 'subjects' to narrate for me their own discursive positioning ('where they come from'), and their strategies as agents of communication working within organisations and setting out to change organisational discourses of difference. By asking them 'who' they were and had been, and what their communicative strategies were, my investigative method at times repeated a traditional account of communication, whereby subjects

produce themselves, and are produced in my research narrative, as rational subjects of communication, 'using' language rather than being constituted by it. In other moments, I asked them to consider the contradictions between their different positions, evoking a more complex, multiple subjectivity. Grace describes this interviewing process as exploring and deconstructing 'familiar stories' about the topics under discussion (Bloom and Munro, 1995; Grace, 1998; Hollway, 1989, pp. 16-18, also discuss interviewing techniques as 'deconstruction' or post-structuralist critique through dialogue). I was delighted by the keen response that most participants had to the communication perspective of my research. Most saw issues of language as crucial to their own work, and most enjoyed teasing out and questioning their own language use. I felt validated in my own stand that post-structuralist theory can be made relevant to practitioners in a research process.

In the first ten or so interviews I also asked for organisational stories or 'incidents' relating to conflicts between issues that subjects were dealing with at work. These questions were not successful: partly, I think, because the topics were considered very sensitive, and the detailed nature of stories as a genre, combined with the small size and closeness of the EEO community, meant that people and organisations could be fairly easily identified. When I was told such stories, it was with strong emphasis on the need for confidentiality, and several were told only 'off the record'. After the first block of interviews I dropped that part of the interview schedule.

To carry out an interview which at the same time creates a critique means finding ways to break through the always-already available narratives, the same old debates. These will say nothing new unless the subject helps the interviewer to produce a new account (Hollway, 1989, p. 41). The success of the interviewer rests on the willingness of the subject to think 'outside the box' and of the interviewer to have a clear theoretical agenda which will open up conversation, rather than close it down. I believe it was an advantage that my subjects were on the whole feminists who were familiar with thinking critically and radically, 'capable of exploring themselves in the kind of way that would tell me something' (Hollway, 1989, p. 160). The Maori, Pacific Island and Indian informants, were also, as 'outsiders' to Pakeha organisational culture, very used to de-familiarising cultural assumptions and presenting 'other' perspectives.

## **5. Documents**

Following a suggestion of Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 48-56), I asked subjects about documents and other literature that were important to their work and thinking. Most subjects gave me copies of organisational reports, unpublished papers, manuals and workshop handouts, and, in some cases, their own academic essays on EEO. I also attended conferences in which practitioners participated and obtained conference papers. I collected a wide range of official reports, some of which were actually written by research subjects, either or before the time of interviews.

These written texts functioned as 'background' for me in my interpretation of interview texts, as well as giving me added credibility and making me a more effective interviewer as I developed my understanding of practitioners' work. In the Public Service there is a particularly strong intertextual link between legislation, policy documents, and manuals which authorise work practices. In Chapter 6 I have written about policy documents and the ways that they 'become the basis for holding together diverse and even antagonistic projects' and 'help clear the way for a field of possibilities not given in the policymakers' words or intentions' (O'Regan, 1992, p. 523). I specifically analyse legislation and organisational documents as key discursive resources for EEO practitioners in Chapters 9 and 10.

## **6. Participant observation**

Because I had a great deal of work experience in the Public Service (although not in EEO as such), and because I shared commitments to feminist and anti-racist agendas, and had attended related conferences, read related materials and been involved in related events over a long period of time, I was in some ways a participant observer in the field. I also actually knew about half the subjects, even if only slightly, before I began the project. In the course of the research process, I was invited to give presentations to practitioners, to participate in a long-term national consultative group, and co-published a book chapter with an EEO practitioner. I also wrote a book chapter based on the first interviews, and presented conference papers and seminars based on the research. All these situations provided opportunities to develop my participant knowledge, and to get feedback and develop discussions with practitioners, both those I had

interviewed and others. I also became involved during the project with EEO policies in my own workplace.

## **7. Creating relationships with research 'subjects'**

It was important to me to create positive relationships with my research subjects. This was related to my 'concern with the social relations of the research act' (Lather, 1991, p. 91). I wanted to be meticulous in treating subjects with respect and to keep them informed of the results of their participation. This was not just a general ethical stance, but was specifically related to the way I saw my research as part of my broader political commitments. As a feminist and anti-racist, I wanted my work to be a positive contribution to the agendas we shared.

Most participants were highly educated, most had carried out some kind of research themselves professionally, and so the language and values of research - and, in many cases, feminist research specifically - were generally well-understood. Most conversations about the research process and relationship focussed around the research agreement, which we signed and discussed at the beginning of each interview (see Appendix A). Participants were prepared to give time because they believed that research on EEO would probably serve their work. At the same time, many of them had previously been research subjects, and often had been unhappy with the results. For instance, several subjects referred to a recently-published piece of local research on EEO which they felt had 'got it wrong'. One Pacific Island participant questioned me about whether and how Pacific Island women would get access to the research. Subjects with strong connections with a feminist community also feared that feminists outside the Public Service would tend to be critical of them as 'selling out' ('selling out' emerged as a theme of a number of interviews; see Chapter 9).

When I had transcriptions of all interviews (carried out by a number of transcribers at The University of Waikato), I wrote to all participants offering them a copy of their complete transcript, the opportunity to make further comments (as opposed to 'correcting the record'), and a list of related publications to date. Only one asked for changes to be made - these were to further disguise the identities of others she had mentioned.

Although I was pleased with the seeming openness and reflective quality of most of the interviews, later I was able to find out more about how subjects found the

interview process. It was only after I had given presentations or published work in progress that several subjects contacted me to say that they had been relieved to find that I did not, as one subject wrote, have 'particular hypotheses that you want to prove or reinforce'. Another wrote to me after a presentation that she remembered 'feeling defensive' during the interview, but after listening to my research presentation she was 'reflecting more on who I am, where I'm coming from and how that affects how I do my job as an EEO coordinator'. My thesis was not 'about' EEO in itself, and I was not in the business of suggesting how they could do it better. Unlike other local researchers that I knew, and/or whose work I had read, I did not see myself as in a privileged intellectual or political position from which to point out how they were falling short or doing 'wrong' or 'right', and I did not come from a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. xxiii). I came to have great respect for the work of practitioners, to gain greater understanding of its complexities, and, through sharing practitioners' debates and dilemmas, to understand my own discursive positionings a lot more powerfully.

It is also important to state that, as many feminist researchers have found, I got a lot more from my research subjects than 'data'. What I got from them personally was respect, willingness to take me seriously, interest, and often care and concern. They offered collegiality and validation for my work at what turned out to be a very difficult time in my life.

## **8. Premises for discourse analysis**

Foucault claims that to analyse a discursive formation is to characterise the 'possibility of transformation' of the statements that it comprises. He makes it clear that this transformation works not only in the 'economy of discourse', in terms of regimes of truth, but also 'in the administration of scarce resources' (Foucault, 1972, p. 120). In other words, discourse analysis is a political matter. Butler's feminist/post-structuralist 'denaturalizing critique' scrutinises the discursive practices by which difference is produced and can be resignified and transformed. This critique is my key link between discourse analysis and feminist theory.

Early in this chapter I cited Victoria Grace's comment that discourse analysis should involve careful attention to, among other factors, theoretical agendas and understandings of 'discourse' (Grace, 1998). In Chapter 6 I have discussed

concepts of 'discourse', especially from a Foucauldian perspective. In this section I review in more detail some theoretical premises that I considered in carrying out my discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is not a 'scientific' field of study, and discursive formations have no essential boundaries which can be mapped. The value of any mapping technique is in relation to specific research questions and theoretical commitments. I want to raise a caution about the use of the term 'discourse' (or 'discursive formation') to mean simply any field of study. Discussing a Foucauldian approach to discourse, critical post-structuralist theorist Mark Poster argues that the effects of discourse as a 'register of analysis' are most powerfully discerned if 'discourse' is seen as 'a written discourse as sanctioned by the institutional framework of a scientific discipline' (Poster, 1989a, p. 88). The value of discourse analysis, then, occurs when 'the close reading of scientific discourse may uncover language patterns which, when associated with practices, position those practices in definite ways and legitimize the patterns of domination inherent in those practices' (ibid., p. 89). Poster's emphasis here on 'science' need not limit discourse analysis to a narrow focus on the explicitly 'scientific', but does highlight the importance of regimes of *knowledge* in specific *institutional* frameworks for Foucault's notion of discourse. Poster's formulation also re-makes the point that 'language', i. e., vocabulary alone, does not define discourses. Foucault insists that vocabulary does not equal discourse, and that vocabularies can be 'coded' in various ways depending on their discursive context (Stoler, 1993). In Chapter 12 I specifically engage with this issue in my analysis of the vocabulary of 'managing diversity'.

In distinguishing specific 'discourses', it is also important not to conflate them with specific patterns or blocs of domination. As Foucault puts it:

It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable... we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between... the dominant discourse and the dominated one' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 100).

I am not seeking here to argue what Foucault 'really' meant by discourse analysis, but to argue, like Poster, that the analytic value of Foucault's approach may be lost if the term 'discourse' is applied indiscriminately to any field of study. In my own field studies, the relationship between discourse formations, institutional legitimation and official knowledges is a particularly useful one, and it is central

to a range of appropriations of foucauldian theory by organisational theorists. I also argue that to see any discourse as essentially dominant is to return Foucault's notion of discourse to a binary structuralist form - exactly what Foucault was contesting. Discussing these kinds of distinctions is increasingly important as foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis proliferate, and move into areas - such as analysing human behaviour rather than written institutional texts - outside the domains in which Foucault exercised his analytic 'method'.

For instance, Ian Parker, like many other writers in discourse analysis, treats 'talk' about any topic as a 'discourse': 'discourses are the sets of meaning that constitute objects' (Parker, 1992, p. 8), and discourse analysis involves choosing an object of study which is to be treated as a text and then 'talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse' (ibid., p. 9). In other words, any field selected by the researcher is treated as a 'discourse', and all language is an aspect of 'discourse'. By contrast, Jeffrey Minson argues that Foucault's 'idea is to treat discursive material less as representing the things on which they bear, rather than as a means of attempting to *organise* them' (Minson, 1985, p. 124; author's italics). From this point of view, discourses may organise their objects along substantially unchanged lines, while appropriating the language of resistant discourses. While language is an *aspect* of discourse in the foucauldian sense, it is not identical with the concept of a discursive formation. One crucial reason for maintaining the distinction between language and discourse, which Parker collapses, is to mark discursive formations as dominant elements that distinguish particular historical and cultural settings. Theorising the relationships between language, action, and power relationships *in context* is central to any projects of discursive transformation.

## 9. Discourse analytic research

In this section I discuss discourse analytic research, or what Grace calls 'understandings of... what one is doing in text' (Grace, 1998). Foucault has offered his writings as 'little toolboxes', which readers are welcome to 'make use of... as they would a screwdriver' (Foucault, interview in Eribon, 1991, p. 237), and I draw on his analytic method in this spirit. Foucault's method of 'discourse analysis' (which he never describes as such), occurred in his earlier works (Foucault, 1965, 1970, 1972, 1994) as an 'archaeology' which focuses on the analysis of discourse, and 'questions the already-said at the level of its existence,

of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs' (Foucault, 1972, p. 131), and in his later works (Foucault 1990b, 1991d, 1992) as 'genealogy', with a focus on analysing subjectivity in terms of a 'historical ontology of ourselves' (Foucault, interview in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 237). Foucault 's discourse analysis is driven by philosophical inquiry rather than methodological rigour. In his own words, 'I call myself more an "experimenter" than a theorist: I don't develop deductive systems to apply uniformly in different fields of research' (Foucault, 1991b, p. 27). As a political strategist, and as an epistemologist, he was more interested in finding ways to intervene in specific local struggles and local knowledges than in creating general solutions, which he saw as a problem of radical narratives (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p. 85). While feminist readings of Foucault's theoretical propositions have informed the post-structuralist framework within which my research questions are generated, I also I draw on some quite specific tools from Foucault's toolbox to analyse specific local interventions in local struggles. For instance, I use the concepts of 'normalisation' and 'surveillance' repeatedly to ask how difference is given the 'appearance of substance' in specific discourses. I use Foucault's notion of 'authority' to ask which subjects are dominant and which are marginalised or repressed in a given discursive site, and to ask which discursive processes create these power relations.

In Chapter 2, 'Theorising gender', I have discussed my debt to post-structuralist social psychology, and, in particular, to the work of Wendy Hollway (Hollway, 1984) and the *Changing the subject* group (Henriques et al., 1984a), in theorising a gendered and ethnic subject of communication. As a corollary, I have been influenced by the methodologies of 'discourse analytic research' (Burman and Parker, 1993) generated in this literature, especially the work of Wendy Hollway (1984, 1989), Erica Burman, Ian Parker, and John Shotter (Burman and Parker, 1993; Parker, 1989, 1992; Parker and Burman, 1993; Parker and Shotter, 1990; Shotter, 1989).

In a review of discourse analysis techniques in psychology, Burman and Parker point to the 'bewildering' variety of debates in discourse research, and the 'proliferation of brands of discourse analysis and their multiple origins, each of which involve different emphases or levels and styles of analysis' (Burman and Parker, 1993, p. 3). My approach is to attend primarily to the *communicative* aspects of discourse in working to develop methods of analysing the 'technologies' of gender and ethnicity in organisational discourses. The focus of this discourse analytic research is subjectivity:

as post-structuralist reworking of the knowledge object at the centre of psychology - the individualised subject of discourse (Burman and Parker 1993, p. 1). In his 'how-to' book on discourse analysis, *Discourse dynamics* (Parker, 1992), Parker sets out fully his criteria for distinguishing discourses. They form a conceptual framework for an initial approach to discourse analysis. These lie on a level somewhere between those suggested by close textual analysis such as Fairclough (Fairclough, 1992) and Potter and Wetherell (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) on one hand, and the outlines set out so broadly by Foucault on the other. I have used revised versions of some of his criteria in developing my own list of discourse analysis questions.

## 10. Accounting for interpretation

The universe is made of stories,  
not of atoms.

(Rukeyser, 1992, p. 135).

In the introduction I cited Barbara Townley's idea that explicit 'accountability' is the basis for an openly partial form of academic writing which is open to contest (Townley, 1994). In relation to feminist discourse analytic research specifically, Victoria Grace points out that, while there is an increasing volume of work, there is a 'surprising lack of detailed information' about method (Grace, 1998, p. 111 ). She argues that there is 'a need for rigor in the process of analysis, insisting that discourse analysis involves the development of specific procedures and is not simply a matter of subjective interpretation' (ibid., pp. 116-117). To this end, 'a careful and thorough description of one's [discourse analytic] method allows others to scrutinise what was done and debate points of departure or disagreement' (ibid., p. 117). In this section I spell out some specifics of how I went about interpreting my field studies texts.

As I have emphasised previously, my design and interpretations by were driven by my research questions. While the literature of discourse analysis in social psychology provides a range of interesting analytic techniques, this material is often unsatisfying in its relationship to social theory, especially foucauldian theory. Sometimes this is because, as Burman and Parker (1993) point out, the 'analysis' is merely descriptive and unrelated theoretically to the foucauldian or feminist frameworks which are invoked. My interest is in relating discourse analysis clearly to both a theoretical framework and a broader research

methodology. While I used Hollway's feminist/post-structuralist account of gendered subjectivity from early in my work (Hollway, 1984), her book *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science* (Hollway, 1989), based on a reflexive account of her methodology in her own 'unorthodox PhD' (ibid., p. 3) was helpful to me later in my writing process to validate and develop the theorisation of my research process. In particular, Hollway emphasises the iterative quality of the process of working back and forth from theoretical readings and writing to field studies, back to theory and back to interpretation. As she points out, in this kind of theoretical research, the boundaries between 'theoretical ideas', 'field notes', and 'me' blur (ibid., p. 9). One of the most valuable features of Hollway's reflexive account of her method is the recognition that, as a feminist, she was personally immersed in 'living' the theoretical questions that she brought into her 'field studies'. Hollway developed an interpretive version of Glaser and Strauss' 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to describe the relationship between theoretical concepts, guidelines for 'data collection', and theory development (ibid., pp. 14-15). This account also applies to my own process of reading, writing, data collection, reading, writing, data collection, writing. Interpretation and analysis took place throughout this process.

'Analysis', that is, creating the category boundaries of the research texts, began before the interviews, in my initial drafting of interview questions. My key analytic concept was a synchronic/diachronic contrast. Appropriating these terms from linguistics (Crystal, 1997), I used them to frame the boundaries between discourses by looking at discourse changes over time (diachronic) and differences between discourses at the same time period (synchronic). As Hollway points out, from a post-structuralist point of view 'all meaning is based on difference. Therefore, meanings are established in an infinite network where content and context cannot be distinguished. The boundaries around pieces of discourse used for research purposes are based purely on pragmatic considerations' (Hollway, 1989, p. 39). The 'boundaries' that I inscribed from the origins of the project were based on my research questions and their theoretical commitments: I was interested in how discourses of ethnicity and gender conflicted and converged; I was interested in how discourses of equality had changed over time in interaction with public service and 'market' discourses; and I was interested in how EEO practitioners theorised their own interventions to change discourses of difference.

While I was clear from the start what I wanted to know about transformation and discourses of difference, the more successful interviews - those in which the dialogue was most effective in finding ways to 'think things differently' - were fruitful in terms of opening up more questions. For instance, the issue of 'selling out' arose early, and led to a focus on further theorising the notions of 'complicity' and 'recuperation' as aspects of political engagement with discourse. The use of the term 'managing diversity' was also a hot topic for many interviewees, and led to a focus on theorising the relationships between discourse and change in specific vocabularies of difference. The issue was also clearly a tension point between various discursive positions on equality, and I chose to represent this tension by giving three different interpretive accounts (Chapter 12).

Initially I positioned myself as text interpreter in the centre of what I saw as the 'community of practice' of Pakeha EEO practitioners. In this way I recreated the dominant positioning of these practitioners as authorities in 'EEO discourse', and used the 'others' as foils and boundary markers. In other words, I started with the 'positions of enunciation' with which I was most familiar through my own discursive biography, developed by the first interviews I did. I then moved to seek other 'disconfirming' perspectives (Patton, 1990, p. 178) in terms of which I could critique the established central understandings. My write-up of my field studies followed the same pattern as I first worked on establishing how I saw the core assumptions of the EEO community (Chapter 9); analysed the changing power relations within which they were operating (Chapter 10), and then went on to re-frame their work in relation to 'other' perspectives (Chapters 11 and 12).

In my writing-up, it was important to my interpretive process that I first wrote my theoretical chapters (2 to 6) before writing the final versions of the field studies chapters. This meant that I was already very focussed on the central theoretical issues - subjectivity, identity, agency, discourse, difference - and, by thinking about how difference was constructed in these terms in the academic literatures, I was able to map, to some extent, the same kind of questions on to the field studies texts. However, these questions had to be made more specific to context. Reading a local PhD thesis, Wendy Drewery's *Directions at mid-life: Women theorise their lives* (Drewery, 1995), gave me the idea of setting out my discourse analysis questions in the format below (see Table 4). Derived from my theoretical readings, these questions shaped the way that I generated discourse

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

### **Subjects**

Which subjects and objects are produced?

Who is authoritative?

How is authority produced?

How is agency produced?

Which categories of objects are produced?

### **Discourses**

What are points of historical change?

What are points of resistance or conflict?

How are discourses being resignified?

Where do discourses converge?

What are the processes of normalisation and surveillance in a given discourse?

**Table 4. Discourse analysis questions**

boundaries and relationships, and located my research subjects in discursive sites.

I re-read the transcripts with my questions in mind. Rather than using a single interpretive strategy for each field studies topic, I experimented with various ways of theorising and representing field studies texts. For Chapter 9, I wanted to establish the relationship between subjectivity and discourse in the historical context. In the narratives of their lives that my research subjects produced, I was looking for what Potter and Wetherall describe as the 'sedimentation of past discursive practices' (1992, p. 78). I was specifically looking for narratives of *change* - organisational change, personal change - of how they had been located in terms of the dynamic boundaries of discourse that I was seeking to 'map'. I wanted to theorise these relationships in the chapter, rather than taking them as given from the beginning. I decide to experiment with the notion of 'typification' to begin my discussion, introducing my subjects in terms of two biographical narratives which expressed my own initial 'intuitive' classification of interviews and transcripts. Hollway points out that this kind of 'intuition' in research is 'of course a product of concepts and theories that [the researcher has] assimilated into [her] own understanding' (Hollway, 1989, p. 33), and part of the work of a reflexive approach is to make these pre-understandings explicit. I appropriated the device of 'typification' from Teresa Baer-Doyle (Baer-Doyle, 1993), who in turn adopted it from the work of Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1967; Schutz and Luckmann, 1974).

While Schutz talks about the creation of an 'ideal type' as an 'interpretive scheme' that we all use in the process of making meaning of everyday life (Schutz, 1967, p. 185), Baer-Doyle appropriates typification as a conscious interpretive research process, used to classify research subjects (Baer-Doyle, 1993, pp. 93-94). A typification is 'interpretively relevant' to a particular problem or inquiry (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974, p. 231). Always determined by 'the interpreter's point of view', a typification is constituted as the answer to a question about someone's actions (Natanson, 1970, p. 111) - in this case, my questions about the relationship of subjectivity to particular discursive histories. The typifications aren't summaries but interpretive syntheses of EEO practitioners: as Schutz puts it, 'no matter how many people are subsumed under the ideal type, it corresponds to no-one in particular' (Schutz, 1967, p. 184). In Chapter 9 I describe 'Sarah' and Donna' as two typifications of my core

group of subjects. I then go on to complicate this typification through further theorising of the relationships between subjectivity, discourse and agency.

My analytic approach is represented in the particular writing strategies that I used to sort my interpretive work into chapters. In Chapters 10 and 11, I focused on the power/knowledge relationships that are central to the construction of difference in organisational contexts. In both these chapters I draw on official documents as well as interview material to bring out the intertextual relationships between the official sanctioned discourse of difference, their relationships to other official discourses, and the ways that EEO practitioners intervene in these discourses. Both Chapters 11 and 12 are structured around conflicts and convergences between official EEO discourses and 'other' perspectives. In Chapter 11, I put EEO discourse in relationship to Treaty discourse, and in Chapter 12, I compare EEO with the emerging language of 'managing diversity'.

## 11. Local knowledges

As Grace points out, it is important in discourse analysis research to be clear about 'how... you understand the relationship between narrative/story and discourse' (Grace, 1998, p. 116). Various forms of narrative are used in discourse analysis, as in other forms of interpretive research, either to explicitly write various versions of a research 'story' (Lather, 1991), or to tell what organisational anthropologist Van Maanen calls a 'realist tale' (Van Maanen, 1988). While a 'realist tale' - for instance, a historical account that frames a discourse analysis - is characterised by 'interpretive omnipotence' (ibid., p. 51), Parker points out that all 'tales' are discursively generated, and that part of the work of discourses is to tell 'a story' 'about how they refer to things which were always there to be discovered' (Parker, 1992, p. 16). As Van Maanen points out (Van Maanen, 1988), realist tales are useful devices which help create shared understandings between readers and writer about the interpretive context. At the same time, a reflexive approach requires devices to frame realist tales as conventional writing, rather than positive truths.

In the next chapter I tell three realist tales. These are intended to provide local historical and cultural narratives to contextualise my field studies sites for readers. They also frame my analysis of field studies materials, and as such they were helpful to me in reviewing, drawing together and making explicit, some of

my historical and political taken-for-granted in carrying out my analysis and selecting field materials. I frame these stories by acknowledging the discourses that 'tell' them, in Parker's terms.

## CHAPTER 8

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGES

I think we should ask, as Foucault did... how seemingly shared vocabularies of sexual and social reform may sometimes remain the same and sometimes diverge and/or transpose into distinct and oppositional political meanings (Stoler, 1995, p. 13).

#### 1. Introduction

In this chapter I present three related narratives of historical and cultural change in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the period from 1984-1994, creating an interpretive context for my field studies. Narratives of recent New Zealand history begin in 1984, the year that the new Labour government took office. The dominant metaphor of these narratives is one of 'crisis'. In the official narrative, 1984 is represented as a time when an economic crisis 'revealed' by the new government - and blamed on previous government regulation - demanded radical 'reforms' (Hope, 1991, p. 336; Humphries, 1996). As Grant Duncan has described it, this is a heroic narrative of 'growing up, achieving independence and asserting one's individuality in the face of old-fashioned and traditional social restrictions' (Duncan, 1997, p. 66). In this story, the New Zealand national story of collective welfare is declared obsolete (Humphries, 1996).

Critical counter-narratives tell a different story, but the central mood of crisis persists. Duncan argues that the alternative story is simply a 'tragic representation of... paradise lost' (Duncan, 1997, p. 66). It is true that there has been a sense of loss in the critical narratives, of 'looking back in anguish', as Robin Ingram puts it (Ingram, 1996). But influential critics like Jane Kelsey have gone to some pains to emphasise that the politics of nostalgia is misleading, that changes *were* needed in the 1980s, but that the changes made were *not* the only possible response (Kelsey, 1995, pp. 350-352). Rather than presenting a unitary narrative of loss, critical narratives emphasise the contradictory qualities of the change impulses triggered in 1984, and the crisis that was the effect - rather than the cause - of those contradictions. In Kelsey's version, a revolution in Maori rights and a revolution in right-wing economics were 'set to collide' from 1984 (Kelsey, 1990, p. 23). The 'crisis' takes the form of a 'dramatic erosion of public confidence in representative electoral democracy' that had developed by 1992

(Kelsey, 1994, p. 178). Feminist critics describe a similar crisis: they see a Labour party equality agenda coming into violent contradiction with monetarist rationalities (Bunkle, 1996; Hyman, 1994; Molloy, 1995).

Throughout the commentary on the 'reforms' the issue of language recurs, drawing attention to the new and contradictory 'vocabularies of... reform' (Stoler, 1995, p. 13), that constituted and signaled the new regimes. Writers talked about a 'modified form of English first encoded in the Public Finance Act... and now common throughout the bureaucracy' (Welch, 1992); 'a subtle takeover of ordinary language into a form of doublespeak' (Hyman, 1994, p. 13); the 'avalanche of jargon' (Macdonald, 1992); and the 'dark abyss of pish' (Scott, 1995). They identified the new official 'rhetoric', in which 'buzz-words like partnership, empowerment, equity, accountability and community control' (Kelsey, 1990, p. 2) mutated strangely in company with the language of the market - terms like privatisation, corporatisation, contestability, devolution and commercialisation (ibid., pp. 32-33). Political correctness was hybridised with 'fiscal correctness' (Wilson, 1995, p. 8; see also Hope, 1991, for an analysis of media representations of the economy over this period). The changing and contradictory discourses of the state from the period 1984 until the time that my interviews were carried out, in 1993, were inevitably implicated in the changing constructions of equality and difference in government organisations.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a narrative framework for my interpretations of research texts, especially the interviews. I also provide a framework for readers more or less unfamiliar with the New Zealand context, or with EEO and Biculturalism policies in particular. I spell out the narratives that have been most powerful for my readings, and give specific details in specialised areas of EEO and Biculturalism. I take both a synchronic approach - in which I look at changes over the period 1984 to 1993 - and a diachronic approach - in which I set side-by-side three contemporary change narratives. I present my account in a realist narrative style. I pass briefly and lightly in the space available over complex and highly contested issues. I return to draw some of these out more fully in later chapters.

I began to plan this research project in 1991, my interviews took place in 1993, and I am now completing my write-up in 1998. What I saw and was curious about in the early 1990s were certain patterns of social and political change, and the ways in which they were implicated in changing organisational discourses of

gender and ethnicity. Talking with my research subjects, my version of the change story was often challenged. But my interest here is not in 'what really happened', but in the changing narratives within which practitioners talked about their work, and about ethnicity and gender in their organisations. To create the three key narratives that constitute this chapter, I draw on published feminist, anti-racist and critical accounts of the period 1984 to 1993. I also refer to some of the official documents collected in the course of my research. Although I do not use the interviews themselves as sources of historical information, in some cases the interviewees were involved, in the course of their work, in writing documents that I do use.

All three narratives I use here are told from an oppositional position - that is, they oppose the dominant and official story, and they present a counter-narrative. I also indicate where there are key points of debate among the commentators on which I draw.

#### *A narrative of 'De-regulation/re-regulation'*

In this narrative I draw on critical perspectives of 'the New Zealand experiment' (Kelsey, 1995), the radical programme of political and economic change initiated in 1984. In the dominant account, the programme is framed as 'de-regulation', a removal of restraint on naturally-occurring 'market forces'. This 'regulation' narrative is interpreted from a critical perspective as a product of new right neo-liberalism (Kelsey, 1990, pp. 30-35; Lauder, 1990). From an oppositional perspective it can be seen as a 're-regulation'; a shift in the regulatory regime which shifts resources from some groups in society to others - in Foucauldian terms, a discursive transformation.

#### *A narrative of 'Equalities/inequalities'*

In this narrative strand I trace changes and contradictions in regimes of equality/inequality in the period the 1984 to 1993 period, focusing on EEO. I draw on feminist academic commentators, and I discuss equality/inequality in the context of my previous review of feminist debates on equality, difference and justice in the liberal tradition (Chapter 2).

I refer here to the saying 'Te Reo o Te Tiriti Mai Rano; the Treaty always speaks', which evokes the generativity of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty) narrative. In this strand I draw on changing and contested readings of the Treaty, the central sign of Maori-Pakeha relationships. I take a Pakeha anti-racist perspective, drawing primarily on Pakeha writers responding to Maori accounts of the Treaty, and especially on the important work of New Zealand legal academic and activist Jane Kelsey (Kelsey, 1990, 1994, 1995).

In my reading, the narratives of 'De-regulation/re-regulation', and 'Equality/inequality' both derive from a broader modernist liberal narrative, and indicate the contradictions within that narrative that have been identified by feminist theorists (see the discussion of equality/difference in Chapter 2). The narrative of 'The Treaty speaks' is different, in that it brings a challenge from outside Western modernist frameworks. However, to the extent that a 'bicultural' discourse is enabled by Pakeha engagement with the Treaty, Western modernism mediates our interpretations of the Treaty.

## **2. De-regulation/re-regulation**

The re-regulation of the New Zealand economy is held up internationally as an experiment in 'pure neo-liberal economic theory' (Kelsey, 1995, p. 1), a success story, a miracle, an example - of what to do or of what *not* to do to reform a modern economy (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 1998; Humphries, 1996; Kelsey, 1995, pp. 1-11). Kelsey lists the 'fundamentals' of the programme as 'market liberalisation and free trade, limited government, a narrow monetarist policy, a deregulated labour market, and fiscal restraint' (Kelsey, 1995, p. 2).

For supporters of equality, it was especially ironic that the programme was implemented by a Labour government traditionally committed to a social democratic philosophy and a welfare state. In 1984 there was a loose coalition of Labour Party women, feminist public servants and organisations, inside and outside the state sector, representing the 'EEO groups'. This coalition got EEO moving in the state sector, but was later weakened and fragmented by the major restructuring of state organisations (Walsh and Dickson, 1993<sup>1</sup>, pp. 16-17). First,

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<sup>1</sup> Walsh and Dickson, 1993, was also published in a shorter and revised version as Walsh and Dickson, 1994. I refer to both versions.

a programme of privatisation drastically reduced the number of government organisations. By 1990, Labour had sold 18 government enterprises (Kelsey, 1995, p. 129). The remaining state sector was subject to far-reaching changes. Fiscal restraint was paramount, and generated 'an endless cycle of restructuring which featured budget cuts, job insecurity, a pay freeze and threats to privatise' (ibid., p. 138).

