
By
Noella Kershaw
Dip. T. (Primary), B. Ed., M. Ed. (Curriculum Studies)

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

December, 2010
...non nobis solum...
I am the author of the thesis entitled


submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis may be made available for consultation, loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Full Name....Noella Julie Kershaw  
(Please Print)

Signed  
Signature Redacted by Library

Date 31 – 05 - 2011
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled:


submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

Full Name Noella Julie Kershaw

Signed [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date 10 – 12 – 2010
Acknowledgements:

I would like to acknowledge and thank Jill Blackmore for calling attention to the history and embedded nature of women’s issues. I offer a special thank you to my colleagues who helped me appreciate poststructuralism and the discourses surrounding leadership and positioning. Andrea Gallant’s contribution was invaluable particularly with reference to how intuitive leaps need explanation. While Noel Gough offered support and a focus on narrative, fiction and stories. To Evelyn Johnson I offer a heart-felt thank you for her encouragement with the early stages of candidature.

In addition to these esteemed colleagues I am grateful to my co-candidates ‘Ph – Divas’: Jill Loughlin, Muriel Wells, Anna-lies Kamp, Rosemary Morgan and Angela Tohill for their optimism and humour. To those colleagues who contributed their experiences in Independent Schools Robyn Kronenberg, Wendy Lewis, Jean Penman, and especially my research participants, twelve Junior School Heads’ who dedicated their time and expertise; thank you, for sharing your thought and experiences.

Indeed a lot of invisible work has been invested in me and this thesis, by family and friends. I am grateful for the enduring support of my patient family without whom I would not have completed this work. I am particularly grateful for the support of my husband, Les, and daughters, Amanda, Julie and my son Andrew. To my equally patient teaching friends, Sharon Leibowitz, Elizabeth Aitchison, Georgie Jorgensen, Lindy Broadfoot, Jan Delloro, Judy Singleton, Kim Harris, Adel Fletcher, Jan Goodall and their ongoing political conversations that always end in laughter; thank you. To my Reggio Emilia colleagues, Jan Millikan, Margo Hobba and Chris Celada, I am appreciative of their support. To my Guiding friends: Alison Bennett, Jenny Mills, Denise Lipiarski and Rose Kizinska; thank you for your encouragement. To the members of Girl Guides Victoria and particularly the Board of Directors Girl Guides Australia, a special thank you for support and for offering insights into leadership and re-culturing not-for-profit, all female, national/international organisations.
Abstract:
This thesis investigates the influence of dominant leadership discourses on shaping leadership identities of women Junior Heads’ in Victoria’s Independent sector. In particular this investigation examines women’s professional work narratives and how these leaders’ discursively navigate the micro-politics of leadership as Heads’ of Junior Schools and leaders within senior management teams (K-12). My contention is that formal leadership as it is encapsulated in these narratives is problematic and signifies a critical pressure point within schools. This study draws attention to the gaps in current research in Independent Schools and women in leadership.

The new global economy and the past decade of educational reform has led to a plethora of leadership meta-narratives including transformational, entrepreneurial (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck, 1999) and distributed approaches (Court, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Gronn, 2000; Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, & Shacklock, 2000). These dominant discourses and the shift to a new mode of professionalism have produced a gender-neutral, one size fits all approach to school leadership. Exploring how these changes have impacted on women’s stories of leadership, particularly at the Deputy and Junior Head level, offers insight into the situated micro-politics circulating within schools. Therefore examining how women leaders’ position and shape themselves discursively as leader-identities in relation to their particular cultural, political and gendered context highlights the gap in educational leadership research in Victorian Independent Schools.

Using narrative inquiry I draw on feminist poststructural theory including Foucault’s theory of governmentality and feminist theories of power and subjectivity to explore women’s stories of leadership. This feminist poststructural frame understands subjectivity to be continuously constituted through discourse and engagement with societal and institutional discourses of gender. By examining the ways in which leadership discourses contribute to ‘producing’ the women as subjects has the potential to build theory and improve understandings of leadership and how women negotiate various discourses within the micro-politics of institutional power relationships.

This thesis is based on a preliminary state-wide Questionnaire followed by twelve in-depth interviews from those who completed the Questionnaire. The Questionnaire
provided an antecedent to analyzing leader’s narratives and individual discursive strategies. I use narrative inquiry approach and the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990) to analyse their leadership discourses.

The findings reveal leadership not only provides a context for activating the operation of *technologies-of-the-self*, but functions as a site of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1991) in which women leader’s self regulate and in turn are regulated. These women’s discourses reveal insights into power, gender and the systemic forces that prefigure power relations. Leadership, because of its symbolic power, contributes to contextualizing our understanding of the formation of women Junior Heads’ subjectivities within Independent Schools. On the basis of this analysis, I argue women’s leadership narratives accentuate how these women negotiate discursive positioning strategies using discourses of *paradox, idealism* and *dissent* within their situated practice.

Identifying leaders’ discursive strategies offers a potential to disrupt the gendered and discriminatory biases, operating within leadership discourses through a biographical, iterative process of self reflexive critical practice. For this reason the study makes an important contribution to the field of educational leadership as it critiques the strategies women leaders’ use to discursively position themselves and enables a better understanding of how women are marginalized. This research indicates the need for new strategies to be developed if women in leadership are to adopt a wider and more critically informed understanding of leader-identity formation.
List of Tables

Table 1  ABS Schools Australia 1993-2009 ......................................................... 3
Table 2  Boys, Girls or Co-Educational Schools: Census of
Non-Government Schools 2008 ................................................................. 5
Table 3  I.S.V Member Schools (2008) ............................................................. 6
Table 4  Schools in this study (2007) ................................................................. 8
Table 5  Profile of leadership contexts (2010) ................................................... 40
Table 6  Gunter, 2001: Extended to include Entrepreneurial,
Distributed and Professional Discourses .................................................. 51
Table 7  Sinclair, 2007: Modified table – Conventional wisdom
vs Critical alternatives ............................................................................. 78
Table 8  Leaders and Schools in this study (2007) ............................................. 133
Table 9  Leaders – Interview research (2007) .................................................. 167
### CONTENTS

Certificate of Authorship / Originality ................................................................. i  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. ii  
Abstract ................................................................................................................ iii  
List of Tables ....................................................................................................... v  

**PART ONE** ........................................................................................................ 1

**Introduction** .................................................................................................... 1  
  *Overview* ........................................................................................................ 1  
  Changing context of leadership: Independent schools ......................................... 2  
    - Background: Australia’s dual education system ............................................. 3  
    - Australia’s independent sector .................................................................. 3  
    - Alternative education in a dual system ...................................................... 4  
    - Victoria’s independent sector .................................................................. 5  
  My interest in Independent schools and women in leadership ............................ 6  
    - Professional dialogues ............................................................................. 7  
  Developing theoretical tools ............................................................................ 7  
    - How power works in gendered ways ....................................................... 9  
    - Key concepts and discourses .................................................................. 9  
    - Insider-colleague, outsider-researcher .....................................................10  
  Significance of the study ................................................................................11  
  Structure of the thesis .....................................................................................13  

**Chapter One: Positioning the Research** .......................................................... 17  
  *The new global economy* .............................................................................. 18  
  Australia, globalization and the performative state ........................................... 19  
  Markets and competition ................................................................................. 22  
    - Funding, markets and Independent schools .......................................... 22  
    - Competition and parent choice ............................................................. 23  
    - Australian middle-classes ...................................................................... 24  
  Performativity .................................................................................................. 26  
    - Performativity and Independent schools ................................................. 28  
    - Image and reputation .............................................................................. 31  
    - Ethos and values ....................................................................................... 31  
    - Autonomy or compromise ..................................................................... 34  
    - Regulation, standardized competencies ............................................... 35  
    - Contested accountability ...................................................................... 37  
    - Disengagement of leaders ..................................................................... 37  
  Leadership Paradoxes .................................................................................... 40  
    - Paradox and Independent schools .......................................................... 42  
  Leadership research ....................................................................................... 44  
    - Independent schools – leadership research .......................................... 45  
    - Australian research - gaps ..................................................................... 45
Chapter Two: Leadership Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership dilemmas</th>
<th>48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contradictory, complementary and overlapping discourses</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant leadership discourses</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transformational leadership</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Entrepreneurial leadership</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distributive ‘hybrid’ leadership</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shared leadership</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sustainable leadership</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distributed or delegated leadership?</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Deputies and senior leadership teams</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional leadership</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Repositioning professional leader-identities</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership discourses – challenges and tensions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical leadership discourses</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is missing?</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Three: Women in Educational Leadership

| Positioning women in leadership discourse | 82 |
| Women and the leadership paradox – re-viewing the ‘problem’ | 83 |
| - A number of problems emerge | 83 |
| Women in Independent schools – leadership research | 86 |
| - Silences in the Australian research | 87 |
| - Female leaders in Independent schools | 88 |
| - Junior Heads’ position | 89 |
| - Selection, induction and succession | 91 |
| Working in gendered spaces | 93 |
| - Historical narratives | 95 |
| - Leadership myths and workplace changes | 96 |
| No discourse is safe | 98 |
| - Diversity | 99 |
| - Gender equity | 100 |
| - Emotional work | 102 |
| - Disappearing acts | 103 |
| Power – knowledge | 105 |
| - Power - discourse and identity | 106 |
| - Power and self regulation | 107 |
| - Power and resistance | 109 |

Chapter Four: Theory and Methodology

| Introduction | 111 |
| Developing the theoretical framework | 113 |
| Meta-narratives – dominant discourses | 115 |
| Discourse, gender and agency | 116 |
| Narrative methodology | 119 |
| Discursive positioning | 120 |
| Feminist frameworks of interpretation | 123 |
| Interpreting texts | 126 |
| Data Methods | 128 |
| Concluding comments | 130 |
PART TWO

Chapter Five: What Discourses do these Female Leaders’ Choose? 132
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 132
- Questionnaire – sample ............................................................................... 132
- Feminist interpretive analysis ................................................................ 134
Leadership paradigms – corporate and professional paradoxes 135
- Autonomy and accountability .................................................................. 137
- Agency, status and priorities .................................................................. 138
- Performativity – struggle against the odds .............................................. 141
- Time and workloads .................................................................................. 145
Transformational leadership and gendered discourses 146
- A good leader is an effective leader ......................................................... 148
Professional discourses ................................................................................ 149
- Caring for others ...................................................................................... 151
- Hard and soft discourses ........................................................................ 153
- Boys’ clubs and networks ......................................................................... 155
Feminist discourses – equity and biases ..................................................... 157
- Positioning – vulnerability and strength .................................................. 158
- Discourses of resistance .......................................................................... 160
Why do leaders stay in leadership? .............................................................. 161
- Concluding comments .............................................................................. 162

Chapter Six: Narrative Encounters .................................................................... 166
Participants’ contexts ..................................................................................... 166
Paradox – keeping the balance ................................................................. 169
- Sarah: “This isn’t helpful… it’s just not helpful!” .................................. 169
- Negotiating paradoxes ............................................................................ 175
Idealism and professional power ................................................................. 177
- Carol: “It’s the men that can really carry it!” .......................................... 178
- Professional power and negotiating right-fit .......................................... 183
Dissent: Caught in the middle – questioning power .................................... 188
- Elaine: “I commented on that… I shouldn’t have!” ............................... 189
- Dissenting strategies – negotiating unequal power ............................... 195

Chapter Seven: Gender and Power at Work ...................................................... 199
Overview ............................................................................................................ 199
Positioning Strategies .................................................................................... 202
- Engaging discourses of paradox ............................................................. 204
- Engaging discourses of idealism ............................................................... 210
- Engaging discourses of dissent ................................................................. 215
Positioning gender and feminist discourses ............................................... 218
- Female stereotypes .................................................................................... 221
- Tempered radicals ...................................................................................... 223
- Leader-identities – authority and agency ................................................. 225
- Technologies of the self ............................................................................ 228
- Concluding comments .............................................................................. 229

Chapter Eight: Women leaders: Embodied agency ........................................ 233
Overview ............................................................................................................ 233
New paradoxes, power and the state of play .............................................. 236
PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Leadership it seems has become ubiquitous. Everyone is encouraged to do it. We have often been seduced by ideas and practices of leadership. Leadership has become a panacea. (Sinclair, 2007, p. xiii)

Overview

In this introduction I set the scene for the thesis as a whole. I foreshadow themes that arise and explain my rationale for undertaking this research within the field of educational leadership. I provide an overview of Independent Schools; their history, the dual system of education and their positioning in Victoria. I also position myself within the field, my research questions and my approach to the theoretical and methodological framework.

Since the 1990s there has been a plethora of populist experts advocating different modes of leadership ranging from ‘Ready/Aim/Fire - strategic leadership’ and ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (Goleman, 1995) to ‘Intelligent leadership’ (Mant, 1997); ‘Principle-Centered leadership’ (Covey, 1992) and ‘Good to Great’ (Collins, 2001) to name a few (Blackmore, 1999). Public interest in leaders and leadership indicates the success of leadership discourses. Leadership has been positioned as the solution, the central structural and cultural focus for personal career advancement and organizational efficiency. Yet is leadership the solution or the problem?

This thesis investigates the professional work narratives of twelve successful women Junior School Heads’ in Independent schools in Victoria. It focuses on how educational leaders in formal leadership positions communicate their stories of professional power and achievement. It also looks at how these women discursively negotiate ambiguity and contradiction arising from the micro-politics of power and gendered discourses. As leadership is now the mantra for educational reform in the literature and policy (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010) my contention is that formal leadership has become increasingly problematic, particularly for women leaders. Current research in Independent schools and women in senior leadership teams has been overlooked as a significant pressure point in schools. As these female leaders bring their stories of leadership to this study I also bring aspects of my own story as a former Junior School Head of an Independent School in
Melbourne. My previous experience raised two questions that instigated this research project: What are the relations of power that produce particular leadership discourses for women? This question then evolved into an inquiry into what are the discursive practices and contexts whereby the female participants’ position and shape themselves as subjects in producing leader-identities?

**Changing context of leadership: Independent schools**

My research focus evolved over twenty years in primary teaching and leadership in Independent schools in Melbourne. During this time, Australian governments introduced educational restructure and reforms based on neo-liberal policies and economic rationalism. The educational restructuring focused on devolved governance in the public sector through corporate strategies of managerialism and marketisation (Ball, 2006; Gewirtz, 2002; Whitty, 2002). Following these changes educational leadership was seen as the lynchpin of educational reform in devolved self-managing schools (Blackmore, 1999). Currently school leadership is under pressure and leaders are experiencing greater demands to comply with national reforms (Bauman, 2000). School leadership in government and non-government schools is central to ensure implementation of, and accountability for, these reforms (Day, 2004; Lynch & Lodge, 2002).

National reforms in curriculum, teacher professional standards, and accountability, together with shifts in funding by the Australian government, have impacted on Independent schools, and thus positions this study (Morgan and Blackmore, 2007; Power, Edwards, Whitty & Wigfall, 2003; Scott, 2003; Whitty, 1997; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Kenway, Bigum & Fitzclarence, 1993). Independent school leaders have experienced these changes as increased pressure to comply with educational policy reforms that continue to promote the move to greater corporatisation of schools (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Kenway et al., 1993).

To contextualize leadership in Independent schools I have included a brief historical overview of the past two hundred years of educational provision in Australia. Leadership in the non-government sector is premised to varying degrees on the traditions, heritage and affiliations that underpin the cultural foundations for particular schools.
Background: Australia’s dual education system

Australia’s educational landscape has evolved, from a deregulated colonial system of Denominational, Catholic and Dame schools, to a dual system of government and non-government schools. During the 1800s schooling was divided along class lines (Barcan, 1964) and the principle of non-funding of religious schools was established (Pascoe, 1998). In the 1970s federal funding to Catholic and Independent schools based on a principle of ‘equity of provision’ for all Australian students (Connors, 1990) was introduced. This assisted the growth of Alternative schools along with the long-standing traditional schools and grammar schools which continue to flourish today. The traditional schools have preserved much of their history and culture despite the rise of mass public elementary and secondary schooling (Pascoe, 1998). According to Praetz, (1974) “…survival and expansion of non-government schools has been bought at a cost of increasing dependency on governments” (p. 39).

Australia’s Independent sector

Australia has a strong dual (government and non-government) system of educational provision. The non-government sector comprises systemic schools administered by a central organization such as the Catholic Education Office in each state as well as networks which are separate legal entities such as Lutherans and Seventh-day Adventists. Most non-government schools are self-managing legal entities, not governed by a centralized authority but managed by a Board of Governors or Management Committee. Non-government or ‘private schools’ refer to Independent schools (denominational and non-denominational) which include Alternative schools and Catholic systemic schools. The two groups are not mutually exclusive as some Catholic schools with an independent tradition maintain affiliations across both sectors (I.S.C.A., 2009). As the table indicates over one third of Australia’s children attend non-government schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>All non-government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Levels</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 ABS Schools Australia - 2009 (publication no. 4221.0)
In 2009, there were 1,022 Independent schools in Australia. The majority of Independent schools are members of the Independent Schools’ Council of Australia (I.S.C.A). Many Independent schools remain located in the higher socio-economic areas where class disparity and exclusive connotations continue to influence markets and parental choice.

Non-government schools offer a range of school structures such as large multi-campus schools often separated geographically forming Junior, Middle and Senior sub-schools, as well as single non-affiliated Junior Schools. In some of the long established schools there is provision for boarders and day students. Independent schools charge fees which limits which students have access to them (I.S.C.A., 2009). As a consequence ‘high fee paying’ schools are viewed as being elite or highly selective. Some government schools are also selective and single sex (Melbourne High School) and have a reputation as high performing academically. However, the majority of public school counterparts cannot exclude students unless they live outside the postcode area for the school (Teese & Polesel, 2003; Teese, 2000; Marginson, 1997b). According to Blackmore (1999, p. 11), there is a blurring of “public/private boundaries as more popular government schools become more selective” (Whitty, 1997; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Kenway et al., 1993).

**Alternative education in a dual system**

During the 1980s, federal funding, along with choice and diversity policies were introduced. At the same time there was a rise in ‘alternative’ schools such as Community schools, Steiner, Montessori and others. Today the independent sector encompasses a range of schools offering different programs, educational philosophies and pedagogical approaches with varying interpretations of mainstream education. They offer internationally devised programs including Reggio Emilia for preschool, Waldorf Education - Steiner Schools, Montessori and more recently the International Baccalaureate for primary, middle and senior school students. Independent schools also present a range of religious and values-based education such as Christian (Anglican, Lutheran, Uniting, Presbyterian and Christian Schools); Islamic and Jewish faiths while others are non-denominational or inter-denominational, such as Aboriginal Community schools and Cooperative schools. Over the past three decades schools across the sector have seen significant
competition from the expansion of low-fee paying schools particularly fundamentalist Christian and Islamic (I.S.C.A., 2009).

**Victoria’s independent sector**

Victoria has the largest number of Independent schools in Australia and holds a unique position as a significant provider of education (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools, 2009). Independent schools are located throughout the State in regional centres, outer suburbs (20 percent) and usually in the more affluent areas in Melbourne (80 percent), although many new schools are being established in the expanding lower middle class areas (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools, 2008). The majority of Independent schools are co-educational; although a few single-sex schools offer co-education at the lower primary level, others offer parallel co-education at the upper year levels and in specific subjects (Independent Schools’ Victoria, 2009).

Independent Schools’ Victoria (I.S.V) is part of the national organization and represents 98 percent, 218 Independent schools. There are 1,617 Government schools and 483 Catholic schools in Victoria. Thirty-five percent of students attend non-government schools (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools, 2009). The following table outlines the number of schools and percentage of students attending those schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of students</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys only</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls only</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>86.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 Boys, Girls or Co-Educational Schools: Census of Non-Government Schools 2008*

Historical, religious and cultural influences continue to inform the governance of Independent schools at the School Board / School Council level, where tradition and faith are propagated. As a consequence the hierarchical structure of governance and management support and sustain school’s ideological purposes. It is not unusual to find this kind of hegemonic and often paternalistic organizational feature in many Independent schools although there are exceptions. The historical influences of the traditional elite schools offer prestige; as their status and reputation are legacies of
“neo-colonial and neo-imperial discourses of otherness” on the cultures of those organizations (Prasad & Prasad, 2002, p. 57). The following table indicates the number of schools and their affiliations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation or Guiding Philosophy</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Affiliation or Guiding Philosophy</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of God</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coptic Orthodox</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uniting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-denominational</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 I.S.V Member Schools (2008)*

**My interest in Independent schools and women in leadership**

As a practicing teacher and leader in the independent sector, I questioned both the theory and practice surrounding these shifts to corporatise education and transform schools. In 1998, I conducted a case study in an Independent Girls’ School located in Melbourne titled: ‘Reconstructing leadership, a new vision for a collaborative learning community’. This project offered me a deeper focus and ongoing interest in leadership research. More recently my experience as Junior School Head of an Anglican Grammar School in an inner suburb of Melbourne from 1999 to 2002, sustained my involvement in all aspects of leadership, women and senior leadership teams.

A further motivation for this research was generated by the changing context of leadership, as there was significant evidence by 2004 that there was disengagement with leadership across all sectors and cross nationally (Cranston, 2007). As a former participant in senior leadership and as a member of the Junior School Heads’ Association of Australia (JSHAA) and the Australian Primary Principals’ Association (APPA) I was afforded numerous opportunities to have critical dialogues and to question what kind of leadership experiences were significant and how leadership was changing. I identified a range of concerns emerging in discussions
with my teacher colleagues and those aspiring for promotion to leadership positions. Particular issues that arose involved individual goal setting and career strategies.

Many of my colleagues, successful women leaders, were seeking a more professional discourse about leadership. Our conversations focused on matters such as the complexity of leadership work, its professional purpose and issues such as autonomy, authority and accountability. Our conversations foci were not uncommon as educational research highlighted leadership performance and accountability as well as workplace issues such as professional status and in some cases gender equity (Sachs, 2003; Collard, 2001; Thomson, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001; Day et al., 2000; Wildy & Louden, 2000; Blackmore, 1999; Chase, 1995; Grace, 1995).

**Professional dialogues**

The professional dialogues revealed that my colleagues were also questioning their own values and raised issues about educational quality, trust, care and community building; issues which they thought were being marginalized. They had formed the opinion that these central tenets were being ignored or undermined by excessive administrative demands and marketing. It was also apparent that their foci involved the affective domains that motivated leaders to want to ‘make a difference’ in children’s lives (Blackmore, 2006). My colleagues questioned how leaders might reinvigorate leadership and address this sense of alienation from their professional purpose and the educational aspects of leading that were most rewarding.

My investment in this study is therefore driven by the same concerns that my colleagues articulated. My professional history is similar to that of the interviewees; they have either been colleagues and/or members of the same professional associations. Therefore I have a professional investment in this project and this has consequences for the way this research was conducted and the assumptions that are brought to bear.

**Developing the theoretical tools**

This research extends an ongoing professional teaching and research commitment to identifying gender issues in educational leadership and how women negotiate contradictory discourses and produce themselves as leader-identities. In particular how power relations operate within the micro-politics of leadership in schools. I use
feminist poststructural theory and draw on a Foucauldian conception of power and discourse to question and challenge current leadership discourses and expose the more complex, relational and discursive dimensions of leadership. I apply feminist perspectives to problematise the notion of gender, discriminatory practices and how female leaders negotiate their professional identities (Dent & Whitehead, 2002; O’Doherty, 2002; Mc Nay, 2000).

In this qualitative study of women leaders in Victoria I use multiple methods (questionnaire, in-depth interviews and field notes) and employ narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Heilbrun, 1999; Czarniawska, 1997; Gee, 1996; Richardson, 1997) and the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990) to analyse leaders’ professional work narratives (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Blackmore, 1999; Chase, 1995). The Questionnaire was used to identify the leadership discourses currently circulating in Independent schools; while Interviews provided a unique space, for a discursively-constructed socially situated interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Interviewing offers an opportunity to expose the discursive tensions and the discourses that produce leader identities. Analysis of interviews seeks to reveal contradictory discourses accommodated or resisted within a wider investigation of power relationships and the cultural and political discourses that contextualize women’s leadership in schools (Porter, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1995).

The women in this study were drawn from I.S.V. (2007) Directory of Member Schools which offers a range of school settings and differing management arrangements. Junior School Heads’ leadership position is a ‘relatively’ autonomous, contractual arrangement where leader’ are part of the school leadership team; answerable to the Principal and in K-6 schools to the Board (Chapter Three). The following table summarizes the twelve Junior Heads’ school contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Single sex / Co-educational K-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Co ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>Co ed / K-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>Co ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Co ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>Co ed / K-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>Co ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Co ed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Schools in this study (2007)*
Investigating how the women interviewees understood their professionalism and situated leadership was facilitated through the analysis of their responses to the questionnaire and leadership narratives (Chapters 5 – 7). Such an approach brings to the study “more insights about power, gender and the systemic forces that prefigure power relations” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 33). My research takes up Sinclair’s challenge and offers depth and specificity to the current leadership discourses by focusing on women, power relations and the micro-politics of leading in schools within broader frames of corporatisation and professionalism. This is important as it situates and contextualizes the leader’s narrative, while allowing the capacity to identify meta-narratives that are mobilized across different settings.

How power works in gendered ways

This thesis questions how power works in gendered ways as do discourses surrounding educational leadership. In other words who gets to speak and therefore the power to name, control, authorize and legitimize some stories over others? I am interested in how women leaders through their professional narratives adopt particular discourses and how they position themselves, and how others position them, within their particular school.

In this regard, I draw on Weedon’s (2004) conceptualisation of power as a useful theoretical approach that supports the Foucauldian concept of how power relationships function through discourses.

[Power] …is dispersed across a range of social institutions and practices and functions through the discursive constitution of embodied subjects within discourses. The subject positions and modes of embodied subjectivity constituted for the individual within particular discourses allow for different degrees and types of identity and agency both compliant and resistant. They include discourses and discursive practices which maybe contradictory and conflicting and create a space for new forms of knowledge and practice. While there is no place beyond discourses and the power relations that govern them, resistance and change are possible from within. (Weedon, 2004, p. 19)

Key concepts and discourses

A number of the key concepts and discourses contextualise this research. First, leadership discourses are situated within specific contexts informed by a number of different bodies of literature in particular, cultural/social perspectives, (Teese & Polesel, 2003; Kenway & McLeod, 2004) political issues, (Gunter & Forrester, 2010;
Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) corporate practices, (Ball, 2003; Yeatman, 1994) and professional discourses (Sinclair, 2007; Sachs 2003; Gleeson & Gunter, 2001). Such contexts highlight the ‘taken for granted’ assumptions about schools, leadership and women.

Second, my thesis is premised on a significant body of feminist literature that supports my contention that leadership is contested and gendered (Sinclair, 2007; Aaltio & Mills, 2002; Hearn, 2002; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Fletcher, 2004). “Studies of gender and such things as organizational symbolism (Acker, 1992), communication (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985), structure (Savage & Witz, 1992), dress (Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail & Mackie-Lewis, 1997), and discourse (Ferguson, 1984), have been invaluable in exposing the cultural processes whereby gendered identities and discriminatory practices are constructed” (Aaltio & Mills, 2002, p. 12).

Third, critical feminist research on gender and leadership has been undertaken in Australia (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007; Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Blackmore 1999). Yet there is limited research on women leaders in Independent schools. Therefore I also draw on international studies (Thomson, 2010, 2001, 2000; Gunter, 2005, 2001; Weedon, 2004, 1999; St Pierre, 2000) and in particular Chase’s (1995) research of women superintendents in the United States: Ambiguous Empowerment, the work narratives of women school superintendents to inform my research.

**Insider-colleague, outsider-researcher**

Acknowledging my background also highlights the tension between the researcher’s experience and the aims of the research project. Being a woman and a former insider-colleague and now outsider-researcher studying women leaders’ narratives, foreground some issues more than others. As Reinharz (1992) explains: “Being an insider of the experience enabled them to understand what [some] women have to say in a way no outsider could”. As a former ‘insider’ I am able to elucidate, analyse and contextualize in ways that place these stories in a larger cultural, political and social setting. For Reinharz this tension has advantages as it, “…does not think of objectivity and subjectivity as warring with each other, but rather as serving each other” (pp. 260-63).
Furthermore Kirsch and Ritchie (1995) argue that while “…it is important to claim the legitimacy of our experience, a ‘politics of location’ also demands a rigorously reflexive examination of ourselves as researchers and writers – and of our locations as ‘fluid multiple and illusive’” (p. 8). With this in mind I employ throughout the text an additional ‘aside’ in which I reflect, muse, clarify and question. My ‘aside’ is inhabited with misgivings, rhetorical questioning and background field notes to the interviews. This space offers me a position to question what I am doing, how I am doing it and why. Feminist researchers have employed similar literary devices or textural strategies such as St. Pierre (2000) with her ‘aside’; Lather’s (2000), ‘intertext’ and Morgan’s (2000) ‘hypertext’. Besides making connections across the text and adding new data “to loosen up the text” as St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) assert “it, in itself, is not liberatory, it can serve the purposes of poststructural feminists who seek a different agency and a different field of operations” (p. 13). Thus the ‘aside’ does not disrupt the main body of the thesis, particularly the interview narratives, but provides a space for deliberate reflexivity.

**Significance of the study**

This study will contribute to the field in a number of ways. First, due to lack of research on women Junior Heads’ in the independent sector in Victoria this study will provide empirical data that adds to a growing body of data in the public sector in Australia. Also the majority of teachers are female and yet women are underrepresented in the sphere of educational administration and leadership (McCrea & Ehrich, 2000, 1998; Ehrich, 1998).

Second, it will indicate the complexity surrounding leadership discourses, not addressed in the leadership literature. The complexity and silences in the literature are an important contextualizing aspect in terms of maintaining leadership which views leadership as “the solution” to effective educational reform and improvement. Also minimal leadership research “questions the assumption that leadership per se is good” (Sinclair, 2007).

Third, by drawing on feminist poststructural theory to unravel leadership discourses I may “conceal as well as illuminate, directing attention to certain parts of the phenomenon while encouraging us not to notice other parts” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 26). I assume an all female study will accentuate the fault lines within the discursive
production of gendered associations and expand the notion of leadership. I also predict a feminist critique of leadership will not inadvertently feed into current leadership models and thus reinforce ‘the power and privilege of leadership’ and maintain the status quo (Sinclair, 2007).

Fourth, this study in leadership is timely, as the shortage of principals is already acknowledged (Wildy, Clarke & Slater, 2007; Cranston, 2006; Collins, 2006; Preston, 2002). Furthermore Cranston (2007) points out, leader disengagement has been a feature of leader aspirant research and is of concern as leaders increasingly “… desire to maintain a work life balance” (p. ii). In general researchers have found all leaders seek a better work – life balance (Duignan, 2005; Gross, Shaw & Shapiro, 2003; Fullan, 2003).

Finally, revealing leaders’ discursive repertoires about educational work, leadership and professional reputations, will be valuable to other leaders, researchers and teachers who experience many of the tensions this thesis identifies. Because schools attract predominantly more women teachers than men (Dillabough, 2007) women leaders and those aspiring to leadership will be interested in the narratives of those in leading positions. This study has potential to illuminate how women engage with leadership and may encourage more women to apply for and take up leadership positions while at the same time it could discourage others. The limitation of this study is that it is self selective and it represents a particular group of white, middleclass, women leaders and educators in Victorian Independent schools. In this respect I assume this research may be of interest to those investigating professional ‘middleclass white women’ which can be equally exclusionary to the ‘other’ who is not white, female and middleclass.