Restructuring of the management of the Public Service was based around the Treasury argument to the incoming Labour Government that 'the aim of management should be the implementation of systems in the public service that can perform broadly the same role for the public service as the price system does in the private sector' (Treasury, 1984, p. 287). This statement signals the introduction to the New Zealand public sector of what is widely described as 'managerialism'. While 'managerialism' occurs in the organisational literature as a term in debates about the rise of managerial capitalism and the power of managers in the modern organisation (see for instance Deetz, 1992, pp. 221-248), it is used more specifically in narratives of change in the New Zealand state. Most simply, it signals 'an approach to public management which... presumes that principles and practices widely employed in the private sector will be equally applicable in the public sector' (Martin, 1991, p. 369). In line with the emphasis on fiscal constraint, 'efficiency' is a central concept, construed as 'doing more with less'. Prominent practices include corporate planning based around specified objectives, performance-oriented remuneration and devolved decision-making (ibid.). This version of managerialism has been influential in public administration in many liberal democracies over the 1980s (Boston, 1991; Lauder, 1990). Managerialism has been driven primarily by practitioners and private sector consultants (Boston, 1991, p. 9). Discussing managerialism from a Foucauldian point of view, Stephen Ball describes it as a 'professional discourse', which 'produces the object about which it speaks - organisation' (Ball, 1990, p. 157). It is a 'theoretical and practical technology of rationality', which 'deploys rationality and efficiency to promote control' (ibid.). It is as a professional discourse that I treat managerialism in my discussion of the work of EEO practitioners.

While the Public Finance Act 1989 instituted the fiscal components of managerialism, the State Sector Act 1988 instituted managerialism in departmental management structures, as well as in state sector human resource management (HRM) and industrial relations regimes (Walsh, 1991). The Act

changed the human resources regime from a bureaucratic control system, in which centrally controlled rules 'constrained the behaviour of managers and employees at an individual level and of union and management at a collective level' (Walsh, 1991, p. 115), to a managerialist control system in which responsibility was shifted from the State Services Commission (SSC), the central state employment authority, to departments, and to divisions or business groups within those departments (ibid., p. 118). Managerial control replaced bureaucratic control. The Act also abolished distinctive public sector bargaining processes, and had the effect of a decline in real wages and the 'clawback' of a number of employment conditions fought for by state sector unions over the years (ibid., p. 121). Advocates of EEO managed to get EEO agendas inserted after the first draft of the Act (Payze, 1991, p. 33), and this part of the legislation constituted the official framework for the EEO environment when interviews were carried out in 1993.

Feminists have tended to see the economic restructuring of New Zealand since 1984 as part of a local and international 'rise of the new right', which 'involves a substantial active and threatened backlash against earlier social and economic gains by women' (Hyman, 1994, p. 9). The market model not only justifies but reproduces inequality by ignoring power relationships between social groups, and by focusing on individual effort and choice. As Hyman points out, there has been no single united position that 'feminists' have taken against the 'new right' (ibid., p. 12). Feminist hopes for the Labour equality agenda of 1984 were 'severely dented' (ibid., p. 17), and feminists have contested the changes on a number of fronts. In the domain of employment, the speedy abolition of the Employment Equity Act by the new National government of 1990 signalled an end to the coalition between Labour Party women, trade union feminists and supportive public servants who had managed to push for broadly based employment equity legislation despite the general 'de-regulation' of the labour market (Ingram, 1996; Walsh and Dickson, 1993, p. 16). It was followed by the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) of 1991, which 'altered the structure of industrial relations in the most dramatic change since the 1930s' (Ingram, 1996, p. 7). It removed unions from the statutes, removed compulsory arbitration and compulsory union membership, and created an 'environment where simply trying to retain wage rates and conditions of employment' became the unions' key task (ibid., p. 9). It became more difficult for officials or members of unions to get resources for specialised EEO work (Walsh and Dickson, 1993, pp. 16-17). Although the ECA covered the private sector, the climate it created flowed into the public sector.

Together with the abolition of the Employment Equity Act, it delivered to private sector employers what they had been asking for: voluntarisation of EEO (Hunt, 1992, pp. 44-46). It removed any obligation for them to review and remove discrimination from management practices, except in the more narrow, individual terms of the Human Rights Act 1993 (Wilson, 1994).

Feminists argue that the economic orthodoxy of the time, which was (and is) 'presented as a package without alternatives, value-free and objective' (Hyman, 1994, p. 9), in fact signals the transfer of power from the already poor and disempowered to the already privileged, especially big business interests. As Phillida Bunkle has memorably expressed it: 'The invisible hand [of the market] is white and hairy' (Bunkle, 1996, p. 6). In her assessment of the impact of market policies on women in New Zealand 1985 to 1995, Bunkle has made three main arguments. First, that the market 'is constructed around implicitly masculinist assumptions', and that the market metaphor has created new social relationships which do not advantage most women (ibid.). Secondly, that women's access to incomes, education, full-time secure work and to health services have all been impaired by the marketisation of the economy. Finally, she stresses that Maori women have been particularly hurt by the new regime (ibid., pp. 6-7). In summary, the period 1984 to 1994 is seen by feminists as a time in which inequalities have been exacerbated: 'for all but a few who have joined the elite, the very small narrowing of the gender gap has been overwhelmed by a high increase in the gap between rich and poor. A far higher percentage of women remain in the lower income groups which have been subjected to increasing levels of disadvantage' (ibid., p. 53).

### 3. Equalities/inequalities

The official discourse of EEO represents the major and critical attempt to address issues of inequality in government organisations since 1984. 'EEO' is an object produced by discourses of equality/inequality, and thus there can be no simple uncontested 'definition'. The practitioners I spoke with tended to operate within the framework of the SSC's description:

EEO is a term used to describe both an outcome and a strategy for change. The outcome is a workplace in which all individuals are able to participate and compete equitably, to develop to their full potential and to be rewarded fairly for this contribution *regardless* of gender, ethnicity,

disability, sexual orientation, age or family circumstances (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 18; author's italics).

In New Zealand, EEO is generally seen as 'beginning' in government organisations in 1984, when an EEO policy statement was first made by heads of departments (State Services Commission, 1995). The context was the government's social justice framework, 'which sought achievement of equity in employment for all people' (State Services Commission, 1996a, p. 40). From 1988, EEO programmes in government departments were mandated under the 'good employer' provisions of the State Sector Act. The Act requires the chief executive of each department to develop an annual EEO programme and to report on the past year's EEO progress. The SSC has a legislative responsibility to 'promote, develop and monitor' EEO within each department in the Public Service (State Sector Act 1988, 6 (e)). An EEO programme is identified in the Act as :

A programme that is aimed at the identification and elimination of all aspects of policies, procedures, and other institutional barriers that cause or perpetuate, or tend to cause or perpetuate, inequality in respect to the employment of any persons or group of persons (State Sector Act 1988, 58 (3)).

From 1991, the EEO Unit at SSC developed a standardised methodology to evaluate the reports that departments were required to provide under the Act. The process was based on a framework, 'stages of development for the New Zealand Public Service', which was intended to provide 'a cyclical and dynamic process for the implementation of EEO across a wide variety of organisations' (EEO Section, State Services Commission, 1992, p. 6). As officials of the SSC, and as change agents, practitioners in the EEO Unit of the SSC came, perhaps inevitably, to be seen by some public servants as 'police checking up on whether or not plans had been implemented' (Kolhase, 1994, p. 269). In Chapter 11 I discuss the surveillance role of EEO practitioners generally.

The State Sector Act's 'good employer' provisions yoke together a range of groups targeted within an equality agenda. These groups are: 'the Maori people', 'ethnic or minority groups', 'women' and 'persons with disabilities'. These groups are named specifically, although other groups may be identified in practice by departments in terms of the general requirement for an EEO programme. There are variations in the ways that the groups are framed in the Act. Some are

recognised in terms of the need for 'recognition of [their] employment requirements': women, persons with disabilities and 'the Maori people'. Other groups are recognised in terms of their 'aims and aspirations': 'the Maori people' and 'ethnic or minority groups'. The 'cultural differences' of 'ethnic or minority groups' are mentioned, although the term is not applied to Maori. The 'need for greater involvement of the Maori people in the Public Service' is specified separately (State Sector Act 1988, 56).

The negotiation in everyday organisational practice of the meanings of the 'good employer' legislation has varied from one department to another, depending on a department's core business, and on whether the legislation has powerful sponsors in the department, from the top and/or from the grass roots (Tremaine, 1991; Walsh and Dickson, 1994). One of the key ways that a 'target group' has been constituted is through the creation of an EEO 'network' group of employees in a particular organisation. Such a group may be initiated by EEO practitioners and/or by active members of the group itself. As at June 1993 there were networks for women in 18 departments, for Maori in 24 departments, for Pacific Island staff in 10, and for 'ethnic minority' staff in nine (State Services Commission, 1994a, pp. 16-17). In 1988 a Census of Ethnicity and Disability (information on gender was already collected) was held to allow members of target groups to be identified nationally and locally, and to allow comparison of the careers of each group. From this time onward, this information was built in to EEO reporting requirements (Burns, 1989; EEO Section, State Services Commission, 1992, p. 5; Tremaine, 1991, p. 353).

The concept of 'EEO Maori' has generally referred to the provisions of the State Sector Act in terms of the 'employment requirements of the Maori people', along with the 'employment requirements' of other target groups. EEO is a discourse that draws on the Western liberal political tradition. Any meaningful recognition of cultural difference puts the universal applicability of this tradition into question. In particular, Maori claims for both participation and autonomy within the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi, and of recognition of Tangata Whenua (indigenous) status, draw from a radically different discourse than that of EEO. The concept of 'EEO Maori' is inseparable from the broader Treaty narrative as it has framed state sector employment issues, discussed below.

Because the scope of this thesis is gender and ethnicity, I will briefly discuss further here how 'ethnicity' other than Maori ethnicity is treated in the EEO

regime. It is clear that Pakeha women have dominated the EEO agenda, and have benefited from it the most (Kolhase, 1994, pp. 271-272; State Services Commission, 1995, pp. 24-25). It can plausibly be argued that this situation reflects demographic 'realities': women constitute 51% of the 15 to 59 age group: Maori 9.7%; Pacific Island people 4% and ethnic minority people 3.1% (State Services Commission, 1994a, p. 46). It also can be argued that Pakeha women 'see and act from their own viewpoint' (Kolhase, 1994, p. 272), and inevitably most clearly perceive our own interests. Another interpretation is that the possibility of coalition that EEO offers to EEO groups has been realised in only limited ways. For instance, Spoonley argues that inter-ethnic coalitions could have provided more support for anti-racist impulses in EEO (Spoonley, 1994, pp. 91-92). One reason for what Spoonley calls this 'failure' (ibid., p. 91) is a gradual orientation towards the Treaty as the basis of anti-racist work in this country. For instance, Pacific Islanders and some others from ethnic minority groups have seen Treaty issues as primary (see for instance Kolhase, 1994). Pakeha anti-racism activist Mitzi Nairn argues that, by the end of the 1970s, broader ethnic terms such as 'multicultural' had been 'co-opted' and 'become suspect', and their effect was to 'divide, dilute and rule' (Nairn, 1989, p. 89). Anti-racism in the 1980s and into the 1990s was focused around the Treaty 'as having both historical primacy and pivotal status' (ibid.).

Pacific Island public servants from the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and other senior Pacific Island public servants, although few in number, have made some impact on SSC policies (State Services Commission, 1993a), and a Cabinet directive of 1991 instructed Public Service CEOs to 'promote Pacific Islands participation at all levels of departments' (ibid., p. 2). At the time I carried out interviews, there was one Pacific Island advisor at the SSC. However, there have been no special advisory positions or policies for 'ethnic minority people'.

At the time of my field studies, I was aware of only one Pacific Island EEO practitioner (who I interviewed) and none from 'ethnic minority' groups. I went on to interview another Pacific Island woman and one 'ethnic minority' woman, both of whom had been active in an ethnic minority EEO network. During the early 1990s, government policies defining New Zealand as an 'Asian' nation, combined with immigration policies favouring certain categories of 'entrepreneurial' Asian immigrants, generated a wide-spread back-lash towards the 'Asian invasion', and a specific challenge by some Maori who saw these new policies as a violation of the Treaty of Waitangi (Walker, 1996, pp. 185-206). In

Chapter 12 I discuss aspects of the emerging trends in discourses of difference in relation to the spaces created for 'ethnic and other minority' groups. Although I do discuss the categorisation of Pacific Island and other 'ethnic minority people' in Chapters 11 and 12, on the whole, this thesis is centred around the Pakeha perspective which I share with the majority of my research subjects, and it reproduces the marginalisation of Pacific Island and 'ethnic minority' issues in EEO.

From 1984, specialised EEO practitioners were appointed to develop and work towards the implementation of EEO programmes. The first was an EEO co-ordinator appointed to the SSC, and in less than two years a network of senior liaison officers in all departments had been established, and some departments had appointed their own EEO practitioners. From 1986 an EEO Unit was set up at the SSC, with a director and four specialist officers representing specific target groups (Tremaine, 1991, pp. 348-349). By 1989 more than half of government departments had full-time EEO co-ordinators, including a few small units with two or more staff (*ibid.*, p. 352). There has been a strong direct relationship between the size of organisations and the number of staff allocated to EEO (State Services Commission, 1996b, p. 12). At the time that interviews were carried out in 1993, out of 37 government organisations covered by the State Sector Act, three of the larger departments had units with two or more staff; six had full-time EEO positions, 10 had part-time dedicated positions, and 18 had positions which included an EEO responsibility. Dedicated EEO positions were variously described as 'EEO Coordinator', 'Adviser, EEO', 'Senior Adviser, EEO', or 'Manager, EEO' (State Services Commission, 1996a, p. 9). Many departments, especially those with regional, divisional or business group structures also had EEO liaison or contact people, and many had various forms of EEO committees (State Services Commission, 1994, pp. 8-9). In addition, there were a number of staff carrying out policy work related to EEO, in organisations with employment policy roles, such as the State Services Commission, the Department of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

It seems to me helpful to see EEO practitioners as a specialised group within a wider number of 'femocrats' who have moved into the Public Service since 1984. In her thesis reviewing the work of 'femocrats' in New Zealand during the 1980s, Gaye Payze characterises them as 'women in positions of relative power within the state, particularly those positions where their holders speak in official contexts on behalf of, or in relation to, women' (Payze, 1991, p. 2). Drawing on

Anna Yeatman's work on femocrats in Australia (Yeatman, 1990), where feminists also came into a range of government jobs on the coat-tails of a Labour government, Payze puts EEO work within the broader context in which feminists began to engage with the state from inside government organisations during the 1980s. She also points out that many EEO practitioners saw other femocrats as their peers and support group (Payze, 1991). Like other femocrats, EEO practitioners embodied the contradictions between equality agendas - especially feminist ones - and the new managerialism of the Public Service.

From the late 1980s the SSC EEO Section held regular monthly meetings for full-time EEO co-ordinators (Tremaine, 1991, p. 352). When the SSC's EEO Unit was briefly moved to the Employment Equity Commission, EEO co-ordinators set up an EEO Practitioners' Association, with a newsletter, training programmes and regular meetings. It had some success in its aim of including private as well as public sector EEO practitioners, and practitioners with part-time as well as full-time responsibilities for EEO work. At the time I carried out interviews in 1993, the Association was still meeting. It was officially wound up the end of 1993, as specialised EEO positions started to be 'mainstreamed' into human resource management positions. The core group of EEO practitioners from the Employment Equity Commission moved back to the State Services Commission and continued some similar co-ordination work from there, although massive re-structuring over this time meant that practitioners had less time to attend development activities.

The increasing dominance of a managerialist agenda in the late 1980s came into tension with progress on EEO. While the 'de-regulation' narrative framed change as a move away from bureaucracy, and towards increased autonomy for managers, the equality narrative extends bureaucracy into new areas. This is seen as a necessary constraint on managerial discretion to be discriminatory (Walsh and Dickson, 1994, p. 47; Tremaine, 1991, p. 343). As one EEO Advisor has expressed it: 'EEO is... a formalised way of interfering, of changing the ways things are done' (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 79). Towards the end of the 1980s, the SSC, whose EEO advisors had been central in driving equality agendas, took an increasingly less direct role in monitoring the details of all types of programmes in government departments (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 79; Walsh and Dickson, 1994, p. 52). As the process of restructuring in the Public Service rolled on, departments argued that re-structuring and financial

restrictions created major constraints on achieving the objectives of their EEO plans (Rendall, 1990; Walsh and Dickson, 1994, p. 51).

Although the Employment Equity Act 1990 did not directly cover the public sector, its abolition was seen by some commentators as a signal of a reduced government commitment to equality agendas within the public sector as well. Within this framework, the trend towards integrating EEO with strategic HRM, and the increased emphasis on the 'business case' for EEO, was interpreted as a victory of managerialism over equality agendas in EEO. Since about 1990, EEO policies have increasingly been 'mainstreamed' (State Services Commission, 1996a, p. 40), moving the emphasis to EEO as a strategic human resource management function (State Services Commission, 1995). Most EEO positions have been moved into strategic HRM areas, or integrated with broader HRM duties<sup>2</sup> (State Services Commission, 1994a, p. 9). Some EEO practitioners saw themselves by virtue of their EEO role as Public Service leaders in working strategically within organisations, and so as being well placed to contribute to the development of strategic human resource management (Burns, 1994, p. 134; Kolhase, 1994, p. 269). These shifts in EEO practice have been the focus of intense debate among EEO practitioners and commentators. From the SSC perspective, they make sense within the 'new context' of the state sector reforms of the early 1990s, within which EEO has been 'repositioned' to support 'the business benefits of a more representative workforce' as well as 'increased managerial autonomy' (State Services Commission, 1996b, p. 28). While some commentators saw the 'integration' of EEO into organisational strategy as a necessary and inevitable part of an organisation's change process (Burns, 1994), others saw it as a withdrawal of previous commitments to EEO (Walsh and Dickson, 1993, 1994), or as evidence that EEO has lost its connection to a 'feminist movement' (Payze, 1991, pp. 65-66, 82-87).

This debate about directions for EEO under the new regime was intense at the time of my 1993 interviews. A key focus for debate was the concept of 'managing diversity'. The vocabulary of 'diversity', appearing alongside or replacing that of EEO, was the centrepiece of the new EEO Trust. This trust was established in 1991 to 'educate' New Zealand businesses about EEO (Potter et al., 1995) and replaced the previous employment equity legislation which gave teeth to EEO in

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<sup>2</sup> Although the State Services Commission progress reports on EEO do not allow direct comparisons of numbers of full-time and part-time EEO positions from year to year, it is clear that there has been some reduction in the number of dedicated full-time EEO positions from 1991 to 1993, and relative stability after that time (State Services Commission, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996).

the private sector. 'Making the most of a diverse workforce' became the Trust's key slogan (EEO Trust, 1992), and in Chapter 12 I discuss the ways that the vocabulary of 'diversity' was read by practitioners in various discursive contexts.

#### **4. The Treaty speaks**

*Te Reo o Te Tiriti Mai Rano; The Treaty always speaks.*

The Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, is the central sign of Maori-Pakeha relationships. The Treaty was signed in 1840 between the British Crown and some Maori chiefs representing various tribal groups. It is widely seen as the founding document of New Zealand. The saying 'Te Reo o Te Tiriti Mai Rano; The Treaty always speaks' (Henare and Douglas, 1988, p. 79), indicates 'that there is something about it which inherently stimulates discourse' (Levine, 1989, p. 17). Because of 'the obvious regard for the Treaty and its place in the post-1840 Maori experience', all dialogue on 'race-relations' must refer to it. Secondly, the Treaty stimulates discourse because of 'the very ambiguity of the texts themselves' (ibid). The Treaty exists in writing as an 'English' version, a 'Maori' version in English of which the original Maori version has been lost, and the 'Maori' version in Maori. Debate about the Treaty has frequently centred around which is the 'real' version and what Maori and English terms in the chosen version 'really' mean. To complicate things further, the meanings of terms in different sections, or articles, of the versions of the Treaty have been read as conflicting in meaning.

Although the Treaty was signed in 1840, and has been the focus of Maori struggles ever since, it re-entered Pakeha national narratives during the 1970s and 1980s as a key and contested symbol of Maori political protest. Although a Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975, it was not until 1985 that the recommendations of the Tribunal were made retrospective to 1840, in arguably the most significant recognition of social justice claims by the new Labour government (Molloy, 1995, p. 95). The major role of the Tribunal is to rule on claims for the return of land, fisheries and cultural resources, that were by various means confiscated by the Crown from Maori since 1840, contrary to the Treaty. Since then, as Ranginui Walker puts it, 'the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal have rewritten New Zealand's history. They also generated a discourse between Maori and Pakeha around the notion of partnership' (Walker, 1994, p.

143). Here I take an explicitly Pakeha and anti-racist view of the Treaty narrative.

In 1983 the SSC was talking about the 'Public service in a multicultural society' (State Services Commission, 1983), but by the late 1980s Biculturalism was central to the agenda, in the context of the broader policy of 'partnership response' (Ministry of Maori Affairs, 1988). An influential report first raised the issue of government employment practices within the context of the Treaty in 1986. This was a report on *Institutional racism* (Department of Social Welfare, 1986), written by a group of mainly Pakeha feminists within the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). They made two key arguments: first, that racism in government organisations was institutional, that is, based on institutional structures and processes; and secondly, that issues of culture and ethnicity were inseparable from issues of anti-racism. They argued in favour of a bicultural organisation in which 'the indigenous Maori culture contributes equally to policy and decision-making at all levels' (ibid., p. 14). Like many of the policy arguments that followed, *Institutional Racism* argued that the large number of Maori clients serviced by DSW required substantial Maori involvement in the department. A Maori Unit of DSW was set up in the wake of *Institutional racism* and subsequent policy developments. The Unit called for 'a bicultural public service', which, like 'a bicultural society', rested on the premise of the Treaty of Waitangi (Department of Social Welfare, 1989).

This vision of a bicultural public service was not reflected in the policy document *Personnel Response/Me Penapenaau* produced by the SSC in 1989 (State Services Commission, 1989b). Taking its cue from the 'partnership response' report produced by the Ministry of Maori Affairs, *Te Urupare Rangapu/Partnership Response* (Ministry of Maori Affairs, 1988), the SSC talks about 'enhancing the responsiveness of the state sector to Maori people and communities' (State Services Commission, 1989b, p. 7). However, the key objective is not biculturalism or even partnership, but 'increasing the number of Maori people at all levels of state sector organisations' (ibid). This 'participation' approach, which refers directly to the State Sector Act 1988, is 'based on equal employment opportunities (EEO) strategies', although the 'principles of the Treaty of Waitangi' are also invoked. Acknowledging that 'Maori people have been identified as just one of the target groups for EEO initiatives', the document asserts that 'there is a particular obligation to implement affirmative action to meet the commitments that have been made to Maori people' in terms of the

Treaty (ibid). A later document, *Maori participation* (State Services Commission, 1993b), based on a Cabinet directive of 1991, refers only to EEO and human resource management issues.

Here I want to distinguish further between Biculturalism and Maori sovereignty within the Treaty narrative. Debates over biculturalism in New Zealand society have continued during the 1980s and 1990s (see Sharp, 1995, and Ritchie, 1992 for key aspects of the Pakeha positions), and the concept has become 'an essential aspect of Pakeha political epistemology' (Culpitt, 1994, p. 48). Whether seen as 'a more culturally sensitive form of assimilation' (Kelsey, 1990, p. 267), or as a potentially genuine 'partnership requiring the sharing of power, resources, and responsibility between two cultures' (O'Reilly and Wood, 1991, p. 321), Biculturalism has, through the 1980s, been the dominant motif of Maori-Pakeha relationships in government. But from the late 1980s there has been what Nairn calls a 'major shift' in the 'analysis, vocabulary and behaviour' of Pakeha anti-racism, as the language of biculturalism and partnership was increasingly seen as being 'in the process of co-option' (Nairn, 1989, p. 89). The shift is away from the concept of partnership, and towards the concept of Maori sovereignty and absolute self-determination or *te tino rangatiratanga*. From a Maori perspective, *rangatiratanga* is not new to the Treaty narrative (Awatere, 1984; Kelsey, 1990, p. 261). James Henare has described the term as used in Article 2 of the Treaty as 'Chieftainship over all their taonga, tangible or intangible... 'taonga' are tangible and intangible culture, language, art, craft, lands' (cited Kelsey, 1990, p. 10). In political terms, *rangatiratanga* emphasises self-determination, the reclaiming by Maori of their own economic resources under the Treaty of Waitangi, and 'demanding political power -sharing in consequence' (Nairn, 1989, p. 89). The power-base of re-constructed Maori economic and political strength, based on Treaty settlements, is seen as a more powerful position than prioritising requests for bicultural participation in Pakeha-created institutions.

The devolution of programme delivery to *iwi* (Maori tribal authorities) under the 1998 *Te Urupare Rangapu* policy (Ministry of Maori Affairs, 1988) could be seen in this light (O'Reilly and Wood, 1991, p. 321-330), although Kelsey argues that devolution was a product of the broader managerialist agenda of decentralising the state, and the claim 'that it reflected a commitment to *rangatiratanga* was a convenient vehicle to sell the policy to Maori' (Kelsey, 1990, p. 247). At the time that my field studies took place, there was active debate among EEO

practitioners and Maori staff in cultural and Treaty units about the relationships between EEO, rangatiratanga, and Biculturalism.

In my 'Field studies' chapter, I have talked about research subjects who were 'practitioners of Biculturalism' and/or working in 'cultural units'. Here I am referring to the range of specialised positions developed in government organisations to address issues related to Biculturalism. The Maori bureaucrats who were recruited into these positions could be compared to femocrats as a group who were brought in after 1984 to drive certain organisational change policies, and who tended to see themselves as a mutually supportive group within government (Gembitsky, 1992). In my group of research subjects, these included Maori EEO practitioners and/or employment policy advisors with a special responsibility for Maori staff. They also included staff in a 'cultural development' unit which was focused on developing a more bicultural and 'diverse' organisational culture. The labeling and situating of Biculturalism practitioners has varied from one government organisation to another. In some cases, units or individual positions providing Treaty policy advice, or other specialised advice about departmental functions from a Maori perspective, were clearly distinguished from units or positions dealing with Biculturalism within an organisation. In other cases, these functions overlapped. For instance, in 1987, Biculturalism programmes in various departments included areas such as Treaty education, racism awareness training, cross-cultural communication, and EEO with or without a Maori cultural element (Hague, 1989, p. 119). In 1988, the titles of dedicated units included a Maori and Pacific Island directorate; cultural development and cultural advisory units; Maori perspectives and Maori advisory units (Kelsey, 1990, p. 295). These were staffed primarily but not exclusively by Maori (Gembitsky, 1992, p. 48).

As indicated by the range of job titles and contexts within which they work, the responsibilities of these Maori staff are often ill-defined. Mitzi Nairn explains some of what is expected - formally and informally - of these Maori staff:

Making connections with the Maori community, mediating when major hassles [blow] up and kindly, gently, tactfully and politely educating Pakeha staff about the Treaty of Waitangi, Taha Maori [Maori matters], 'bicultural development', and the racism of the institution, all without hurting any feelings ]or ruffling any feathers... Add in several and contradictory levels of accountability. (Nairn, 1994, p. 2).

In his review of the role of Maori policy advisors, Brendan Gembitsky has also emphasised the complexity of their accountabilities to the state and to Maori communities (Gembitsky, 1992). Because of the debates about whether it is appropriate at all for Maori to be involved in EEO, Maori working in EEO could be seen as in an even more difficult position than their peers in policy work. These debates to some extent map on to the Biculturalism vs. rangatiratanga tension. EEO Maori as an expression of kawanatanga, or Pakeha-based power structures in government, is seen by some commentators as incompatible with and even damaging to claims based on rangatiratanga (Spoonley, 1994; Waaka, 1990), while others argue that both approaches can be potentially empowering for Maori (Doherty, 1994; Tremaine, 1994; State Services Commission, 1995, pp. 78-80). This discursive conflict is largely the subject of Chapter 11.

The Treaty narrative has its own history and its own kaupapa (philosophy). While from a Pakeha anti-racist point of view the Treaty may seem to be an obvious issue of social justice, there is no intrinsic antagonism between the Treaty narrative and de-regulation. While writers like Kelsey emphasise the convergences between Western social justice discourse and the Treaty, others argue that aspects of 'de-regulation' and market discourse, especially the devolution of government programmes to iwi, in some situations dovetail with te tino rangatiratanga and with entrepreneurial strands in Maori culture (Awatere, 1996; Baird, 1990; Spoonley, 1994, pp. 94-95).

Maori bureaucrats were recruited to give specialist policy and cultural advice to government in the context of the Labour government's advancement of Treaty issues and issues of social justice more broadly. Like the femocrats, they are embodiments of discursive tensions in government: in this case, tensions between Treaty discourse, equality discourse and managerialism.

Stoler's argument, after Foucault, that 'seemingly shared vocabularies of sexual and social reform may sometimes remain the same and sometimes diverge and/or transpose into distinct and oppositional political meanings' (Stoler, 1995, p. 13) is a critical issue in analysing the discursive shifts in New Zealand government organisations in the 1984 to 1993 period. Commentators over this period have repeatedly drawn attention to the new vocabularies and the re-signified vocabularies generated during this period. Stoler makes the foucauldian point that distinguishing discourses and discursive shifts is not a matter of

tracking vocabulary, but rather of tracking the discursive concepts within which vocabularies are signified, re-signified, and transformed. I now to consider a range of contexts for these transformation processes.

## CHAPTER 9

### CHANGE AGENTS, DOUBLE AGENTS, SECRET AGENTS: EEO PRACTITIONERS AS AGENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The participant who wants to discursively contest policies as texts must come to understand how discursive practices operate, how they distribute power and constitute power, and how discursive interventions are possible. This will apply no less to their own discursive practices, including their own policy recommendations, as to those of others (Yeatman, 1990a, p. 160).

#### 1. Introduction

EEO practitioners are organisational change agents. The issue of agency is the question of how action is possible. What is our capacity to act, to intervene, to create change? My specific questions about agency relate to the agent, or subject, of communication. How it is possible for subjects to communicatively intervene in organisational discourses as change agents? In *The archaeology of knowledge* Foucault talks about what he calls an 'enunciating subject' of discourse, who is not the 'author' of the statement she makes. Rather, the 'enunciating subject' is seen as 'a particular vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals' (Foucault, 1972, p. 95). Foucault's interest is in the discursive rules that make it possible for the position that 'can and must' be occupied by the subject of a given statement (ibid., pp. 95-96). From a foucauldian perspective, the subject of communication is not a free agent. Agency is produced by specific location in 'vacant places' that discourse creates. To be able to create 'possibilities of transformation', to intervene in a way that creates discursive change, rather than simply reinforces an existing discourse, depends on the ability to 'replay and resignify the theoretical possibilities that have constituted me', as Judith Butler puts it (Butler, 1995a, p. 42). A reflexive approach to one's own positions is necessary, 'working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude' (ibid).