I recognize that while I take a feminist poststructural position; women in this study may or may not have feminist views, although some narratives suggest an empathy with feminist approaches. However, my narrative and intention as a feminist scholar will be to lend strength and a discriminatory critique to my perspectives of the social/political discourses in leadership through this approach. My contributions to, and experiences of, Independent Junior School leadership will inform my analysis of the women’s stories.
Structure of the thesis

There are two parts to this thesis: Part One includes Chapters One through Four. Part Two covers Chapters Five through Eight.

Part One: Introduction

Chapter One
Is an exploration of the educational leadership literature and looks specifically at big ‘L’ leadership and what factors are driving economic, markets, politics and social discourses influencing educational policies from an international, national and local level. I take an analytical look at the educational ‘enterprise’ and what the research is telling us about commodification and marketisation of education in Victoria’s Independent schools. I conclude with an overview of current educational leadership research, including Australian research into women in leadership and highlight some of the gaps and the ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions that contextualize leadership, particularly for women.

Chapter Two
Investigates the range of leadership meta-narratives arising from the corporatisation of education and what discourses dominant the field of educational leadership and those discourses that may operate within Independent schools and may influence Junior Heads. I introduce the discourses arising from the main paradigms of corporate managerialism and professionalism; that is, Transformational, Entrepreneurial, Distributed, Professional and Critical discourses. Also how leaders are situated within these contradictory discourses and how they are positioned by such discourses.

Chapter Three
The foci is with how power and resistance contributes to gendered discourses, gendered workspaces and emerging discourses surrounding leadership, gender equity, culture and diversity, politics of emotion and feminist discourses. I discuss how marginal discourses are part of the contradiction and ambiguity related to gender and power. I also detail the role of a Junior School Head and the strategic selection, induction and succession processes of senior leadership in Independent schools.
Chapter Four
This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework, methods of analysis, design of the study and assumptions underpinning the research. In particular I examine the influence of poststructural theory, feminist perspectives and a narrative inquiry approach that involves using the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990). I also explain details of the research design, the (self selected) participants and how I conducted the questionnaire and the interviews with the women. I draw on these theoretical and methodological approaches to analyse the data that was collected and the transcripts that were produced.

Part Two
The focus of this section is the analysis of each leader’s response to the Questionnaire and interviews with each of the participants. In particular, analysis of the Questionnaire revealed a range of issues currently influencing women leaders’ in senior leadership positions and the dominant discourses that contextualise their leadership practices. The analysis of the interview transcripts followed. These vignettes provided the specificity and individual contexts that situated each leader’s discursive positioning in relation to their experiences of power and subjection. Closer analysis indicated how women leaders’ take up or refuse particular contradictory discourses and negotiate their positions as they produce leader-identities. Analysing these discourses using the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990) also reveals leadership, not only provides a context for activating the operation of technologies-of-the-self but functions as a site of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) in which women leader’s self regulate and in turn are regulated. Each leader’s vignette reveals the positioning strategies leaders’ use to negotiate power-relationships operating at the micro-political level in schools.

Chapter Five
The women participants and their responses to the Questionnaire are introduced. The questionnaire analysis highlights the discourses women leaders’ draw on when they write about how they position themselves and are positioned by others as leaders. In particular I analyse the dominant leadership discourses and issues that emerge from their responses. This Chapter is arranged according to the issues and discourses that the women indicate are important to them.
Chapter Six

Analysis of narrative transcripts revealed leaders’ employed positioning strategies using discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent. Analysis of Sarah, Christine, Sally and Linda’s narratives revealed these leaders’ negotiated the paradox of complementary discourses such as, corporate/transformational discourses focused on values, vision and consensus building. These leaders’ use discourses of paradox where performative expectations and loyalty combine, indicating degrees of subordination and ambivalence. Carol’s narrative is an example of discourses of idealism. Such discourses about idealistic professional values tended to overcome any dissonance through values focused discourses and democratic and/or collaborative practices. Julie, Jan, Ellen and Sharon also share the discourse of idealism. In contrast Elaine employs discourses of dissent to critique leading and managing in order to renegotiate a more favourable position. Meredith and Pam equally have a discourse of dissent.

Chapter Seven

The findings from the data analysis are discussed. This Chapter focuses on the difficulties that persist in negotiating the discursive terrain of leadership, particularly while there is no neutral administrative logic to which women can safely appeal. I draw attention to the broader Australian cultural context along with the stereotyping of gender and women’s styles of leadership. The discussion centres on exploring the discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent and the problematizing of gender and feminist discourses. Added to this is the relativism and situatedness of all discourses and how women leaders’ positioning emerges out of these contextually diverse and specifically negotiated relationships within schools. There is an investigation of the inherent potential within discursively managing ‘technologies of the self’ and the production of leader-identities.

Chapter Eight

This Chapter concludes this investigation. The study reveals how women in leadership embody relative agency and the capacity to reposition themselves through managing the discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent. New leadership paradoxes, power and the state of play describe the current status of Junior Heads and how women leaders’ in Independent schools position themselves in relation to the game. This thesis contributes to building theory and adds empirical data to
educational leadership research and literature. These narratives reveal a potential for reconceptualising what is valuable in leadership, how this might redress the gendered workplace and the significance of leadership as a critical, discursive and reciprocal practice.

Aside: March 2006

Why am I passionate about researching leadership?
These uncertainties and misgivings were compounded by a concern for locating my-self in the research and acknowledging that writing is a political act. As a colleague and former leader my politics are biased toward an emancipatory inclination and I am aware that trespassing on ‘sacred ground’ of things confidential is part of this dilemma. Hence questioning and exposing the disjunctions, flaws and misconceptions within the field of educational leadership exposes a certain political vulnerability. Moreover the contradictions of location place me in the position of an intruder, one dispossessed of a landscape that was once so familiar. My passion to unravel the nuances of leadership and how it is produced biases my argument. However my experiences in the field have been shaped by the same discourses my participants draw on and as such provide a sense of ‘insiderness’.

Does greater awareness of the discursive positioning power of discourse afford women choice or even a voice? Do other women in leading positions have similar experiences of power? As St Pierre (2000) reflects on her research as an opportunity to transform, “impossibility into possibility where a failed account occasions new kinds of positionings” (p. 263). Moreover according to Bourdieu (1990) the theory of practice as practice insists “...the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and ...that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented to practical functions” (p. 52). In this way leader’s habitus within the field of educational leadership is a generative rather than determining structure. According to McNay (2000) Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus is expressed in a “dialogical temporality denoting both the ways in which norms are inculcated upon the body and also the moment of praxis or living through these norms” (p. 32).

This is a useful reflection which challenges me to understand the implications of the idea of the field for the “gendered habitus” and the possibility to think beyond the negative paradigm of subjectification (McNay, 2000, p. 32).
CHAPTER ONE

POSITIONING THE RESEARCH

Independent Schools are quite isolated either by geography or market dollar competition. (Pam: Junior School Head, 2005)

In the Introduction I highlighted the main themes, positioned this research within the field of educational leadership and in relation to my own professional investment in this research along with a rationale for interviewing women Junior Heads. This Chapter begins with locating leadership research within the broader international, national and local contexts. In particular I examine the global economic and political changes that underpin current leadership discourses and the impact of markets and ‘performativity’ (Blackmore, 1999, p. 11).

The globalization of markets and international policies on education have privileged the economic domain over the social (Thrupp, 2003; Henry, Lingard, Rizvi & Taylor, 2001). Policy can be viewed as both text and discourse (Ball, 1994). Policy as a communicative practice is also about prioritizing and allocating values; and shifts in discourses and vocabularies of practice can lead to significant shifts in value (Gewirtz et al., 1995; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). Policies have the capacity to drive particular discourses that contextualise leadership and position leaders within the field of educational leadership.

In this chapter I draw on the broad contexts of educational restructuring and reform which provides a closer examination of how educational leadership is positioned and its relationship to Independent schools. As there has been little research conducted in relation to women leaders in Independent schools in Victoria; I have selected research that contributes to the contexts in which women leaders operate and are situated. This chapter is organized around contexts and how leadership as a discursive practice is redefined and repositioned within the political, economic and cultural restructuring of education in Australia.
The ‘new global economy’
Since the 1980s major economic and political shifts as well as educational restructuring and policy changes have taken place. The international situation has intensified as Gunter and Forrester (2010) point out; the New Labour government (1997) in England entered a reform of ‘headteachers as leaders’ and “constructed and communicated a ‘doxa’ (self evident truths) (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 11) of good leadership practice and used state apparatus to fund and legitimize such preferred and required practice” (p. 56). Furthermore the reform is defined by, and “controlled through these ‘self-evident truths’ located in values [economic rationalism / corporate managerialism] and discourses” (p. 57). Such values and discourses, have promoted ongoing privatization which has meant; increased contractual measures, shifting responsibility for educational reforms onto leaders and schools with benchmark performance and accountability.

The international move to ‘privatisation’ discredits the professional doxa based on public service and notions of care, commitment and inherent understandings of quality (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Such ideas are replaced with the educational provider constructed to protect self-serving bureaucratic systems and interests (Gewirtz, 2002). The result has been a resurgence of privatization in educational provision, where professionalism is based on customer responsiveness combined with entrepreneurial risk-taking and accountability for the delivery of targets (Clarke, Gewirtz & McLaughlin, 2000).

In Seddon’s (1999) view this contradiction and shift to a new mode of professionalism requires a redefining of work through “critical thinking … [that] offers alternatives to, and practical critiques of, capitalist triumphalism and its neo-liberal programs” (p. 37). However, control of educational leaders, schools and employees, whether from government or private enterprise becomes more rigid when the political agenda ignores contradictions and engineers social policy towards economic purpose (Seddon, 1999).

The ‘new global economy’ has seen the emergence of ‘enterprise’ and ‘knowledge economy’ discourses. These discourses have produced educational workplace changes that have transformed the “…relationships between the state and the individual with new modes of governmentality” (Blackmore, 2004, p. 269) and
produced widespread cultural shifts and a rise in new ‘instrumentalism and entrepreneurialism’ in the provision of education. The cultural shifts have impacted on educational leadership as schools are now being linked more closely to the national economy. The significance of the economic agenda that drives educational reforms through corporate managerial discourses simultaneously undermines professional discourses that retain democratic principles and values. Such discourses are in danger of being subverted or colonized.

According to Apple (1993) democracy is no longer a social project but rather an economic one. He contends “…there has been a withering of substantive large scale discussions of feasible alternatives to neo-liberal visions, policies and practices, ones that would move well beyond them” (Apple, 1999, p. 16). Moreover we live in a world of ‘intense individualism’ (Sommerville, 2000) where selfish and self-serving means are often used to “to achieve ends that are inimical to community values and the common good” (Duignan, 2006, p. 7).

**Australia, globalization and the performative state**

Since the 1990s Australian schooling has been subjected to unprecedented change (Limerick et al., 1998). Nationally globalization has meant leaders in schools have undergone similar transformations as their OECD counterparts. Australia and other nation states have generated educational reforms informed by new managerialism and market notions of choice, competition and contractualism (Blackmore, 2004).

Australia’s ideological shifts, (neo-liberal economic rationalist philosophies) produced a ‘cultural restructuring’ in terms of attitudes to education and training generally, with the assumption that more instrumental approaches provide competitive advantages, specifically in terms of what form of education is seen as preferable and better. Blackmore (2004) argues: “The language of the market and new managerialism positioned teachers as education providers, parents as clients and students as consumers” (p. 273).

The current government policy initiatives shared between Australia, UK, New Zealand and the USA have continued to resonate with neo-liberal economic and social philosophies adopted at the federal level by the previous Howard Government (1996-2007) and encouraged privatization. After 1996 the push for privatization of
schooling was exacerbated when the conservative federal government mobilised policies of parental choice (Marginson, 1997b, 1997a, 1993). In Australia neoliberalism has generated conditions that utilize the ‘parent choice’ strategy to rationalize increased funding to the non-government sector. The overall effect of privatization and marketisation, research suggests, is a widening of the gap between rich and poor schools (Gordon, 1994a).

While concerns about markets and parent choice have always been the case for private schools, the ‘commodification’ of education has meant embracing a reinvigorated consumerism. In the current climate leaders’ struggle with the paradox of economic marketisation and consumerism that challenges professional values. Such contradictions contextualize leaders in schools and how they experience leadership (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007).

Leadership research in Australia between 2001-2005 conducted by Mulford (2007), indicates that although this is considered internationally to be a ‘golden age’ of school leadership the results suggest that despite “…increased interest and investment… one is struck by the small number of studies related to research on Australian educational leadership (p. 18). Indeed he goes on to explain that the disappointing results could be attributed to lack of government funding, studies often limited to one state, few longitudinal studies, many are small scale and concerns over publication of Australian research that may not be given as high a status as overseas counterparts (Mulford, 2007, pp. 18 -19).

Of particular interest in current research, is the reference to “a bureaucracy that replaces professional autonomy and ownership with dependency [which] may no longer be the best means of delivering education in, and for, a democratic and increasingly knowledge-based society” (Mulford, 2007, p. 18). He asserts “there is general support among principals for performance management, but only …if it has a strong focus on professional development and growth, school and organizational improvement, cooperation and teamwork rather than competition, emphasis on longer as well as shorter term goals, regular constructive feedback and transparent processes” (pp. 17-18).
In Victoria these structural reforms were promoted by the neoconservative
government at the time (Caldwell & Haywood, 1998). In-depth case studies (Gurr,
Drysdale & Mulford, 2005) conducted in five Tasmanian and nine Victorian schools
highlighted the importance and contribution of the principal to quality education.
Factors that needed to be taken into consideration include:

… context; principal’s values and beliefs; styles of leadership, including
building individual support and capacity; building school capacity; shared
school direction - vision; school outcomes in terms of teaching and learning;
student academic and non-academic results, community social capital; and,
evidence-based monitoring, evaluation, critical reflection and
change/transformation. (Mulford, 2007, p. 12)

Furthermore the impact of these changes repositioned Independent schools and
leaders through increased Government funding, standardization and accountabilities.
Although Independent schools have not experienced the full force of these changes
as their colleagues in public sector; they have experienced significant change as a
flow on effect. These changes have meant greater push for expansion of
‘privatisation’ along with increased market competition. The impact of increased
funding and ‘parent choice’ policies has lead to an increase in the number of new low
fee paying schools and a reinvigorated competition between schools. For leaders’
competition between schools, challenges cohesion, collegiality and professional
dialogues that critique the current state of affairs.

As leaders are receivers of these changes they are strategically positioned to advocate
for or challenge, the ‘new performativity’ that has come to dominate the Australian
workplace characterized by processes of ‘commodification’ and ‘marketization’ of
education. The notion of performativity captures “both the states managerialist
(efficiency and effective) and evaluative (symbolic) aspects, to produce new
managerial or managerialised identities” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). Governments
have been quick to acknowledged leaders’ potential ‘as participants in the game’ that
provides a ‘logic of practice’ against which leaders can be measured (Gunter &
Forrester, 2010). Therefore regulatory controls, performance measures and
accountabilities/competencies ensure leaders’ allegiance by defining a different
professionalism, one that conforms to the business rhetoric of corporate
managerialism.
Markets and competition
Researchers, Menter et al., (1997) argue there is an assumption that: “Markets are considered less subject to political interference and the weight of bureaucratic process as they are grounded in the rational choices of individual actors” (p. 27). They are supposed to be neutral, natural and governed by effort and merit. According to Whitty (1997) supporters of marketised ‘choice’ assume that “competition will enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of schools” (p. 58). However, taking a closer look Apple (1999) argues: “Markets are marketed, are made legitimate, by a depoliticizing strategy” (p. 8). Such ‘depoliticized’ markets, when joined to mechanisms that generate evidence of entrepreneurial efficiency and effectiveness, provide performance measures and ongoing surveillance through policy and regulation.

In the Australian marketplace schools and their leaders now compete for a larger market share of the available student population. The economic colonization of cultural traditions through marketing strategies, promotional campaigns and advertising has come at a cost, in part because survival relies on a particular ‘successful school image’ (Thomson, 2004). In response to the need to maintain a successful image and increase enrolments the majority of schools have taken a ‘corporate’ approach to improve image and provide ‘value-added’ incentives (holiday programs and extended care services) to consumers (Blackmore, 1999).

Funding, markets and Independent schools
As a product of the neo-liberal government policies there has been a growing funding differential between public and ‘private’ schools. For over a century Independent schools did not receive government funding, which positioned them as a corporate private enterprise, supported by parent fees and often church or other affiliations. The introduction of funding to Independent schools in the 1970’s has strengthened their appeal to parents and positioned them favourably in the marketplace.

Competition and privatization has also encouraged the establishment of numerous small Independent schools, federally funded and able to compete for students with each other and government schools. Competition for students from newly established (low fee paying denominational schools, cooperative, alternative parent governed schools) schools means these challenge both ‘elite’ and government schools. Rivalry
between schools has placed increased demands on leaders and schools to provide value-added incentives such as, scholarships, bursaries and grants as well as expanded services such as extended care options which have now become a common feature in most schools (Blackmore, 1999).

Many of the long standing elite schools have a distinct marketing advantage. According to Apple (1999) markets are being depolitized, reducing them to individual choice while also highlighting the ‘decontextualising’ process where funding, policies and social capital advantages, are ignored.

**Competition and parent choice**

Educational leaders have experienced the impact of political pressure through ‘parent choice’ policy promoted by a neoconservative free market enterprise system. Hence competition for students combined with government policy and increased funding has meant significant shifts for Independent schools and leaders to accommodate changing parent attitudes and parent choice of schools. Competition has become a marketing imperative for survival. For educational leaders’ and their schools “…survival in the market leads schools to shift focus onto image management, entrepreneurship and financial management and away from curriculum and pedagogy” (Blackmore, Bigum, Hodgens & Laskey, 1996; Ball, 1994). As Blackmore et al., (1996) indicate research on the market perceptions of ‘good schools’, points to a shift in emphasis away from the core work of teaching, leading and learning to school leadership and resources.

Parents are the key to market survival for schools and what motivates their choice of school is vital. Researchers, (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington, 2009; Connell & Irving, 1992) suggest a range of sociological factors that have impacted on school choice. In particular they highlight the relationship to educational advantage and how parents utilize the specific powers of the educational system as an instrument of reproduction [that is] “as a mechanism of class transmission” (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1978, p. 205). The assumption of ‘neutrality’, regarding patterns of achievement in education and ‘neutrality’ regarding marketplace trading is assumed to be fair and equitable for all; is rarely questioned (Campbell et al., 2009).
The prevalence of these assumptions about educational advantage tend to support the social reproduction of class within the schooling sector that is; the operation of acquiring social capital and desire for high academic results from middle class parents and increasingly the ‘aspirational’ classes (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1992). Certainly the work of Gewirtz (1992) indicates great social complexity at work as parents’ particularly middle class parents often make strategic choices beginning with primary schools and “patterns of transfer from certain primaries to particular secondaries” (Gewirtz et. al., 1992, p. 19). This knowledge of the system according to Gewirtz et al., (1992) advantages the ‘middle-class’ parents “…and orients them differently to school choice” (pp. 3-29).

**Australian middle-classes**

The Australian middle-class has distinctive approaches to schooling that are historically based (Campbell et al., 2009). Australian research into school choice and the middle-classes indicates that neoliberalism has produced new pressures that shape parents’ choice of schools (Campbell et al., 2009). Hence new ways of exercising parent power ‘parentocracy’ (Brown, 1990) and interventions; especially by middle-class parents are readily discernible in schools of the twenty-first century (Brown, 1990). Middle class parents particularly in urban centres have become quite skilled in exploiting market mechanisms and bringing their social, economic and cultural capital to bear. The more deregulation, the more possibility of informal procedures being employed, such as moving children around the system. Campbell et al., (2009) argue parents are positioned within this new regime of school choice and are “expected to be active and wise in choosing a school” (p. 1).

In the last decade there has been on average a shift of about 0.4 percent of students per year from the government to the non-government sector (ABS, Schools Australia 2009 no. 4221). The move to private education indicates parents’ are influenced by a school’s religious/ethnic/philosophical affiliations as well as aspirations about the connections between academic success, social advantage and cultural capital they are hoping to achieve for their children (Campbell et al., 2009).

The independent sector is premised on ‘parent choice’ within an ‘independent’ market system and when parents exercise choice by selecting a school often by ‘word-of-mouth’ the social and educational implications for Independent schools
survival is at risk. Parent choice policies and values have historically differentiated the independent sector from the government system. However, it now unites them as rivals for attracting students and marketplace status.

As more parents consider the advantages of Independent schools, Kenway (1988) points out that this apparent advantage is not without a strong argument: “Given the connections between private schools, social power and dominant educational ideologies it is hardly surprising that their [students’] success is deemed inevitable…its ‘success’ is the product of hard ideological labour and is achieved through intensive use of dominant educational and social categories of value” (p. 121). Kenway (1988) explains: “The private school, state school division, although blurred along class lines, provides a convenient means of making such distinctions” (p.135).

Furthermore a community perception exists, whereby students who attend Independent schools are believed to have come from wealthy backgrounds (Campbell et al., 2009). Yet almost half the families in the independent sector have an average or below average income (Campbell et al., 2009, pp. 61-72). It follows that as the sector expands, the cost of perceived ‘advantage’ to less affluent parents appears to be a choice they are prepared to accept. A more nuanced analysis indicates that such statistics lack the specificity to explain why parents with lower incomes continue to stretch their finances to pay for schooling. This would suggest that Independent schooling is regarded as desirable to families for the distinctive social/cultural and/or religious benefits e.g. faith-based schools. Campbell and his colleagues’ research indicate “patterns of school enrolments are related to interwoven social relations of class, religious affiliation and cultural identities and ethnic origins” (Campbell et al., 2009, p. 30).

In current circumstances “choice is as likely to reinforce hierarchies as to improve educational opportunities and the overall quality of schooling” (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998, p. 14). Independent school leaders’ contend with social attitudes and values in terms of their individual school ethos, image and strategic marketing that accompanies these shifts in socio-economic conditions, middle-class choice and competition.
Performativity

Today the ‘business’ rhetoric of the ‘performing school’ is an outcome of the restructuring and pedagogical reforms that have shaped the educational change of the 1990s (Gleeson & Gunter, 2001; Ozga, 2000; Ball, 2000; Yeatman, 1994). As Ball (2000) points out: “Performativity is a system of regulation, of organizations and the self, providing a measure of worth and of productivity against which individuals are judged” (p. 3). He goes on to note, ‘performative’ discourses also generate a tendency to fabricate, that is, “…fabrications are versions of an organization (or person) which does not exist …they are produced purposefully in order ‘to be accountable’. The fabrication becomes embedded in and is reproduced by systems of recording and reporting on practice…It excludes other things which do not ‘fit’ into what is intended to be represented or conveyed” (Ball, 2000, p. 9).

In this regard Dowling (2008) states: “Output measures are the new currency of an educational market; the new ‘bottom-line’ upon which schools, school systems and increasingly teachers will be judged” (p. 9). Such ‘performative’ expectations generate tensions and stress that can also lead to a “form of fabrication to fit the categories of documents and reports, or the standardizing tendencies of management through best practice rhetoric and normalizing images of good schools promoted through markets” (Blackmore, 2005, p. 350).

Performativity discourses also bring into question the “tension between ‘performativity’ or performing well through managing oneself better according to a new set of regulatory… mechanisms – and the passion for ‘doing good’ in educational work based on a desire to achieve …fairness and social justice” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 27). Hence educators and leaders are caught up in the dilemma of ‘performativity’ or ‘doing good’ in educational work involving pedagogical and collaborative practices. There is a clear intention regarding performativity to establish “a set of management practices” (Hatcher, 1994, p. 55). That is, framing the discourses about how education will be delivered, what will be targeted and how teachers and leaders will be measured. The neo-conservative market discourses underpinning educational reforms disregard funding, resources and social pressures and suggest that if a school is not performing then the leadership is in question.
To further clarify the complexity of leadership activities and difficulties with measuring performance within the formal and informal distribution of leading and managing; I draw on Spillane, Camburn, Pustejovsky, Pareja and Lewis (2008) longitudinal research into principals’ day to day work in 52 schools in the United States in 2005. The research explored leading and managing practices and involved multiple individuals with formal and informal positions. These studies found that leading and managing depends on the organizational function or leadership routine (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Spillane, 2006). Moreover studies have shown that individuals with no formal leadership position - mostly classroom teachers - also take responsibility for school leadership and management (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond & Jita, 2003). Such distributive practices undermine the measuring of leadership performance that requires clear hierarchical structures in schools. Thereby reinforcing the corporate business rhetoric of individual leader performance relates directly to school structure and performativity.

In England, Gunter and Forrester (2010) highlight how the language of educational reform such as, ‘intervention’ and ‘zero tolerance’ are used to show the directness of what is efficient and what is required. The reform movement is “framed in such a way as to make any alternative agendas look to be unnecessary and, if pursued, seditious” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 59). They also highlight how ‘performative’ discourses feed into discourses about “teacher incompetence… underperforming schools and inadequately skilled school-leavers [who]…are the product of a failing, insufficiently skilled and poorly led and managed teaching profession” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 59).

Therefore both research and policies are brought to bear to convince educational leaders to support the corporate discourse about ‘performativity and accountability practices’ as necessary to ensure better student outcomes (Hattie, 2003). Persistent claims about ‘improved student outcomes’ being directly connected to ‘good leadership’ through competitive marketing and the ‘performative’ school has contributed to shifting the focus away from supporting teachers and students (Hattie, 2002; Clarke, Gewirtz & McLaughlin, 2000). Such performative discourses have attempted to embrace the emotional, values discourse of ‘making a difference in
children’s lives’ through promoting positive ‘student outcomes’ as premised on leadership performance.

Such unwarranted claims circulating about how ‘good leadership’ directly improves student outcomes is a common misreading of the effective schools literature. As Hattie (2003) argues “…teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement” (p. 4). While researchers (Thrupp 1999; Waslander & Thrupp, 1995) have raised concerns that governments have misinterpreted their work on school effectiveness and student outcomes. Morley and Rassool (1999) argue “school effectiveness and school improvement are powerful policy condensates’ demanding ‘consensus and orthodoxy’…that is tied to national economic interests…” (p. 135).

Moreover a review of the ‘student outcomes’ research by Hallinger and Heck (1996) revealed that leadership can play a role and indirectly impact on student learning outcomes by providing the conditions that facilitate teacher student interactions but do not have a more immediate impact. Hence supporting Hattie’s research that suggests “…it is teacher-student interaction (preferably with principal support)… that impacts most on student learning” (Hattie, 2002). Hattie, goes on to note how other conditions impact on educational achievement and can be largely attributable to parental background 40 percent, teachers 30 percent and schools 10 percent plus other factors as social mix and peer groups (Hattie, 2003).

The outcome of commodification and marketisation of education has been increased competition, parent choice policies and performance discourses that require regulatory control and accountability processes. Measuring performance of both leaders and schools, has been decontextualised and depolitisized.

**Performativity and Independent schools**

Independent schools have traditionally operated with discourses that promote a different form of liberalism than what government policy makers endorse today. Apple (1999) makes a clear distinction between classical liberalism and its faith in ‘enterprising individuals’ in a market and current forms of neo-liberalism where the latter’s commitment to a regulatory state is a key feature. In this ‘regulatory state’ neo-liberalism demands the constant production of evidence that one is in fact ‘making an enterprise of oneself’ (Olssen, 1996).
This movement of responsibility from state to individual and from individual to state demonstrates the monoculture of ‘cause and effect’ instrumental, business management focused, strategic and performance driven. Teachers and leaders in Independent schools are as their public counterparts feeling the effects of this performance driven culture and increased regulation, and also a sense of alienation from particular views held by many education professionals about education as producing a reflexive well educated citizen and not just an entrepreneurial worker (Blackmore, 1999).

Paradoxically, such shifting relations of power are part of a larger discourse in which dominant economic groups shift the blame for the massive unequal effects of their own misguided decisions from themselves onto the state. The state is then faced with a very real crisis in legitimacy. Given this, “… we should not be at all surprised that the state will then seek to export this crisis outside itself” (Apple, 1999, 1996; Whitty et al., 1998). The effects of neo-liberalism, markets and educational restructuring have shifted the responsibility for the inequalities in access and outcome from the state onto individual schools, leaders, parents and students. The shift of responsibilities from the state onto individual schools and leaders has consolidated and expanded a ‘performance’ discourse about school efficiency and success premised on the principal. The ‘performative’ State is therefore asserting itself.

The competitive climate has positioned leaders in Independent schools, more than in the past; as rivals. Today Independent schools and their leaders are obliged to generate a successful image. As the literature suggests, this leads to cultural shifts in management practices, particularly effecting senior leadership and middle managers to show efficiency and provide evidence of accountability (Ball, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998; Grace, 1997). The dilemma is intensified when leaders are appointed with a promotional image in mind that represents and reflects the marketing strategies of the school (Thomson, 2004). This may favour women or alternatively men according to the dictates of media advertising and public perceptions.

The expansion of the ‘performative’ agenda and related accountabilities has meant Independent schools and leaders have become more corporatised and more economically focused. For instance, formal leadership positions in Independent schools are contractual arrangements and therefore leaders expect appraisal against
performance along with active promotion of the school to the public. However, Independent school leaders now experience greater performative demands, competitive marketing, increased workloads, accountabilities and corporate expectations (Ball, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998; Grace, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997). According to Whitty (1997) “…headteachers are no longer partners in the process of educating pupils – they become allocators of resources within the school, managers who are driven to ensure that the activities of employees are appropriate to the needs of the business” (p. 305).

The outcome for Independent school leaders finds their workplace has become increasingly demanding with “…ever escalating demands for accountability [and] a never ending schedule of meetings, and in many cases [Cooperative and Alternative schools] a growing scarcity of resources both emotional and physical” (Whitty et al., 1998, pp. 67-68). Leaders contend with increased performativity in terms of new demands for accountability, pressure to conform to national curriculum, standardized testing and reporting. In addition there has been a greater demand for resources, technologies and staffing for low fee paying schools, that often rely on parents for fund-raising and as volunteers, for example: The Little Yarra Steiner School.

Formal leadership in the independent sector has meant the performative context is often contentious. As Blackmore (2005: 179) points out, “…individuals internalize the goals and missions of organizations… [And] are continually remaking themselves in the image(s) of the corporation [Independent school] to meet the market and managerial demands, to become what Casey (1995) refers to as ‘designer employees’ (du Gay, 2007, 2000b). In this way the new breed of ‘designer employees’ (Casey, 1995) work with a “new ‘contractualism’ [that] discourages opposition from within or without, expects agreement, silences debate and casts a veneer of neutrality over what is highly political” (Blackmore, 2005, p. 179).

Independent schools operate with contractual arrangements for formal leaders and employment awards and conditions covered by the independent sector. That is, Independent Schools’ Victoria (I.S.V) provides minimum pay awards and employment conditions. Independent schools have more flexibility to pay over the awards, respond quickly to changes, engage staff and encourage new ideas particularly from formal leaders as they are expected to contribute and enhance the
school’s image (Thomson, 2004). Moreover school leaders’ reputations and careers are tied to school success and improving student performance. As Blackmore (1999) indicates the leader - student outcome assumption has been used to “…justify, top-down, principal-led reform” agendas linked to performance pay (p. 5).

**Image and reputation**

Public image and reputation are important aspects of school survival and are maintained through marketing, competition and performativity. A school’s success and failure is closely related to community perceptions and media representations (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004; Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Thomson, Blackmore, Sachs & Tregenza, 2003). In this respect middle class parents are likely to consider multiple sources of information relating to a school’s reputation and practice. According to Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1995) “Reputation and image are key to understanding the position of elite schools and for individual parents general reputations are often supported by first hand reports” (p. 66).