In this chapter I look at how practitioners are constituted as agents of communication within specific organisations in a given historical moment. I work through some of the general issues of agency that they confront in their work. In

particular, I ask what discursive resources they have with which to create possibilities of transformation. In the three following chapters I look at how agency works in the context of three specific issues in practice: enforcing compliance with Equal Employment Opportunities policies; putting Equal Employment Opportunities discourse into practice in relation to the Treaty; and 'managing diversity' as the 'next step' in Equal Employment Opportunities practice.

I begin by asking 'who' EEO practitioners are, and 'where' they come from: how are they discursively constituted in their own autobiographies? I go on to look at how they see themselves as communicators, and at where they see the boundaries between 'selling' their message and 'selling out'. I consider which discourses are dominant and which are marginalised in Equal Employment Opportunities practice, and at the ways that EEO practitioners authorise themselves as competent professionals. Finally, I return to the question of whether Equal Employment Opportunities practice transforms and re-works organisational discourses.

## 2. Introducing 'Sarah' and 'Donna'

How are practitioners discursively produced as agents who can intervene in organisational discourses? I asked 'subjects' to create a sort of discursive autobiography by asking them to reflect on where they 'come from' and where they feel they 'belong'. EEO practitioners may describe themselves as 'coming from', for instance, the women's movement, social work, Maori community work, human resource management, trade unionism, and/or the Public Service. They may present themselves as currently located in one or more of these discursive positions, and/or as having moved from one to another. In analysing these life narratives, I have sought to map some relationships between communicative practices and identity. This mapping strategy is based on the theory that communicative agency is constituted by positions of enunciation in particular discourses. I wanted to know what discursive resources were available to my subjects in carrying out their work.

'Sarah' and 'Donna' are typifications of the female Pakeha EEO practitioners who constitute the core of the 'EEO community', as many interview subjects called it. In Chapter 7 I introduced the idea of 'typification' as expressing my own initial categorisation process. A typification or 'ideal type' is created by

'taking a cross-section of our experience of [others] and, so to speak, "freezing it into a slide"... This is done by means of a *synthesis of recognition*' (Schutz, 1967, pp. 186-187; my italics). I will draw on quotations from interviews to illustrate my descriptions, but do not attribute these to named subjects. The typifications are synthetic of a range of positions across or within all subjects, rather than a division of subjects into two boxes.

In telling the stories of Sarah and Donna, I introduce some of the key issues addressed by EEO practitioners as agents of communication, and set out some of the key discursive resources that they draw on.

### *Sarah*

For Sarah, EEO work means being 'in a job where I practise my passion, getting paid to shout about... issues for women and Maori'<sup>1</sup>. She came into the Public Service from a background in social work and feminist activism. She sees these positions as related to her 'political drive... towards equity... plus a simultaneous drive to try and change some things'. In fact, she saw EEO work as the opportunity to make political changes on a more systemic level than social work allowed. She also sees her background in activism and social work as giving her 'a kind of fundamental... conceptualisation of why things are as they are'. A political analysis of inequality is often evoked by implication - rather than spelled out directly - in Sarah's talk. At times she refers to it as a 'structural' analysis: one which relates the inequalities of different groups - women, Maori, for instance - to broader social power structures. This 'structural' analysis creates certain objects of inequality - disadvantaged groups, dominant groups, and power structures. It also generates the strategic approach that change must be systemic, not individual. (The 1986 report, *Institutionalised racism* (Department of Social Welfare, 1986), represents a feminist structural analysis of a government department). Her background in feminist activism and social work also represents a sense of deeply felt values, which sustain and drive her in her work, but which also at times come into painful collision with 'the system'. Sarah sometimes presents this conflict in terms of herself as an 'outsider' having to live 'inside' the system:

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<sup>1</sup> I have edited quotations in various ways. Omissions are indicated by 3 points... and insertions or changes to words by [square brackets]. Generally I edit out repetitions, unless I want to highlight them for some reason. I edit out words such as 'um' without marking an omission. I have also used punctuation to create pauses and emphases. I break long quotations into paragraphs for ease of reading by distinguishing what I see as separate points.

At this stage I'm choosing to work within the system and if you are going to work with the system there are certain ways you have to [do] it, and there are certain issues you [have] got to tackle and there are certain ways you got to tackle it...

When you are on the outside things can seem quite black and white and it gives you a lot of energy to fight, it takes a lot of energy to say 'this is wrong and you should do this and you should do that'. When you are on the inside of a system you start to see more of the complexity of it and that can be useful, in that you can actually sometimes target your advice, but it gets to a stage where it becomes damage, it blunts you. I mean, it actually blunts the passion you need and I think that it is a job you need a certain amount of passion to do and so my concern is that sometimes I feel like I'm straddling that border...

Sometimes I'm too aware of the complexities of the system and have too much sympathy for that and therefore don't fight hard enough. Other times I feel like, well, yes, that just helps me actually work it better. But I suspect that another couple of years out and that will be about as long as I can work in the field because that drive will be blunted too much.

In this extract, Sarah positions herself as working 'in' the system at a certain point of her life in order to pursue her passion for social justice, for what she sees as wrong and right. She distinguishes a 'border' between herself and her passions on one side, and the system and its values on the other. As a change agent she wants to be *in* the system, but not *of* it. In a sense, her 'career' is as an activist for social justice.

Looking back, Sarah sees herself as having been quite naive when she first came 'into the system'. Powerful resistances to her work have at times left her 'extraordinarily disillusioned', and she feels there has been 'enormous personal cost'. But she reminds herself that she does have 'a degree of influence in this position' and she sees herself now as realistic, rather than cynical, in terms of her original agenda. Although these days she is more likely to talk about EEO as good business rather than as social justice, her activist background is 'a light on the horizon behind [her] that she keeps there as a reference point'.

Donna had already taken the first steps on the management ladder when she began to work in EEO, and she sees her future career as in a broader managerial role, probably via a strategic human resource management position. She is an insider in the system, and tends to emphasise that she is a manager herself, with similarities to the other managers that she seeks to influence: 'I [have] quite a lot in common with them, I have [a] similar... middle class Pakeha background'. Like Sarah, she is 'personally' committed to social justice, but she sees her EEO job as expressing her commitments with little, if any, conflict: 'the department's view and my personal view [of EEO] are reasonably similar'. Her key focus is 'looking at the department and dealing with the issues here'. Unlike Sarah, she doesn't feel accountable to other EEO practitioners, and has only occasional contact with them. Rather than aiming for fundamental changes in the department's culture, Donna argues that the key to the success of her work has been 'to get EEO integrated into all of the department's policies so that it doesn't stand out on its own'. From the start, 'we've treated EEO entirely on a business basis', rather than on 'humanitarian grounds'.

Donna's main sales strategy runs like this:

The way of selling it to some of these people who are set in their ways in the department really had to be from a business angle: that you have got human resources in the department... and those human resources are very valuable, and if you haven't got people content in their work environment,... if you're losing the skills which have taken years to accumulate, it's really not cost-effective at all.

While Sarah, too, will talk about the necessity of selling EEO on business grounds, Donna discusses EEO almost solely in business terms. There is little sense of the 'border' between her agenda and the organisation's needs as they are constituted in organisational strategy. Where she does see a distinction, she is likely to interpret it in managerial terms, rather than in feminist ones:

I mean management is compromised by and large... it's no different to any other management or specialist role... you've got to go about selling ideas, concepts, and there's got to be a certain amount of realism and pragmatism in what you can actually achieve.

In this account, Donna sees herself as just another specialist with an agenda. Her emphasis is not so much on the contradiction between feminist values and the inequitable system, as on the pragmatics of organisational life. Unlike Sarah, she does not interpret the fate of EEO in her organisation in terms of a 'structural analysis' of power that goes outside the organisation to which she is accountable.

As Yeatman points out, *all* 'subjects are always positioned interdiscursively' and therefore the 'contradictions and incompatibilities' between discourses always prevent a subject from becoming a 'genuinely closed system' (Yeatman, 1990, p. 164). Even more than these typifications suggest, all EEO practitioners are open systems, and may be 'Sarah' at one point, 'Donna' at another. Neither Sarah nor Donna represents a single discursive position, but rather a particular provisional constellation of discursive resources. There is no neat division in practice between, for instance, 'radical' and 'liberal' discourses (Walsh and Dickson, 1993), or between 'feminist', 'managerialist' or 'bureaucratic' voices. Sarah represents herself as being in various ways contradictorily positioned within her organisational context, and so she tends to be more highly sensitive to the discursive complexities of EEO discourse. However, nearly all EEO practitioners saw language as a crucial strategic resource in their work, as well as a salient part of the changing climate in which they were operating.

### 3. Talking EEO

The period 1984 to 1993 is marked by a change in dominant forms of language in the public sector, and of new and contradictory uses for old terms (see Chapter 8). This shift showed up strongly in the account of one of my research participants who had been overseas in the late 1980s, and found a marked change of language in the Public Service when she returned:

There's a whole new language there all the time... And it doesn't even allow certain things to be [discussed]. It just doesn't have the words for it so they're excluded... You have a... lingua franca that's really defined and that's the language that you use and you are expected to use. And people are very conscious of it and they upgrade it all the time... Everybody is saying the same sort of thing. No-one says anything different... people

have got different perspectives on various... issues but the way they talk about the... issues is fairly consistent (Annette<sup>2</sup>).

Annette suggests here that there is a *new* discourse in government organisations; that it is very dominant and ubiquitous; and that it normalises certain topics and perspectives while it suppresses or marginalises others. She explains these points further in terms of the metaphor of distinct languages:

The language itself is coherent... and it's self-contained... It's a bit like saying... certain things are pertinent for me, certain things are unspeakable, because I don't speak Italian (Annette).

Annette relates this new language very explicitly to the new Treasury-driven policies, to the new 'fiscal correctness' (Wilson, 1995). The power of this discourse is partly that it is a 'self-contained' and 'coherent' discursive system which dis-invites contestation *except on its own terms*. Alternative discourses are positioned as obsolete. The power of the Treasury to comment on all major policy, especially via the Public Finance Act 1989, enforces the use of the new discourse of economic rationalism in all policy documents. This discourse then creates the horizon within which all policy discussions in government occur, within which organisational agency is possible.

The processes of normalisation that go with the new discourse include a self-disciplining process which ensures that 'correct' language is used. For instance:

People are very conscious of [language] and they upgrade it all the time... We were talking about brain-storming, and... somebody said 'oh brain-storming's finished. It's really out of favour now', and this young analyst went, 'oh really'. She was really concerned that... she didn't know that this word was out of favour... You could see her sort of replacing that word - getting rid of it, thinking 'I mustn't ever use that at work again'. You know it could sort of ruin career prospects (Annette).

Yeatman points out that a feature of the policy genre is that policy texts are 'written in such a way as to deny the politics of discourse', that is, 'a politics of

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<sup>2</sup> I use changed names where I quote research participants directly. The use of names allows possible connections to be made between various statements by the same person. I do not use names in a few places where I quote just one or two words from a given speaker, in the context of a list of related terms.

contested meaning'. (Yeatman 1990a, p. 160). The language of such texts works to 'make the problem which is to be tackled appear as self-evident, thereby rendering invisible the construction of this agenda by those who produce the policy and the politics which informs this construction' (ibid.). This policy language creates the horizons for various genres of organisational discourse, not just official policy texts. Here Annette is referring to what Yeatman calls 'managerialist-economic rationalist' discourse (Yeatman, 1990a, p. 3), in which economic rationalism drives policy issues and managerialism drives administrative frameworks. The power of the language of the policy genre to silence a 'politics of discourse' is even more salient in the context where 'managerialist-economic rationalist' discourse has clearly and decisively won a national political and economic battle, and where its dominance in the state sector is accompanied by major restructuring of government organisations and a new and much more tenuous employment relationship between the state and its employees.

Annette argues that the climate of repeated organisational restructuring has left people 'very insecure'. She sees, as a result, that senior managers have enhanced control of their workforce: 'not just in terms of getting rid of people you don't want, but also in the way that people that you do want behave'. She also argues that 'Treasuryspeak' has been directly transmitted to departments by replacing 'restructured' staff with managers with a Treasury background. In this climate the discourse of social justice is rendered not only obsolete, but often stigmatised. As another practitioner put it, justice is a 'dirty word':

If you talked about fairness, equity it was sort of like derided and, you know, 'where are you coming from?', you know, 'that's not our concern'... I was told by some... well-meaning managers that that kind of language was not going to be credible... that I'd have to use the language of good business sense, 'what's the bottom line for this organisation?' (Katarina).

In this context where the 'language' of the Public Service has changed and where language use is so salient, EEO discourse becomes important in creating a space for practitioners, as agents of communication, to raise issues of difference and of equality: 'where else in the organisations are those things talked about?' (Tara). Kathy Ferguson has argued that feminist discourse in organisations is constructed of what Foucault calls 'subjugated knowledges' (Ferguson, 1984, pp. 2-23). Foucault says that 'criticism performs its work' through genealogical

inquiry which rediscovers these 'unqualified' or 'disqualified' knowledges operating on a 'local and specific' level (Foucault, 1980c, p. 82). For Ferguson, feminist discourse in bureaucratic organisations accepts neither an 'outside' nor an 'inside' role, but draws on subjugated discourses to 'articulate a feminist discourse that neither accepts the male public world as it is nor simply abdicates it to men' (Ferguson, 1984, p. 24).

Ferguson raises the critical question of what feminist discourse can be in a male-dominated bureaucracy. EEO practitioners have been authorised to speak *as feminists* - that is, as women who represent their own perspective as a 'target group', as well as presenting a feminist 'analysis' of equality issues. This perspective was originally brought 'inside' the organisation from 'outside', and the early work of some EEO networks could be seen as the articulation of 'submerged discourses' (Ferguson, 1984, p. 23). But as time has passed, the overtly feminist positioning of practitioners has become less authoritative. Firstly, the agency to speak for others has been unsettled by refusals from those others: to talk about a unitary 'different voice' or a 'male public world' is now less thinkable within feminist discourse, in both theory and practice. On the other hand, in the New Zealand Public Service there is an increased demand for EEO practitioners, like other public servants, to be accountable to senior managers. Organisational strategies, translated into individual performance goals, are explicitly the only legitimate workplace objectives. At the same time, social justice discourse, with which feminism converges, has become both integrated and stigmatised in Public Service discourse.

Unlike Ferguson's 1984 scenario, where feminist discourse was to be constructed from 'a different voice, a submerged discourse' (ibid., p. 23) and then brought in to challenge organisational processes, feminist discourse in the form of Equal Employment Opportunities had become, by 1993, quite familiar in many Western bureaucracies, and had been met by a counter-discourse which positioned it as obsolete - or marginalised at best - to the extent that it was located within social justice logics. At the same time, aspects of EEO language and practice had been absorbed by organisations. This partial absorption made it possible for some managers to argue that the problems that EEO existed to address had been solved. This argument presented a new communicative challenge for EEO practitioners, described by one practitioner as 'how to confront a marshmallow wall... how to deal with people who make the right noises' (Pauline).

Here practitioners must confront what Gunew calls 'the spectre of recuperation' which ever haunts 'the relations between centres and margins' (Gunew, 1994b, p. 87). Any successful re-signification of a dominant discourse may be in turn re-signified to assimilate resistance. Some practitioners are wary that EEO discourse has been, or will be, marginalised to the extent that it works only on the level of 'word games... management trotting out all this language about equality and so on which didn't get translated into any practical actions and change' (Tara). EEO discourse is theorised by practitioners in terms of a split between 'rhetoric' and 'action':

Sometimes the rhetoric was superb but [there was a] lack of action and the feedback from very disempowered people... was very strong. Like saying 'we are not taken seriously, they say that we [are] but we [are not]' (Pauline).

It is this split between 'rhetoric' and 'reality', or language and action, that Foucauldian discourse theory problematises. Foucault insists that language does not equal discourse, and that dominant discourses may appropriate language from discourses of resistance. Theorising the relationships between language, action, and power is central to the work of EEO practitioners, and to any projects of discursive transformation.

I see EEO practitioners as generally highly sophisticated in their awareness of the complexities, problems and opportunities of communicative practice. They see their communication skills, the ability to 'sell' EEO through the effective use of language, as essential to their professional expertise. They have to be 'chameleons' (Lorna), flexible and 'multilingual' (Cara):

In terms of persuading... organisations about their need for EEO you have to speak it in the language that fits with the people you are speaking with... The whole thing about doing EEO is assessing their audience... And what things are going to make sense to them. Or going to feed their world view really (Cara).

The theoretical resources that EEO practitioners draw on to reflect on their own communicative practices centre around versions of the familiar transmission model of communication, in which sender, receiver, message, medium and channel are all separate (Fiske, 1990). Practitioners take a functionalist approach

to the 'use' of language: 'my strategy is to use communication techniques that work' (Edna). Generally they see language as a strategic tool that enhances their degree of agency - their ability to create change - in organisations. The language of 'business' is seen as a means to an end - a tactic to introduce social justice. Most practitioners also see effective business processes as valid in their own right. Some of the issues involved are traced in the following interview extract:

*Question: Can I just check this with you? It sounds like you're saying that you have a sense of what you want to have happen and for you personally that would come back to your ideas about social justice. Right... And then out of that you'd get a sense of outcomes that you wanted... and then to get those you would argue whole different strategies with different people depending on what, who they were. Is that right?*

Well. No. That's not quite right because... I do also very closely tie to [the approach] that it's not just social justice - as in being a good guy and everyone getting a good deal and stuff... It is also very much the fact that I think that these organisations, the way they lumber on, they really don't benefit from... the diversity of people that are available. So I mean there are the two things really... I mean I do actually believe that... if we have things like better management, the sort of policy advice that would go up would be much better (Cara).

Here I tried to tease out the issues in terms of an ends/means split. This split was refused by Cara. Her point was that she identified herself with both a social justice agenda *and* with aspects of the managerialist agenda. Her phrase, 'I mean I actually do believe that', resonated for me throughout the project. This practitioner refused to be positioned by me in a single discursive location: as 'really' believing one thing and 'using' another argument as a means to achieve her 'original' ends. In carrying out interviews and in reading the transcripts, I was often unclear about how to distinguish 'real' agendas from discursive tactics intended to mask them. I also felt that the subjects themselves were unclear at times about what they 'really' believed.

This lack of 'clarity' - this discomfort with multiple positioning and this insistence on unitary ethical and political positions - is at the heart of my inquiry about feminist discourse in a post-modern context. This lack of clarity is related to how discourse and subjectivity are conceived. If we 'use' certain language, do

we inevitably become subject to it? It seems not. For instance, aspects of EEO language and practice can be drawn on by managers in what seems to be a form of resistance to equality, a strategy of 'tokenism'. Similarly, some EEO practitioners both 'use' and 'refuse' the 'business case' for EEO. On the other hand, both post-structuralist theory and the subjects' own accounts argue for the inter-implication of language and subjectivity in a way that is denied by the traditional split between 'sender', 'message' and 'medium' of communication.

EEO practitioners see language from a functional or 'transmission' perspective. The languages of 'social justice' and 'business' are seen as tools - either for expressing genuinely-held values or for selling these values in terms of 'language that works'. I discuss some specific disagreements about the political effects of using various languages, in relation to the issue of 'managing diversity,' below in Chapter 11. Here I consider more generally some questions of language and subjectivity in terms of the concepts of 'selling' and 'selling out'.

#### **4. Selling/selling-out**

The need to 'sell' EEO effectively was a constant theme in the interviews, positioning EEO practitioners as sales agents whose primary targets were the managers who could resist or implement EEO in their organisations. With the State Sector Act 1998, the Public Finance Act 1989, and the shift from enforcement to persuasion signified by the abolition of pay equity legislation in 1991, 'selling' EEO to managers as a way of achieving their business outcomes was seen by practitioners as their strongest card. Legislative requirements came second, and appeals to 'fairness' (rather than 'social justice') came last, if they were used at all. The dominant 'business' message draws on the discourse of strategic human resource management, positioning target group members as 'human resources' which should be used effectively by managers to further organisational strategies. This means that 'as a good manager you will of course want the best people for the job' (Andrea), and that there is a 'direct correlation' between organisational effectiveness and 'happy, involved, committed and motivated staff' (Susan). For some specific EEO programmes, such as on-site child-care and extended parental leave provisions, formal cost-benefit analysis may be used (Torrie, 1994). The second way that the 'business' message positions target groups is as 'clients' or 'customers' of government organisations. The argument here is that the needs of specific client groups must be effectively targeted, and that this is best done by an organisation that includes a

representative proportion of the target groups: 'We're talking customer service... looking at servicing only particular cultural groups is ineffective from a business point of view' (Sharyn). The link with EEO is that:

You can't provide a... culturally appropriate service to clients unless you have, in the ranks of the employed, people who can understand and communicate with those client groups, and are reasonably happy and well-served in their own positions. So that's where EEO comes in, in terms of selecting appropriate people and training them and keeping them on board (Susan).

In discussing both their own tactics and those used by others, practitioners frequently invoked ethical frameworks as well as issues of political strategy and professional competence. In the debates between means and ends, in the confusion over what we 'say' and what we 'do', the boundary between 'selling' and 'selling out' becomes blurred. Practitioners talk about this issue in terms of 'compromise', 'integrity', 'cop-outs' and 'sell-outs'. In thinking through communicative strategies, practitioners have different ways of framing the distinction between the 'message' and the 'language' (or 'medium'):

I don't want to compromise the message but I do want to find and target ways in which that message is received by the employers out there. So that does mean actually using different language, it does mean now promoting different selling points in terms of EEO and I still use a social justice message but I use other messages as well (Alison).

At first Alison distinguishes the 'message' from the 'language', but later talks about sending more than one 'message'. I see this distinction as significant: there are genuine debates here about the relationship between 'message' and 'language'. These debates are not only about theorising communication strategy, but about politics as 'the art of the possible'. EEO practitioners sometimes talk as if there is a single basic message, sold in different languages; at others, they talk about multiple, converging messages, as in Cara's comment that she 'really believes' that good business and Equal Employment Opportunities go together. One practitioner's 'chameleon' abilities to sell Equal Employment Opportunities may look to another like 'compromise' or lack of 'integrity'.

Foucault saw 'ethics' - 'understood in a "practical way"' (Rose, 1996, p. 153) - as 'the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself... which determines

how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 352). He examined ethical fields in terms of the 'technologies of the self' by which individuals 'transform *themselves*' (Foucault, 1988, p. 18; my italics) in the context of broader discursive transformation. The corollary of self-regulating ethics is regulating the ethics of others: so that, as Parker explains it, the subject is 'glued in place from within by the responsibility of responsible agency (confession) and from without by the apparatus of surveillance (discipline)' (Parker, 1989, p. 60). EEO practitioners evaluate the ethics of their own actions and those of others within specific discursive contexts. For instance, one practitioner described her predecessor this way:

I think she was a very passionate woman... I don't think she had... that kind of ability to be chameleon-like in that sort of environment... I think she was a person of strong integrity (Katarina).

Here, as in a number of the autobiographical accounts, 'passion' is associated with integrity and deep personal commitment to equality agendas. Being 'chameleon-like' means not having integrity. This distinction contrasts with Lorna's approving reference, in an earlier quotation, with her ability to be a 'chameleon' in her communicative practices.

Katarina goes on to place herself within this ethical discourse:

I found myself right from the start feeling absolutely compromised and there is no way I could have carried out this job without losing my integrity and in the end I just [left] (Katarina)

In practitioners' accounts, personal and political agency is distinguished. *Personal* agency is framed in terms of an ethical category of 'integrity', in which communicative strategies are related to deeply or 'fundamentally'-held values. *Political* agency is framed within categories of 'ends' and 'means'. 'Personal' and 'political' agency are both invoked in evaluating the processes of 'selling' and 'selling out'.

## 5. Double agents

EEO practitioners frequently describe themselves and others as having to operate within two or more sets of accountabilities. These accountabilities are

relationships within which agents must 'answer to' others. In this sense they are agents acting for those others. In the Public Service, formal accountabilities are spelled out in the system of delegation of statutory authority, most recently in the form of the State Sector Act. Double or multiple accountabilities may be described by practitioners as conflicting, converging, or both. In analysing the accountabilities of EEO practitioners as change agents, I use the metaphor of the 'double agent' who feigns loyalty - accountability - to one cause, while 'really' acting for another. As in novels of espionage, as agents dwell in two or more sets of accountabilities and commitments, in two discourses, clarity about where 'true' loyalties lie becomes blurred. This is how one practitioner maps the connections between commitment and accountabilities:

I'm fairly cynical of a lot of people who work in the EEO field. I think that... a number of people have seen EEO as an employment band wagon and they have sort of put up their cards saying I'm an EEO Consultant and in my view they have... very little experience or understanding of the issues and I'm appalled... that people employ them...

I'm there to work for the target group, I'm not there to pander to the niceties of management... I'm committed in all the things that I do to the advancement of women and the other EEO target groups, now in the role of EEO Coordinator, I am employed by management to work for management but my basic philosophy and purpose for being there is to work for the target groups. I think that...a lot of people working in the EEO field have very little commitment. I think a lot of people are just in it for the job I'd have to say (Marie).

For this speaker, lacking 'commitment' to the 'advancement' of 'the target groups' is an implied sell-out - being 'just in it for the job'. She also invokes a professional competence which is authorised by 'experience or understanding of the issues' from a political, rather than a managerial, perspective. She positions EEO practitioners within a social justice discourse as the *real* EEO professionals. Marie particularly questions the authority of 'consultants', who are associated with the private rather than the public sector, and thus with managerialist discourses, and, by implication, a commitment to the individual career, rather than to social justice objectives which serve collective ends. Here she echoes the attack on 'femocrats' by feminists outside the state sector who represent them as

'passive, self-interested and individualist' (Payze, 1991, p. 3). In Marie's account, this accusation is referred out to 'others' in the EEO field.

Marie raises the issue of accountability in terms of being accountable to 'target groups' as opposed to 'management'. This dichotomy is a frequent point of contest in EEO work, with the term 'social justice' used as a kind of proxy for the 'advancement' of the 'target groups'. EEO practitioners vary widely in the extent to which they work with 'target group' networks within the departments, and the extent to which they feel accountable to them. Most are more inclined than Marie to see themselves as clearly accountable to senior management. This accountability refers to the employee relationship, in which, like other managers, they are constituted as accountable to the senior management of the department. Many EEO practitioners also see their accountability to managers as strategic: they see structural change as occurring most effectively if it is implemented by managers:

I do see EEO as a... way of managing. I'm very keen [on] setting up networks and so on for the staff but I really am keener on making management improvement... The managers are responsible for EEO and I want to put more effort into bringing them into account (Lorna).

Here EEO discourse is addressed *to* managers as the prime audience. There is also an attempt to make managers, in a sense, reciprocally accountable to EEO practitioners, to the extent that practitioners signify the delegated statutory requirements to meet Equal Employment Opportunities objectives.

Accountability is a crucial aspect of our construction as agents: it constitutes the audiences that we address, as well as the positions from which we may speak. As John Shotter puts it, the subject is constituted as an 'I' with an 'inside' that can be accessed through processes of confession or surveillance, the 'mobile sign' of 'I', as John Shotter puts it, (Shotter, 1989, p. 140). This 'I' enables and requires us to be accountable within systems and relationships of power and identity. Relationships of accountability between EEO practitioners, 'target group' members, and managers, are central to the discourses of Equal Employment Opportunities. These relationships position each type of identity within their discursive context. The work of EEO practitioners could be seen as an attempt to intervene in, and change, the relationships between managers and target groups.

In Chapter 10 I analyse relationships between EEO practitioners and managers, and in Chapter 11 I analyse relationships with and between the 'target groups'.

Conflicting accountabilities - the condition of being a 'double agent' - are framed by practitioners in ethical and/or political terms. The ethical and political issues framed by practitioners make sense within specific discursive contexts. These contexts frame the agency of EEO practitioners: what they can say; who they can speak to and for; 'whose' agents they are; the kinds of expertise and experience that they are professionally authorised by. From the point of view of discourse theory, a crucial question is: to what extent does the language in which they 'sell' their message become the only available place they can step into? In 'feeding the world view' of managers, as Cara put it, how do they also 'feed' and develop a resisting 'world view'?

In practitioners' accounts, discursive change in the workplace is entwined with their own changing subjectivities:

I wouldn't say that it was... just the features of the job that might have caused me to be more low key. But definitely I think my sort of loyalty to the department, and my desire to see myself as being a really effective person, has probably meant that when I am talking with people I maybe take a perspective or use language that, if I didn't have this job, I wouldn't be using (Edna).

The issue here of whether and how my 'job' becomes 'me' is experienced as acutely problematic by feminist EEO practitioners who have come 'into' the system with a conscious agenda to change it. Their struggle - whether framed ethically, politically, or both - centres around their entry into organisational discourses. Being able to work within and 'use' these discourses is seen as the key to agency within the organisations. But resisting being 'co-opted' by dominant discourses is the key to retaining feminist agency, that is, agency as generated by feminist discourse.

The communicative strategies of EEO practitioners as change agents in organisational discourses of difference are generated by their accounts of their own subjectivities: 'who I am' constitutes my rationale for 'how I communicate'. Drawing on Gunter Kress' work in linguistics, Yeatman theorises that organisational change agents produce new 'texts' - accounts of their work - which

attempt to resolve unresolved tensions and contradictions in their inter-discursive situations (Yeatman, 1990a, pp. 164-165; Kress, 1985). When I carried out interviews in 1993, many EEO practitioners specifically rejected unitary resolutions of discursive tensions. While some EEO practitioners clearly privilege managerialism, and have no problem with that, others seek to maintain and develop a discourse of Equal Employment Opportunities which does not roll over to managerialist discourse, that maintains the possibilities of resistance. In Judith Butler's thesis, agency is enabled when discursive tensions are kept in play and re-worked to provide a critical space. This project requires a reflexive ability to 'understand how discursive practices operate' and to apply this understanding 'to their own discursive practices, including their own policy recommendations, as [they do] to those of others' (Yeatman, 1990, p. 160). This reflexive ability requires active engagement with discursive tensions, as well as a critical language with which to 'replay and resignify the theoretical possibilities that have constituted [oneself]' (Butler, 1995a, p. 42). I propose that feminist post-structuralism makes available a critical language which enables political intervention in what Riley calls 'reflexivity and an ironic spirit' (Riley, 1988, p. 98). But no intervention is possible or thinkable without resistance to dominant discourses. This resistance does not need to take the form of 'massive binary divisions' but can operate in terms of 'mobile and transitory posits' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96).

## **6. Losing 'the language of resistance'?**

One of the trade unionists I interviewed, Janet, raised a crucial issue when she was talking about the new language of Equal Employment Opportunities as 'managing diversity'. She described herself as telling EEO practitioners that 'you are losing the language of resistance'. In 1993, three key points of resistance to managerialist discourse were available to EEO practitioners in the Public Service. One was the challenge posed by the Treaty of Waitangi, which for Pakeha EEO practitioners was an important resource to draw on in re-working a social justice agenda. I deal with this issue in Chapter 11. Here I discuss two other key points: feminist discourses 'inside' practitioners, and trade union discourses 'outside' government organisations.