Therefore the marketing imperative involves schools’ reputations and leaders’ performance, that is a schools’ public image and a leaders’ career, intersect. Schools and Heads’ are no longer as ‘independent’ as they were in the past. Schools and leaders are exposed to the uncertainty of politics and markets through compliance to policies and funding. Leaders are now required to deliver standardized testing of all students; adopt the government assessment and reporting procedures as well as the demands of performativity to ensure image and reputation are competitive.

A school’s reputation is often influenced by age and history. Some of the large traditional denominational schools have a heritage of more than 150 years. Hence portray a public image of stability, reliability and continuity which are attractive qualities that promote confidence in educational delivery (Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz, 1995). Many Independent schools have a long standing tradition as well as a religious / philosophical background that imbues strong adherence to ritual and symbolism within the school’s culture that is attractive to parents. Also many Independent schools provide excellent resources and offer social and cultural advantage; it is not surprising that parents perceive additional benefits and are not deterred by the school’s strategic marketing, capturing their attention. Media and advertising play an important role in promoting a school’s image and reputation.
through shaping public understandings of what constitutes a good school and a good principal (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003).

**Ethos and values**

The majority of Independent schools are premised on a particular ethos (philosophy and values). School leaders are faced with the responsibility to promote an individual school identity (ethos and affiliation) while adhering to the performative purposes of educational reform practices and contemporary leadership rhetoric. In this context Independent school leaders’ seek to preserve their distinctive commitment to a particular ethos that differentiates them from other schools. At the same time public attention focuses more strongly on images of schooling and the representation of the principalship as school identity (Thomson, 2004). Therefore a school’s distinctive social and cultural identity (religious practices, symbols and culture) places a greater pressure on leaders to identify with and advocate for their particular school’s institutional narrative. Hence leaders contend with contradictory discourses; on the one hand upholding their school’s cultural, religious and philosophical values while maintaining a contemporary performative leadership discourse. As a result leaders’ play an important role as a cohesive force that requires commitment and emotional investment from leaders in order to sustain a school’s unified image of stability and ‘good standing’ within the community. As Ryan and Sungaila (1995) have stated:

An organization with a distinctive Identity is socially cohesive. While, in fact consensus is not possible… a presumed consensus is achievable, wherein nearly everyone presumes that nearly everyone agrees that what is actually happening ought to be happening. This presumed consensus helps to ensure a socially cohesive organization, which endures across social space as well as over time. (Ryan and Sungaila, 1995, p. 160)

Each Independent school leader provides a strong marketing and competitive stance and generates discourses of continuity and stability, for their individual schools. This apparent ‘presumed consensus’ has endured, in some cases for over 150 years. As a consequence there is an assumption that Independent schools’ strong ethos fosters a sense of consensus and stability (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995). Therefore schools have a vested interest in minimizing any disparity and compromise, that current policy and funding elicits. As a result it is the leaders’ responsibility to negotiate discord within their ranks, while ‘marketing’ solidarity. According to Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) the status quo is shaped and reshaped by “the interactions between
leaders and other agents in the community” (p. 4). Furthermore, how leaders operate within the field of education is increasingly being made subordinate to politics, the media and the economy (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Dillabough & Acker, 2002).

Independent schools’ are not without closures, mergers, dislocations and ruptures. Over the last twenty years some of the long standing elite single sex schools have moved to co-education and as a consequence gained a greater market share (Wesley College, Carey Baptist Grammar School). This has caused philosophical rifts within their parent community with those parents seeking a single sex education (Campbell et al., 2009). What is often obscured when major change happens is the discontent within leadership ranks, as it falls to the leadership team to facilitate the processes of consensus building in order to maintain the school’s image and reputation.

According to Southworth (1998) head teachers have a “strong sense of self…based on the belief that they are of central importance to the school’s success… and that this proprietorial identity is a major source of pressure and unhappiness” (p. 319). Hence actively promoting and implementing a ‘consensus’ culture places greater responsibility, accountability and pressure on senior leaders. In such a climate many school leaders’ experience tension. Increased tension contributes to leaders’ disenchantment with leadership which is often experienced as feeling isolated, with a limited sense of agency and a devaluing of the relational aspects of collegiality in favour of performative goals (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007; Fletcher, 1999).

In today’s workplace culture performance management has become an accepted part of organisational life and we no longer see the pressure on identity that they produce. “As leadership has gained currency as an idea it has become commodified – that is it has become a product, sought after, manufactured and traded” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 131). Furthermore the culture generated by corporate managerialism has reinforced particular ‘paternalistic’ hegemonies, historically established within private enterprise and the independent sector.

Contrasted to such ‘paternalistic’ arrangements is the tendency to promote the school’s ethos through a ‘nurturing stereotype’ (Chase, 1995) – the female leader who portrays the image of a ‘caring’ school. For women in leadership regardless of
the system, there is a deepening anxiety and sense of ambivalence as they are often selected as ‘change agents’ to drive new regulatory practices and manage a larger share of the caring and emotional discourses. Furthermore Blackmore and Sachs, (2007) note that popular associations between leadership and images of hegemonic masculinity “…meant women managers carefully managed their presentation” (p.44).

**Autonomy or compromise**

Advocates of Independent schools in Australia have argued that “generous government funding does not mean curtailment of their autonomy – [independence] they must remain free to make decisions they see fit” (Thomson, 2010, p. 11). The Chair of one such school recently made this case to an OECD conference:

> The independent school sector, as one portion of non-government schools in Australia…is not faced with the plethora of obstruction to innovation caused by centralized school management because, apart from operating independently, each school of this type is connected with its customer base. If the educational product delivered … does not meet the expectations of its clients the school must eventually fail, as the client seeks a better product elsewhere… [Therefore] …reformers of government schools must look to the successful independent schools as the benchmark by which devolutionary reforms must be measured and as the model by which they can be achieved. (Morgan, 2003)

Independent schools are responsive to parent concerns but not to the extent Morgan (2003) describes as parents, particularly middle-class parents have a ‘knowledge of the system’ and are “engaging their middle-class skills” (Ball, 2003, pp. 166-8). Often parents’ will align with and actively support a particular school even through the school is experiencing difficulties and struggling to deliver on the high expectations of parents (Steiner schools). This is a contradiction to the current rhetoric.

The presumption of ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ depoliticizes and neutralizes what is highly political. There is a strong argument that the impact of educational reforms, funding, increased accountabilities, parent expectations and competitive demands that positions leaders, demonstrates a significant lack of freedom. Leaders’ moral and ethical concerns, disengagement and discontent (Cranston, 2007; Sinclair, 2007;
Duignan, 2006) also contradict the idea that Independent school leaders’ exercise such freedom and autonomy.

School’s customer base does not reflect the full extent of the complexities effecting schools and leaders or the long range purposes and outcomes of such policies on schools. However, Independent schools’ success in achieving a strong customer base as Kenway (1988) argues has been “the product of hard ideological labour” (p. 121). The product of such labour has been the consolidation of cultural and social capital over a long period of time and applies particularly to the elite Independent schools. According to Thomson (2010) freedom and autonomy “equates to each school becoming a ‘corporate’ commercial enterprise; the opposite end of the continuum, from local school management being a means of enhancing democracy and social justice” (p. 12). However, not all Independent schools operate from a purely commercial premise. Alternative schools, such as Steiner schools would defend their approach as democratic and seeking social justice. Therefore such comments about Independent schools are not accurate or inclusive of the diversity across the sector.

**Regulation, standardized competencies**

In Australia the work of educational leaders, as the research indicates, has radically changed (Mulford et al., 2007; Caldwell, 2006). The changes reflect the promotion of a delivery disposition designed to fulfill the neo-liberal economic agendas of policy-makers (Earley & Evans, 2004). The economic agenda is achieved through regulatory control that has led to greater accountability, performance appraisal and the intensification of work (Mulford et al., 2007; Caldwell, 2006; Cranston et al., 2006; Fullan, 2005; Cranston, 2000; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Caldwell & Haywood, 1998; Hargreaves, 1998b, 1997).

The leadership literature in Australia would suggest that research focused on leadership experience (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) has relied on professional discourses of principals to define effective leadership in action (Harris, 2002; Morrison, 2002; Razik & Swanson, 2001; Owens, 2001). That is, researchers investigating leadership in schools have relied on those leading in schools to respond and provide the information for analysis that contextualizes leadership. This has frustrated the policy-makers in their efforts to achieve simple, standardized and measurable outcomes-based results that authorities require. Therefore in response to
government’s regulatory control and accountability processes, policy-makers have generated their own criteria and preferred theory in order to develop performance measures. To this end teaching as a profession is being increasingly regulated through national and state statutory authorities requiring registration and accreditation of all teachers. Although this has been a feature in the past it is now more tightly controlled and aligned with maintaining approved professional development or ongoing teaching experience.

In 2004, Teaching Australia was established to regulate education through state disciplinary controls and set up regulatory bodies to monitor and regulate the industry. In Victoria the ‘Victorian Institute of Teaching’ (V.I.T) is now the statutory authority that regulates teaching profession in Victoria and is connected to Teaching Australia. All teachers have to be registered and accredited through V.I.T. who develop and monitor teacher professional standards. Teaching Australia is currently developing a set of standards that ensures delivery of a National policy on effective leadership ‘best practice’. As a result, all leaders across the profession are witnessing and experiencing a standardized set of competencies and accountabilities that are expected to produce a list of criteria defining ‘generic attributes’ for leadership that will inform principal accreditation and training procedures. Independent school leaders will need to address the proposed criteria either formally or informally. However, these ‘standardized set of competencies’ will be tied to registration, leadership development (and accreditation processes) therefore compliance will be required.

The Australian Principals’ Association (APA) recently revisited the notion of principal competencies for building school leadership and found “…there is more to leadership development than collecting tricks in competency profiles and doing a leadership course” (Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council - APAPDC). According to Wildy (2006) “… such activity generates, long complicated lists of duties, competencies or capabilities … [and] they do not differentiate between what is important to do and what is not important, nor do such lists take account of the context of the work of the leader” (p.2 ). Such lists are seen to contribute to a ‘centralizing’ of regulatory control with an oversimplified, easily measurable generic leadership model that has adapted corporate management practices for leaders; in a misguided effort to improve student learning and schools.
The rhetoric for improving student outcomes tied to effective leadership and ‘good’ leadership practice provides policy-makers the leverage to justify the push for standardised principal competencies (Gunter & Forrester, 2010).

**Contested accountability**

The impact of performativity, accountability and regulatory control for schools both private and public has influenced educational leadership in terms of the expectations and demands placed on leaders. In a recent International study (2000) of teacher and executive satisfaction during rapid educational change it was found that secondary principals are ‘doing better’ than their primary colleagues. The Australian phase was completed in 1997 and suggested that workload pressures could be an important factor eroding primary principals’ satisfaction. Also lack of control, over pacing and timetabling were significant factors for predicting lower levels of mental well being and emotional vulnerability (Dinham & Scott, 1997, 1998b). Australian research into leader disengagement has identified the impact of these and other concerns on leaders (Cranston, 2007, 2005).

**Disengagement of leaders**

As disengagement with leadership becomes more widespread research in Australia (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003) has focused on the contributing factors and found lack of family time and quality of life, have added to the concerns for attracting future leaders. Today many of the pool of possible applicants are not applying. Studies in Australian Catholic schools confirmed these findings (d’Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002) in New South Wales Catholic Systemic schools, and (Carlin, d’Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003) in Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian Catholic schools. For those already in leading positions the incentive to ‘apply for’ principalship is one not many are willing to make.

Disengagement of leaders, as Cranston (2007, 2005) highlights in his research, is also a gender issue as women now constitute the pool of potential applicants. Hence there is a need for further research concerning women and leadership in schools. The situation is articulated by Blackmore (1999) where, “…women readily list the exclusionary barriers confronting women seeking leadership: marginalization of teachers to organizational decision-making; the lack of professional development and
resources for gender equity reform; the dynamics of selection and promotion panels; the age factor jokingly referred to as ‘lies, secrets and half truths’; the lack of female mentors; the triple shift of paid work, homework and community work; narrow community perceptions about women in leadership and so on” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 130).

As Cranston (2007) sums up, disengagement is a perception that “…the principal’s role is too demanding … [with] too high accountability [and] expectations…” (p. ii). Indeed Sinclair (2007, p. 134) argues “the feeling that lives were completely imbalanced in favour of work has been found to be a major concern in a regular survey of Australian leaders” (Casey, 2004; Bell & Taylor, 2004, 2003; Gronn, 2002, 2000; Mitroff, 2003). According to Sinclair (2007) getting caught up in finding a ‘balance’, “…allows [leaders] to become more passively situated in a game in which someone else is setting the rules…[and] in their preparedness to play by those rules, leaders become complicit in perpetuating them” (p. 135).

In addition to the concerns over disengagement there have been various reports, (Cranston, 2007; Lacey, 2004) that indicate teacher and leader shortages will worsen over the next five to ten years, as principals age and retire with what is referred to as the ‘the impact of the baby boomer retirement phenomena’ (Cranston, 2007, 2006; Barty et al., 2005; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Halperin & Ratteree, 2003; Preston, 2003). Considering the research into disengagement and retirement of a substantial number of principals in the near future, it is significant that more research has not been undertaken on the role of women leaders’ in senior leadership positions, as they currently make up the major portion of aspirant leaders (Cranston, 2007, 2005).

The impact of a shortage of leaders and leader’s disengagement along with increased pressure to perform to ‘markets and new managerialism’ with the accompanying accountability has led to renewed interest in assessment of schools, staff and students. Such performativity has generated a discourse of transparency and accountability particularly when policy, funding and school choice are involved. In this way schools, leaders and staff are weighed against each other in the public forum. A recent example of the governments move to increase schools accountability and transparency has been the national publishing of individual school performance on the ‘Myschool’ website. That is, schools are rated according to student results
from the national curriculum and standardized assessments conducted across schools at class levels 3, 5, 7 and 9. To resist such ‘performatve’ discourses “is to risk being identified as outmoded” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 107).

Few professionals deny that they should be accountable to their communities, in terms of giving an account of what they have done and why or adhere to standards or ethics of professional associations. Rather it involves the form, focus and effect of these new accountabilities that is contested (Sinclair, 1995, p. 221). Blackmore and Sachs (2007) research of women in educational leadership found “Personal conflicts arose when professional accountabilities clashed with managerial accountabilities … Most were ambivalent but felt that the balance between autonomy and accountability was weighed increasingly towards the latter” (p. 121). Indeed, “the more intense the gaze of the audit, the less trust invested in the moral competence of the practioners to respond to the needs of those they serve” (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, p. 341).

As performativity has intensified so the accountability processes have increased and become the key to risk management and the perceived ‘breakdown in trust’ in institutions (Warren, 1999). Within schools, the disciplinary technologies associated with accountability have produced ‘audit cultures’ where evaluating and ensuring ‘quality’ has led to processes of governmentality which is about the conduct of conduct (Strathern, 2000a; Power, 1999). Furthermore the media has increasingly played a part in circulating ‘blame/shame’ and ‘win/lose’ discourses, creating ‘another mode of public accountability and judgment’ …together with management and markets (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003).

Overall individuals are caught between demands of performativity/accountability and their professional dispositions generating a degree of ambivalence. Blackmore and Sachs (2007) call this “dispositional dissonance” between different ways of being accountable, or what Sergiovanni (1999) refers to as “conflicting mindscapes” between competing managerial/market/professional value systems” (p. 107).

**Leadership paradoxes**

Educational leadership is contextualized within such ‘conflicting mindscapes’ and the dominant value system of managerialism and marketisation produces
global/national leadership discourses that are contradictory and problematic (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hill, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000; Townsend, 1999; Whitty, 1997). Those leaders that seek to challenge the fundamental values that inform educational policy and practice to ones of democratic principles and values; are marginalised. In the following table, I have summarized what I consider the ‘big picture’ leadership contexts (global, national, state and independent sector) that influence leadership discourses.

| Economic rationalism and neo-liberal policy – ideological shifts: Corporatisation, commodification of education. | Funding, neo-liberal policies ‘knowledge economy’, parent choice policies, privatization, and increased funding – Independent schools | Pressure to adopt managerialism to improve efficiency and respond to consumers needs. Expand markets Standardisation. | Independent schools increase due to funding and parent choice policy. Greater compliance to state / national policy. |
| Performativity and Accountability: Quality control mechanism for delivery of educational provision. | Centralised authority – Teaching Australia. Systematize and standardise leadership competencies audit, measure success and performativity for schools and leaders. | Regulatory control as part of national agenda shifts to state. Victorian Institute of Teaching (V.I.T). Performance pay, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to better student outcomes. | Focus on school’s image ethos, reputation and leader’s capacities, performance, appeal to the public. Greater compliance to standards, assessment and reporting practices. |

*Table 5 Profile of leadership contexts (2010)*

Educational leaders are situated within a leadership paradox: Corporate managerial leadership discourses and professional, values-led leadership discourses. The former aligns with ‘heroic, transformational and entrepreneurial models’ in which marketing, administration and accountability practices takes precedence (Mulford et
The latter promotes critical ‘values-led’ approaches premised on democratic principles, pedagogy, collaborative collegiality, professionalism, and a focus on social justice (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Duignan, 2006; Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Day, 2004; Begley, 2004, 2000; Sachs, 2003; Hargreaves, 1997).

Corporate-managerialism sees leadership overtaken by management and leaders are measured according to particular managerialist discourse that ensures they abide by particular descriptors of ‘good leadership’ practice (Gunter and Forrester, 2010). Conversely a ‘values-based’ discourse (for example, Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Starratt, 2004; Buzzelli et al., 2002; Sergiovanni, 2000; Noddings, 1992; Senge, 1990) pursues more democratic and distributive processes that suggest leaders will be more caring, critically reflexive, collaborative and comply with moral and ethical standards in their relationships and practices (Fullan, 2003).

Contradictory discourses accentuate the paradox of postmodern management texts that emphasize change, fluidity and flexibility as critical to effective change (Sinclair, 2007; Duignan, 2006). Yet there is a sense of determinism about the rhetoric of change that signals the reassertion of organizational hierarchies. As Blackmore (2005) states: “The corporate leader is still modelled on particular hegemonic male images of being strong, able to make hard decisions, being independent and taking unilateral action and so on” (p. 354). As leader’s wrestle with professional and political discourses responsibilities continue to expand and their highly specific work experience is intensified in both government and independent sectors (Whitty, 1997; Wylie, 1997; Ball, 1994; Caldwell, 1994).

According to Gunter (2001), “…there are deep contradictions in what they [teachers and leaders] are being told is good performance management practice, and their experiences of what matters in their work with the children and the community. [Furthermore Gunter points out] … there are complex interpretations regarding position and positioning… in how leaders adopt policies, adapt to circumstances and the local context” (Gunter, 2001, p. 31).

Thomson (2010) takes up ‘position and positioning’ and argues “…heads are key players and while they work for their schools, and students, what they do – their
agency – is always framed by a decision about whether they are prepared to ‘play’ [go along with the changes] to their own positional detriment” (p. 17). A significant body of research on headship / principalship (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998a; Whitty et al., 1998) suggests that teachers have not fully embraced the management imperative and language. Taking collective action, questioning the status quo or challenging what is considered ‘politically correct’ invites teachers and leaders to take a stand on such issues. However, leaders are reluctant to take collective action in the current climate where individualized and decontextualised leadership regimes hold sway. Such dilemmas highlight the contradictions and ambiguities leaders’ face.

The paradox presented in the Australian context arises with the reliance on increased regulation while verbalizing greater autonomy for leaders in schools. Contradiction is evident as regulatory bodies expand and educational researchers with the Victorian Department of Education develop Leadership Frameworks and at the same time Early Childhood Development research proposes educational leadership in the 21st Century will need leaders to be reflective learners, technical, adaptive, collaborative and visionary (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Duignan, 2006; Gunter, 2005; Goleman, Boyzatis & McKee, 2002; Gronn, 2002; Ball, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2000; Yeatman, 2000; Blackmore, 1999).

**Paradox and Independent schools**

Independent schools and leaders are positioned like their counter-parts in the state system, within the global paradoxes where there are increased demands for managerialism (efficiency, productivity and accountability) and the expectations created within a values-based school community. The introduction of new regimes of performativity creates tension and new forms of ‘fabrication’ to fit categories of documentation and the standardizing tendencies of management. Such processes are adopted to ensure student outcomes, behaviours, appearance and reputation; perform well (Ball, 2000).

Hence ‘excessive managerialism’ (Little, 1997) has been problematic, particularly for Independent school leaders, many of whom have experienced a major shift from what leaders’ view as a ‘liberal education’ (Apple, 1999). Such repositioning has contributed to leaders’ disengagement with leadership (Bottery, 2004) and the accompanying workload stress does not ameliorate the lack of aspirants seeking
leadership roles (Cranston, 2007, 2006; Barty et al., 2005; Bottery, 2004; Gronn & Lacey, 2004).

The concern for the shift away from a ‘liberal education’ signifies the connectedness between historical and cultural discourses related to Independent schools. That is, such discourses provide “identity spaces” that are “sites for the transmission of and adjustments to” the changes such as, globalization that has swept across all educational sectors. Identity spaces are being challenged by the changes to pedagogical practices, standardization and assessment and reporting procedures that are linked to funding. Therefore economic and political discourses foreground how the broad educational changes have impacted on the Independent sector.

Along with the Catholic system, Independent schools are tasked with preserving the ethical and religious/moral values of the school. These values are often contested at the senior leadership level. At this level emphasis is placed on corporate purposes embedded in the politics and power relations within the school which in turn exposes the disjunctions between ideology and practice. As leadership is one of the important mediums for transmitting cultural discourses that carry the school’s ideological purpose (Thomson, 2002) leaders are empowered to articulate the school’s ideology and exert meaning that creates change or reinforces the status quo. According to Fullan (2001) “…moral purpose and the sustained performance of organizations are mutually dependent” (p. 28). For instance, the Catholic system often employs Catholic teachers and exclusively Catholic Heads’ and Principals. Therefore leaders’ commitment to their school’s ideology and compliance to what policies advocate as ‘good leadership practice’ positions leaders in contradictory ways.

In addition “the currents of globalization have altered the contours of difference and otherness, simultaneously rendering them more immediate, more exciting and profoundly more problematic” (Prasad & Prasad, 2002, p. 57). As contexts have shifted so have the ‘contours of difference’ which has meant Independent schools understand ‘parent choice’ and the option of different types of schools’ responsive to the needs of particular communities or interest groups as encompassing ‘diversity’. From this perspective the discourse of diversity has provided a rationale for many of the changes (low-fee paying, Alternative, Cooperative schools) that have been established.
Moreover the rationale extends to schools justifying their marketing campaigns as promoting an ‘inclusive identity’ due to their cultural/religious alliances and range of programs. In this respect both Independent schools and government schools have failed to make a strong argument for social justice, equality of opportunity in education and to argue for the ‘profession’ of teaching. And while Independent schools continue to receive substantial financial assistance from the government they will continue to experience internal dislocation and disillusionment within the ranks of leaders and teachers.

**Leadership research**

Numerous studies researching principals and leadership at the state and national level have been undertaken in Australia (Wildy et al., 2007; Cranston 2007; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Gurr et al., 2006; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2006, 2003; Barty et al., 2005; Matters, 2005; Bell & Taylor, 2004, 2003; Casey, 2004; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Collard, 2004, 2003, 2002; Carlin, d’Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; Mitroff, 2003; D’Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Blackmore, 1999).

An overview of Australian case studies findings (Mulford, 2007) focused on a combination of managerial and professional concerns with no mention of gender in the summary. Although the overview mentions “successful principalship is best understood when it takes account of a combination of contextual, individual (self and others), organizational, outcome and evaluative/accountability factors” it appears that gender has been dismissed (Mulford, 2007, p. 15). Mulford states, “it can be concluded that it is necessary to move beyond the current …adjectival leaderships (authentic, parallel, strategic, democratic, instructional, teacher, transformational, sustaining, breakthrough and so on) that bedevil the field” (Mulford, 2007, p. 16). The call for a more complex set of relationships to understand successful leadership is timely, but ignoring the ambiguities, and absences in the research notably gender disparities leaves much of the Australian research lacking in comprehensive analyses that potentially may have a more profound impact on educational leadership.

**Independent schools – leadership research**

Leadership research in Australian Independent schools has been sporadic and conservative. Research has mainly focused on principals, classroom teachers and
students (Dinham, 2005; Mulford & Johns, 2004; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann, 2003; Lacey, 2002). Such research is usually part of larger Australian studies and rarely acknowledges the significance of women leaders or senior leadership teams, constituting Deputy Heads’ and Junior School Heads’ within the school.

However, the Catholic system has produced some substantive research and development in leadership ‘values, ethics and social justice’ that has been adapted for broader educational contexts (Duignan 2006, 2005; Branson, 2005; Begley, 2004, 2000; Starratt, 2004; Grace, 2002).

**Australian research – gaps**

First, there is a lack of research into the processes of cultural restructuring and the relationships of power that impact on leaders when leadership is treated as technical expertise, rather than professional and moral practice (Thrupp, 2003; Gewirtz, 2002; Bosetti, 1999; Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998; Beare, 1995). These cultural shifts according to Blackmore (2004) are organized around a “… a set of processes and practices that are simultaneously reproductive of old as well as generative of new, relations of power” (p. 269).

Second, the shift in values produced through policy texts, funding mechanisms, labour market relations and the lived experience of people working within educational institutions; affect leaders orientation to work (Payne, 2007). As Gunter (2001) argues “the policy context is not presented as necessarily determining struggles, but as defining the setting in which dialogue is being constructed and reshaped” (p. 15). Therefore researching policy texts and funding mechanisms may expose gaps and biases in the system.

Third, the gaps in educational leadership literature reveals a need to refocus on the complexity of leading and on making formal positions more flexible and less demanding physically and emotionally (Blackmore, 1995; Gherardi, 1995; Sinclair, 1994). Investigating the complexity of leadership exposes how leader’s are constrained by cultural discourses (Thomson, 2005) as researchers have found, although the basis of their argument is different, in terms of what schools and principals can do is restricted by ongoing socio-economic structures/cultures.
organizational cultures, systemic policies and broader policy and cultural/political relations (e.g. Thomson, 2005; Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Smulyan, 2000; Lipman, 1998).

Fourth, Australian research (Cranston, 2007, 2005) indicates now that work/family life imbalance contributes to leader disengagement and is one of the critical factors influencing the lack of aspirants seeking leadership. In particular the impact on women’s careers has been well documented; as the unequal distribution of domestic and emotional labour at work and at home, impact on women’s propensity to take on leadership positions that require even greater demands on time (Casey, 2004; Bell & Taylor, 2004, 2003; Gronn, 2003b, 2002, 2000; Mitroff, 2003). It appears that policy-makers are reluctant to address disengagement and principal shortage. Until these issues are addressed there will continue to be an ongoing crisis of supply (Blackmore et al., 2006).

Finally, I have reviewed the current leadership literature both internationally and locally and found leadership discourses fail to address fundamental issues about changing relationships between the individual, education and society; the changing nature of knowledge and the materiality of educational work, and how this impacts on what it is to be a ‘professional’ educator in ‘postmodern times’ (Hargreaves, 2003; Lingard et al., 2003). The lack of qualitative research in Independent schools in Victoria has meant I have drawn on a wide selection of literature that informs the discourses surrounding educational leadership. I consider the strength of my study is its focus on the Independent sector in Victoria and the displacement of women leaders from much of the leadership literature.

In the next chapter I examine how leadership discourses draw on corporate management discourses juxtaposed and at times overlaid with professional discourses. I introduce the contemporary, emergent discourses concerning leadership, leader-identities and what is missing from the dominant discourses. In particular I take up a critical position to examine the gaps in the current leadership rhetoric and how policy is influencing what is considered good leadership practice (Gunter, 2001). This is important as it positions and foregrounds those issues that influence the women in this study and my analysis and interpretation of the women’s
narratives. In particular how women work with/against the hierarchical and paternalistic structures and practices in Independent schools.
CHAPTER TWO

LEADERSHIP DISCOURSES

Critical work is concerned about theorizing the interplay between agency and structure, and uses theories of power as a lens through which to describe, understand and explain. (Gunter, 2001, p. 42)

Leadership dilemmas

In the previous chapter, I contextualized educational leadership and presented dilemmas that all educational leaders consistently confront. I considered how the wider paradigms of corporate and professional domains have been drawn on to generate contemporary leadership discourses and practices. In this chapter I critique the dominant leadership discourses arising from the broader educational contexts in which women in leadership are located. From the field of educational leadership there is an abundance of research literature focused on leadership approaches, practices and discourses supporting various leadership perspectives (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Glickman et al., 2001; Gleeson & Husbands, 2001; Thomson, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1999; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Cope & Kalantzis, 1997; Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz, 1995).

In this chapter, I propose to focus on two competing leadership paradigms that dominate a range of leadership discourses: Corporate managerialism and Professionalism. The former includes Transformational and Entrepreneurial (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2007; Caldwell & Hayward, 1998). The latter focuses on Distributive, Professional and democratic and ethical – values-led discourses (Gronn, 2009; Duignan, 2006; Ribbins, 1997c; Southworth, 1995). However, these paradigms are contentious, overlapping and open to interpretation. Therefore I include the critical theorists (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Ball, 2007, 2000) as a way of offering perspective when critiquing from a feminist poststructural position.

Contradictory, complementary and overlapping discourses

There are problems using a binary or oppositional approach when examining leadership discourses as this can lead to a reductionist or simplification of complex ideas (Blackmore, 1999). To address this problem I use a heuristic approach when
identifying leadership theories and critiquing how discourses can be contradictory as well as complementary and overlapping. Taking a critical approach to oppositional leadership paradigms and discourses where there is overlap and contradiction has the potential to reveal the ways in which managerial discourses have colonized professional discourses (Dent & Whitehead, 2002).

Professional discourses are unstable and under review. As Sachs (2003) points out, “the concept and practice of professionalism is a site of struggle, especially as it relates to meaning” (p. 6) According to Hanlon (1998) “this struggle revolves around whose definition of professionalism emerges as hegemonic and therefore who has access to significant economic resources” (p. 48). Such colonizing and overlapping of leadership discourses situate leaders in schools.

I would also point out that despite the important shifts now apparent in notions of the professional, and relationally, managerialism – “little has been written that connects these two discursive regimes and does so through a critical study of the changing forms of organisational identity” (Dent & Whitehead, 2002, p. 1). At the same time, organisational life is currently subjected to increasingly sophisticated regimes of accountability. Whether in the public or private sector, “the professional has no escape from being managed nor … from managing others” (Dent & Whitehead, 2002, p. 2).

Researchers, Gunter and Forrester (2010) analysed the discursive dilemmas facing educational leaders in England. They reveal how the dominant corporate discourses have “been communicated through policy processes and the symbolic exchange between policymakers and headteachers” (p. 56). In addition they identify the contribution of a ‘logic of practice in educational reform’ and how headteacher autonomy plays into the ‘exchange of capitals’ between policymakers and headteachers (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010).

The ‘exchange of capitals’ within the preferred doxa of leadership is more unsettling for leaders when the processes by which a ‘delivery disposition’ is achieved involves a particular discursive position. Gunter and Forrester (2010) argue this positioning process is achieved through social practices that involve a “codification of delivery” combined with a “consistent message and the use of particular language that seeks to
‘fix’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 p. 17) and reposition the intended meaning of leadership language” (p. 59). Proceeding from this ‘codification’ of language is the repositioning discourse that places an “emphasis on the heroic head as transformational leader”, and “has contributed to the re-emergence of a ‘leader-centric’ strategy” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 59).

In response, educational leaders have been pressured into taking up particular leader-centric strategies that discursively feed into broad corporate systemic changes and professional paradigm shifts. Moreover the repositioning of leadership has challenged researchers and leaders to position themselves and argue from a range of theoretical positions: Postmodern, poststructural, feminist and critical theories (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Ball, 2007, 2000; Sinclair, 2007; Gunter, 2005, 2001;) to the humanist / interpretive stances (Gronn, 2009; Ribbins, 1997c; Southworth, 1995) followed by the instrumental and technical approaches (Leithwood et al., 2007; Caldwell & Hayward, 1998).