I have described Sarah as an outsider working within the system. Her 'outsider feminism' was constituted as an internal reference point. While many practitioners told me that the feminism of their earlier lives - of the 1970s and early 1980s - was

still a touchstone for them, this discourse was currently rarely mobilised in practice. A number commented that they found it unfamiliar now to talk about their work in the feminist terms that framed some of my questions: as one commented, after I had turned off the tape-recorder, 'I haven't talked in this language in ages' (Tara). Unlike Maori practitioners, who regularly consulted in Maori networks outside as well as inside the Public Service, often literally going 'home' to their tribal area, Pakeha EEO practitioners had no distinct point of reference in the form of a community *outside* the Public Service. Several told me that they could no longer discuss their work with their feminist friends, because the professional issues for EEO practitioners could no longer be easily explained to people with no specialist experience. They were also wary because they had been accused in various ways of 'selling out': 'I don't feel so accountable now but I have felt judged by [people] without a clear understanding' (Edna). Several saw 'the EEO community' as providing that 'home' where they could be openly feminist and where their position in the 'system' was sympathetically understood. However, even in this context, the outsider discourse of feminism was rarely explicitly articulated. I see this outsider feminism as operating as a 'submerged discourse' *within* practitioners, located in their personal pasts. The feminist communities that generated these perspectives no longer existed in the old form, and so were no longer there to consult, even if practitioners had wished to do this. Only one or two of the EEO practitioners I talked to had important links to contemporary feminist activities outside their work.

Anna Yeatman has argued that 'equity' as a policy issue became 'residualised' in the Australian Public Service after managerialism became dominant there (Yeatman, 1990b). I see this 'residualised' feminist discourse as 'submerged', in Foucault's terms: not the not-yet-articulated discourse that Ferguson evokes, but as a submerged discourse that did break the surface at one point, but which has now been once more pushed below. I argue that the feminist discourse that practitioners brought in from 'outside' the Public Service exists in a 'residual' way within their subjectivities, as a kind of internal 'secret agent' who rarely breaks cover. Her existence shows up when practitioners talk about using 'subterfuge', being 'sneaky' and having 'personal' agendas which at times diverge from organisational ones as defined by senior management. They talk about having to work in a 'hidden' way, to achieve their objectives 'despite the system', and to have to maintain a 'double vision', looking from both 'inside' and 'outside'. Like secret agents they see themselves as not free to express what they

'really' believed - or their 'real' identity - because they fear they will lose legitimacy in the organisation, and thus defeat their strategic purpose. Seen as secret agents, some EEO practitioners are not simply interdiscursively positioned, but are actually hiding or masking what they see as their primary subject position. If feminist EEO practitioners are secret agents under deep cover, when do they come in from the cold? Or, as one trade unionist expressed it, using the metaphor of the Trojan horse, 'when [do] EEO practitioners jump out of the horse?' (Janet). Here the 'horse' is the language of managerialism, and the EEO practitioners jump out to fight the battles of social justice. When and where is the time and place that a critical feminist discourse - one that can contest and still engage with the assumptions of managerialism and bureaucracy - can be developed? One practitioner sums up the discussion about Equal Employment Opportunities strategy this way:

My own belief is that it's actually social justice, kind of fundamentally, but that's not a selling point, so '[EEO] is good for business' will be used up front, but as long as the people doing EEO don't come to believe that [the business case] is the be-all and end-all of it (Pauline).

If the 'business case' is not going to be 'the be-all and end-all', how can 'the people doing EEO' locate and mobilise a discourse of social justice - or other resistant discourses - to generate alternative 'beliefs' about EEO?

It seems clear that a feminist 'social justice' perspective that is located in the personal 'pasts' of EEO practitioners, that is *in practice* positioned as obsolete or residual in EEO discourse, and that is not brought into play in locations where it can be developed in new social and historical contexts, cannot be an effective source of critical discourse. To the extent that this residual discourse is marginalised in the dominant discourse of EEO, the actual deployment of any form of 'social justice' perspective that resides in the subjective 'pasts' of practitioners depends on this particular cohort remaining in EEO positions. To the extent that they are moving out of the system or into other management roles, and that the discourse of strategic HRM assimilates EEO, a critical feminist account of equality issues within organisations will become completely marginalised in practice. It is not that the strategic adoption of aspects of managerialism or bureaucracy inevitably leads to a 'sell-out', nor is it a question of the 'integrity' of individuals, but rather a question of the conditions in which EEO discourse remains effective as a transformative force.

I agree with Yeatman that it is possible for practitioners within the Public Service to 'discursively contest policies as texts' (Yeatman, 1990a, p. 160), with a strong insider understanding of the way that organisational discourses work. It seems possible to be strategic agents of communication, to step into dominant discourses in a way that contests them and reworks them. It is the interdiscursivity of EEO - the extent to which it creates spaces within which both organisational discourses, and feminist discourses, can be looked at from 'elsewhere' - that EEO can transform organisational discourses. 'Feminism' is always historically and culturally situated in relation to the horizons of dominant discourses (Yeatman, 1995) - there is no 'genuine' feminist discourse, but there are feminist discourses that are more or less effective in creating certain transformations in certain specific historical and cultural situations. To put it another way, EEO discourse is not an abandonment of the 'genuine' feminism of a certain era, but a new form of feminist discourse, constituted within and across specific organisations. However, its effectiveness as an oppositional discourse depends on the existence of locations where practitioners can articulate a 'language of resistance'.

The interviews with trade unionists were very important for me in distinguishing what was missing and what was marginalised in the discourse of Equal Employment Opportunities. While the power of trade unions has been dramatically reduced since the Employment Contracts Act, trade union discourse is still an important site in which to consider the employment relationship from *outside* the managerialist discourse of human resource management. From the perspective of the trade union feminists that I interviewed, the discourse of human resource management silences any discussions about power in terms of conflicts of interest between employers and employees, about exploitation of employees in the service of organisational objectives. While some individual trade unionists maintained informal links or were sometimes consulted by EEO practitioners, the worker perspective was clearly marginalised within Equal Employment Opportunities discourse. For the trade unionists I interviewed, the gap between EEO practitioners and feminists in trade unions opened up after 1990, as Equal Employment Opportunities discourse increasingly converged with the discourse of strategic human resource management in the aftermath of the State Sector Act and the Employment Contracts Act. Although some of the EEO practitioners I spoke to had trade union backgrounds themselves, none talked explicitly about the employee

relationship in terms of power, or about the role of unions in Equal Employment Opportunities. In Chapter 12 I analyse the ways that trade union discourse creates resistances to managerial discourse, especially where it takes the form of strategic human resource management.

## **7. You can't go 'home' again**

In the feminist literature on EEO, criteria for assessing 'the extent to which femocrats are agents of change in the state' tend to centre around 'whether they are feminists. Whether they represent the agendas that characterise the feminist movement' (Payze, 1991, p. 83). In her 1991 thesis on EEO co-ordinators as 'femocrats' (Payze, 1991), Gay Payze characterises 'feminism' as 'involvement with feminist groups and organisations' outside 'the state', as specifically distinct from involvement in the EEO professional community. This kind of critique wants to refuse to EEO practitioners the authority of 'feminism'. It assumes a feminist 'home', a community or discursive location in which 'feminists' dwell and to which they are ultimately responsible. Any such imaginary 'home' for feminism depends on what US feminists Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty call 'invisible and only apparently self-evident boundaries around that which we define as our own' (Martin and Mohanty, 1986, p. 192). I argue for a different approach, in which debates over the 'boundaries' of feminist discourse are used to inquire into what feminist discourse does in a given context. Such an approach would also avoid what Martin and Mohanty call 'the all-too-common conflation of experience, identity, and political perspective' (ibid.), in which a given 'individual' is tied to a particular identity and politics:

The 'unity' of the individual subject, as well as the unity of feminism, is situated and specified as the product of the interpretation of personal histories, personal histories that are themselves situated in relation to the development within feminism of particular questions and critiques (ibid).

In this chapter I have presented interpretations of 'personal histories', based on accounts that research subjects produced in relation to my 'particular questions' and their own. In this inquiry I have been interested, not in individuals and their political effectiveness as such, but in the ways in which their communication strategies are linked to fields of power and resistance in state organisations. I have done this by mapping certain kinds of statements in terms of certain discourses. I have also talked about the ways that EEO practitioners theorise

their own communicative strategies as change agents, and argued that a post-structuralist perspective introduces reflexive possibilities that are not available in 'transmission' models of communication.

In most situations of power and resistance, 'one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves', as Foucault puts it (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96). Rather than repeating binary divisions between entities such as 'feminism' and 'the state', feminist criticism needs to 'continually operate both from within and outside of traditions and communities' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 108). Feminist post-structuralism can contribute to 'possibilities of transformation' by providing frameworks which practitioners can draw on to move between and reflect upon their changing positions as 'enunciating subjects' in the discourses of the organisation. The political effects of their strategic 'interdiscursivity' will be seen at local and specific levels, rather than in some major binary trade-off between 'justice' and 'business' or 'feminism' and 'managerialism' for instance. In the following chapters I carry out more experiments in feminist/post-structuralist theory by discussing EEO practitioners as agents of communication confronting local and specific points of tension.

FEMINISTS SEIZE THE PANOPTICON: EEO AND THE NORMALISATION  
OF EQUALITY

Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96).

**1. Introduction**

In this chapter I focus on the relationship between communication and power. In particular, I am interested in the power that EEO practitioners deploy as they seek to create compliance with EEO programmes. The idea that 'feminists seize the panopticon' represents for me the paradoxical process by which EEO practitioners, as feminists within government organisations, work through 'apparatuses of security' (Foucault, 1991c, p. 104) to normalise a regime of equality. Listening to practitioners talk about taking 'quite deliberate and coercive measures' (Pauline), I was fascinated by the contrast between feminist notions of liberation and the seemingly repressive approach that practitioners took in enforcing compliance to EEO programmes. Foucault's theories of power and resistance problematise the humanist liberation/repression model of power. His account of power relations as a 'dense web' with many possible 'points of resistance' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96) upsets structural analyses of power in which dominant and oppressed groups are clearly located and locatable. These questions are important to feminism because feminism sees itself as an essentially liberatory discourse, one in which resists dominant patriarchal discourse from the bottom up (Yeatman, 1995).

In this chapter I argue that feminism has effectively re-signified organisational discourses to create 'Equal Employment Opportunities' by working through processes of normalisation which are repressive, as well as productive. Re-signification, or the re-regulation of meaning and communication, does not work unless there is an effective 'adjustment' between 'resources of communication

and the play of power relations' (Foucault, 1983, p. 219) within specific disciplinary formations. In other words, change agents must not only find ways to intervene by re-signifying organisational discourses, they must find ways to line up power relations to legitimise and maintain the re-worked discourse. This means that EEO practitioners must act in some ways as agents of resistance - resisting and re-working organisational discourses - and in other ways as agents of domination - gaining leverage over competing interpretations through marginalisation and repression.

Through EEO programmes, feminists have been to various extents effective in seizing the panopticon in government organisations, and turning their normalising gaze on discourses of difference and equality within those organisations. In *Discipline and punish* (Foucault, 1991d), Foucault uses the metaphor of the panopticon to represent modern social processes. The panopticon was designed so that prisoners could be kept under surveillance, and its genius was that this surveillance could be carried out all the time, or any of the time, without prisoners knowing for sure when they were being monitored. The key effect of the panopticon is that the individual disciplines him or her self in the direction of the required norm. They become *self-regulating* subjects. As Jeffrey Minson points out, the metaphor of the panopticon is too totalising, too evocative of repression, to be used alone to explain Foucault's notion of power in the disciplinary society (Minson, 1985, pp. 97-98). But its generativity derives from its challenge to humanist notions of freedom and repression, and from the link that it makes between 'internal' and 'external' regulation. Jana Sawicki argues that the 'emphasis on normalisation' is 'a major advantage of the disciplinary model of power' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 85), because normalisation makes the link between surveillance and subjectivity, operating 'by inciting desire, attaching individuals to specific identities, and addressing real needs' (ibid). At the same time, undesirable desires, identities, needs and knowledges are made ab-normal through processes of marginalisation, repression, subjugation. The link between surveillance and normalisation also emphasises how central visibility is to power, and in his later work on sexuality and the confessional, Foucault develops this point - that discourse makes social domains visible, and thus opens them up to normalisation (Foucault, 1990b).

In this chapter I look at how EEO discourse creates normalising practices within government organisations, proliferating discourses of equality and difference, and opening them up to regulation. Here I emphasise feminist discourse

specifically, looking at re-signification through 'gendering' and 'de-gendering' organisational discourses, and I analyse how practitioners theorise the ways that they exert force and persuasion on others to bring about their change agenda.

## 2. Playing the state

EEO practitioners in the New Zealand Public Service must come to terms specifically and directly with power relations in state organisations. In New Zealand in the early 1990s, this meant addressing a particular combination of managerial and bureaucratic discourses, and particular combinations of what Foucault called *monarchic* (or 'sovereign' or 'juridical') power and *disciplinary* power (or 'governmentality' or 'pastoral' power). Much of the recent work on re-theorising organisational behaviour after Foucault has focussed on the new forms of disciplinary power in organisations, especially those authorised in various ways by the discourses of medicine via psychology. The authority of psychology as a discipline drives both official and 'folk' theory in change-oriented fields such as human resource management, education, and change management (Clegg, 1994; Hollway, 1991; Rose, 1990, 1996; Townley, 1994a). There is disagreement about the extent to which this new form of power has supplanted the older monarchic power. Newton argues that force is still a central feature of employee relationships, primarily through the fear of job loss (Findlay and Newton, 1998). Juridical power, associated with monarchic power, still has a part to play in regulating some aspects of employment relations (e.g., non-discrimination laws), and is especially salient in state organisations in which power refers repeatedly back to statutes. For Foucault, disciplinary power is on the ascendant, but both types are 'absolutely integral constituents of the general mechanism of power our society' (Foucault, 1980c, p. 108), although they are 'absolutely heterogeneous types of discourse' (ibid., p. 107).

I emphasise the pastoral power of the state here (Foucault, 1983), because it is this pastoral drive to salvation which takes its form in various types of intervention for the 'welfare' of subjects, and thus shows up as legislative and regulatory programmes in fields such as EEO. Here the state's pastoral responsibility for citizens generally overlaps with its responsibility to its own employees, through the 'good employer' provisions of the State Sector Act, and the persistent traces of 'social justice' discourse in EEO policy (Burns and Hanson, 1997; State Services Commission, 1995; State Services Commission, 1997). This form of power has to know 'the inside of people's minds', and

'implies a knowledge of the conscience and the ability to direct it' (ibid.). It appears too in the 'human relations' strand of human resource management, with its medicalised discourse of psychological and organisational health (Newton, 1995). These two strands of pastoral power - as the power of the state and the power of psychological discourse - converge in EEO as a professional discourse. This makes the directions of conscience part of the business of EEO.

### **3. The discursive context: bureaucracy and managerialism**

The meaningfulness of discursive statements always refers back to the site of enunciation, that is : 'the status of the individuals who alone have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse' (Foucault, 1972, p. 50). To communicate effectively, and to intervene in power relations, EEO practitioners must be located in sites of enunciation where their statements will have authority. In this section I outline the discursive context within which EEO practitioners have to work: bureaucracy and managerialism in the New Zealand Public Service. In a sense, the term 'femocrat' is by 1993 obsolete, to the extent that it relies on an equation of feminist + bureaucrat = femocrat. 'Bureaucracy' is not what it used to be. While state 'bureaucracy' remains as a distinctive discursive formation, it has taken new forms in response to the 'managerialism' which had taken a strong hold by the early 1990s. I represent these dominant discursive formations in the New Zealand Public Service by splitting them into two blocs, with their characteristic objects, disciplinary processes, and systems of authority (see Table 5, Bureaucratic and managerialist discourses). I use the table as a synchronic device to compare the two discursive formations during 1993, not to set up a diachronic 'before' and 'after' situation. In practice, discourse and power relations are 'an untidy mixture' (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 178), and this binary table is not intended to imply that 'pure' forms of either occur. EEO programmes, like any other organisational programmes, take place at the intersection of 'the play and development of a set of diverse realities articulated on each other' (Foucault, 1991c, p. 81). These 'realities' include: laws which give them their 'coercive power'; institutions that 'embody' them; 'the behaviours that more or less faithfully conform to them'; and the perceptive and evaluative 'grids' that they produce (ibid). I consider these 'diverse realities' in mapping the discursive context of EEO discourse.

<b>Discourse features</b>	<b>Bureaucratic discourse</b>	<b>Managerialist discourse</b>
<i>Objects of discourse</i>	<i>Minister</i> as responsible constitutionally, source of delegated statutory authority; source of political will.	<i>Minister</i> as customer, purchaser of specified outputs; source of political will.
	<i>CEO</i> as senior public servant.	<i>CEO</i> as Chief Executive Officer (top manager); employer of all departmental staff.
	<i>Managers</i> as senior public servants accountable for putting legislation, policies and regulations into practice.	<i>Managers</i> in the state sector accountable for cost-efficient outputs as purchased by the Minister; 'empowered' to achieve effective, targeted results based on their competencies.
	<i>The public</i> as citizens and taxpayers, with rights and needs defined by legislation, the political process and state welfare policies.	<i>The public</i> as customers and clients, with rights defined by membership of groups targeted for specific policy outcomes.
	<i>Staff</i> as experienced public servants who know and obey regulations, are committed to Public Service ethos.	<i>Staff</i> as employees who must perform to set performance contracts or leave; as organisation members whose attitudes must be aligned to the new organisational culture.
	<i>EEO groups</i> as 'disadvantaged' target groups listed in legislation.	<i>EEO groups</i> as individual and diverse 'human resources' to be managed effectively.
<i>Disciplinary processes</i>	Monitoring performance based on: (i) compliance with legislation and regulations through reports to senior managers and central monitoring agencies; inspections by central agencies; (ii) delegation based on explicit hierarchies; (iii) data collection and reporting linked to policy priorities.	Monitoring performance based on: (i) the employment contract via human resource management technologies including interviews; performance review, training and educational processes; (ii) financial reporting; (iii) strategic planning and 'visiting' processes; strategic 'leadership'.
<i>Who is authoritative?</i>	Public servants with experience and seniority; authority based on seniority in hierarchy.	Managers ('let the managers manage'); authority based on seniority in hierarchy, and/or specific technical expertise (e.g., financial, human resource management).
<i>Sources of authority</i>	(i) Explicitly delegated authority from Minister via senior managers; (ii) legitimation by CEO, senior managers; (ii) professional expertise: knowledge of legislation and regulations; knowledge of public service practice; expert status in specific fields: education, social welfare, etc.	(i) Explicitly delegated authority from CEO; (ii) legitimation by CEO, senior managers; (iii) professional expertise: economic rationalism; generic management theories and competencies, especially strategic management; human resource management.

**Table 5: Bureaucratic and Managerialist Discourses (New Zealand Public Service 1993)**

Following Anna Yeatman, I characterise the move from 'bureaucracy' to 'managerialism' in the New Zealand Public Service as primarily a political shift, rather than simply a shift in management style. In an analysis of this shift across a range of Anglo-American democracies, Yeatman argues that, in spite of the vocabulary of de-regulation, or 'rolling back the state', in fact the key issue is that 'the direction of the state's intervention' has changed, not necessarily its extent (Yeatman, 1991a, p. 1). This means 'the replacement of public policy objectives couched in the terms of social goods by public policy objectives couched in terms of economic goods' (ibid.) In management terms, managerialism means the presumption 'that principles and practices widely employed in the private sector will be equally applicable in the public sector' (Martin, 1991, p. 369). But 'bureaucracy' does still exist, albeit in modified form: ministers, not CEOs, define the business and resourcing of departments. While the slogan 'let the managers manage' is taken to signify 'empowerment' - an increased freedom and flexibility for managers - at the same time intensified reporting requirements, mainly cast in economic terms, have shifted rather than removed the locus of control, and instated a whole new type of red tape (Stace and Norman, 1995). What looks like 'debureaucratisation' frequently signals new forms of institutional power, rather than a simple reduction in it (Sarangi and Slembrouck, 1996). A new emphasis on contractualism - on the Minister as purchaser of services, and on employees as tied by individual performance contracts - reduces managerial agency in some respects, while increasing it in others (Yeatman 1991a).

The State Services Commission model of EEO implementation shows a move towards 'mainstreaming' or integrating EEO principles within each organisation's specific 'business' objectives (Burns and Hanson, 1997, pp. 8-19). This 'evolution' has been taking place in parallel with the reduction in centralised control over managers and departments. It can be seen in the context of managerialist discourse, which privileges changing organisations by changing 'culture' - the 'ensemble of norms and techniques of conduct that enables the self-actualising capacities of individuals to become aligned with the goals and objectives of the organisations for which they work' (du Gay, 1996a, p. 151). In other words, it is not enough for organisational members to comply with directions and regulations: they must have the right attitudes so that they see what needs to be done without instructions, and they must also manage the conduct of others in the right directions. As one EEO practitioner said: 'People are having to simply become change agents in their own right to some extent'

(Pauline). This is a clear shift from the previous regime, in which objective, professional and politically neutral public servants carried out the Minister's instructions. Now they have to align their 'inside' as well as their outside ('behaviours'), with the new organisational culture (du Gay, 1996). Technologies such as strategic planning (a rational process of aligning individual and organisational objectives) and 're-visioning' processes (more oriented to hearts as well as minds) (Marsh, 1993) converge to put in place the framework for the new culture (Knights and Morgan, 1991). Foucault's metaphor of panoptic shift from external surveillance to self-regulation works well here.

'Strategic human resource management' is a crucial aspect of this new normalising technology, and has increasingly been used as both vehicle and legitimation for EEO practices. The job of EEO practitioners is to make EEO a self-regulating practice, to mainstream it in organisational 'culture'. This is how one practitioner set out the problem of the new environment:

One of the difficulties is that some of the [EEO] structures were set up for a central control organisation... so some of those things have to be re-looked at... And so how do we make sure that we manage in a way that is going to mean that people have equal opportunities? Rather than seeing it as a sort of 'thou shalt', we'll build it in so you have to tick boxes... The management style [of the] nineties means that we're talking more and more about 'let the managers manage'... So we have to say 'let the managers manage' but 'if you don't do it this way we'll boff you' and it becomes ridiculous (Andrea)

Here the conflict between a language of force ('we'll boff you') and a language of management empowerment ('let the managers manage') is clearly highlighted. The suggested solution here is a technocratic one that works smoothly with the new 'out-put' orientation of managerialism - rather than insisting on a moral stance ('thou shalt not') or a specific way to do things ('do it this way'), the leverage is through detailed performance reporting procedures.

In the next section I will argue that the work of EEO is to work through processes of normalisation, both bureaucratic and managerial, to re-signify them in terms of difference and equality.

#### 4. Re-signifying the public service

Judith Butler argues that identities, seen as performative, as 'a set of repeated acts', can be transformed when these practices are disrupted, de-naturalized and re-signified (Butler, 1990, p. 33). A distinction can then be made between performative acts which function as transformations and those that function as repetitions. Here I treat the discourse of EEO as a re-signification of bureaucratic and managerialist discourses by feminism. Foucault argues that 'problematization' is crucial to the work of critique and transformation, because it is the process by which a new problem 'enters the play of the true and the false, and constitutes it as an object for thought' (Foucault, 1996a, p. 456-457). Feminism makes difference - and gender more specifically - an object for thought in terms of a problem of *equality*. Just as the medical discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced an 'enormous explosion of discourse and concern' about sexuality and the body (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 140), there has been an 'enormous explosion of discourse and concern' about gender over the last twenty years. This proliferation of discourse about a 'problem' opens it up to new processes of normalisation. I have discussed (Chapter 2) the feminist theoretical frameworks for thinking of gender in terms of both 'difference' and 'equality'. In the re-signification of bureaucracy and managerialism by feminism, this dual framework takes the form of both 'gendering' (Acker, 1992) and 'de-gendering' (Sullivan, 1990) organisations. Re-signification through 'gendering' makes difference visible: it shows, for instance, through the re-signified 'play of the true and the false', that there are fewer women than men in the senior management of the Public Service, compared with their proportion in the workforce. This difference is problematized as inequality. 'De-gendering', on the other hand, seeks to remove the practices of sexual discrimination by which difference is distinguished, because they have resulted in inequalities. 'De-gendering' means, for instance, removing traditional practices whereby certain occupations are open solely or primarily to men. The paradox of difference and equality in the re-signification of organisational practices is that difference, problematized as inequality, is made visible in order to remove it. Every employee must be able to 'compete equitably... *regardless of* difference (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 18, author's italics).

The recruitment interview provides a good example of the disciplinary processes of EEO discourse, and the ways in which they both repeat and re-signify previously existing practices. The gendered natures of both interviewer and

interviewee are made highly visible. The gender of the interview panel, of the candidates and of the eventual appointee, and the gender implications of the questions themselves, have been opened to surveillance. Paradoxically, this process of making gender difference highly visible is linked with a language of 'merit', of getting the 'best person for the job' (State Services Commission, 1989a). From a 'merit' perspective, gender difference is made visible in order to be eliminated as a factor in appointments. So gender difference becomes both more and less important.

It is not only the practices of the interviewers that are subject to new normalisation processes - the attitudes of applicants in respect of difference are also open to surveillance through confessional techniques. Many public service job advertisements ask applicants to show a 'demonstrated commitment' to EEO principles. Employees must have not only equitable attitudes but should be positive change agents in the new equitable organisational culture. Foucault's thesis was that 'the key to the technology of the self is the belief that one can, with the help of experts, tell the truth about oneself' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 175). The self is not *revealed* in the interview - as the managerialist account of interview design purports - but is *produced* by the interview's confessional technologies. In other words, confessional techniques are intended to make us self-regulating. Other forms of confessional appropriated by EEO discourse include direct monitoring through individual performance review processes, and less direct monitoring through the requirements to provide regular reports on EEO programmes.

EEO discourse produces a category of deviance - of abnormality - characterised as 'inequitable' attitudes. This category replaces femininity as the deviant quality in public servants. This replacement involves making sexist or 'inequitable' discourse visible, and then deviant. This is an attempt to replace one regime of truth by another, and to produce a new kind of 'equitable' subject, along with 'equal' subjects. In this sense, the work of EEO practitioners is not only to authorise themselves as experts in organisational discourses of difference - to re-work existing discourse to create a space from which they can speak - but also to legitimately enforce the rules about what *others* can and can not, should and should not say. Literally and specifically, this means regulating language practices, 'eliminating sexist language' (State Services Commission, 1988). Much more broadly, they must find ways to make others accountable for their own practices in the realm of difference.

## 5. Addressing the managers

The accountabilities of EEO practitioners are complex. As discussed in Chapter 9, they are employed by the senior management of organisations with an explicit brief of creating organisational change - that is, they are accountable to senior managers for bringing about change in the practices of other managers. To make it more difficult, they often have also to convince the managers who have employed them - under pressure from the State sector Act and ensuing monitoring processes - of the value and significance of their work. As objects of EEO discourse, 'managers' have increasingly central importance as points of leverage:

With the introduction of the State Sector Act... there was a lot more focus on managers managing and so you had to sell the concepts to the managers (Mary-Jane).

The way that 'managers' occur as objects of EEO discourse produces the possibilities for how they may be addressed by EEO practitioners. A first basic element of 'truth' in EEO discourse is the gendering of 'managers'. They are neither generic nor simply individualised: they are seen as male or female first, and then in terms of membership in other EEO groups which may create affinities with EEO projects. Membership of EEO groups generally positions managers as 'us' rather than 'them', while it is 'they' who have to be worked on, in Foucault's sense of power as 'a mode of action upon the actions of others' (Foucault, 1983, p. 221). Secondly, managers are seen in terms of the power they have within organisations to legitimise the persuasive or co-ercive powers of practitioners. Here practitioners must refer to the existing organisational discourses to analyse who has the power from both bureaucratic and managerial perspectives. Thirdly, they may as individuals be seen as personally supportive of EEO. This personal commitment may be unrelated to either organisational imperatives or membership of EEO groups.

The complexity of Equal Employment Opportunities discourse is indicated by the number of sometimes conflicting representations of 'managers' in different discursive contexts. Are they the same old power elite of feminist discourse, who simply resist change? As one woman said: 'All I know is that... the boys are still running [things] and the boys are still white' (Annette). Are they bureaucrats

who must both comply with and enforce their statutory obligations? Are they the rational agents of managerialist discourse, who have the power to make change, and can be convinced by rational persuasion to implement EEO in their own self-interest? Or are they the subjects of a humanistic human resource management discourse, who want to be 'an effective manager of [their] people and [their] staff... to see the best happen for them and wants to develop them as fully as possible' (Pauline)? In practice, 'managers' are positioned at different times and sites in all these ways, and this complexity highlights the multiple discourses that converge to constitute EEO discourse.

EEO programmes can be seen as the 'strategic codification of... points of resistance' to 'the institutional integration of power relationships' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96). EEO is concerned with discourses of difference, and with re-signifying the power relationships inherent in them. Points of resistance are identified and mobilised through the same communicative processes that disciplinary power requires (Austrin, 1994). EEO discourse is also vulnerable to being resisted in the same way that any programme can be resisted. In the next section I look at how EEO practitioners deal with resistance to EEO: resistance to creating EEO programmes and resistance to existing programmes.

## 6. Complying with EEO

Communication is inseparable from power relations. The 'constraint and coercive effects' of communication are inevitable, and 'games of truth' can never circulate freely without them (Foucault, 1996b, p. 446). In analysing the ways that EEO practitioners deal with resistance, I draw on Foucault's categories of 'relationships of communication' and 'power relations' (Foucault, 1983, pp. 217-218). (Foucault also talks of 'objective capacities' of disciplines, but I do not address this category here.) Communication and power are never separable: 'Relationships of communication... by virtue of modifying the field of information between partners, produce effects of power' (ibid., p. 218). However, Foucault proposes that certain disciplines privilege relationships of communication, and in particular, he cites disciplines of 'apprenticeship', that is, education and training (ibid., p. 219). In analysing educational institutions, for instance, Foucault identifies relationships of communication in terms of 'a whole ensemble of regulated communications in contrast with 'a whole series of power processes' (ibid., p., 219). To experiment with this distinction, I am going to describe the 'persuasive' tactics of EEO practitioners in terms of relationships of

communication, and their 'coercive' tactics in terms of power relations.

### *Coercion*

Legislation gives 'coercive power' (Foucault, 1991c, p. 81) to EEO discourse:

In the Public Sector there is a law that says you've got to do that, and you've got to do this clearly in [section] 56, 58, it requires Chief Executives to obey the law and provide Equal Employment Opportunities, so I don't have to fudge around, persuading people... that this might be nice or a good thing to do or [in their] better interests (Marie).

Here a practitioner takes the line that her job is to implement the existing law, rather than persuade senior managers of its value. She specifically distinguishes the public sector situation from that in the private sector. While some legislation (e.g., the Human Rights Act 1993) makes all employers liable to legal sanctions for specific acts of discrimination, it is only in the State Sector that legislation requires positive action for EEO. This point was emphasised when the Employment Equity Act was repealed in 1990, and the EEO Trust was set up with the job of educating private sector employers in EEO practices, with no further coercive powers. But Marie argues that 'you won't bring about Equal Employment Opportunities or any real move towards them without legislation... most of the credible EEO people... don't see working in the Private Sector being effective without legislation'. This strategy is based on a feminist analysis of 'the basic issue of power and control' in terms of 'white men giving up their power': at the end of the day, will those white men give up power like that [through persuasion]? I don't think so.

While EEO practitioners as a group may agree that coercion in the form of legislation is crucial, they tend not to lead with it up front:

The punitive approach - this is a legal requirement you have got to do it - doesn't go down well with a lot of people. It's a base-line reality. They do have to do something to be seen to be meeting this requirement, but we actually take a more positive and proactive message out there (Alison).