**Dominant leadership discourses**

Leaders contend with systemic issues arising from the repositioning of leadership and the relationship to power that leadership discourses engender. Leadership in education is influenced by particular discourses that generate; corporate managerialism and professionalism (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 47). At the same time, these dominant discourses are sustained through the ‘use of particular language’ that ‘attaches’ meaning and reinforces the status quo and mainstream ideas while silencing alternatives (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Central to this is the method by which the policy processes are activated and maintained by “… the system of social conditions which have made a particular way of being and doing possible” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 15). In particular, the impact of a corporate monoculture of ‘cause and effect’ instrumental, business focused, managerial, strategic and ‘performance driven’ leadership and how such discourses impact on the professional provision and delivery of education.

In order to expose the gaps and contradictions within leadership discourses and leverage change, I draw on poststructural perspectives premised on the concept that “organizations are gendered, privileging stereotypical masculine qualities and values and devaluing the feminine” (Fletcher, 2001, p. 18). I conceptualize leadership as a
social, relational and political discursive practice, one characterized by lived contradictions and dilemmas in which agency is in constant tension with dominant ways of being and doing leadership.

Teachers and leaders in Independent schools are as their public counterparts feeling the effects of a performance driven culture and the sense of alienation it produces particularly from views about education as producing a reflexive well educated citizen and not just an entrepreneurial worker.

In the following overview (Table 6) I have modified Gunter’s (2001) original table to provide an outline of the prevailing leadership discourses that dominate the field: Transformational, Entrepreneurial, Distributive (Sustainable, Shared) Professional and Critical. Although these are partial frames they offer a convenient but limited mapping of the leadership terrain where discourses overlap, converge and contradict each other. A critique of leadership perspectives follows and exposes the underlying assumptions inherent in various leadership discourses. This leads to a discussion about the struggle to preserve and enhance professional discourses while acknowledging the critical disposition as a useful discourse to highlight the gaps and silences in the leadership literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Managerial Paradigm</th>
<th>Professional Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transform - ational Leadership</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires: charisma motivates subordinates</td>
<td>Goal oriented: strategize for greater influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on subordinates needs</td>
<td>Focus on personal charisma, ambition and corporate vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences thinking of subordinates</td>
<td>Generates strong marketing focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Managerial Paradigm</th>
<th>Professional Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Discourse: A leadership position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competence, expertise and values, keeps the status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emancipates by questioning power base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions dominant discourses, values social justice, equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problematizes language, practice and beliefs and social inequities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Idealized influence, builds an emotional commitment to the vision | Measuring success means achieving social and political goals Performance and appraisal | Encourages social responsibility Peer review | Seeks new ways of re-conceptualize leadership: autonomy and individualism | Provides critical evaluation and alternative ways of understanding organizations

Promotes allegiance, consensus and the status quo | Rewards compliance | Promotes task sharing and develops leadership capacities | Influences shifts in social/cultural and political agendas | Questions practice to re-conceptualize political/social reality

Table 6 (Gunter, 2001) Extended to include Entrepreneurial, Distributed and Professional Discourses.

**Transformational leadership**

It has been suggested that “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Over thirty years ago Burns (1978) and McGregor (1960) conducted the foundational work on transformational leadership originating in the corporate, business sector. Educational researchers, Leithwood et al., (1999) adapted transformational theory and applied it to education. The past decade has seen a renewal of ‘transformational leadership’ as a dominant discourse. Leithwood and his colleagues argue transformational leadership moves schools beyond first-order surface changes to second order deeper changes that alter “core technologies” of schooling such as pedagogy, curriculum and assessment (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 99).

According to Leithwood et al., (1999) there are six aspects to building and cultivating transformational leadership: school vision and goals; intellectual stimulation; individualized support; symbolic professional practices and values; high performance expectations and participation in school decisions. In an attempt to accomplish such desired outcomes, leaders have adopted leadership practices that reflect ‘charismatic’ and ‘hero’ leadership meta-narratives and ‘meta-images’ (Leithwood et al., 1999). As Leithwood et al., (1999) explains schools now and in the future will require “a high reliability learning community” (p. 223). ‘High reliability’ is based on the need to sustain the core purpose of learning and more importantly, deliver reliable (measurable) outcomes.

The enduring appeal of transformational leadership has been the strong values of individualism and universalism it generates, including the notion that leadership can
be reduced to a formula that is distilled and applied in any situation. In this way leaders’ benefit by preserving the power relationships and status quo that dominant discourses provide while silencing debate and contestation. Hence the transformational discourse has become clichéd and over-used. It has gone from a concept of transforming power relations, to achieving targets for aspiring managers. According to Sinclair (2007) transformational leaders “work by tapping into and inspiring the higher motivations of followers while ‘transactional’ leaders rely on influencing followers via material rewards and sanctions” (p. 23). Both strategies intersect and complement each other in achieving school and corporate goals.

The difficulties of adopting and maintaining a ‘leader-centric, heroic’ transformational discourse has given rise to its newer claims to be ‘post-heroic’. Such claims have become entrenched in a discourse that emphasizes ‘agency through shared vision’. Post heroic leadership appears to offer a less individualistic, more relational concept that focuses on, motivating others; the needs of subordinates; influencing thinking and imagination of subordinates and influencing through communication and building an emotional commitment to vision (Gronn, 1996). However, regardless of some change in the rhetoric at the broad societal level ‘heroic individualism’ persists as a pervasive and popular narrative (Fletcher, 2004).

Sinclair’s (2007) view coincides with Fletcher’s in that despite the more careful and critical accounts of transformational leadership “the conceptual templates, expectations and interests in leadership remain remarkably durable” (p. 32).

According to Day et al., (2001) a ‘post-heroic’ or ‘post-transformational leadership’ is an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of transformational leadership by including: moral purpose, personal aspirations aligned to organizational purposes, along with integrity of actions, context and understanding (Day et al., 2001, p. 3). Sinclair (2007) argues post-transformational discourses smooth over assumptions and values, slipped in from prevailing economic or managerial orthodoxy:

That individual, not groups, deliver leadership; that they achieve by competitive edge; that ‘winning’ is always good and an appropriate aspiration; that success is measured by the size and scale of material achievement or international conquest, and so on. (Sinclair, 2007, p. 26)

Sinclair’s questioning of the underlying values of transformational discourses lends strength to other researchers (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010) concerns
about how “leader’s autonomy plays into the exchange of capitals and establishes a delivery disposition that strategically sidelines the professional discourses” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 64). Furthermore transformational discourses have produced contradiction concerning agency (individual or group). As Bezzina (2008b) argues, “There is clearly a role for strong individual initiative but in the context of shared moral purpose… rather than a heroic individual struggle” (p. 53).

However, ‘post-heroic’ discourses do not address the underlying hegemony of the top-down model where compliance and consensus is required nor does it address fundamental issues around power relationships. Furthermore the hierarchical structures in most schools and the lack of democratic processes, means leaders would need to rely on the influence of a shared moral purpose to build consensus. This would indicate leaders need to rationalize the strategic business goals with a more educationally suitable moral imperative. In this respect Duignan and Bezzina (2006) caution against how this might be successfully achieved as one can have a shared moral purpose for example, a desire for social justice but still have conflict over the values, means and processes. Generally these issues are ignored in much literature on moral leadership as well as corporate discourses (Duignan, 2006).

Post-transformational leadership discourses promise much, but, as Gunter (2001) indicates, such discourses are redirected into corporate goals, that see “leaders exercising a disciplinary function which is overlain by optimistic ‘aerosol’ words (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998b, p. 21) such as commitment, consensus, empowerment, quality, standards, excellence and performance control, underpinned by a discourse of what can or cannot be said and done” (p. 98).

Hence the transformational discourse is subject of a range of critiques (Gronn, 1996; Smyth, 1993). According to Grace (2000) “A discourse and understanding of management must be matched by a discourse and understanding of ethics, morality and spirituality, of humane educative principles, of the praxis of democratic education, the power relations of class, race and gender in education and some historical sense of the place of schooling in the wider formation of society” (p. 224). Duignan et al., (2003) support this argument and state “…all these corporate-managerial imperatives should be counterbalanced by commitment to ethical moral and authentic leadership principles and practices” (Duignan, 2006, p. 15).
Gunter (2001) highlights the terminology related to transformational discourses and the misappropriation of the meaning ‘to transform’ that is, ‘to change, alter or convert’ both leadership and schools. She argues, “Transformational leadership is not really transformational” (p. 73). The current shaping of transformational leadership discourses enable and support existing power structures to be maintained and developed. In particular a ‘top-dog theory’ that meets the needs of management (Ball, 1987; Watkins, 1989) or in Allix’s (2000) terms “implies a pattern of social relations structured not for education, but for domination” (p. 18).

**Entrepreneurial leadership**

Globalization and the radical reforms introduced in the 1990s brought leaders new anxieties, new risks and new challenges to professionalism. In response to the increasing commodification of education driven by economic markets, educational professionals became knowledge workers and a focus for national reforms; as professional expertise was directed towards particular national or organizational ends (Blackmore, 2005).

At the same time governments produced neo-liberal policies promoting user-pays, individual choice and competition. Leaders were encouraged to embrace more instrumental attitudes and entrepreneurial leadership discourses. In this context more inclusive notions of leadership were co-opted to serve the pressing demands of economic rationalist concepts and corporate performance measures. That is, entrepreneurial leadership discourses focused on high performance, achieving targets, co-opting followers to organizational goals and producing hard-line management decisions that ensure authority, control, hierarchy and subordination.

Therefore survival in the market leads schools to shift focus onto performance, image management, entrepreneurship and away from pedagogy and curriculum (Ball, 1994). Entrepreneurial leaders are strong and visionary but also good people managers (Gewirtz et al., 1995). This has meant the re-making of hegemonic masculinity away from the image of the rational bureaucrat to the multi-skilled, flexible, service oriented, facilitative and entrepreneurial manager (Blackmore, 1999).
Entrepreneurial leadership discourses have taken the paradoxical effects of post-transformational discourse and replaced it with personal ambition, pragmatic outcomes and goal oriented strategic management practices. This has emerged as an antidote for the relativism that has crept into transformational discourses and institutional thinking and addresses the inflationary corporate, marketing and financial demands placed on schools today. Blackmore (2005, p. 351) states:

Entrepreneurial leadership in the performing school is about being opportunistic, managing risk and producing not the best, but the right representations according the norms laid down by management and markets about what constitutes a good school, effective leadership and educational success in which the identity of principal as a success or failure is linked to that of the performing school (Gleeson & Husbands, 2001; Thomson, 2001). (Blackmore, 2005, p. 351)

For educators already in leadership, this has meant even more time spent prioritizing administrative demands, promotion and marketing.

According to Dinham (2007) entrepreneurial leadership feeds into the need for “greater emphasis on strategic planning, quality assurance, mission and vision statements, added value measures, measurable outcomes, competition, entrepreneurial activity and marketing schools” (p. 21). Such realignment entails the systematic mechanization of leaders into institutional corporate systems managers who are outcomes focused, capable of dissociating themselves from the school community and pursuing marketing and human resource management.

According to Kerfoot and Knights (1993) entrepreneurial discourses involve strategic or competitive masculinity that equates with reason, logic and rational process. It also generates and sustains “a hierarchy imbued with instrumentalism, careerism, and the language of success; stimulates competition linked to decisive action, productivism and risk taking; and renders sexual and bodily presence manifest through physicality, posture, movement and speech” (p. 671).

Moreover it is important to note that the image of entrepreneurial ‘masculinity’ that is being promoted does not necessarily fit all men, or all women for that matter, as there are instances of women who work well in such environments. As Blackmore (2005) points out, “Not all men are macho, hard-nosed, and hyper-rational and claim to represent the universal interest, just as not all women are caring and sharing” (p.
The challenge is to overcome the stereotypical discourses and broaden the leadership repertoire to expand the image, practices and world view. To encourage debate about what leadership is about and for whom, rather than consider matters of style and image (Deem & Ozga, 1997).

Educational leadership has been discursively reconstituted through the language of consumerism, audit, performance and risk management and generic multi-skilled, entrepreneurial managers are the ‘new’ professional executives imbued with significant powers to shift organizational cultures. Kerfoot and Knights (1996) suggest the ‘new’ managerial leader, with their rational detachment, leads to a form of estrangement and a belief in one’s own competence and power. Such discourses have appeal as organizations and schools seek leaders who can deliver on outcomes. Thus capitalism and the managerial agenda have produced many assumptions about leadership focusing on the ‘heroic performance of the individual’ (Sinclair, 2007). As a consequence educational leaders’ experience tension and dissonance between what they are expected to be and do, and what teachers and parents see as the key aspects of good leadership.

Such debates question how to deliver effective and efficient educational outcomes and improve schooling. The doxa of good leadership practice promoted by governments and policy makers is behind the escalating adoption of transformative and entrepreneurial discourses (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Therefore debates continue around how and for whom transformational, entrepreneurial ‘charismatic’ leadership ‘best works in practice’ (Gronn, 1996). However, as Court (2003, p. 4) argues “improved schooling is unlikely to result from top down, technical-rational approaches which take insufficient account of ‘professional and moral dimensions’ of educative school leadership (Day et al., 2000)”.

The impetus to explore other leadership options is increased.

**Distributive ‘hybrid’ leadership**

“History is not on the side of reformers…as reformers still cannot ‘mandate what happens’ for effective practice in ways that matter, spread and last” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 155). Opponents of the above approaches (transformational and entrepreneurial) view the partial and singular focus on the leader as not fully attending to the context of schooling. Gronn (2002) uses the term ‘distributed
leadership’ and more recently ‘hybrid leadership’ (2008) as an alternative to ‘designer leadership’ (du Gay, 1996) which he refers to as a strong expectation that total responsibility rests with the principal. Distributive leadership has attempted to address the ‘effective schools’ research and improve student outcomes literature (Silins & Mulford, 2002; Glickman et al., 2001).

Distributive leadership practices as described in Gronn’s (2002) research, assumes a collaborative approach that strategically incorporates teachers as collaborators in the ‘transforming vision’. He developed a distributed leadership taxonomy based on ‘small work groupings, and over 20 studies. Researchers (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Gronn, 2000) review of successful schools found shared leadership with teachers offers a collective approach that directly contributes to improved leadership performance and school effectiveness (Gronn, 2002, p. 447). Other researchers (Silins & Mulford, 2002; Glickman et al., 2001) agree with these findings and cite examples where distributed leadership plays a predominant role in schools’ success. Moreover Silins and Mulford (2002) found where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community teacher empowerment and student outcomes are more likely to improve.

Distributive leadership discourses have emerged as a powerful paradigm. Recent distributive approaches (organizational learning) emphasise the capacity of leaders to develop conceptual maps and schema, delegate, self-manage and deal with complexity (Gronn, 2003, 2000). While some researchers (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) query its manageability it has strong links to the self-managing school and participatory democracy. It is not difficult to see the basis of its current appeal. Distributed leadership acknowledges diversity in our educational communities; it is people focused, encourages collaboration towards shared goals and is based on trust and the distribution of power by merit and expertise rather than formal positions. Such arrangements in Independent schools can often be seen in Alternative and Cooperative schools. In particular, Steiner schools have a holistic approach, with no formal leadership positions yet all teachers have a mutual purpose, collaborate together and share power and decision-making through the collective, configuration of a ‘college of teachers’. These schools have successfully demonstrated a democratic arrangement of shared leadership and management.
As a leading researcher in the field, Gronn (2003b, 2002, 2000) refers to two forms of distributed leadership: holistic and additive (Gronn, 2003). The former relates to a structural arrangement where there is a mutual purpose and those providing leadership are interdependent. This form of collective leadership can emerge spontaneously as two or more people team up. Or it may evolve as two or more people intuitively develop close working relations as they share a role space. Or it may occur as a deliberately planned change in organizational structure or regulating shared practices such as committees (Gronn, 2002).