Alison sees EEO practitioners not as enforcers but as educators, 'assisting with an understanding of what Equal Opportunities is, what their legal requirements are... and providing methodology'. Coercive power here is a 'base-line' which is referred to only obliquely; the topic of discussion is turned towards 'how' rather than 'why' or even 'whether'. In this sense, EEO practitioners are obeying the managerialist imperative to 'depoliticise' issues of needs allocation by presenting them in terms of technologies and efficiencies, as Yeatman argues (1991a, p. 8), 'methodologies' as Alison puts it. While EEO practitioners themselves often have a feminist analysis of EEO in terms of power, of sexism and racism which must be addressed legally, their avoidance of social discourse rather ironically duplicates managerialism in attempting to make EEO discourse impermeable to contest:

I don't think anybody wanted any conflict or backlash or whatever and the fact that there is widespread inequality was never addressed... I don't think people wanted to deal with racism directly or sexism directly. I think... the idea was to avoid all that sort of overt stuff so that... the whole thing about EEO was depoliticised (Annette).

As Annette says, in its own way the presentation of EEO as simply the (depoliticised) sign of best management practice is 'quite a bullying line'.

The use of coercion in relation to persuasion is partly driven by the ways that practitioners theorise the process of personal change. In attempting to change people's 'grids for the perception and evaluation of things' (Foucault, 1991c, p. 81), it may be seen as not enough to 'take the nice approach and get everyone to agree and change their attitude as they go' (Pauline). Here Pauline explains how coercion in implementing an EEO programme allows - rather than forces - resistant public servants to change their 'stereotypes' and 'prejudices':

Sometimes there have to be quite deliberate and coercive measures... and then you work out how to deal with the resistance that then ensues from that... They went to quite a lot of extreme activity to refuse to comply and it was forced on them basically and then what happened was... that their attitudes then changed because they had direct experience which counteracted the old ideas.

Here the issue of resistance is defined as a cognitive one, rather than a question

of intractable differences in political interests. Nonetheless, coercion is used, not because the resisters will not change their minds, but in order to get them to change their minds. In Pauline's words: 'it depends on whether you believe that human beings can transform themselves or not, and I believe they can'.

Overt coercion is presented by practitioners as an extreme measure, a 'back-up' to persuasive strategies, a 'very useful argument to have up your sleeve if all else fails' (Lorna):

You also have back-up strategies... there's the front line strategies which are the obvious appeals... 'You are good people, you want to be good managers, you are wanting your staff to be happy... You want to see everyone get a fair deal. You will actually get more benefits anyway'. So there's those obvious things that go in first like the front line and then it seems to me you have got to have the back-up strategies which are more (Pauline).

The backup strategies cannot be directly enforced by EEO practitioners, whose coercive power depends on their capacity to invoke enforcement by others by reporting lack of compliance: 'when I report, sonny, your name will be on this list as not complying with this regulation' (Lorna). This approach works well within bureaucratic discourse: 'this is a very rule-oriented department. If nothing else works people are here to obey the rules. Mostly their job consists of getting other people to obey rules and when you appeal to their need to obey a rule they jump to it' (Lorna). Here the appeal is to a discourse in which people are already strongly invested. The disadvantage, in comparison with the 'culture change' approach of managerialist discourse is that 'they usually comply to a minimum standard but they do comply' (Lorna). Here resistance takes the form of minimum compliance which remains dependent on external surveillance, an effect of juridical rather than disciplinary power.

The threat to 'report on' resisters depends on the organisational legitimation that the reporting process is given, and practitioners see this as depending largely on the CEOs. One experienced practitioner described CEOs as being of three types:

The first ones were those that did nothing whatsoever, or did the absolute minimum... they weren't even going to get into the argument. The second group... just really didn't know how and once a year they thought

about [it] I think that they some of them genuinely saw it as an issue when it was pointed out to them. But it didn't live in their heads very long. And the last group were those who genuinely decided it was a structural issue they were going to deal with (Andrea).

So although all CEOs have contracts with their Minister, 'key people with a real commitment' (Pauline) make a difference to whether coercive threats will be backed up. In a bureaucracy power is explicitly delegated from Ministers to CEOs and on down the hierarchy, so that the issues of political will is also central to issues of compliance. On this level, EEO takes a low priority as a compliance issue:

There have been no penalties for those people who haven't complied... I would like to... see... some sort of rapping over the knuckles for those Chief Executives that have obviously been flouting EEO provisions. If they didn't comply with the Finance Act there would be penalties, they'd probably lose their jobs. What you've got to have is a climate where there's some penalties in terms of EEO and... those white managers dragging the chain, will learn when it's in their interest to learn.

Some 'very shrewd organisational players' (Pauline) do see it as 'in their interest' to learn how to implement EEO discourse, not so much through fear of penalty but through a positive desire for reward or recognition. To be required to carry out certain practices in order to get promotion can be seen as a kind of coercion, although one which is taken for granted in organisations, just another 'skill that any supervisor or manager who wants to get anywhere in this department has got to have' (Lorna). In fact, there are no 'skills' that are not part of a power/knowledge regime (Hollway, 1991; Rose, 1990, 1996; Townley, 1994a), and feminist organisational theorists have argued that gendered organisational practices make some skills visible and others invisible, some valued and some discounted (Acker and Van Houten, 1992; Burton, 1992; Game and Pringle, 1983). Similarly, the 'skills' of equitable management are highly political in terms of their potential for intervention in discourses of difference. The intensity of resistance to EEO programmes, whether seen in feminist terms as resistance to 'giving up power' or in anti-feminist terms as resistance to 'social engineering' makes the political dimensions of strategic change processes explicit in new ways, in spite of moves to depoliticise it.

In Chapter 9 I discussed ways that EEO practitioners 'sold' their message to managers. This 'sales' approach depends on the conviction that managers can be persuaded to behave in new ways, and to maintain new behaviours once established. In discussing 'coercion' in this chapter, I have analysed how practitioners theorise the ways that relations of power can be applied to back-up or enable persuasive strategies. In analysing the 'diverse realities' that make up institutional change programmes, Foucault makes a distinction between 'behaviours that more or less faithfully conform' and the 'grids for the perception and evaluation of things' that such programmes produce (Foucault, 1991c, p. 81). In the case of EEO, some practitioners focus on behaviour, not perceptual grids:

We have always said that 'we're here to change your behaviour. I don't care how racist you are or how sexist you are, but you're not allowed to be racist or sexist in the way that you behave to me, or to those groups'. You can't change what [people] think in their head... we're not out... to change people's minds, we're out to change their behaviour (Marie).

This argues for a compliance approach where people are persuaded - whether through overt coercion or the promise or rewards for 'best practice' management - to change overtly racist and sexist behavior. From a humanist perspective, the fit between individual behaviours and the organisational norm alignment occurs through 'forcing' an individual to act a certain way, regardless of his or her 'private beliefs'. In this situation, monitoring processes are essential to continue to maintain the external force and ensure ongoing compliance. Coercion is opposed to persuasion, by which subjects 'really' take on new beliefs. However, Foucault's 'post-humanist' (Fraser, 1989, p. 55) idea of panopticism problematises this distinction between 'inside' beliefs and 'outside' force. In order to make surveillance function permanently and independently, the technologies of surveillance must be able to create and sustain 'a power relation independent of the person who exercises it' (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). The objects of power then become 'caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers' (ibid.), that is, 'change agents in their own right' (Pauline).

Compliance based on power relations alone generates 'lip service' (Lorna), and 'can be very vulnerable to the whimsies and personal values of the chief

executives and also the political winds that blow'. So 'there's got to be something even deeper than that' (Pauline). This 'deeper thing', is 'cultural change', which is 'even more radical in a sense, or more far reaching' (Pauline) than a thorough-going system of reward and punishments. As Paul du Gay points out, 'this focus on "culture" as a means of producing a particular relationship to self amongst members of an enterprise suggest that its deployment as a government technique is intimately bound up with questions of identity' (du Gay, 1996a, p. 152). To the extent that public servants are required to take on or 'own' the new organisational culture, they are no longer administering public policy, but implementing 'personal moral enthusiasms' (du Gay, 1996a, p. 165).

EEO practitioners' work of re-signifying discourse of difference relies strongly on pedagogical processes of persuasion, as well as the techniques of confession and surveillance already discussed. 'Educational' or 'training' sessions to change the attitudes of managers and other staff are considered a normal part of many EEO programmes. Posters, handbooks, manuals and brochures proliferate. While some practitioners may see this pedagogical drive as more about teaching 'methodologies', others see it as a way of changing attitudes as well. Whether positive orientation to EEO is seen as an *attitude* which can be acquired or discovered through education; a *skill* to be acquired through training; or a functional *goal orientation* to be acquired through a process of planning, reward and punishment, ways of theorising the levers of persuasion tend to track back to either economic discourse (rational self-interest) or psychological discourse (cognitive, affective or psycho-analytic drivers). There are also traces of appeals to social justice discourses expressed in ethical terms, 'road to Damascus experiences' (Lorna).

There is often resistance to attending such 'education' programmes. Many EEO practitioners feel that it is important that EEO trainings not be made compulsory, because of the back-lash that can ensue when employees feel that their 'personal' views are being tampered with, that they are being subject to 'social engineering', 'mind-changing and tampering with individual freedom' (Pauline). From this perspective, 'freedom' is the right to maintain your own identity 'inside' your head, regardless of your employer's agenda. In this sense there is a broader issue about the role of EEO practitioners as 'directors of conscience, moralists and pedagogues' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 128). While resistance to EEO 'education' may be convincingly analysed in terms of racism and sexism, there are broader political issues here about disciplinary processes

in organisations. Some employees will also resist attending *any* organisational change programmes that explicitly aim to change their identities, and this resistance can be seen as a refusal of new forms of disciplinary power.

Foucault's distinction between 'relationships of communication' and 'power relations' within disciplinary processes seems a fruitful basis for more detailed analysis of organisational processes such as job interviews and training sessions. Here it provides a way of considering the relationship between communication and power, and the circumstances in which power relations 'pass through systems of communication' (Foucault, 1983, p. 217). I have considered relationships of communication in EEO discourse in connection with some of the items on Foucault's list of 'power processes' surveillance, reward and punishment (Foucault, 1983, p. 219), as well as confession. Further theorising along these lines would be helpful in theorising the power relations associated with new privileged relationships of communication in managerialist cultures, including communication competencies and organisational processes such as strategic planning (Knights and Morgan, 1991). It also allows theorisation of communication as an element of discourse, as Easthope argues (Easthope, 1990), rather than as identical with it.

Foucault is very clear that the 'production and circulation of elements of meaning' (Foucault, 1983, p. 219) is not identical with discourse formation, and that meaning is mobilised by relations of power. The work of EEO practitioners in re-signifying discourse of difference has effects in power relations to the extent that they are effective in strategically codifying points of resistance, seizing opportunities to re-work discourses of bureaucracy and managerialism. In the discussion above, I have described how EEO practitioners appeal to juridical power in enforcing EEO programmes. This appeal is central to broader debates among feminists about whether legislation is essential to introducing equity into the workforce. In Foucault's terms, the 'power relations' involved in implementing EEO seem to involve a mix of juridical (monarchic) and disciplinary power processes, and as Findlay and Newton have argued, this mix of powers needs more thinking through in the context of contemporary employment relationships (Findlay and Newton, 1998).

## 7. Feminists seize the panopticon

I have argued that feminists have seized the panopticon of disciplinary power in setting out to normalise equality in the Public Service. As agents of communication, they have entered into and re-signified organisational discourses in terms of the issue of difference. They are successful in this work of re-signification to the extent that relationships of communication and power relationships are effectively 'adjusted' in the relation to each other (Foucault, 1983, p. 219). What dangers are introduced when feminist seize the panopticon? Feminists have drawn on post-structuralist theory to address 'questions of how our very efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance at the micro-level of local resistances' (Lather, 1990, p. 125). Here Lather is referring to the feminist classroom, where the refusal of feminist discourse by some students - and the response to this resistance by feminist teachers - problematises 'feminism' as an empowering discourse, as a 'submerged discourse' (Ferguson, 1984, p. 23), a collective uprising of knowledge on which to build political programmes. As Elizabeth Ellsworth has asked: 'why doesn't this feel empowering?' (Ellsworth, 1989). The over-simplicity of an 'empowerment' model becomes clear when resistance is encountered, especially from those who are meant to be 'empowered'. Feminist interest in post-structuralist theory derives partly from the need to re-theorise such experiences, in which it becomes obvious that 'the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category' (Butler, 1990, p. 4). After refusals have been experienced, feminist discourse is seen as capable of re-creating and then perpetuating new systems of dominance, rather than simply contesting them. If feminist discourse is not innocent and is not situated outside modern disciplinary practices, it cannot provide a politically pure state 'outside' power relations. For instance, Katherine Ferguson has argued that programmes such as EEO serve only to proliferate institutional power, and that feminist discourse will always be subservient to dominant organisational discourses (Ferguson, 1984). But feminist post-structuralism offers another perspective. Rather than seeing complicity with dominant discourses as in some way wrong, avoidable, and fatally dis-abling, it offers the possibility of analysing how this complicity works in given situations. Ferguson argues, after Foucault, that the 're-colonisation' of feminist discourse by dominant organisational discourses is inevitable at some point (ibid., pp. 28-29). While this may be true, unlike Ferguson I do not believe this analysis can be carried out in a once-and-for-all way, where 'feminism' either is or is not

inevitably swallowed up again by what she calls 'bureaucracy'. Foucault argues that this point of 're-colonisation' is something to watch out for, and will depend on 'the relation of forces' at a given point in time (Foucault, 1980c, p. 86). This is in line with his experimental, rather than programmatic, approach to political change. The question for feminists in respect of EEO would then be: which, if any, aspects of feminist discourse have been so thoughtfully 're-colonised' or 're-codified' by bureaucracy and/or managerialism that they no longer have the political force we want to create? While this question is a foucauldian one, the answers can only come from specific political programmes: as Knights and Vurdubakis argue, 'resistance acquires its status within specific political programmes and analyses', so that 'co-optation by the system' in one programme is represented as 'transformation of the system' in another (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 181).

Foucault has nothing to offer those who want to carry out reforms which, like EEO, would try to solve problems of political power once-and-for-all:

The necessity of reform must not be allowed to become a form of blackmail serving to limit, reduce or halt the exercise of criticism. Under no circumstances pay attention to those who tell you 'Do not criticise since you are not capable of carrying out a reform'. That's ministerial cabinet talk. Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this is what needs to be done. It should be a instrument for those who fight and refuse what is (Foucault, 1981, cited in Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 187).

While I agree that critique is not necessarily invalidated if it does not go beyond a refusal, EEO practitioners *do* have to talk 'ministerial cabinet talk', even if they do not speak it un-reflexively. There are some EEO practitioners who see EEO - in some form - as the eventual solution to the problem of difference in organisations. There are others who see EEO as a way to open up and continue the conversation of equality, but without any specific reform programme that must be implemented. Many are in both positions at different moments. Just as feminists need to use, as well as refuse, the discourse of feminism, EEO practitioners can use and refuse the discourses of bureaucracy and managerialism. To do this, it is necessary to be able to analyse the discursive context, and to be vigilant about the convergences between feminism and organisational discourses.

There are dangers that disciplinary forms of power can be proliferated in the service of EEO that may have damaging consequences for women in a wider context. For instance, it is very limiting to base EEO 'on the application of the merit principle' (State Services Commission, 1997, p. i). While many EEO practitioners are aware of the pitfalls of this term and its spurious objectivity and simplicity (Burton, 1992), it keeps recurring as a centre-piece of EEO for the very reason that it does seem to promise simple objective technologies of equality. To take another kind of example, it may be dangerous to reinforce the employment contract as the basis for enforcing EEO compliance. The trade unionists I talked with argued that EEO practitioners have, on the whole, been so strongly oriented towards a unitary strategic human resource management approach, that the industrial relations implications of EEO have been lost, along with any discussion of the power relations inherent in the employment relationship. What are the broader implications of the individual employment contract being used to punish and reward increasingly explicitly spelled out aspects of workplace behaviour?

To take a third example, It also seems ironic and possibly dangerous that the 'strategic' move away from 'social justice' discourse by EEO practitioners dovetails with the managerialist move to the language of technology ('efficiency', 'methodology') rather than the language of rights and welfare. This move has the effect of excluding political contest over equality issues (Yeatman, 1991). EEO practitioners are, in that sense, being disingenuous about the potentially far-reaching social implications of EEO programmes. They are also collaborating in silencing any open discussion of EEO in the political terms in which it was first generated.

To take one more example, caution is needed in deciphering the convergences of 'culture change' and EEO. While the language of 'transformation' and 'empowerment' may be seductive to feminists, and perhaps may possibly be put in the service of equality, it is also powerfully implicated in a kind of violent managerialist change which is 'led' from the top down, and of which the corollary is that those who will not take on the identities of the new culture will be removed from it. This is far from EEO as the democratic opening up of organisations to the voices of the marginalised.

Feminism has been based on the emergence of subjugated knowledges, of empowering the silenced to speak. This is one of the 'connections' which explains how EEO programmes came into being (Foucault, 1991c, p. 81). Women inside and outside the public service opened up the question of difference and equality in the world of work, as in every domain of life. In other words, the conversation was started by the 'EEO groups', not by the managers. The focus of this chapter has been on EEO in terms of communicating with managers. This line of communication has been seen by EEO practitioners as critical to creating far-reaching organisational change. In the next chapter I consider the place of the 'EEO groups' in EEO discourse. In particular, I ask how they are represented (spoken about and spoken for), and look at how ethnicity has worked as the basis for refusal and re-working of EEO discourse.

### WHAT COUNTS AS DIFFERENCE : THE CONSTRUCTION OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) GROUPS

I have been rather pre-occupied with the relations between centres and margins and have tried to confront (again) the spectre of recuperation. This latter fear is intimately linked to what many have pointed out with respect to the issues of representation, in other words, that it involves two meanings of the term: on the one hand representation as 'depiction', and on the other as delegation (speaking for)... it all hinges on constructing a certain 'authority', a right to speak 'in the name of' (Gunew, 1994b, pp. 87, 89).

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter is about representation: about how EEO groups are represented, and represented as in being 'spoken for'. As Sneja Gunew argues above, the issue of representation is central to the relationships between margins and the centre. She highlights the discursive power of those located at the centre to represent (in both senses of the word) those at the margins. 'The spectre of recuperation' is the ever-present possibility of the 're-colonisation' of resistant meanings, depending on 'the relation of forces' between the centre and the margins at a given point in time (Foucault, 1980c, p 86). As I have argued in the previous chapter, relationships of communication become meaningful as disciplinary practices to the extent that they intersect with particular kinds of power relations. Categories of difference are produced in every area of government policy and regulation, whether addressed explicitly - as in policies which address EEO, the Treaty of Waitangi, or immigration - or implicitly, in the silencing, exclusion and marginalisation of minorities. Contests over the meanings of key policy concepts *constitute* the politics of the issues they address: policy is about contested meanings, about deploying language as leverage to argue certain policy outcomes (Yeatman, 1990). The question is about what terms of representation do in specific contexts: in Patricia Johnston and Leonie Pihama's words, 'What counts as differences and what differences count' (Johnston and Pihama, 1993).

In this chapter I argue that Pakeha EEO practitioners are complicit in the recuperation of marginalised discourses of difference, at the same time that they

are struggling to create a 'strategic mobility of racial discourses' (Stoler, 1996, p. 13) across the range of designated 'EEO groups'. I use three examples to make my argument. First, I discuss the constitution of the EEO group networks representing EEO groups. I analyse the relationship between EEO networks and EEO practitioners in terms of the ways in which the authority of EEO practitioners is constituted by their right to speak for EEO group members. Secondly, I analyse the epistemological framework within which categories of difference can be 'known' in EEO discourse. The categorisation of EEO groups is inseparable from the ways that EEO practitioners analyse inequality in terms of power relations... Within this framework a 'new hermeneutics of the workplace' (Yount, 1993, p. 197) is created. In drawing on this hermeneutics, certain representations of difference are normalised. In my third example, I look at a major challenge to the EEO power/knowledge regime from Maori within the Public Service. Standing in the cultural authority of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori have refused categories which position them as just another EEO group. This refusal is framed as a resistance to cultural and political recuperation or assimilation.

## 2. Speaking in the name of...

EEO discourse itself can be seen as having created a speaking position for women in organisations to speak *as* women, and more specifically, as politicised women. Feminists are invested in those discursive processes which allow 'woman' a place from which to speak, and the possibility of agency as 'the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter', as US feminist Carolyn Heilbrun puts it (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 18). Especially in the early days, EEO practitioners were recruited *because* they were feminists. As 'standing for' women and other marginalised groups, they are always at risk that their statements will automatically be marginalised within sexist discourse. The desire to avoid marginalisation by moving towards integration with the centre of organisational power brings with it the problems of complicity and recuperation. Some EEO practitioners believe that EEO discourse was originally given a speaking position within Public Service organisations only *because* it was thought to be containable, safely marginalised and therefore silenced, in the guise of being given a voice: "'for god's sake don't let these women start screeching like harpies... Let's choose one and put her up [on the] second level... And just for christ's sake keep the other ones quiet'" (Annette). However, most EEO practitioners have not kept quiet, although it is a

matter of political debate how marginalised their voices are and how compromised they may have been as they moved towards the centre. Relationships of accountability between EEO practitioners, 'EEO group' members, and managers, are central to the discourses of Equal Employment Opportunities. These relationships position each type of identity within their discursive context.

EEO networks are seen as 'speaking for' the interests of EEO groups within organisations. They originated before official EEO policies were instituted in the form of unofficial women's networks, oriented towards addressing issues of inequality within government organisations. They were influential in creating the political climate for EEO (see for instance Department of Social Welfare, 1986). The State Sector Act 1988 created a list of officially designated EEO groups, and since that time voluntary networks based on these designations have gradually been legitimated by organisations as 'an important part of the implementation of Equal Employment Opportunities' (State Services Commission, 1994b). This legitimation includes some resourcing of regular local meetings; travel and other resources for occasional national meetings; some resourcing for designated EEO network coordinators; and a range of more or less formal consultation channels (State Services Commission, 1994b). The State Services Commission emphasises the 'support, training and developmental needs' that they meet, as well as their opportunities to 'assist management in better meeting employee needs and aspirations' (State Services Commission, 1994b).

EEO practitioners argue that EEO is most properly a management function, in which employee participation is directed from above: 'the managers are responsible for EEO' (Lorna) (see Chapter 9). In interviews with EEO practitioners about communicative strategies, relationships with the EEO networks were rarely explicitly discussed. I have considered whether my research design explained this relative silence. My question, 'What strategies do you use to persuade others to change?', may have lead subjects towards focusing on managers, rather than on EEO group members, as objects of change. However, the interview format encouraged practitioners to raise a wide range of issues. There was a repeated explicit emphasis on managers as the agents for implementing EEO programmes, and this convinced me that practitioner relationships with managers were central to EEO discourse, while the 'empowerment' of EEO networks was more marginal.

Officially, practitioners were responsible for staying in touch with, supporting, and sometimes for setting up EEO networks, and some EEO practitioners were in jobs with designated responsibility for addressing the needs of a specific EEO group (Burns and Hanson, 1997, p. 10). However, EEO networks were not mentioned as a strategic element in the implementation of EEO. In a review report written after my field studies were carried out, 'a focus on EEO groups' was identified with 'phase one' of the EEO evolutionary model (Burns and Hanson, 1997, p. 9), and it was argued that an orientation towards EEO groups implied a deficit model in which 'the locus for change was primarily EEO group members themselves rather than the organisation' (ibid.). Later phases of the model rejected this approach in favour of 'structural change' (ibid., p. 10) within organisations. This argument pre-supposes that there has already been a definite move away from EEO networks as organised groups of marginalised employees, pushing for political change. Framed as support groups, EEO networks then seem peripheral to major strategic change based on 'structural' analysis. However, they remain as a system of communicative relationships with which there is no exact parallel in bureaucratic or managerial discourse, and retain potential for more or less overt politicisation. It seems that this potential was most likely to be activated in the Maori networks. Although Maori have generally tended to refuse the concept of EEO (discussed below), Maori networks make up the largest number of networks (State Services Commission, 1994a, pp. 16-17), and have taken the opening created by the concept of EEO networks to mobilise as a Maori community network based on tino rangatiratanga.

While some practitioners talk of 'empowering' EEO groups, this empowerment is generally focused along the lines of group support for 'personal benefit in terms of confidence, self-esteem, skill levels and career prospects' (Burns and Hanson, 1997, p. 10). One practitioner argued that there was still a radical potential available in working with EEO networks:

On one level.. the stated objective... of setting up a network in an organisation... is for support for those people... to provide an opportunity to meet together and develop strategies and... in the longer term it should also be... a springboard for providing senior management with information about what the issues are... Now as well, an agenda that I have very strongly is that those groups by meeting together will become

much more political and will take the initiative to challenge... the structures and things that they perceive to be unfair. I see that as part of EEO... that what we are doing is making change... One of the spin-offs would be to progress the EEO agenda a bit further (Cara).

This more radical agenda for EEO networks is presented as an alternative to the 'stated objectives', and is based on a feminist strategy that individual EEO practitioners may seek to activate on another, less obvious 'level'. However, both interviews and the literature indicate that this kind of political mobilisation by EEO networks is, while possible, rare, and made less likely by the institutional normalising of the networks' constitution and communication relationships.

An aspect of this normalisation of EEO networks is their legitimisation as providing an advisory service to senior managers. One practitioner explained how she handled the 'shock horror response' of managers to the concept of networks: 'we sold the idea of liaison with employees so much to them that they felt that they really had to have these networks' (Mary-Jane). Ironically, managers were so keen to draw on this extra source of advice, that they had to be reminded of 'the fact that [networks] should be driven by the members themselves not by management' (Mary-Jane). In presenting the benefit of the networks as providing 'a flow of communication between employees and managers' (Mary-Jane), especially on cultural issues, EEO networks are being treated rather like native informants who will improve the ability of those at the centre to communicate with the margins as required in the service of business. This approach dove-tails with the ways that Maori and other ethnic minority groups have been re-framed as 'clients' in managerialist discourse. I discuss this connection in the next chapter (Chapter 12).

Although the designated EEO groups are specified in the State Sector Act 1988, the ways that these designations work in practice vary from one department to another, and centre around the question of which networks are officially recognised and resourced. The negotiation process may involve the 'networks' themselves, EEO practitioners, and senior managers, exerting various degrees of power from above and below. In some departments, for instance, a Pacific Island network might exist as well as or instead of an 'ethnic minority' network, although Pacific Islanders are not a designated EEO group, and 'ethnic minorities' are. 'Ethnic minorities' and 'people with disabilities' are least likely to constitute EEO networks, and their networks are the most poorly resourced (State Services Commission, 1994a, p. 17). Official ambivalence about the role of networks is indicated by the concern expressed that some employees represented

themselves in terms of multiple dimensions of difference, nominating themselves as members of two or more networks - for instance, Pacific Island as well as women's networks. This categorisation would entitle them to two sets of resources. Thus concern expressed as resource constraint ties employees to a unitary privileged 'difference', as well indicating a lack of conviction about the productive value of network membership.

The framework for inclusion as an EEO network has been continuously contested by various self-designated groups, creating leverage from the State Sector Act's definition of an EEO programme as:

aimed at the identification and elimination of all aspects of policies, procedures, and other institutional barriers that cause or perpetuate, or tend to cause or perpetuate, inequality in respect to the employment of any persons or group of persons (State Services Act 1988 58 (3)).

This definition opens up possibilities for a range of groups to negotiate the meaning of 'inequality'. For instance, in one department there was a 'men's' network. The EEO practitioner in the department explained:

I think they initially came together because they felt that everyone else was in a group and they better be one too, and they were missing out... I think men are distinctively disadvantaged in terms of their concept of their role in society, men are conditioned to be the bread winner, to go to work from 8 to 5, to have very narrow concepts of what they should do... I think that everyone in our society would be much better if men had rather better values (Marie).

While Marie saw value in the network, she distinguished it from others 'in terms of the resources available to EEO. I don't see the men's network getting their share according to their numbers' (Marie). The question here is how the term 'inequality' works. Marie clearly does not feel that men are 'unequal' in the sense set out in the legislation, although she does see them as in some sense as 'disadvantaged'. In another department, a Scottish network had been established, again begging the question of the assumed relationship between ethnic minority status and disadvantage. There is also a sense here of affirmative action as unfair advantage: that EEO network status is a privilege from which some see themselves as excluded. The disingenuous assumption of EEO group status also implies a kind of tongue-in-cheek resistance to the equality politics of EEO,

while at the same time having the effect of drawing attention to the politics of creating the categories. Ironically, the managerialist move to foreclose on the political claims of EEO, by representing EEO programmes as management mechanisms rather than changes in power relations, actually makes it difficult for EEO practitioners to contest these kinds of resistant moves in political terms.

Even in the case of designated groups, the vocabulary of 'equality' sometimes seems to sit uneasily. For instance, Marie argues that members of an 'ethnic' group in her department, who are 'mostly all men' and 'mostly Chinese and Indian extraction...', are clearly advantaged in any salary profile [of the department, they're clearly streets ahead, so they're not... although under the State Sector Act, ethnic minorities are identified as a target group' (Marie). The ellipsis after 'they're not' appears in the original, not in my transcription: she almost but not quite says that they are not unequal or disadvantaged, yet the legislation does designate them as a 'minority' group. The assumption here is that 'minority' status in some universal way signifies inequality. However, EEO practitioners report that some ethnic minority groups are not only not unequal in the sense of access to promotion, but actually refuse the designation of disadvantage. Rather, the basis of their desire to constitute an EEO network is cultural affinity, creating 'support from each other in a hostile environment, that still isn't your environment - it represents someone else's culture' (Tanya). (I will return to the issue of 'ethnic minorities' as EEO groups in the next chapter). The issues of identity and power that are signified in EEO discourse are subject to continuous negotiation between the margins and the centre. This process can be seen in the official recognition of new types of EEO networks which constitute newly-legitimated identities (e.g., lesbian and gay), and in new formulations of EEO as based around 'issues' rather than 'identities' (e.g., 'people with family responsibilities') (State Services Commission, 1994a, 1995, p. 23; Torrie and Jones, 1997).

EEO discourse is centrally concerned with representing the identities and so the needs and interests of the EEO groups. As the central authoritative subjects of EEO discourse, EEO practitioners are constituted as subjects with 'a certain "authority", a right to speak "in the name of"' EEO groups (Gunew, 1994b, pp. 87, 89). This is the case regardless of whether, as 'individuals', they see themselves as willing, able or entitled to represent others. Foucault has argued that 'reforms... designed by people who make a profession of speaking for others' create thereby 'new power' and 'double repression' (Foucault, 1977a, pp.

208-209). By contrast, reforms that 'arise from the complaints and demands of those concerned' question 'the totality of power and the hierarchy that maintains it' (ibid.). This argument reiterates Gunew's fears about 'speaking for' others as 'recuperation'. In the case of EEO, it seems clear that the historical domination of EEO discourse by Pakeha women has had the inevitable effect of marginalising the voices of other EEO groups, despite the often-repeated slogan that 'a win for one is a win for all', and despite the specific appointments of EEO practitioners to represent Maori, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. As one practitioner put it: 'as long as I'm in there as a Pakeha woman I'm going to bring my Pakeha female perspective... I don't apologise for that. It's just how it is' (Susan). Given that (mainly Pakeha) women's networks were the historical forerunner of EEO, it is not surprising that Pakeha women have been the main beneficiaries of EEO programmes (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 24), and 'people still... when they hear EEO, they think "women"' (Susan). Susan argues that 'the only way we can effect change is to change the personnel involved in working in EEO', and it is possible that staffing of EEO positions - especially in senior EEO management jobs - by a more genuinely representative range of EEO groups would help avoid the 'double repression' of being both oppressed and 'spoken for'. However, the mainstreaming of EEO into human resource management positions since 1993 makes it less likely that even the existing commitments to 'representative' appointments will continue. I next argue that the power/knowledge connections in EEO discourse have the effect of perpetuating the old power relationships between margins and centre.

### 3. The power/knowledge connection

As EEO experts, EEO practitioners draw on the particular convergence of power/knowledge regimes that constitute EEO discourse. Implicit in the truth games of EEO discourse are epistemologies which dictate how difference can be known and represented (or 'depicted' in Gunew's term). Political analysis and political claims for EEO are based on this epistemology, which is shared by social scientific discourses of difference. I argue that this epistemology of difference is implicated in the normalising processes of governmentality, and that these processes tend to naturalize representations of difference (see Chapter 3).

EEO practitioners tend to think of organisational change in terms of some kind of structural analysis, whether a functionalist or radical structuralist version of organisational theory (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Deetz, 1996; Putnam, 1983), or

a more specifically feminist 'structural analysis' (Burns and Hanson, 1997, pp. 78-80; State Services Commission, 1995, p. 10 ). This latter 'structural analysis', derived from versions of marxism, is a central knowledge component of the discourses of the 'new social movements' - including second wave feminism and various anti-racist movements. It centres around 'both theorising and overcoming' patterns of oppression or disadvantage - sexism, racism, class oppression - which are seen as 'interlocking' (Yeatman, 1995, p. 42). This approach is a particular 'strategic codification' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96) which has been powerful among feminist EEO practitioners, and relies on a mode of truth which categorises 'oppressed' groups in certain ways in order to create what are seen as the most effective change strategies, and on a modernist politics based around universals such as social justice, self-determination, participation, domination and liberation. From this perspective EEO issues have 'structural bases and structural solutions': as one EEO practitioner put it, 'this is my background, my own orientation, it's feminist, I mean I think about structures' (Jessie). Explicit and implicit references to 'structural analysis' are used by EEO practitioners to index their own specifically feminist expertise in creating organisational change. The feminist-structuralist approach de-naturalizes structures as well as the identities which are located within them.

Foucault distinguishes his approach to power from other critical approaches, such as marxism and feminism, by moving away from binary models of dominance and oppression, repression and liberation. When we want to distinguish power and resistance in government organisations, for instance, we are not looking for 'a binary structure with "dominators" on one side and "dominated" on the other' (1980b, p. 142). While he acknowledges that 'forms of domination exist' (Foucault, 1996c, p. 416), domination is just one of the ways that power works. His model of power is relational: it is a network, web-like, capillary in its diffusion throughout the micro-practices of daily life. Where there is power, there is resistance, and within this web of power are many points of resistance (Foucault, 1980b). In his writings Foucault uses the term 'power' to refer to both one pole of the power-resistance relationship, and also to the relationship as a whole (Clegg, 1994, p. 286). I will distinguish these terms by using 'power' as one pole of what I will refer to more generally as 'relations of power' (Foucault, 1980a, p. 114) or 'power relations' (Foucault, 1983, pp. 217-218). While the 'institutional integration' of power relationships (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96) may give power structures 'the appearance of substance' (Butler, 1990,

p.33), they 'crystallize into institutions' (Foucault, 1991a, p. 81) only in forms that are temporary, contingent, and always vulnerable to resistance.

Because there are no essential binary structures, there is no agency of resistance that is not situated within specific change programmes, as Knights and Vurdubakis point out (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 181). While 'women' are seen as the privileged agents of resistance in feminist discourse, and the 'working class' in marxist accounts, in Foucault's account resistance and dominance depend on specific positions of enunciation in different discourses. As Yeatman argues in respect of feminism: 'we cannot know who we are until we act, and our action always takes place in a particular context of relationship to and dialogue with others' (Yeatman, 1995, p. 55). This analytic approach is very different from basing a political programme on pre-given identities which are assumed to be identical with pre-given interests. While there is no essential or underlying pattern of resistance to be discovered and mobilised, the 'strategic codification' of 'points of resistance' makes changes in power relations possible (Foucault, 1990b, p. 96). The work of EEO practitioners could be seen as this kind of 'strategic codification', in which the interests of the 'EEO groups' are coded in the vocabulary of equality and difference - 'disadvantage', 'discrimination', 'diversity' - to mobilise changes in power relationships. Because power is relational, 'possibilities of transformation' do not come from 'outside' relations of power, but through re-signifying relations of power. They are not based on a universalised and 'scientific' reform programme (such as marxism), but on analysing 'the specificity of mechanisms of power... to build little by little a strategic knowledge' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 145). The knowledge that supports political change, then, is not based on a 'global systematic theory which holds everything in place' but on 'theory as a tool-kit', as 'an investigation which can only be carried out on the basis of reflection' (ibid.). This is not a functionalist 'pragmatism' which masks its own political interests, but neither is it the kind of knowledge on which EEO practitioners make their claims to specialised expertise, whether this is framed as specialised feminist and/or 'strategic' (in the managerialist sense) truths and techniques.

In the previous chapter I discussed the distinction that Foucault makes between monarchic (juridical or sovereign) and disciplinary (pastoral) power, or 'governmentality'. The political effects of the intersections of these two types of power are unpredictable, and they add complexity to the analysis of power/knowledge connections. For instance, US writers on 'affirmative action'

have argued that the juridical approach to equality works on the basis of procedural fairness, but the efficacy of this fairness is assessed largely through a 'hermeneutics of the workplace' based on disciplinary power (Hadreas, 1991; Yount, 1993).

#### 4. The new 'hermeneutics of the workplace'

A disciplinary 'hermeneutics of the workplace' (Yount, 1993, p. 197) draws on the normalising and categorising processes of modern 'bio-power' to statistically quantify the distribution of 'EEO groups' in the workforce. When 'fair' procedures fail to produce positive improvements in the demographics, the incompetence of the 'disadvantaged' groups is reinforced (Hadreas, 1991; Yount, 1993). In the New Zealand situation too, EEO programmes draw on both monarchic and disciplinary forms of power, as they are articulated through bureaucratic and managerialist discourses. Hadreas and Yount's argument exemplifies the complex relationships between these two types of power/knowledge and the instability of their political effects in EEO discourse. One EEO practitioner described this as a distinction between a 'behavioural change' and a 'facts and figures change', and 'what we've got to have in the end is some movement in terms of the facts and figures change' (Marie). Practitioners struggled to rationalise and also to defend their programmes based on participation rates of EEO groups when 'the unfortunate thing is that in the last three or four years there's been very little change' (Cara). At the time of interview, the explanation tended to be that 'in a time when the Public Service has been drastically re-shaken and down-sized' the 'EEO groups have held their own' (Marie) (see also State Services Commission, 1995). The issue here is that both 'failure' and 'success' are discursively determined, and that, as agents of communication, EEO practitioners struggle to legitimise their programmes within a mode of truth in which 'facts and figures' rule.

The ability of EEO practitioners to handle the hermeneutics of the workplace is a central element in their authority. Terry Johnson argues that disciplinary power requires the existence of professional groups of experts who are 'fused' with the 'strategies and technologies of governmentality' (Johnson, 1993, p. 144). These 'strategies and technologies' constitute their own subjectivity, as well as constituting the objects of their professional discourse (ibid). Those who operate the panopticon are also subject to its power (Foucault, 1977a, p. 207). Modern social science is a mode of truth central to governmentality. The normalising

power of the statistical curve is premised on this particular form of surveillance (Hollway, 1991). The need for 'facts and figures' legitimisation of EEO programmes intensified in the managerialist climate of the early 1990s, 'that whole business of competitiveness and accountability', as one practitioner put it (Jessie). The ascendance of strategic human resource management also requires intensified information gathering about 'human resources' in order to exploit them most effectively: as one researcher pointed out, EEO information can be seen as just another aspect of 'data for the nineties' (Jessie).

EEO practitioners do feel some unease about the limitations of statistical 'proofs' of the value of their programmes, but still, 'being able to do EEO... depends on good data... [to identify] structural disadvantage and occupational disadvantage' (Jessie). For them, definition and quantification of EEO groups is essential to problematising equality and difference. EEO 'census' data both defines EEO groups (also spelt out in the State Sector Act) and 'proves' that there are unequal participation rates by EEO groups at all levels (Burns, 1989). Combined with feminist critiques of inequitable practices, this statistical picture 'proves' the existence of procedural injustices that are addressed by EEO programmes. As one researcher argued, if organisational data were not categorised in terms of difference, 'there's an assumption that everyone was the same'. Where you can't get 'a description of what's happening' from organisational records, the 'whole system [is] set up to disadvantage any minority groups' (Sonja). The role of research is crucial to establishing the 'expertise' of EEO discourse, the truth game in which difference is made visible and open to surveillance, and the inequality of outcome can be argued. The expectation is that the success of EEO programmes should be reflected in more equitable participation rates. As Yount and Hadreas argue, two regimes of truth are being muddled here. The complicity of feminists with the 'truths' of participation rates is predicated on normalising data as a legitimised mode of truth, not only for the specific business of governing, but also as the basis for feminist structural analyses of society. Both of these purposes are subsumed within modernist social science and its normalising truths, its 'comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and interventions' aimed at the body politic (Hacking, 1991, p. 183).

A further set of truth claims was just beginning to emerge in 1993: the use of organisational data to argue the 'business case' for EEO. This argument has required more specialised truth claims based on economic rationalism, such as cost-benefit analysis (Torrie, 1994). (A later report called for a 'more sophisticated

system of collecting, storing and analysing data than has been used previously' in order to 'measure the effectiveness' of the business benefits of EEO (State Services Commission, 1997, p. 19). Although there is a general argument that inequitable processes imply inefficient use of human resources - the 'waste-of talent' argument - more specific claims are based around 'the fact that there are going to be demographic changes in the next little while and that also feeds into that business sense argument' (Cara). This is what I call the 'Workforce 2000' argument, based on the US 'diversity' discourse in which organisations must move to 'manage' demographic inevitabilities (Jamieson and O'Mara, 1992; Johnston and Packer, 1987). As I have argued in Chapter 3, while claims made on the basis of 'difference' as a demographic variable may have a polemic effect in the context of social change agendas, they obscure the processes whereby ethnic difference is in fact *produced* in organisational processes. If difference is to be re-thought as 'relations played out in power struggles' (ibid., p. 507), the 'hermeneutics' of difference must be bracketed as constitutive of a particular power/knowledge regime with political effects that can be analysed in specific contexts. It is not a question of replacing one truth regime by another, but of finding ways to locate a given truth regime in a power/knowledge context, and considering its effects.

Our 'knowledge' about EEO groups not only constructs the borders of their identities, but represents their interests and needs. This representation of needs is a central concern of the pastoral power of the modern state, and a key component of any categorisation for policy purposes. US feminist Nancy Fraser, in her analysis of welfare policies, has pointed out that both the identities and needs of 'target groups' are 'interpreted identities and needs. Moreover, they are highly political interpretations and 'as such are in principle subject to dispute' (Fraser, 1989, p. 153). Similarly, the identities and needs of 'EEO groups' are created in the competing discourses of EEO. These include the different discourses of the 'EEO groups' themselves, which both overlap and come into conflict at different times and sites; and what Fraser calls the "'expert" needs discourses' (ibid., p. 157) of groups such as policy analysts and human resources consultants.

In my 'Introduction' (Chapter 1), I characterised the post-modern in Wendy Brown's words as 'a global intifada of the margins against the center' (Brown, 1991, p. 63). This definition highlights the potential of 'post-modern' epistemologies to subvert the old power/knowledge connections. Rather than

repeating existing categories of difference, a post-structuralist approach presents the possibility of re-signification. In the New Zealand Public Service, Maori have explicitly refused, in political terms, the processes of categorisation implicit in EEO discourse. In the next section of this chapter I consider the 'problem' of EEO Maori, and the ways in which Maori in the Public Service have both refused and used EEO discourse to advance their political claims.

## 5. The 'problem' of EEO Maori

### *The 'cone of silence'*

In designing my research, I was interested in looking at 'refusals' of EEO discourse, and, in particular, at occasions when discourses of 'gender' and 'ethnicity' came into conflict as the basis for political equality claims. These points of conflict and resistance show up where unitary identities strain at the seams. The relevant interview question was framed this way:

Can you think of times when there have been conflicts between gender and ethnic issues in your work? (Tell a story.) How have you resolved these conflicts?

I had in mind the many stories I had heard, and the experiences I had had, where Maori women challenged the dominance of Pakeha women in feminist contexts, and where the gender politics of Pakeha feminism had come under fire from Maori, especially Maori men. However, the most common response I got from my Pakeha subjects was along the lines of 'I wonder if I should get you to turn the tape off at this point'. Accordingly, I cannot repeat the stories that were told with the tape turned off, or on an 'off-the-record' basis. This 'cone of silence', as I think of it (as per the 1960s TV 'secret agent' show, *Get smart*), was familiar to me from feminist discussion of 'race' issues, and is important in itself, signifying the intensity of the political sensitivities involved. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I have focused on broader policy issues related to the intersection of gender/ethnicity, rather than on the micro-politics of 'doing EEO'.

### *Introduction to 'EEO Maori'*

My account of the Treaty narrative in Chapter 8, 'Local knowledges', provides the context for this discussion of 'EEO Maori'. 'EEO Maori' was acknowledged by both

Maori and Pakeha to be a 'problem' for EEO practice in my research interviews, and in the reports and the literature of the time (Abel, 1993; Commission for Employment Equity, 1990; Doherty, 1994; Spoonley, 1994; Tremaine, 1994;; State Services Commission, 1995, pp. 78-80; Waaka, 1990). I analyse this 'problem' in terms of how communities are constructed and differentiated (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p. 4) within a specific organisational context. As I show below, the Treaty of Waitangi is the basis of re-signification of EEO discourse for Maori, whether in order to refuse it or to use it. As the central text of post-colonial Maori identity, the Treaty cannot simply be translated into Pakeha regulatory practices. The relationship between Biculturalism and EEO Maori from a Maori perspective is summarised by Louise Waaka in a 1990 report for the State Services Commission:

(a) EEO is not part of a bicultural initiative and was not designed for that purpose.

(b) Maori people are not unique as tangata whenua within EEO Maori initiatives: they are simply one of several targeted groups (Waaka, 1990, p. 3).

My focus is on the ways in which Maori refusals and re-signification of EEO discourse make clear its cultural specificity. In the context of other acts of translation such as the 'mainstreaming' of Maori concerns within government administration, and the 'recuperation' of Maori initiatives through government funding, EEO Maori is seen by some Maori as, potentially, a re-colonising mechanism of assimilation, threatening Maori identity and Maori interests (Johnson, 1993; Parata, 1994; Waaka, 1990).

Maori EEO practitioners clearly play a key role in mediating various interpretations of EEO Maori. While figures about the ethnicity (or gender) of EEO practitioners as a group are not available, my research indicates that Maori are and have always been very much a minority among EEO practitioners. (Maori men are among the tiny male minority of EEO practitioners.) In most cases, their positions are specifically tagged 'Maori', and may include primary responsibility for specific development programmes for Maori, rather than general EEO work. Maori EEO practitioners maintain networks with other Maori public servants working in areas such as Maori-related policy, cultural development, and bicultural units. At the time of the interviews, a Maori EEO practitioners' group had recently formed within the EEO Practitioners' Association. In comparison with the Pakeha

practitioners I interviewed, Maori practitioners were definite about their sense of accountability to Maori communities both inside and outside the Public Service (see also Gembitsky, 1992). These accountabilities took the form of answerability to specific Maori communities and/or whanau groups:

It's important to continue to be grounded... So I try to go back to the Urewera at least once every two or three months... and maintain contacts with my whanau and hapu (Steve).

Having connections 'at grass roots' nurtures the broader vision for Maori, and 'gives me some justification to know that I'm heading in the right direction' (Richard). This clear sense of accountability to, and support from, Maori communities, does not necessarily make life easy:

You get challenged from both sides, challenged from Maori, challenged from Pakeha... then you've got accountabilities to management (Tanya).

While these conflicting accountabilities are often painful and difficult to negotiate (Nairn, 1994; Gembitsky, 1992), the central status of Maori identity as the basis for political action is relatively clear-cut in comparison with the more individualised and diffuse identities of Pakeha EEO practitioners, and their more individualised and diffuse political focus.

The concept of 'EEO Maori' is based on the State Sector Act's (1988) 'good employer' provisions. The inclusion of references to EEO in the Act (at second draft stage) is considered by EEO practitioners to be a key achievement. However, there is no explicit reference to the Treaty of Waitangi in the State Sector Act 1988. The Act's (1988) 'good employer' provisions include:

56 (2) (d) Recognition of--

- (i) The aims and aspirations of the Maori people; and
  - (ii) The employment requirements of the Maori people;
- and
- (iii) The need for greater involvement of the Maori people in the Public Service (State Services Act 1988).

The naming of specific groups in terms of the 'good employer' provisions for 'fair and proper treatment of all employees' acknowledges that these groups in

particular are likely to be disadvantaged in respect to 'fairness'. The 'aims and aspirations of the Maori people' are not distinguished from the 'aims and aspirations' of ethnic and minority groups, but the 'need for greater involvement of the Maori people in the Public Service' could be read to imply some kind of special status for Maori in public administration. As I have described in Chapter 8 the reference to Maori 'involvement' or 'participation' in the Public Service recurs in government documents in various contexts, sometimes in (unspecified) relationship to the Treaty of Waitangi, sometimes not (Ministry of Maori Affairs, 1988; State Services Commission, 1989, 1993b). When the Treaty of Waitangi is referred to in relation to 'Maori participation', it tends to be 'participation' in the service of increased Public Service capability to deal with Treaty issues, rather than 'participation' in the service of Maori people, and of their Treaty rights to equal partnership within the state sector.

When I carried out my field studies it was three years since the change of government in 1990, and policies of Biculturalism - framed as such - were in retreat (Spoonley, 1994, p. 93). As one practitioner explained it, 'when the government will ceased so did a lot of that push [towards Biculturalism] in government organisations' (Cara). In interviews and documents at the time there was little talk of Biculturalism or of Treaty partnership within organisations, and more talk about the Treaty as a basis for getting resources out to separate Maori organisations. Maori participation becomes the basis for recruiting, training and retaining Maori staff who can generate policy advice and create relationships with iwi and Maori organisations, so that: 'at the end of the day... the business of government is conducted in a much more efficient and effective way and it meets the needs of Maori people as clients of the state' (Steve). The concept of EEO Maori was beginning to attract new interest from some Maori EEO practitioners as a legitimised way to advance Maori interests within the public sector. Below I discuss ways in which Maori both 'refused' and 'used' 'EEO Maori', authorising both strategies in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi.

### *Refusing EEO Maori*

As both a Pakeha and feminist discourse, EEO was doubly suspect in the eyes of many Maori, who:

were quite resistant... because they saw it as being something for Pakeha women and feminists... One of the biggest issues for us as Maori is the gender issue versus the ethnicity issue. It puts them off EEO generally (Tanya).

At first glance, it seems ironic in terms of EEO's 'social justice' agenda that the association of EEO with feminism has the effect of undercutting the authority of EEO as far as some Maori are concerned. While many Pakeha feminists, including EEO practitioners, have been active in anti-racism and therefore in support of Treaty discourse, the support is not necessarily reciprocal (D. Jones, 1992). But of course a 'social justice' agenda, framed in terms of equality for a range of oppressed groups, is a construct of western cultural and historical discourses. In the words of Maori activist Donna Awatere:

White people's protest is done within the boundary of the western capitalist culture which is their heritage. Maori people's protest is done from inside a cage within and against that very culture which has denied us *our* heritage and our rights (Awatere, 1984, p. 35).

Ongoing debates about the status of women among Maori communities add complexity to the picture. 'Feminism' is seen by some as a Pakeha concept, and EEO as a version of feminism is therefore doubly discredited.:

I know some Maori people who say... EEO has got nothing to do with the Treaty of Waitangi. They think it undermines the Treaty and it gets back to that, [that] 'EEO - it's for white women' (Tanya).

The discourses of EEO and of the Treaty each categorise and position Maori differently as a group within government organisations. In terms of EEO Maori, Maori are given legitimacy along with - and to the extent that they are seen as - groups that are disadvantaged in terms of access to employment. From this perspective Tangata Whenua status is irrelevant, and EEO Maori can be seen as 'undermining' the Treaty, especially if it threatens to replace Treaty discourse as the framework for Maori interests and claims within the state sector (Waaka, 1990).

If claiming self-representation as Tangata Whenua is a position of strength, one which is legitimated both by Maori culture and the Treaty legislation, 'being recognised as a disadvantaged group' (Tanya) is seen as a position of weakness

in which the unique power of indigenous status is lost... This difference also counts in term of resources. While a partnership model implies equal sharing of power and resources, an EEO group model refers back to demographics, and to Maori as about 10% of public servants and about 15% of the population as a whole (State Services Commission, 1993, p. 1). As a Maori EEO practitioner argued:

If the Treaty of Waitangi... had been honoured, we would be in a far different position today... We don't even get an equitable balance of resources... Maori represent 17% of the staff in this department... but they don't have 17% of the access to resources and training and that's not even talking about the bicultural issues involved. The resourcing would be different if you were thinking of it in a partnership... approach... but because we are in EEO... we become one of five groups (Tanya).

To develop a Treaty-based future for Maori in the state sector, Maori public servants increasingly have come to advocate the creation of Maori-controlled programmes by which government resources are directed outside government departments to iwi groups. These developments enable tino rangatiratanga, or self-determination. To some extent this development had already been occurring in areas such as education, health, justice and social welfare. One Maori EEO practitioner described the 'changes in [her] own thinking' which meant that she questioned now the appropriateness of Maori employment issues being addressed under the heading of EEO:

I see the bicultural issue as a bigger burning issue for me... I sometimes try and think outside of this organisation in terms of Biculturalism and... I just don't think we're going to achieve any kind of Biculturalism or tino rangatiratanga at the end of the day, if we stay in these organisations... I think we could be doing better things outside of these organisations. It could work for services... we could actually control (Tanya).

From this perspective, rather than pushing the state sector to provide employment for Maori, tino rangatiratanga enables Maori to create employment in their own organisations. Rather than trying to influence policy implementation through getting Maori policy analysts into the state sectors, Maori organisations can be providing their own policies and services. The problem of translation within a bicultural environment always dominated by

Pakeha has been countered by Maori with the claim of tino rangatiratanga: 'I think because Maori people are Tangata Whenua, their issues are different... as much as you try and avoid it... there's conflict of interests' (Tanya).

### *Using EEO Maori*

The increasing interest by Maori in making use of EEO makes sense only within the context of strong adherence to the Treaty of Waitangi. 'Te Reo o Te Tiriti Mai Rano; the Treaty always speaks', and making use of EEO legislation to further the interests of the Maori people is enabled by reading it via the text of the Treaty. This approach means continuing to refuse relegation to EEO group status, while using the legislation to advance the Treaty agenda. This is an overtly and explicitly *critical* enterprise, which can be interpreted in a foucauldian sense as setting out to 'expose the risks and stakes of any given set of terms and what they stand for' (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 191).

For Maori EEO practitioners, the first part of the strategy is to gain leverage from 'the fact that something has been said... in a piece of legislation. So, to use that to the best advantage that you can' (Richard). The task they face is to re-signify 'EEO Maori' so that it speaks to Maori people and advances the Treaty agenda. The problem is not 'the work that is being done but... this label' (Richard). The objection is to the concept of 'disadvantage' and the threatened loss of Tangata Whenua status. There is also an issue of the untranslatability of EEO discourse into Maori terms, especially for Maori outside the public service: 'they don't see the relevance of that sort of thing' (Richard).

The second part of the strategy then is to re-signify EEO in terms of the Treaty: to make it make sense to Maori, and to spell out its possible benefits. The key move was to locate the concept of 'EEO Maori' in Article Three of the Treaty:

Issues to do with equity and equality are Article Three issues. So as far as Maori people are concerned Equal Employment Opportunities - as a consequence of Article Three - is relevant... but that doesn't detract from the fact that there is a partnership arrangement implied by Articles One and Two (Tanya).

Article Three confirms the equal rights of Maori as citizens, but does not address the central issues of tino rangatiratanga and of partnership based upon it

(Articles One and Two). With this strategic interpretation, EEO Maori can provide openings for Maori in Pakeha institutions, without giving away arguments for partnership or for forms of separate development:

In working with EEO Maori as a citizenship issue, Maori EEO practitioners have also re-signified the 'good employer' legislation itself. They have decided to focus on one part of the relevant section, the phrase referring to 'recognition of the aims and aspirations of the Maori people' (State Sector Act 1988, 56 (2) (d) (I)). This provision is seen to provide an opening for iwi-defined agendas that refer back to Maori discourses within and beyond government organisations. It is very important that this phrase describes Maori as a 'people', a community, not just as a group of diverse individuals who have the right to compete equally:

'Look. We are *Maori* before anything. What does... anything mean without the survival of the Maori as a nation. It is empty. Meaningless. Nothing that happens to an individual is as important as it happens to us as a people (Awatere, 1984, p. 45).

Maori EEO practitioners chose to link the 'aims and aspirations' specified in the State Services Act to the wider Treaty vision of the Maori people. This interpretation of Maori as a 'people' strongly evokes the concept of Tangata Whenua, although the 'aims and aspirations' of ethnic minorities are also specified in the Act, and specific Tangata Whenua status is clearly not intended. Although it does not directly authorise tino rangatiratanga, this version of EEO Maori can be used to advance it, by increasing the number of Maori in the Public Service, 'being employed and getting in senior management positions. And all of those things are going to help to advance Maori... in the wider area' (Richard). These Maori staff were seen as vital to developing the Treaty claims process and the resulting ongoing Maori-Pakeha relationships in the direction of Maori agendas. EEO Maori implied a responsibility for chief executives to 'create or develop an environment that enable the aims and aspirations of Maori people to be achieved within the public sector' (Steve).

Maori EEO practitioners have had at least preliminary success in re-signifying EEO Maori in terms of the 'aims and aspirations' approach. An 'Aims and aspirations' conference was held in February 1995 ('EEO in Aotearoa: Aims and aspirations conference', Massey University, Palmerston North). The State Services Commission's 1995 review report on EEO highlighted the issue of EEO Maori as the

subject of 'ongoing debate', and referred to 'wider strategies relating to Maori that would be required to implement all three aspects of the clause [in the State Sector Act 1988] more broadly' (State Services Commission, 1995, p. 36). Pakeha EEO practitioners have also drawn on the authority of the Treaty to clarify their own positions in relation to EEO Maori, again by distinguishing EEO from tino rangatiratanga (Abel, 1993; State Services Commission, 1995, pp. 78-80).

Maori resistance to EEO discourse has been framed in terms that are very clearly and explicitly political, and authorised by a Maori cultural vision. This resistance puts in question the claims that EEO is simply a matter of universal best practice and good management. In their refusal of EEO, Maori have brought into relief some of its culturally specific assumptions, and disputed the authority of feminism. In both refusing and using EEO discourse, re-signification by Maori provides a striking example of 'the strategic mobility of racial discourses', whereby 'a shared vocabulary' can be '[infused] with different political meanings' (Stoler, 1995, p. 13).

## **6. The old problems still linger**

Denise Riley argues that the difficulty of identity categories in feminism cannot be dealt with simply by adding on to or extending the current formulations: 'below the newly pluralised surfaces, the old problems still linger' (Riley, 1988, p. 99). In this chapter I have addressed these 'problems' as problems of representation, of speaking for and speaking about others. This representation occurs directly through relationships of accountability, or indirectly, as mediated by power/knowledge regimes which regulate the relationships between centre and margins.

If we ask 'what counts as differences and what differences count' (Johnston and Pihama, 1993), the differences that count in EEO discourse are those that meet the purposes of governmentality. Within a broader analysis of modern disciplinary society, feminism and governmentality converge in some basic assumptions about categories of difference. The case of EEO Maori exemplifies processes by which community is constituted in struggles over representation. Treaty discourse provides a powerful authority for refusing and re-signifying EEO discourse, and for claiming identity and a political place in other terms. The question is not what difference 'is', but what it does, the way that it works performatively in a given context - in this case, in New Zealand government

organisations. To ask what makes it possible for the category of identity to act in certain ways, we must consider the power issues that are at stake. This consideration itself takes place in a dynamic policy environment where a range of values is called upon by different stake-holders to legitimise their access to the resources of the state.

In my earlier discussion of feminist post-structuralism, I raised Jana Sawicki's questions about the relationship of feminism to discursive authority:

What price do we pay for becoming 'authorities' in our discourses?  
To what extent does it involve identifying ourselves with patriarchal and racist forces? How are we suppressing other voices? (Sawicki, 1991, pp. 106-107).

Having made the strategic decisions that EEO must be implemented by 'managers' - that is, by centralising EEO discourse as far as possible in organisational discourse - EEO practitioners are constantly at risk of various unintended political effects of this complicity with 'patriarchal and racist forces'. Through its incorporation into the official systems of representation, 'difference' becomes normalised in a way that privileges the interests of some EEO groups over others - primarily, privileging Pakeha women. Many EEO practitioners are quite aware of this effect of EEO, and address it in their work. But there is a tendency to repress the political issues at stake *between* the EEO groups through the rhetoric of 'a win for one is a win for all'. This has the effect of 'suppressing other voices'. The 'voices' of the EEO networks are de-politicised, so that questions of conflict of interest between EEO groups, or between EEO groups and senior management, are virtually silenced.

I also believe that the complicity of EEO discourse with 'patriarchal and racist' power/knowledge regimes is disguised by the convergence of modern social sciences, especially modern sociologies, with feminist discourse in terms of the ways that collective identity is represented (Riley, 1988). This convergence forms the basis of much of the 'structural analysis' on which the expertise and authority of practitioners is based. Part of the job of feminist post-structuralism is to draw attention to these convergences and their assumptions and political implications, and so to tease out what is at stake in 'what counts as difference', in using or refusing a specific vocabulary of difference. In the next chapter I return to this issue in an analysis of the discourse of 'managing diversity'.

### **'MANAGING DIVERSITY': THREE READINGS OF A NEW VOCABULARY OF DIFFERENCE**

The challenge is how to really deal with the difficulties and complexities of difference, not just the difference between cultures but the difference that questions a whole system of truth and representation and allows each case of marginalisation to be dealt with as a unique case without losing sight of what it may share with others (Trinh, 1994, p. 15).

#### **1. Introduction**

In 1994, 'managing diversity' was emerging as a new and contested vocabulary for addressing issues of difference - gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality - in organisations. It was raised by EEO practitioners in early interviews, and it soon became obvious to me that, as one woman put it, 'there's a whole lot of politics around those terms' (Cara). I therefore decided to ask specifically about the term in each interview, and found that various readings of the term worked as powerful indicators of discursive difference. In the previous chapter I argued that 'a shared vocabulary' can be '[infused] with different political meanings' as a function of 'the strategic mobility of racial discourses' (Stoler, 1995, p. 13). In this chapter I take 'managing diversity' as the 'shared vocabulary', and look at how it worked as it circulated in different discursive contexts.

In the recent academic literature, arguments over definitions of 'managing diversity' have been intertwined with arguments over business and social objectives (Boje and Dennehy, 1994; Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Thomas and Ely, 1996). A call for 'conceptual clarity' is intended to remedy the current 'confusion and ambiguity' (Cox, 1994, p. 51), to replace it with new truths about what 'managing diversity' really 'is'. I take a different approach, arguing that vocabularies of difference will inevitably be unstable, and that this instability opens up possibilities for de-naturalizing difference. As Trinh Minh-ha points out, the 'difficulties and complexities' of difference are the effect not only of cultural difference, but of the systems of 'truth and representation' that govern the placing of differences between the

margins and the centre (Trinh, 1994, p. 15). Trinh also stresses the importance of the 'unique case' of each variety of difference, but also the importance of being able to identify political affinities that create leverage for change.

I have argued in the previous chapter that the vocabulary of 'EEO' tends to have the effect of regulating differences to unify them within a single framework based on discrete group identities. In the vocabulary of 'managing diversity', difference is represented within another unitary framework, on which is based around individual, rather than group, difference. In this chapter I present readings of 'managing diversity' from three discursive contexts: I look at how EEO practitioners have questioned 'managing diversity' in the context of EEO discourse; I look at trade union discourses which provide oppositional readings of 'managing diversity' as a form of human resource management; and I consider uses and refusals of 'managing diversity' in the framework of local, culturally positioned discourses of difference: accounts from Maori, Pacific Island and 'ethnic minority group' perspectives. The approach I take is not that there are 'better' - clearer, more correct, more universally politically effective - readings of 'managing diversity', but that all have their dangers and possibilities in specific contexts and in terms of specific political programmes. As Foucault argues, 'everything is dangerous' so 'we always have something to do... The ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 343). In analysing the more-or-less-dangerous effects of 'managing diversity' as a strategic reframing of difference, practitioners are positioned themselves in particular positions of enunciation - professional, ethical - always in relation to others. I treat the uses of 'managing diversity' as a kind of litmus test of discursive conflict around issues that have already come up in this thesis: the relationship between managerialist and bureaucratic discourse; the relationship between 'top down' and 'grassroots' approaches to equality and difference; the relationship between Maori and non-Maori identities.

I am primarily concerned with practitioners' readings of 'managing diversity' in the specific contexts, rather than with the academic literature of 'managing diversity', although I do use the literature to create some context for my analysis. One of the points I want to make is that

'managing diversity', like other terms of difference, works in more contradictory and complex ways in practice than it does in the programmatic literature. It is also important to the context of my readings of 'managing diversity' to emphasise that the range of discursive positions that I set out here is derived from interviews with people who are explicitly committed to equality in organisations. For these subjects, 'women and minorities' are 'we', not 'they'. By contrast, much of the academic and professional writing about 'managing diversity' positions 'women and minorities' as 'them', as in this New Zealand example:

If we are to prepare our managers to deal with a workforce made up of more minorities and women, what do we need to teach them? What a barriers must they overcome to manage effectively people who are different from themselves or different from the mainstream? (Sauers, 1993, p. 46).

## 2. Discourses of equality

The first mention of the term 'managing diversity' in a research interview was by an EEO practitioner who used it to distinguish the state sector approach to EEO from the private sector approach:

EEO [in the private sector] has been very different from the way that we've approached it... They are following a 'managing diversity' approach. There are bits of it that I don't think are a lot different from EEO [but]... it does seem to have a much more of an individualist focus and that tends to be the approach that's been picked up in the private sector (Cara).

Moving away from an emphasis on legal regulation of 'equality', the government-funded EEO Trust adopted 'making the most of a diverse workforce' as their slogan, and 'the successful management of diversity' as the core of their mission statement (EEO Trust, 1992). More generally, private sector human resource management practitioners and consultants sponsored 'managing diversity' as a new framework for organisational discourse of difference (see also Ellis, 1994; McNaughton, 1994).

As I have explained in Chapter 11, EEO epistemology is based around a structural model of discrimination, and it is in these terms that practitioners contest the 'individualist approach' of 'managing diversity'.

I think to de-politicise it entirely is... going to lead to an increasing individualisation of approach - what does the individual need to develop themselves to the best advantage?... I think it becomes much more discretionary, at times in some workplaces... so that you don't actually acknowledge things as having a structural basis... or structural solutions (Jessie).

The 'individualism' associated with 'managing diversity' is signalled by a specific move *away* from identifying disadvantaged groups, and towards 'the many ways employees are different and the many ways they are alike', in the words of Roosevelt Thomas, an African-American who is the author of *Beyond race and gender* (Thomas, 1991, p. 12), the seminal text of 'managing diversity':

Diversity includes everyone; it is not something that is defined by race or gender. It extends to age, personal and corporate background, education, function, and personality. It includes lifestyle, sexual preference, geographic origin, tenure with the organisation... and management or nonmanagement (ibid., p. 11).

In this scenario no group has special status, no difference matters more than any other, and 'everyone will benefit' (ibid., p. 168). Every individual is 'diverse' in different ways, and 'managing diversity' offers 'something for everyone' (EEO Trust, 1992, p. 4). In particular, distinctions between 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' are erased, and the focus 'includes white males' (ibid., p. 28). Thomas's definition is: 'Managing diversity is a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works for all employees' (ibid, p. 10).

However, categories of difference - no matter how long and inclusive a list - are never arbitrary or innocent of power relations. In Thomas's managerialist discourse, the 'meaning' of categories of difference between employees is always interpreted in terms of 'the benefit of the corporation'

(ibid, p. 168). Although he claims 'all groups' will benefit, 'the driving force is the manager's, and the company's self-interest' (ibid.).

Paradoxically, although the central subject of 'managing diversity' is each diverse individual, the case for 'managing diversity' is driven by knowledge claims based on the same statistics used to argue EEO - analyses of workforces in the terms of group demographics. However, the argument is not that changes in these demographics are *desirable* but that they are *inevitable*: 'Every business is likely to be affected by the changes in the New Zealand workforce... Success in business means managing change, not avoiding it' (EEO Trust, 1992, p. 4).

This demographic language has a 'like it or not' feel to it. As one EEO practitioner said: 'It feels horrible... "let's manage this diversity that we've ended up with"' (Jessie).

For some practitioners, the term 'managing diversity' was provisionally acceptable as a sales ploy in certain situations:

I don't mind people using 'managing diversity' if they don't compromise the analysis about who has power and who doesn't have power (Alison).

This is the familiar dilemma of ends/means in the communicative strategies of EEO:

['Managing diversity'] is becoming a big glib marketing phrase which I find very hard, on a personal level... But I wouldn't be averse to using it myself in policy documents... But I suppose it's one of those 'ends justifies the means' (Katarina).

Here the speaker distances herself from the 'managing diversity' vocabulary, but at the same time is prepared to use it strategically. It is crucial here that the vocabulary of 'managing diversity' is acceptable if it is seen as, in effect, EEO by another name, rather than a whole new approach to difference. In a sense, the term 'managing diversity' works within EEO discourse as an indicator of the more strongly managerialist versions of the 'business case'. It is equated with 'private sector'

imperatives, where the 'business case' is not a complement to equality agendas, but stands alone. In this sense, 'managing diversity' signals to some EEO practitioners a challenge to their professional identity both in terms of expertise - a change programme based on structural analysis of EEO groups - and also in terms of values. EEO practitioners see themselves as part of 'the EEO community', which has over a number of years shared certain assumptions:

All of us who are working in this area are working towards substantive social change. We come into this work because of our gut connections with the issue, because of some personal understanding and analysis of discrimination and oppression or because... we connect with it for others if not personally for ourselves. But [now] you can't make that assumption about... everyone who is working in this area. And so one of the concerns has been with the use of the term 'managing diversity' alongside the professionalisation of the area. Do you have people working and promoting that message who don't have any concept or desire to see fundamental change and aren't using the language as a tactical means of achieving fundamental change? The concern is that some of the professionalisation of the area is the sanitising of it as well (Alison).

For the 'us' of the core 'EEO community', the term 'managing diversity' mapped a boundary between equality discourse and business discourse which they were unwilling to cross. Some guardedly went along with the strategic use of the term, within the context of an equality agenda. Most fought the replacement of EEO by 'managing diversity' as a framework for dealing with organisational difference, and repudiated the proposition that:

EEO is dead and we are on to this next phase and the next phase is bigger and better and brighter, etc., etc (Jessie).

Of the two EEO practitioners I interviewed who could be seen as supporters of 'managing diversity' as a new approach to issues of difference and equality, both were (in different ways) on the periphery of the 'EEO community'. Of these, one suggested that the refusal of 'managing

diversity' indicated 'a degree of conservatism... of not moving with the times' (Tara). She wondered if 'there has been a very stereotyped way' of presenting 'managing diversity' because of 'something going on there to do with ownership of ideas'.

The vocabulary of 'managing diversity' has two key components: the emphasis on *managing* as the way to create organisational change, and the emphasis on *diversity* as a way of conceptualising difference in organisations. Among my interviewees, there was one strong champion of 'managing diversity', and her argument was that EEO had failed in terms of both of these components. Against the criticism of other EEO practitioners, she argues that 'managing diversity' will work better:

They say it's a sell-out because it's getting away from the target groups to [focus on] managers... the way I see things is [that] the barriers [are there] because of the people that are in management positions... And so obviously it makes sense... to actually try and fix it at that level. If you try and fix something at the grass roots and you haven't got the power it's never going to change anyway (Sharyn).

The focus on managers here seems little different from the arguments discussed above in Chapter 11, where the focus of EEO discourse has shifted from EEO networks to managers. Sharyn goes on to point out the problems of the EEO group approach:

EEO has created a back-lash and by and large the people in the back-lash group are the ones that are in control. Also it's made a lot of people in the target groups, especially Maori, totally uncomfortable and stigmatised and they don't like being segmented and pointed at. There's also a compulsion to fix the target group people rather than fix the problem that caused it in the first place. So there's a lot of things that have been maybe unintended consequences but I think they've caused a lot of difficulties (Sharyn).

Here Sharyn follows closely to the arguments of Thomas, whose publications she drew on extensively (Thomas, 1991). EEO is represented

here as something that is being 'done to' certain groups of people: a process where certain identities are normalised through being fixed as 'target groups'. Dominant groups are seen as resisting EEO discourse effectively. In contrast, 'managing diversity' is seen as a strategy to avoid binary models which create resistance from *both* groups. For this speaker 'managing diversity' is a more effective strategy than EEO, not a 'sell-out', *because* it manages identity differently. As Thomas puts it, difference is not 'an "us/them" kind of problem', but 'a resource to be managed' (Thomas, 1991, p., 10).

For some feminist EEO practitioners, some degree of 'back-lash' is inevitable if power relations in organisations actually shift substantially: 'that [negative] reaction's going to be there with anything else once it starts to have any bite' (Ilona). They do not agree with Sharyn that 'managing diversity' is a more effective approach, and its greater acceptability is seen as simply 'leaving some of the hard bits out' (Jessie). A second EEO practitioner, Tara, did initially see possibilities in the vocabulary of 'managing diversity', but then decided against it. Her description of her process of choosing to refuse the vocabulary of 'managing diversity' is interesting, because it illustrates some theoretical possibilities and contextual limitations.

First, she saw 'managing diversity' as 'another angle to do the same things from':

Broadening the concept of EEO beyond the usual designated groups... To look at other differences like wage and salary workers and other differences, age differences and all of these things... The way that I was understanding initially was that managing diversity was a lot about creating climate and transformation. Rather than just changing rigid systems to another system that was more fair. It was something that was more flexible... But based on the same goals.

Tara gives two main reasons for having changed her initially positive response to 'managing diversity':

The emphasis is much more on the individual thing [than] on groups. So it is not... actually recognising the institutional barriers in the way that it should be.

and:

That you can get into looking at so many different kinds of difference and recognise them. That you are actually ignoring the fact that there is major discrimination against particular groups (Tara).

The assumption here is that to open up a more flexible and complex way of looking at difference inevitably results in a de-politicised and individualistic approach. In other words, the only possible reading of the vocabulary of 'diversity' is in a managerialist context, and the only alternative to this individualising managerialism is EEO discourse based on structural analysis (institutional barriers, discriminated-against groups, etc.).

Another important basis for refusing 'managing diversity' was that practitioners saw it as based on a US model of equality/difference - specifically, one that centred around certain types of affirmative action programmes. This is how one EEO practitioner put it:

I think that we have got to be very careful that we don't... bring in what is basically an American model and try and plant it in New Zealand... I think that in the States that what has happened is that the 'managing diversity' model has grown up alongside the fact that they have had a very quantitative target and in some cases quota system where there's been a real focus on the numbers... And so 'managing diversity'... is now starting to address some of the gaps that were left in the American approach... I think we had from the start taken much more of an environmental, cultural perspective in EEO... So I don't think that we have necessarily the same issues (Ilona).

New Zealand feminist academic writers on EEO and 'managing diversity' have similarly argued that 'diversity represents a complex intersection of

many differences set against a backdrop of multiple... influences', and that it 'cannot be imported from other countries' (Pringle & Sowcroft, 1996, p. 41). For instance, Deborah Shepherd argues from her research on diversity programmes run by US-based multinationals in New Zealand, that, paradoxically, these programmes ignored local perspectives on cultural diversity in 'an attempt to get everybody to share the same set of values as a way of respecting individuals' (Shepherd, 1997, p. 15). The New Zealand perspective on cultural diversity issues in organisations differs from the US view in two key ways. There is a different history of social equity in the workplace, focused around the concept of EEO rather than that of Affirmative Action, as Ilona points out above. Secondly, it is characterised by a unique post-colonial relationship between the Tangata Whenua and later settlers.

Because the vocabulary of 'managing diversity' reduces all difference to equivalence, it is seen by Maori EEO practitioners as, like EEO, subverting Treaty-based employment policies:

There are some benefits there but there's also the danger of detracting from things like the Treaty... the [demographic] argument can be used here but it has to be used knowing the risks in terms of bicultural development... There's a real risk of losing sight of the Treaty completely (Richard).

Here, the arguments against EEO Maori, presented in Chapter 11, also apply: 'managing diversity' implies a model of identity which is in conflict with the self-representation of Maori people. There is no room for group claims within 'managing diversity', let alone claims for indigenous status as a difference which makes a major difference. Nor is there room for a collective, rather than an individualised concept of identity (Pihama, 1994; Tremaine, 1990). Maori cultural values matter only to the extent that they add value to the organisation: 'Things like consensus decision making... [being a] team player those sorts of things (Richard). Maori culture is offered within a 'managing diversity' model as a commodity to employers, rather than as a cultural resource that Maori people themselves as Tangata Whenua have a right to create in their workplaces.

In this section I have presented EEO practitioners as, on the whole, rejecting the new vocabulary of 'managing diversity', except in certain strategic contexts where it can be seen as an extension of, or opening for, EEO. I now to look at how trade unionists with particular experience in EEO issues see the work of EEO practitioners, and how they interpret the language of 'managing diversity'.

### 3. Discourses of exploitation

Interviews with trade unionists introduced important new perspectives on EEO discourse. They saw themselves as having, after a period of convergence in the mid to late 1980s, moved away from EEO practitioners and the 'EEO community' after the political changes of 1990 and later. As one trade unionist put it: 'the EEO coordinator was far more likely at the end of 1990 to align herself with the Chief Executive' (Jane). While most EEO practitioners downplayed the claim that there had been major political shift away from employment equity at this time, trade unionists experienced this as a time of major blows to unions, and one in which the inequities of the employment relationship were exacerbated. Trade unionists expressed particular frustration that many EEO coordinators 'refused to see that there was an industrial side to their work' (Jane). Certainly, none of the EEO practitioners that I talked to mentioned industrial relations or the role of unions as an aspect of their change strategy, or in any other context. The strategic turn to human resource management by EEO practitioners was seen by trade unionists as a response to the chilly political climate for unions, workers rights and equality issues more generally. The 'refusal' to see EEO in industrial relations terms was attributed by trade unionists to the strategic human resource management framework which took a unitary approach to 'employee' / management' interests, and 'everything now is a way of delivering to the employer what the employer wants' (Janet). By comparison, trade unionist discourse is centred around the objects of 'workers' and 'employers', and their interests are seen as - if not fundamentally, at least potentially - opposed. This relationship is central to how trade unionists see the work of EEO practitioners:

No matter how much [they] are genuinely committed to furthering the interests of those workers, I think that it's too contradictory

and in the final analysis [they]’re actually working for the [employer]... There may be the argument that working from within you may make more progress. I don’t know but I haven’t seen evidence of it particularly (Joanna).

The commitments of EEO practitioners to management, combined with their own middle-class and (usually) Pakeha status, meant for trade unionists that EEO was seen by many EEO group workers as ‘not just a Pakeha women’s issue but a particular kind of Pakeha women’s issue’ (Jane). From the perspective of their own version of structural analysis, trade unionists saw EEO practitioners as representing employers rather than workers, so that EEO was ‘us [EEO practitioners] doing it to them... kind of equal-opting them’ (Jane). EEO practitioners then are seen as ending up on the other side of the ‘us/them’ divide.

From the managerialist perspective articulated by Thomas, ‘the company’s self-interest’ in ‘managing diversity’ (Thomas, 1991, p. 168) is paramount, although employees too will benefit - but that is a side-effect rather than an objective. From the point of view of trade unionists I spoke with, ‘managing diversity’ opened up the cultural resources of employees for commodification and exploitation. The contribution of employees from their cultural perspectives may benefit the organisation, but this effect may be produced at the expense of employees, rather than inevitably benefiting them as well. One trade unionist described this as ‘screwing diversity out of’ workers, and she spelled out how this occurred:

You know all that, dial-a-waiata [traditional song], kind of dial-a-mihi [Maori welcome], dial-a-kaumatua [elder] stuff that they were doing to our members in their workplaces, and yet it wasn’t a two-way street... Calling out our young members to perform and to you know, lay it on, when it was appropriate... and yet the reciprocity of recognising that very special contribution that Maori may have - the value of that to their organisation - was never backed up by recognition of the place that those persons’ values had in their life... they weren’t prepared to recognise that that skill was like the policy-writing skill or the mail-sorting skill or... whatever skills that people brought to work and were remunerated for, it was like they couldn’t deal with it, and they wouldn’t (Janet).

Here Maori workers were required to produce the signs of 'Biculturalism' at the demand of the organisation. Frequently, the request was in a culturally inappropriate context: for instance, the Maori worker concerned might be too young when an elder was needed, or untrained for a particular role in some of these situations. Maori did not control when and how their culture was represented. From the trade union perspective, they were not recognised or remunerated adequately for their skills, and the construction of 'merit' was clearly monocultural (Pakeha). Trade unionists dealt with the issue of cultural skills within an industrial relations framework by bringing them within the scope of industrial claims: Te Reo (Maori language), Pacific Island languages and Sign Language were all the subject of collective claims. Cultural skills were put in the same frame as other EEO issues covered by collective agreements, such as Child Care and Parental Leave, Tangihanga (Maori funeral ceremony) Leave, Cultural Leave, and Sexual Harassment programmes.

To represent 'managing diversity' as 'screwing diversity out of the workers' is to turn arguments in favour of 'diversity' upside down: it is to evoke the possibility of 'managing diversity' as an exploitative vocabulary appropriated in managerialist discourse, and one that that runs *against* the grain of workers' interests. The interests of workers and managers are placed in opposition, and 'diversity' is presented as vulnerable to commodification through being 'managed'.

The trade unionists that I interviewed agreed that the placement of EEO as an aspect of human resource management tended to take it out of the domain of industrial relations - where, for instance, remuneration such as language allowances could be negotiated to recognise cultural skills - and into the domain of organisational strategy. In this context, issues of equality are valuable or otherwise in terms of the strategies of the organisation, assumed to be unitary with the best interests of individual workers. But from a trade union perspective:

Management have a narrower and different agenda... ['Managing diversity'] just defines it really, really clearly as a management tool. That this is all about controlling to our advantage... the range of staff that we can employ. It's got nothing to do with... social

equity... and that's a problem... I just don't think you can do EEO work in a workplace... without union and staff involvement... they are the essential elements (Joanna).

Joanna argued that, like issues such as Occupational Safety and Health, official worker recognition was essential to ensure that EEO groups could speak for themselves and define their own workplace issues. But the decreased power of unions in the 1990s has meant that workers no longer have a strong collective speaking position from which to demand equity:

You are still in a grace and favour situation... because even then you are asking your employer to change (Janet).

Trade union discourse on 'screwing diversity out of [the workers]' (Jane) can be seen as a kind of counter to the managerialist discourse of 'managing diversity', which is also one of exploitation, but presented in a positive light as an opportunity to 'capitalize on differences' (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 32).

Trade union discourse provides a powerful reverse interpretation of EEO discourse and of the ways that the vocabulary of 'managing diversity' might work within its context. In particular, trade unionists highlight the managerialist appropriation not only of 'managing diversity'. They also highlight the managerialist strands of EEO discourse. While EEO practitioners are wary of 'managing diversity' for some of the same reasons as trade unionists - especially, the marginalisation of equality agendas - trade unionists are more likely to see EEO discourse as already overwhelmingly compromised in the same way, through its complicity with the managerialist discourse of human resource management. Both EEO and trade union discourses tend to work in terms of grand narratives, in which certain groups - workers, EEO groups - are seen as oppressed and others - employers, white males - as oppressors. In this context, the vocabulary of 'managing diversity' is interpreted in terms of pre-given identities, power structures and political narratives. From both these perspectives, the language of 'managing diversity' has the effect of recuperating equality claims within a managerialist discourse that works against the interests of the 'unequal'. I argue for a more specific analysis of 'managing diversity', which allows for the possibility that the vocabulary of 'managing diversity'

can be given resistant as well as recuperative meanings. If power produces resistance, as Foucault argues, then 'resistance' in the form of EEO will inevitably generate reciprocally a 'back-lash', which can be resisted in turn: 'resistance consequently plays the role of continuously provoking extensions, revisions and refinements of those same practices which it confronts' (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 180). For instance, new managerialist discourse in the language of human resource management may be intended by some managers to side-step industrial power struggles, but may in turn be used by unions to open up what Terry Austrin calls new 'contexts of talk' (Austrin, 1994), in which new speaking positions are created for employees. If we move away from seeing discourses as created by and for a specific pre-identified social group, but instead see them in the foucauldian sense as fields of power relations productive of identities, then managerialist discourse no longer appears as a monolithic system of representation, but instead as a series of points of power where resistance is possible. 'Managing diversity' could be read as a form of resistance by the margins against the centre within the context of managerialist discourse, just as it can be read as managerialist recuperation of EEO discourses. Thomas claims that one of the 'critical issues' that triggered 'managing diversity' as a way of describing issues of difference included increasing resistance on the part of marginalised workers to cultural assimilation within organisations (Thomas, 1991, pp. 4, 7-9). I suggest that this resistance is paralleled by the resistance of the marginalised to feminist and other critical discourses which make claims for equality on the basis of universalised subjectivities. In the next section I consider the issue of 'cultural difference' within organisations, and consider 'managing diversity' in the context of perspectives from 'ethnic or minority groups' within EEO discourse.

#### **4. Discourses of difference**

The vocabulary of 'managing diversity' is strongly associated with managerialist notions of 'culture change'.

We have got all of that, that stuff that is happening in corporate culture and stuff that is going on... the 'managing diversity' line actually fits in more with cultural change... It is not just about things like training and recruitment and all of that (Tara).

Thomas argues that 'changing the root culture' of organisations is what distinguishes 'managing diversity' from Affirmative Action (Thomas, 1991, p. 26): 'managing diversity' programmes will eventually generate 'a *natural* capacity for bringing about the required results' (ibid., p. 23, author's italics), while Affirmative Action is 'artificial' (ibid). As I have cited above, some EEO practitioners argue that in New Zealand they have 'from the start taken much more of an environmental, cultural perspective in EEO' (Ilona), so that cultural change has always been part of EEO discourse here. However, there seems to me to be a historical affinity between bureaucratic discourse and EEO, and between 'managing diversity' and a managerialist discourse which - as I have discussed in Chapter 9 - privileges changing organisations by changing 'culture', that is, the 'ensemble of norms and techniques of conduct that enables the self-actualising capacities of individuals to become aligned with the goals and objectives of the organisations for which they work' (du Gay, 1996, p. 151).

The influence of policies of Biculturalism has put a particular local spin on the question of 'organisational culture' in the Public Service. Quite specific policies of cultural change marked by Maori ethnicity and originating from Maori claims, jostle uneasily with managerialist models of organisational culture change which tend to erase or obscure ethnicity as a cultural 'variable'. The mobility of the vocabulary of 'culture' within organisational discourse poses complex challenges for EEO practitioners:

I hate the language about institutional culture and all of that. I mean I used to resist that like hell. Especially coming from an anti-racist perspective. Because I thought that it really obscured the whole language. The whole thing about Maori culture and so on... But like it or not it's here (Tara).

Maori claims for the survival of their culture in a post-colonial era get placed under the heading of 'culture' along with new attitudes such as 'greater business focus'. Organisational anthropologists have recently been critical of the kinds of claims about 'culture' that management practitioners have been making to authorise certain kinds of change programmes, conflating the idea of specific organisational 'cultures' with the concept of

'culture' as it is linked to ethnicities or nationalities (Wright, 1994). This problem also shows up in the literature of cross-cultural management and of 'managing diversity' where 'culture' is at once an organisational resource to be 'managed' and a complex map of national and global identities - which, by implication, can be managed in an equally simplistic way.

A number of New Zealand government departments have specific Treaty-related 'Cultural Development', or 'Partnership' units which focus on developing organisational biculturalism and/or relationships with Maori communities outside the organisation. How does 'managing diversity' vocabulary relate to bicultural development? One Maori EEO practitioner argues:

'Diversity' has come from the States and it's more about having to change because you've got a lot of people in a population from lots of different cultures... Nothing to do with how their culture is or how you're going to get it through the organisation... Which is totally different from the New Zealand and the Treaty in [creating] a bicultural understanding first and things will flow on from that...If they're working towards cultural change... based on their understanding of [the] commitment they've got to the Treaty then maybe what they are doing is using the tool that's best suited for them at their place of work at the time. So if that's good, if that will work, then that's fine (Steve).

Here Treaty discourse is always dominant, and if 'managing diversity' vocabulary is to be used as a 'tool', it refers always back to the Treaty. Tis argument that the Treaty must come first, and the rest will 'flow on from that' has been a cornerstone of Maori approaches to cultural change in New Zealand, and one which has created tensions between Maori, Pakeha and those other 'others', the groups described in the State Sector Act 1988 as 'ethnic or minority groups' (State Sector Act 1988, s 6 (2) (f)). The legislation uniquely marks cultural difference as an issue for 'ethnic or minority groups' by specifying in their case 'recognition of... cultural differences' (ibid). Like Maori, their 'aims and aspirations' are also recognised, while, unlike Maori, they are not identified as 'peoples'.

Like the other 'marginal groups' within EEO discourse that I included in my research, the speakers from Pacific Island/'ethnic minority' backgrounds provided perspectives on EEO and 'managing diversity' which brought assumptions about identity and difference into relief in new ways, with an emphasis on the ways that 'culture' works in New Zealand organisations. In 1994, the broader political context for competing versions of cultural difference was an emerging debate about national identity, centring around immigration policies. Government support for immigration policies which encouraged Asian investment was linked with an intensified focus on trade with Asia and with economic 'de-regulation'. Suddenly terms like 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness' were emerging in official texts. One Pakeha EEO policy analyst talked about her use of these terms:

Personally I wouldn't have used those words... They are... words that the Minister has used in a speech... That is where [my] strategy comes from because they will use those words and... they have got political acceptability now (Lyn).

Because the Treaty of Waitangi is historically a contract about regulating immigration, Maori were challenging changes and demanding a voice in immigration policy. In this context, the distinction between (Anglo-European) and 'other' ethnic minorities both is, and is not, important. In emphasising Tangata Whenua status, Maori sometimes frame all non-Maori within the term 'Tauwiwi' ('aliens' or 'strangers'). In that sense, what goes on between Tauwiwi groups is not a Maori concern. But in another sense, the relationship with Pakeha is considered primary because the Treaty was signed with British settlers on behalf of the British Crown. The fact that new policies specifically opened up New Zealand to some types of Asian immigrants - with whom Maori had no established relationship - was seen as putting the Treaty at risk.

Obviously there are complex and dynamic issues of difference developing here, which Treaty discourse alone, as it has developed historically, does not fully address. From the point of view of one 'ethnic minority' EEO practitioner:

There seems to be a lot of resentment being... expressed by Maori groups... saying that immigration should be curtailed and Maori

people's views should be taken into account... I must admit that sort of disturbs me... because I feel that you need to work though the issue of biculturalism first... and then you look at multiculturalism, because whether you like it or not the reality is that there [are] sizable groups of people from other cultures (Katarina).

While Katarina herself does follow the line of 'biculturalism first', she emphasises the importance of 'multiculturalism', and describes herself as being 'in the minority' among ethnic minority people in her recognition of the Treaty:

I don't think it wears with a lot of people who have come here with nothing... and then they see... as sort of unfair, preferences being given to people just because they happened to be here first (Katarina).

While Maori can make a stand as *Tangata Whenua*, for other 'ethnic minority' people the demographic rhetoric of 'managing diversity' vocabulary can be seen as providing them some political leverage. 'Managing diversity' also tends to be coded as 'multicultural' in a New Zealand context, which discredits it with both Maori and anti-racist Pakeha who tend to associate the term 'multiculturalism' with racist moves to discredit Biculturalism and Treaty claims in particular. As the largest single 'ethnic minority' outside Maori and Pakeha, Pacific Island people<sup>1</sup>, although not one of the legally-designated EEO groups, have 'through [their] commitment and Pacific Island individuals or the networks within departments... really raised the profile of the Pacific Island people as a group' (Valda) in government organisations. This visibility has included designation as an EEO group in departmental EEO plans, and even a few Pacific-Island-tagged EEO positions.

While keen to create their own networks, Pacific Island people have struggled with designation as an EEO group: 'there's some people that resisted that [designation] and some who have not... I've sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'Pacific Island people' as it is commonly in use in New Zealand, that is, to refer to Pacific Island Polynesians. 'Pacific Island' is also the term used in official EEO publications (e.g., State Services Commission, 1993a), although it erases distinctions between

resisted it and sometimes moved with it'. They have used EEO group status to 'create a profile' and so a space from which to 'further [our] cause', but have refused the idea that as an EEO group 'they weren't good enough and they had to... be given help'. The response to this implication is 'well I don't need extra help' (Sara).

Pacific Island people in New Zealand often walk a narrow line between support for Maori Treaty-based rights, and the need to develop strategic arguments around multiculturalism or diversity that will work for themselves. For example, the term 'biculturalism' was a stress point in the representation of difference:

It caused a lot of tension. It was an example of linguistic imperialism, if you like, in the sense that [Maori and Pakeha] defined 'biculturalism' and a lot of Pacific Island people... felt shut out and said... 'we're bicultural' (Sara).

For this reason some Pacific Island people preferred to use the concept of 'partnership', rather than 'biculturalism', to mark the Maori-Pakeha cultural and political relationship. A Maori-Pakeha 'biculturalism first' model might have political force in terms of national or organisational policies, but for Pacific Island people a more complex formulation of difference cannot wait:

Multiculturalism and biculturalism to me exist and develop spontaneously... it's not to say you can't be bicultural or you can't be multicultural if you're not bicultural (Sara).

The language of diversity offers a way past this divisive language of bi- and multi-culturalism:

Diversity is more positive... people can say, 'yeah, I'm diverse'. It's like putting [everyone] into a class, [to say] 'You're multicultural, you're bicultural', whereas [if] you say 'we're all diverse' we're all in it together, so no-one is being limited (Sara).

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Pacific Island groups (see Spoonley, 1993, p. xiii). Other Pacific Island immigrants to New Zealand include ethnic Chinese or Indians, for instance.

Sara also prefers a diversity model to EEO because it is 'a celebration of your difference', whereas her experience of EEO was that 'I could never convince anybody, especially my management,... that equality is not about the same treatment'.

Diversity, means that I don't have to be like you and you don't have to be like me and the way you'd reward me or work with me would be natural to me (Sara).

There is a struggle here between an inclusive diversity model where 'we're all diverse, we're all in it together so no one is being limited' and a recognition that there are political effects of identity - effects which are masked by an individualist model of difference: 'When you say diverse it means free for all... I can be a white racist male and not have to deal with it' (Sara).

In a few cases there were 'ethnic minority' networks which included the 'other' others, either with Pacific Island people or as a 'group' in its own right: 'anything foreign came to me', as Katarina put it. Although EEO practitioners resisted the homogenising impulse to 'stuff them all together' (Sara), at the same time they recognised that these groups did find they had issues in common. As Tanya described it, their approach was that 'we don't want to be considered a minority, [but] we want to be considered an ethnic group'. While - as for other groups - 'minority' status implies a kind of disadvantage, 'ethnic group' status recognises that cultural minorities can feel 'very very alienated and alone' (Katarina), even though they may be highly-paid professionals within their organisation: 'you still need support' in 'someone else's culture' (Tanya). The specific identities and interests identified within the framework of 'ethnic minority' were very diverse: Western (non-Anglo) and Eastern Europeans; people from a range of Pacific and Asian origins, including refugees; facing issues including 'economic barriers and educational barriers and... not getting the breaks they should be getting in the workplace because of stereotyping and racism and discrimination' (Katarina).

Faced with this complexity, EEO practitioners had 'to be assertive and say I can only speak for [these people]' (Sara). There is not a clearly-established space for 'ethnic and other minority' groups in discourses of

difference in this country, and, within workplaces, no clearly-established space from which to speak. Marginalisation and silencing have been the effect. Their positions in future New Zealand workplaces seems especially interesting in terms of developing immigration debates and government commitments to a certain version of 'Asian-isation'. The new signs of national discourses of difference, they carry 'the burden of our nostalgia for the loss of [supposedly] unified communities', as Gunew describes it in an Australian context (Gunew, 1994, p. 90). While developments in Treaty discourse have been experienced by Pakeha as disturbing and confronting, there is still something familiar about the Maori-Pakeha relationship, no matter how much it is being re-worked. The relationship between 'New Zealanders' and 'Asian' immigrants, in particular, involves 'the transformation of limits and boundaries into in-between spaces where cultural meanings and political authority are overtly negotiated' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 4). Although there have previously been small amounts of 'Asian' immigration, the 'Asian invasion' - linked with the official re-constitution of New Zealand as an 'Asian' Country, and with 'new right', business-oriented political agendas - represents new and paradoxical ethnic configurations in New Zealand. While there is an established discourse of 'multiculturalism' in other similar settler societies such as Canada and Australia, 'the discourse in New Zealand has hardly begun' as Ranginui Walker argued in 1993 (Walker, 1996, p. 205).

##### **5. 'Managing diversity' and a politics of difference**

There can be no grand meta-language of difference which transcends or comprehends all differences. A feminist politics of difference attempts to address the 'unique case' of each case of difference, while, in terms of a political agenda, attempting to deploy 'what it may share with others' in order to mobilise transformations in discourses of difference (Trinh, 1994, p. 15). A strategic judgment about which differences make the difference refers back to specific political programmes, which may focus for instance on differences within/between women in order to mobilise 'women', and/or may focus on a range of marginalised identities who are seen to have a stake in change. EEO discourse constitutes a framework of difference that makes it hard to create the kind of 'interethnic coalitions' that Spoonley sees as essential to its success in battling the challenges of managerialism (Spoonley, 1994, p. 91). I have argued that EEO discourse

silences overtly political claims, and the 'EEO group' designation seems to work much better for some groups than for others. It also seems clear that the primacy of Maori Treaty discourse makes an 'interethnic coalition' impossible unless it signs up to 'Biculturalism' (or 'tino rangatiratanga') first.

'Managing diversity' has emerged as a possible replacement, complement, or new formulation for EEO. In 1993, the Pakeha EEO practitioners I spoke with generally resisted it, and acceptance of its strategic use was predicated on the maintenance of EEO discourse, characterised by 'structural' analysis. For trade unionists, the emphasis on the *management* of diversity signalled a further shift towards the recuperation of equality issues within managerialist discourse, and a loss of the 'language of resistance' (Janet) within which marginalised groups could name the politics of exclusion from organisational power. For 'ethnic minorities', 'diversity' can be seen as a way to talk about cultural difference without getting enmeshed in multicultural/bicultural arguments, and without the stigmatisation of EEO group status.

By presenting readings of 'managing diversity' from three different discursive positions, I have set out to show that there is no one 'true' interpretation of what this particular vocabulary 'means' - it 'does' different things in different discursive contexts. Even here, I have been simplistic in emphasising differences among the three positions of enunciation: for instance, many EEO practitioners have been quite aware that cultural skills have been 'screwed out of' employees without reward, and the need for recognition of these skills is now incorporated within EEO policy (State Services Commission, 1993a, 1993b). Nonetheless, the point is that this recognition is to a large degree discretionary within human resource management contexts, rather than a legally-agreed right in an industrial relations context.

In my analysis of 'cross-cultural communication' (Chapter 5), I have argued that cultural and ethnic identities are created in communication processes, and as Nkomo and Cox point out, to discuss 'diversity' is to discuss 'the very meaning of identity and its treatment in the study of organizations' (Nkomo and Cox, 1996, p. 339). In talking about 'managing diversity', I have presented an example of the ways in which representation and self-

representation interact to create a continuous production or reworking of difference within fields of power relations - what I have called organisational 'discourses of difference'. Within the 'managing diversity' literature, there is a constant tendency to reinstate 'race' and 'sex' by naturalizing difference. For instance, Deborah Litvin has argued that the rhetoric of 'managing diversity' invokes a biological account of diversity (Litvin, 1997): in the neo-Darwinian workplace, organisational survival depends on getting the best pick of the gene-pool. 'Managing diversity' is framed in opposition to EEO or 'affirmative action' as the de-regulation of difference, allowing 'natural' abilities - whether ascribed to groups or individuals - to flourish (Sauers, 1993). This reading of diversity as de-regulation masks the rules by which identities are constructed. Similarly, Thomas talks about the 'artificiality' of Affirmative Action, as against the permanent cultural change will allow presumably essential identities to be expressed (Thomas, 1991, p. 23). These biological appeals fix 'sex' and 'race' in natural bodies. The emphasis then falls on how these bodies are 'managed', regulated or de-regulated, rather than on how 'the appearance of substance' (Butler, 1990) is created.

As assumed naturalness of difference also supports foundationalist critical readings of 'managing diversity'. They work within a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', in search of 'a deep truth which has been purposefully hidden' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. xxiii). For instance, Grice and Humphries (1995; see also Humphries and Grice, 1995) argue that 'managing diversity' is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', because its 'appearance of concern with fairness, EEO and empowerment' is a 'facade' which obscures the 'underlying' economic argument by which 'managing diversity' 'represents an attempt to maintain as many vestiges of... exclusion as possible' (Grice and Humphries, 1995, p. 162). While I have simplified the detail of their argument, the point I argue is that there is no 'underlying' or fundamental meaning to 'managing diversity'. This vocabulary may be coded to work in the service of multinational organisations, as they argue, but it may also create new possibilities of resistance for marginalised groups. For instance, in the New Zealand private sector situation, where HRM tends not to be highly professionalised, there is no or little explicit employment policy of any kind, certainly no policy of EEO or of 'managing diversity' and no discursive opening for discussing equality or difference except where legislation covers areas such as discrimination and sexual

harassment. In this situation 'managing diversity' provides new 'contexts of talk' (Austrin, 1994).

Grice and Humphries' critical reverse reading of 'managing diversity' highlights the ways in which the domination of multinationals - especially US multinationals - goes unquestioned in much of the literature of 'managing diversity' and of 'cross-cultural communication'. As 'managing diversity' develops as a global/ising vocabulary of difference, US cultural dominance may be reinforced by a US model of difference, applied globally. Although taking a US perspective as if it reflects some kind of universal 'best practice' is a commonplace of mainstream management literature (Jacques, 1996), it is ironic that even in the critical literature, Taylor Cox has expressed frustration that 'in international forums diversity is branded as an "American" issue' (Cox, 1994, p. 52). It seems to me vital that in New Zealand we do not automatically *either use or refuse* 'managing diversity' without careful attention to the discursive context in which it does its work of politics and identities. In particular, the language of 'diversity' may offer openings to develop a politics of difference which can account for the various versions of New Zealand national identity that are emerging within the context of globalisation.

Post-structuralist feminist theory argues that no discourse of difference is innocent. Both 'equality' and 'diversity' are concepts predicated on a particular Western account of difference that has its limits and creates its own exclusions. This shows up clearly in the examples I have given of the workings of EEO discourse in a specific New Zealand context. A 'return' to EEO is not adequate as the alternative to new formulations of difference such as 'managing diversity'. Apart from anything else, as one practitioner said about the language of 'managing diversity', 'it's here' (Tanya). Both EEO and 'managing diversity' can be approached - and often are approached by practitioners - from a 'use and refuse' perspective which frames them in what Riley calls a 'reflexivity and an ironic spirit' (Riley, 1988, p. 98). If we aim to problematise the vocabulary of 'managing diversity', we can analyse the possibilities it opens up as well as what it prevents; what it allows to be said and what is silenced or repressed. We can consider who is being marginalised and who is being placed at the centre of a given organisational discourse:

Whether you want to call it employment equity, managing diversity, equal employment opportunity... I think the term is totally irrelevant because I think it's covering up a whole multitude of sins and the issue really is who has the power and what rules they make (Sharyn).

The question of 'who has the power' and who makes the rules is crucial in theorising difference as well as in organisational practice. For instance, the attack by Australian feminists Gunew and Yeatman on Treaty discourse in New Zealand because it is based on 'ontologised difference' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993, p. xxii) fails to account for the 'core of intransigence at the heart of... every culture' that Gunew argues elsewhere (Gunew, 1994, p. 93). A theoretical perspective that may work well for some Western-oriented feminists, for instance, must not be prescribed for other cultures. Issues of 'race' and ethnicity cannot be simply reduced to theoretical notions of essentialism and anti-essentialism, any more than they can be reduced to issues of economics and of class. In New Zealand, 'the survival of the Maori as a Nation' continues to set the agenda for 'race' issues (Awatere, 1984, p. 45). As I have argued above (in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 5), an anti-essentialist critique of identity directed from the (Pakeha) centre to the (Maori) margins can amount to an attack on political claims based on indigenous identity. It may foreclose on the recognition of cultural 'incommensurability' in the ways that identity, difference and community are understood (Gunew, 1994). The Australian account of 'multiculturalism' is derived from a historical and cultural context that is different from the New Zealand one in important ways (Pearson, 1991), and - even put within a 'post-structuralist' frame - cannot simply be transposed here, any more than a US-imposed version of 'diversity' can be, managerialist or otherwise. Maori and Pakeha feminists both use and refuse feminist/post-structuralist accounts of difference, always referring back to the unique context of the Treaty and to Tangata Whenua status (Larner, 1995; Matahaere, 1995; Pihama, 1994; Pihama and Johnston, 1993). Whether we are talking of EEO, of 'managing diversity' or of feminist post-structuralism, no framework for difference can transcend its own specific origins:

White people's protest is done within the boundary of the western capitalist culture which is their heritage.

Maori people's protest is done from inside a cage within and against that very culture which has denied our heritage and our rights (Awatere, 1984, p. 35).

We are never outside our own 'systems of truth and representation' of difference. A disciplinary model of power and difference shifts from an inquiry into which systems of difference tell the 'truth' about difference, and instead asks what various versions of difference do. Investigating the various ways that difference is normalized shifts away from arguing how difference is 'best' represented, and instead means looking at how power 'operates by inciting desire, attaching individuals to specific identities, and addressing real needs' (Sawicki, 1991, p. 85).

## CHAPTER 13

### REVIEW

A work, when it's not at the same time an attempt to modify what one thinks and even what one is, is not much fun... To work is to undertake to think something other than what one has thought before (Foucault, 1996a, p. 455).

#### 1. Introduction

In this final 'review', I look back over the thesis in terms of three key issues: interdisciplinarity; theoretical sophistication; and agency. These are the issues central to my research agenda (see Chapter 4). I began my 'Field studies' chapter (Chapter 7) by citing Marshall's comment that 'postmodernism is... about those threads that we trace, and trace, and trace. But not to a conclusion... To better understanding, yes' (Marshall, 1992, p. 4). This review, then, is not a 'conclusion'. Treating the thesis 'as an open site', I trace some key theoretical 'threads', and draw attention to the questions that 'have not yet found answers' (Foucault, 1970, p. xii).

I have cast this thesis as an autocritique, an opportunity to draw on developments in post-structuralist theory to 'think differently' (Foucault, 1992, p. 9) about difference and communication in an organisational context. As Judith Butler points out, 'post-structuralism' can (but will not necessarily be) a political 'mode of critique' that contests 'the foundationalist move' (Butler, 1995a, p. 41). I have drawn on particular feminist and foucauldian versions of post-structuralist discourse to carry out a denaturalizing critique, to question foundationalist accounts of identity, especially gender and ethnicity. I have used the process of interpreting my field studies to experiment with some political implications of this analysis in organisational communication practice.

My leading arguments are that gender (identity) is an effect of discourse, and as a corollary, that all claims about the truths of given identities have political implications. In writing my thesis and carrying out my field studies I set out to interrogate the 'ruse of authority' (Butler, 1995a, p. 41) that makes foundationalist claims to truth. I asked how this ruse worked in academic writing, in the literatures of difference and communication, and in organisational

discourses. The reciprocal dangers of 'complicity' and 'recuperation' have recurred throughout both the literature critique and the field studies. I have argued that there can be no 'pure' feminism (or any pure discourse). I argue for a different approach, in which debates over the 'contamination' of feminist discourse are used to inquire into what feminist discourse *does* in a given context.

## 2. Disciplinary interference

In contesting disciplinary boundaries to address specific research questions, I have set out to challenge the power/knowledge investments in disciplinary formations, as well as to show how drawing together a range of discursive resources across disciplinary lines can open up new perspectives on 'gender and communication'. For instance, in analysing the literatures of 'gender and communication' and 'cross-cultural communication', I argued that different types of difference - in this case, gender and ethnicity - cannot simply be mapped on to each other. While both these literatures can be re-framed in terms of the concepts of 'performativity' and representation', the differences between them provide important information about the developing politics of their disciplinary locations. In the same way, I argued that, in organisational contexts, difference works as 'relations played out in power struggles' (Nkomo, 1992, p. 507). In field studies chapters, I identified sites where 'power struggles' between different forms of difference were central to the work of practitioners in EEO and Biculturalism projects. In the 'new hermeneutics of the workplace' (Yount, 1993, p. 197), certain representations of difference are normalised. These representations are authorised by the various discourses of difference also found in the academic literatures.

Running the literatures of 'gender and communication' and 'cross-cultural communication' side-by-side emphasises the exclusions in both: for instance, the absence of critical perspectives in 'cross-cultural communication'; and the marginalisation of differences other than gender in the literatures of 'gender and communication'. 'Accounting for others' in 'gender and communication' is not just a question of dropping in the ethnicity variable, but of 'a specification of the machineries and discourses that constitute both the possibility of representing an "other" and the criteria by which such representations function in the world of knowledge' (Ganguly, 1992, p. 71). Feminist communication scholars can draw on developments in other disciplines, such as anthropology, to learn how to draw up these 'specifications'. If feminist communication scholarship is to be a

transdisciplinary force' (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 145), it is necessary to develop understandings of the theoretical issues at stake in moving between and 'interfering' with disciplinary formations. In asking what possibilities of transformation can be created, we need to centre on specific research agendas which bring these theoretical issues into focus.

I have argued that the new literatures of post-structuralist psychology offer opportunities for re-theorising the subject of communication, and that 'post-modern' developments in 'organisational communication', and organisational studies, open new doors to the politics of difference. Being self conscious about interdisciplinarity, and what it does, requires the ability to make theoretical distinctions. I have argued that, as 'discourse analysis' proliferates in a number of related disciplines, communication scholars need to think carefully about the distinctions between the concepts of 'communication' and 'discourse', and to re-think what 'communication' scholarship may have to offer in theorising discursive practices. For instance, is there a useful distinction between 'discourse analysis' in organisational studies research, and the work of 'organisational communication'? Do we want to retain a disciplinary territory for communication, or does the 'linguistic turn' mean that such territorial markings will serve only as a futile attempt to push issues of representation back into its traditional spaces? A danger of interdisciplinary work is that genre-hopping mixes epistemologies. While this contamination can be tremendously productive as an opportunity to re-think truth values, it also demands theoretical sophistication in sorting out the issues. I have discussed some of the issues at state in this 'sorting out' in my critique of some feminist versions of 'social constructionism' (Chapter 3), and in my discussion of methodological issues such as the relationship between 'narrative' and 'discourse' (Chapter 7).

### **3. Theoretical sophistication**

I have used the terms 'performativity' and 'representation' to create a theoretical framework for a research agenda. This framework allows a retrospective re-framing of the literatures, as well as pointing to the key theoretical issues that I argue will matter for the future. Theoretical debates in feminism have for a long time centered around the questions of difference and equality. The concept of 'essentialism' has been central in re-thinking difference. While debates within feminism have long progressed past 'essentialism bad, anti-essentialism good', asking instead what different 'essentialisms' do in context (Fuss, 1989), the

success of Tannen's work (Tannen, 1990) indicates that there is a constant pull to re-assimilate the work of 'gender and communication' into the same old unquestioned essentialised differences. In Chapters 11 and 12 I have analysed tensions and convergences between 'equality' and 'difference' approaches in organisational discourses. I have also argued for the importance of putting equality/difference debates in local contexts: in New Zealand, the issues read quite differently in terms of the relationship between the Tangata Whenua and Pakeha than they do in cultures where difference is signified primarily in diasporic terms.

I have argued that problematising the *subject* of communication is critical to questioning how various 'essentialisms' work in 'doing gender' (performativity) and representing gender. It is not enough to simply invoke a generalised 'social constructionism': as feminist communication scholars it is vital that we put careful work into thinking about the relationship between identity and communication, or, put differently, the subject and discourse. I have argued for a theorisation in terms of foucauldian discourse theory. However, regardless of their theoretical 'grounds', it seems necessary to me for feminist communication scholars to be able to spell out, and argue for, their particular commitments. This is an argument for reflexivity: for the ability to reflect on, and be accountable to readers for, the epistemological and political bases of research. For me, this means a statement of some version of 'truth values' (Chapter 1 and Chapter 7).

I have relied strongly on 'deconstructive' psychology to provide the basis for developing a post-structuralist theory of the subject. This brings me to what I have come to call the 'Hollway problem', because it crystallised for me during a discussion with Wendy Hollway during a recent seminar in Wellington (Hollway and Jefferson, 1998). This 'problem' can be cast as a question: how far can foucauldian discourse theory be pushed to re-theorise psychological processes - 'what's in [people's] heads' (Foucault, 1980, p. 133)? Foucault specifically rejected this project in favour of studying regimes of 'the production of the truth' (ibid.) While post-structuralist psychologists have developed a critique of the regimes of truth that constitute psychology itself as a discipline, some have gone on to use foucauldian notions of subjectivity to investigate specific processes such as interpersonal communication. This means moving away from 'the primacy of individual cognition [i.e. rational, biologically-based] in

understanding meaning and communication' (Henriques et al., 1998,<sup>1</sup> p. xiii), and finding other ways to account for individual subjectivity. I see this extension of Foucauldian theory as a (productive) 'problem' because it raises difficult theoretical questions. First, does looking at what is 'inside people's heads' re-instate the 'individual' subject, rather than questioning how it is that we want to construct the subject of psychology in the way that we do? In other words, does it disingenuously side-step the Foucauldian challenge? Secondly, is there a way to develop theories of subjectivity - such of those of psychoanalysis - without implicitly making claims about 'essential' developmental processes? These issues are very germane to feminist 'organisational communication' theory, because we want to be able to re-theorise processes of 'communication' and 'organisation', as well as to analyse the ways that organisational discourses produce certain kinds of individuals.<sup>2</sup> The concept of performativity, as Judith Butler has been developing it, seems to offer great mileage here, drawing as it does on forms of linguistics, psychoanalysis and Foucauldian discourse theory.

The process of discourse analysis itself continues to generate productive problems. Parker and Burman end their collection on *Discourse analytic research* with a chapter called 'Thirty-two problems with discourse analysis' (Burman and Parker, 1993c). I am tempted to make my own list of 32 problems, but will confine myself to just a few here. The question of terms used in discourse analysis is central. Burman and Parker argue that the 'interchangeable' use of terms such as 'discourse', 'text', 'narrative', 'theme' and 'story' in the discourse analysis literature is symptomatic of confusion, rather than simple proliferation, and I agree (Burman and Parker, 1993c, p. 158). This does not mean that essential 'definitions' are required, but that 'the meanings and uses of... terms need to be carefully specified' in given discourse analysis projects (ibid.). This specification requires some theoretical and methodological rigour, to avoid reproducing the 'familiar dualisms' in addressing issues of 'agency, creativity, change and resistance' (Henriques et al., 1988b, p. xiii).

Another discourse analysis 'problem' that I have flagged (Chapter 6) is the relationship between language and action, or language and non-linguistic practices. Foucault problematises this relationship, and I have used the terms 'language' and 'vocabulary' to spell out that discourse does not equal language ,

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<sup>1</sup> The *Changing the subject* group have recently re-published their collection with a new preface (Henriques et al., 1998).

and that the notion of the 'strategic mobility' of discourses (Stoler, 1996, p. 13) is important in bringing out the flexibility and dynamism of organisational discourses (Chapter 12). It also seems to me that ethnographic work on communication in organisations would be a fruitful site for research and further theorisation of the relationship between 'discourse' and 'discursive practices', between 'saying' and 'doing'.

The third discourse analysis problem I want to highlight is that of defining a 'discourse' for research purposes. I have questioned (Chapter 7) the device of defining a discourse as simply 'talk about... the object of study' (Parker, 1992). In this conception, 'discourse', unlike Foucault's notion of 'discursive formations', has no necessary or explicit links with power/knowledge relations across a range of sites in a particular historical moment. On the other hand, the extension of foucauldian discourse analysis into new fields requires new ways to think 'discourse' - but with a corresponding requirement to develop the theoretical framework for doing so.

#### 4. Articulation in action

The issue of agency matters because it is the key concept for theorising transformation. In Chapters 9 and 10 I have concentrated on re-theorising practitioners as 'agents of communication' in specific discursive contexts. This means looking at relationships between identity and discourse, as well as connections between power relations and relationships of communication. The basis of Butler's feminist/post-structuralist politics is the argument that "'agency" is to be found... where discourse is renewed' (Butler, 1995b, p. 135). The argument for a discursive notion of gender is the argument that transformation requires it. For me, the logic of feminist/post-structuralist theory is that it is concerned with practice, rather than with developing a body of theory that is prior, and then 'applied', to practice. In Butler's terms, 'theoretical presuppositions are articulated only in and through [political] action and become available only through a reflective posture made possible through that reflection in action' (Butler, 1995b, p. 129). This argues for a kind of action-research approach to 'work done at the limits of ourselves' (Foucault, 1984c, p. 46), and opens up for me the possibilities of using post-structuralist theory for future collaborative work with practitioners which addresses ongoing change projects in an 'ironic spirit' (Riley, 1988). As I have argued, the objectives of change only make sense within discursively-defined programmes, whether framed as feminist

equality projects or organisational change management. The possibility of drawing on post-structuralist theory is to provide a critical space for researchers, as well as practitioners, to reflect on 'articulation in action'.

Issues of 'complicity' and 'recuperation' mark out the sites of 'the ethico-political choice we have to make every day... to determine which is the main danger' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 343). These contaminations are 'within' the subject as well as 'outside', and in fact constitute key conditions of agency and subjectivity for practitioners. I argued in Chapter 9 that many Pakeha EEO practitioners worked from a rarely-articulated 'social justice' discourse, which they rarely - if ever - had the opportunity to articulate and develop in the present. Making spaces *outside* organisational discourses to develop this discourse seems an important task, if feminist discourse is to work as a transformative force *within* organisations, whether or framed as 'EEO'. By contrast, Maori practitioners were actively involved in the development of Treaty discourse 'outside' their organisations, and drew on clearly articulated discursive positions in their work 'inside'.

'Post-structuralism' does not provide the drive for political action or other transformative programmes. In Chapter 9 I have experimented with ways of theorising the relationships between individual discursive biographies and practitioners' political choices or 'investments', as Hollway calls them, the desires which 'drive' agency (Hollway, 1984). Feminist philosophers struggle to create a discourse of difference that works for 'feminism' without simply generating the kinds of exclusions and silences that I have identified in my field studies analyses. There is no fully-worked-out 'politics of difference' that can be urged upon organisational practitioners, even if the goals of change were taken as shared. I have argued that there are major problems with the uncritical use of equality discourses, but they are not the only way forward for organisational justice. In this thesis I have discussed Gunew and Yeatman's concept of 'interested universalisms' (Gunew and Yeatman, 1993a) and Hollway's theorisation of 'choice' (Hollway, 1984) as ways to think about communication as transformation. This is an area that requires further theoretical and field work to relate communicative processes to political change. Jane Flax opens up a possible direction with her argument that 'discourse about justice cannot do without concepts of subjectivity' (Flax, 1992, p. 203). If feminists are to refuse 'transcendental reason' as a basis for social action, we must develop alternative accounts which explain the desire for justice. Flax proposes 'powerful affective

relationships with other persons' as the ground for discourses of justice, theorising that 'both justice and the self can be conceptualised as complex processes that are necessarily imperfect, incomplete and without an end, a justification in themselves' (ibid., p. 204). Here Flax offers a post-foundationalist account which could be extended to relational models of communication and other communicative processes; it is highly contextual, yet not grounded solely in rationally pragmatic strategies.

## 5. Farewell

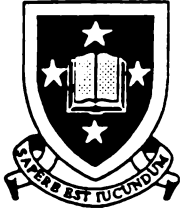
Like many feminists, while I want to refuse authoritative discourses, I also want to use them. In this thesis I have argued that, in a variety of ways, EEO practitioners both use and refuse the authority of specific organisational discourses. I see my job as a feminist academic, and as a colleague of practitioners, as finding and articulating forms of critique which enable practitioners to reflect on the various issues at stake in given acts of use and refusal. Refusal generates the possibility of not being governed in a specific way, but most feminists want more: 'to set norms, to affirm aspirations, to articulate the possibilities of a more fully democratic and participatory political life is... a necessity' (Butler, 1995b, p. 129).

As I am completing this thesis two recent events resonate with my reflections here. In the last week I attended the 'farewell' of the last designated 'Senior Advisor on EEO' at the State Services Commission. The era of specialised, centralised EEO policies in government is over. At the same time, a student of mine has just had to re-work her research project on women and EEO - her organisation has been acquired by a multi-national, and the new programme is called 'managing diversity'. These two events clearly signal for me that the era of EEO discourse, as it has developed since the early 1980s, is ending. New discourses of difference are being generated. I see the value of my thesis as having created a new critical position, one which is generative of new theoretical issues as well as providing my own 'toolbox' to use in work with practitioners.

My position is mine to the extent that 'I... replay and resignify the theoretical possibilities that have constituted me, working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude (Butler, 1995a, p. 42).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RESEARCH AGREEMENT**



Deborah Jones

**Research project: Talking about equal employment opportunity and biculturalism**

## **RESEARCH AGREEMENT**

The purpose of this research agreement is to make sure that everyone involved in this research project is informed as much as possible about the purpose of the research, what it means for them, and the rights of participants to confidentiality and control over their involvement. It is based on the ethical code of the Sociological Association of Aotearoa.

This research is being carried out as part of a DPhil degree. This means that it will be written up as a final thesis report, as well as in the form of various articles both before and after the thesis is completed. It is also likely that I will present conference papers and carry out other public presentations drawing on my research. This agreement covers all these forms of publication, and any others.

According to this agreement, the researcher and participants agree that:

### **Publication**

1. Participants have a right to approve or change or disapprove the publication of any information relating to them. This means that they will see complete copies of any transcripts that are made of interviews with them (not all interviews will be transcribed in total), as well as any information relating to them in the thesis or other publications if not previously approved.

## **2. Confidentiality**

The names of individual participants and the organisations they are associated with will be known by the researcher only, unless specific permission is given in writing to use names of individuals in published work.

## **3. Withdrawing consent**

Participants can decide at any time not to participate further in the research, or to withdraw consent for me to use material previously supplied.

## **4. Feedback and information to participants**

The researcher will supply:

- preliminary general information about the research project;
- any further information about the research project that participants are interested in, as long as this does not breach confidentiality for other participants;
- a summary of research findings when the project is completed;
- notification about the thesis when it is published.

## **5. Any other conditions for participating in the research**

**Signed**

**1. Participant.....Date.....**

**2. Researcher.....Date.....**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

# TALKING ABOUT EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND BICULTURALISM

## Interview questions

This list of questions gives an idea of the main areas I would like to cover in the interview. However, people I talk to may come up with other ideas that we can then talk more about.

1. How do you come to be in your current job? (or how did you, and why did you leave? if no longer in position)

2. What are your own beliefs/values about EEO/biculturalism? How does your job relate to your own beliefs/values?

*Is there anything you have read on these topics that has especially influenced you?*

*Who do you see as 'your' community to whom you feel accountable and with whom you discuss your work?*

3. What is your understanding of these terms?:

equity;  
EEO;  
biculturalism;  
affirmative action;  
Treaty of Waitangi (*others will arise*).

*Can you think of times when there have been conflicts between these ideas or over what these terms mean? Can you remember specific incidents that have happened or stories you have heard that are examples of these conflicts?*

*What policy or other documents have you read or do you use to guide your understanding of these terms in your work?*

4. What strategies do you use to persuade others to change?

*Can you remember specific examples of occasions when you have written or spoken to someone using a particular strategy?*

5. What strategies have you been involved in to monitor the effectiveness of your work?

6. Can you think of times when there have been conflicts between dealing with gender issues and with cultural issues in your work? How have you resolved these conflicts?

*Can you remember specific incidents that have happened or stories you have heard that are examples of these conflicts?*

7. What changes have there been, especially since 1990, in the strategies you have used in your work? Have you changed the terms you use over this time?

8. If not already covered:

What are the main policy documents used in your organisation relating to EEO/biculturalism?

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