The latter ‘additive’ approach refers to multiple leaders as anyone might be a leader and there is no cohesive framework. Hence this approach is collaborative, participatory, and spreads the burden of the overall school decision-making. More recently Gronn (2008) has posited that leadership in some situations is ‘hybrid’ rather than distributed. He uses the term hybrid to refer to the mix of solo, dyadic, triadic and team groupings that occur in some schools. He acknowledges that there may be “highly influential individuals working in parallel with collectivities” (Gronn, 2008, p. 152).

A study (Harris & Chapman, 2002) conducted in the United Kingdom involving 10 headteachers revealed the challenging contexts that impacted on heads as they purposefully distributed leadership in different ways at different stages of development in their schools. They were prepared to adopt the discourse by enacting being firm and directive, re-aligning others to their particular vision and values and as their schools improved they employed more democratic leadership styles. Adopting the discourse also saw them actively devolving leadership by working with and through teams inviting others to lead. The results indicated that heads’ placed a growing emphasis on relationships rather than systems. Although they seemed to maintain ultimate control of who did what in their schools there was an ‘educative’ move to a more democratic system of leadership, where managing change in stages promoted the development of trust, collegiality and leadership (Harris & Chapman, 2002).

To contextualize further, Leithwood et al., (2007) examined how leadership was distributed in a group of eight schools (four primary and four secondary) in Ontario. Their study indicated that monitoring and intervention was needed by principals and
that “…aligned forms of distributed leadership are unlikely in the absence of focused leadership on the part of the school’s formal leader” (p. 55). Distributing leadership requires someone to lead the leaders. Interviewees identified the need for collaborative structures, manageable numbers of collaborators on a project, use of expert rather than positional power, an open and encouraging culture, visible support from formal leaders, promotion of staff autonomy and professional development opportunities. Leithwood and colleagues argue that distributed leadership produces “greater demand: to coordinate who performs which leadership function, to build leadership capacities in others, and to monitor the leadership work of those others” (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 63).

The social significance of inter-dependence, mutuality and the practice of distributing leadership responsibilities within schools (Gronn, 2008, 2003b, 2002, 2000) have not been fully evaluated using qualitative or longitudinal studies. Researchers Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) have argued from a distributed ‘hybrid’ perspective. Their studies identified numerous individuals – both positional and informal leaders – in schools across whom the work of leadership and management was distributed (Spillane et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006; Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003; Heller & Firestone, 1995).

Spillane et al., (2007, p. 111) found that in studies of more than one hundred U.S elementary schools, responsibility for leadership and management function was typically a ‘hybrid’ distribution across three to seven formally designated leadership positions per school (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003). This discourse is often reflected in Independent schools structures and highlights the allocation of work and the need to evaluate how this is achieved. As Gunter (2001) points out “we need to know more about how work is assigned, divided up, approved and disapproved of, so that habitus can be revealed and understood through the struggle over position and positioning” (p. 119).

There have been a range of studies (Spillane et al., 2007; Harris, 2005; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Gronn 2003; Silcox, MacNeill & Cavanagh, 2003; Lambert 2002; Davis & Wilson, 2000) that support the distributed nature of principal’s day to day work. Indeed as Heads’ of Junior Schools and/or sub-schools leading and managing the micro-politics of power relationships often mirrors the principal’s work as well as
incorporating the notion of ‘co-performance’ with those in senior leadership and the principal (Spillane et al., 2007, p. 119). Co-performance appears to provide a broader grouping of senior leaders in the school yet it has characteristics that align with Gronn and Hamilton’s (2004) notion of co-principalship.

**Shared leadership**

In recent years co-principalship has emerged as a particular form of the ‘distributed’ leadership discourse. According to Court (2003): “Co-principalships developed in New Zealand in resistance to a generic model of efficient, effective management that was seen as counter-productive to a professional approach to leadership for learning” (p. 33). Successful examples in Australia have been found at a private co-educational school (Gronn, 2002) and at a Catholic all girls’ secondary school, which has male and female co-principalship (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004). This form of leadership may serve to strengthen positions, share the workload, lower stress and share the risks (Kayrooz & Fleming, 2008).

The discourse of shared leadership challenges the way traditional leadership discourses shape our thinking and practices and should be considered in discussions about what ‘distributed ‘leadership is or is not.

This is not to say research should focus on delineating the fine distinctions between delegated leadership and distributed leadership as devolved, dispersed, democratic or organizationally ‘dense’ (Southworth, 2002). Rather consider the consequences of developing another mantra or ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1980) for school leadership. According to Court (2003) “…no one leadership and management model can be guaranteed to fit all schools, as so called ‘best practice’ varies according to context and people specific dimensions (Dimmock and Walker, 2002). [Indeed] …it is partly as a consequence of these issues and research findings that there is a growing interest in shared leadership initiatives” (p. 4).

A recent study into co-headship was conducted by Court (2003) as part of an investigation by The National College for School Leadership in England. Court’s (2003) report reviews shared leadership initiatives, provides a case study of a successful primary school teaching co-principal collective and looks at the implications for those considering introducing shared leadership into their schools.
Her research into different approaches to sharing school leadership is a result of an interest in how different initiatives contribute to the development of more inclusive and democratic school organizations, as well as ameliorating the escalating workloads and stress that many headteachers are currently experiencing. This has a strong connection to Gronn’s (2008) term ‘hybrid’ where he refers to ‘dyadic and triadic’ forms of shared leadership.

Court’s (2003) report draws on the concepts of distributed leadership and discourses that support a democratic ideal and a commitment to cooperative purposes; while examining international examples of co-head partnerships and teacher leadership collectives (initiatives in which two or more people share, or replace the position of headteacher). In particular she outlines a range of approaches such as: full-time, task – specialised co- principalships; full-time supported dual leaderships; part-time job-sharing partnerships; integrative co-headships (where the co-heads collaborate more fully with other staff leaders) and teacher leadership collectives that completely replace the head’s position (Court, 2003, p. 8). An example in this study is the Steiner school.

Court’s (2003) report also details a case study of the Hillcrest Avenue School co-principalship: A team of equals sharing leadership. This is a detailed account of the process of setting up, developing, evolving and sustaining shared leadership from 1997 – 2002. She goes on to highlight the difficulties and challenges including navigating the micro politics of relationships, interdependence, clarity of purpose, commitment to a democratic philosophy, openness, trust, honesty, collegiality, debate and learning together. In this way her study provides insights into the specificity of situated leadership and the importance of shared leadership discourses and relational practices.

The implications from Court’s (2003) research indicate: that the discourse of shared leadership has been established successfully in different parts of the world; professionally supportive innovations offer a variety of ways of addressing current difficulties in headteacher disengagement and recruitment (Cranston, 2007, 2006). The discourse of shared leadership can empower teachers and others in the school community and be highly effective in developing strong commitments to improving student learning.
Perhaps the most interesting aspect of her research is how the accountability process works without tying people down to task specific, linear, and contractual legalities. Throughout the time this arrangement has been in place at Hillcrest Avenue School, the board has remained satisfied with joint appraisal procedures. Although in other cases mentioned in the report, individual appraisals may be used to rectify a situation where one of the co-principal partners is not fully competent.

Another important feature of shared leadership discourse is the day-to-day examples of democratic approaches to organization and management and of men and women working together in effective leadership teams (Glenny et al., 1996). Therefore the significant elements of shared leadership are; jointly shared multiple accountabilities and personal ethical, moral and caring responsibilities. These elements are vulnerable to external bureaucratic regulatory controls that can undermine the trust and collegiality on which shared leadership approaches depend. Such strategies may increase efficiency, but they can be de-motivating. They can work against the development of a ‘school ethos of mutual trust and commitment where teachers work together without coercion’ (Webb & Vulliamy, 1996).

Conversely the discourse of shared leadership has the potential to enhance understandings about democracy, gender equity and developing communities. As Court (2003) highlights, some of the schools “…were starting to involve children in decision making about their learning and school procedures” (p. 32). Discourses about shared decision-making relate to how learning communities are linked to ‘authentic learning’ as argued by Lambert (2002); Crowther et al., (2002). Such community learning has been promoted and affirmed as a solution to intensification of work and empowering teachers and students. Here ‘authentic learning’ is tied to ‘shared leadership’. Sharing leadership in this learning context is a return to what Smyth (1996) calls the restoration of ‘educative leadership’ and is one “…in which the process by which the school and community are involved enables democratic and communal ways of working to educate all participants (Gunter, 2001, p. 75).

**Sustainable leadership**

Sustainable leadership discourses reflect the ‘hybridizing’ of leadership discourses that has emerged in recent times. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006) “Sustainable leadership is distributed leadership. But not all distributed leadership is
sustainable leadership” (p. 111). In this respect the risks of naively adopting
distributed leadership are amplified “if they are not bound together by a clear vision,
tight processes and clear accountability, multiple sources of leadership can pull the
school apart. The risks of distributing leadership are anarchy and confusion [while
the] consequences of not distributing leadership are staleness and stagnation”
(p. 112).

The attraction of ‘sustainability’ for Independent schools is the promise of economic
stability and educational resilience. Sustainable leadership discourses have particular
appeal for Independent schools’ in relation to the “five action principles for
achieving sustainability in practice: Activism, Vigilance, Patience, Transparency and
Design” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, pp. 255-56). The first three principles are
focused primarily on the leader’s disposition with ‘transparency and design’
operating as organisational mechanisms for distributed performance and control;
hence its attractiveness to Independent schools.

As Sustainable leadership seeks to provide consistency there is the shift to adopt
some of the transformational discourse that builds a stable, consensus culture. This
could be interpreted as another ‘transformational’ spin off as both discourses
maintain a commitment to a goal or vision, through hierarchical (Transformative) or
distributive (Sustainable) processes. The dilemma posed for the distributive approach
is its capacity to be diverted to a rigid strategic analysis of human resources or be
overly influenced by the micro-politics within the school community. In addition
distribution of authority can also be problematic although this is not to imply there is
no collaborative purpose or that vision is focused on exploiting the teachers but it is
where the emphasis is placed. As the strategic deployment of teachers and formal
leader positions would not be unusual in transformational leadership. According
to Spillane et al., (2001) leadership is stretched across the school primarily to share
the burden of the workload on formal leaders. Yet Distributive and Sustainable
leadership discourses do not question the politic of who gets to speak, who is spoken
for and who is silenced.

More recently Vroom and Jago (2007) identified leadership as a “process of
motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things” (p.
18). Vroom and Jago’s (2007) concept of leadership has been described as
‘participative’ by Leithwood et al., (2007) who consider participative, shared, democratic and collaborative leadership are all very similar to distributive leadership. Again there is a blending of leadership discourses. In this instance ‘Participative’; Distributed and Sustainable leadership can easily be co-opted to achieve corporate ends.

Researchers (Gurr, 2002; Day et al., 2001) have found distributed leadership discourses lacking, and point out there needs to be an addition to the model. Gurr et al., (2003) consider leaders of learners, moral leadership, accountability and responsiveness to change’ to be important. Gurr’s additions reflect Day et al., (2001) ‘post-transformational leadership’ in attempting to redress the gaps in the distributive discourse. Indeed gaps in the discourses of transformational, entrepreneurial and distributed leadership have led to a colonising or blending of discourses. For leaders the overlapping discourses and attempts to re-work Distributive (Shared, Sustainable, Participative) approaches pose problems which have been more about delegation of managerial jobs rather than distribution of authority, resources and agency.

**Distributed or delegated leadership?**

Distributive leadership is, however, more than just ‘delegated headship’ where unwanted tasks are handed down to others; less concerned with individual capabilities and skills than with creating collective responsibility for leadership action and activity (Harris & Chapman, 2002). Distributed leadership utilizes teacher expertise and encourages teachers to take a leading role. As a general practice ‘distributing’ leadership is not uncommon and is predominantly relational, situated and changing. However, this concept overlooks the relationships of power and issues of authority and control.

A distribution of labour and responsibilities may lessen the burden of work for the principal or other formal leaders but if it is not framed by democratic processes it becomes delegated work. Distributing responsibilities may also tend to undermine collegiality and relates well to Hargreaves (1994) argument concerning ‘contrived collegiality’. While it encourages participation from staff it can undermine professional collegiality, spontaneous communication and collaborative teamwork by generating micro-level authority, and discourses focused on accountability, discipline and control.

65
Distributive approaches are more difficult for researchers to quantify in terms of individual leadership performance and school success. Authority, when it is exercised across the school rather than top-down poses problems such as accountability, particularly within the paradigm of the ‘performative’ school. In these competitive times schools are challenged by performance measures that leave little room for building trust and a shared, participatory model which requires strong democratic commitment along with participant’s loyalty to a consensus culture that supports the goals of the school.

Distributed leadership discourses are framed in much of the literature without the benefit of a clearly articulated democratic process, often accompanied by a lack of resources and fails to address the structural, political and social disparities within schools. Distributive leadership discourses provide a rationale for internal management practices that overlook the micro politics of situated, multiple leaders; vulnerable to external pressures, and open to coercion unless governed by an ideology of equity and democratic practices.

**Deputies and senior leadership teams**

The distributive discourse has ramifications for senior managers / leaders (i.e. Junior Heads and those taking on work that could be done at headteacher level) within Independent schools (Court, 2003). Senior leadership (management) teams comply with Gronn’s (2008) term hybrid and refer to ‘dyadic, triadic and team leadership groupings that occur in some schools” (p. 152). Gunter (2001, p. 115) notes since the 1990s there has been a ‘reduction in deputy posts’ and senior leader positions as “restructuring of schools has meant ‘leaner and flatter systems’, often based on reasons of economy rather than organizational effectiveness” (Snell, 1999). However, as formal leadership positions have reduced in the main stream they remain an important part of K-12 Independent school structures particularly where corporate approaches dominate.

The comprehensive work undertaken into the workings of senior management teams in primary (Wallace & Huckman, 1996) and secondary schools (Hall & Wallace, 1996; Wallace & Hall, 1994) in England, has revealed significant discrepancies; in particular the ‘credibility gap’ denoting relationships between those making the decisions and those in receipt of them (Wallace & Huckman, 1996, p. 311). In
addition Wallace and Hall (1994) found that the hierarchical organization of the school meant that senior management team members were empowered to monitor the work of other staff, but not the other way around. The potential therefore arose for a sense of distance between the senior management team and other staff.

According to Wallace and Huckman (1996) effective teams need to do more than just get along with each other but consider issues around power and process or what they term “high gain, high strain” (p. 297). In particular, issues surrounding context and historical legacies, role clarity, division of labour and responsibilities that are currently being sidelined, as managerialism and performativity take precedence. As Gunter (2001) comments: “What research is telling us is that [these issues are] in tension with the professional habitus of senior post-holders…” (p. 119).

Australian studies (Harvey, Clarke, Hill & Harrison, 1999; Harvey, 1994) have also found dissatisfaction when researching deputy principals and senior post-holders. Harvey (1994) shows how deputy principals in Western Australia see their role as out of step with the needs of the school particularly where the emphasis is on administration and routine rather than on strategic ideas and creative ways to move the school forward. Furthermore he found deputies feel neglected as they are absorbed into senior management teams in which the traditional headteacher role could be further privileged. Such research, questions whether the deputy head’s position has been clarified or confused by the current educational changes impacting on leadership. The deputy and/or Junior Head position is a place where professionalism, values and administrative functions, struggle for ascendancy as senior leadership situations focus more on day to day functioning than strategy, forward planning or educational leadership (Garrett & McGeachie, 1999; Garrett, 1997).

As contention and contradiction surround senior leadership in K-12 schools, Gunter (2001) points out “researchers have raised the point that, while senior management teams are important, the delegation of decisions has to be tempered by a headteacher’s ultimate accountability” (pp.118-9). When these factors are combined with an intensification of work and a shift to a performative culture the result can be a growing anxiety amongst senior leaders in relation to role clarity, professional identity and organizational /cultural values.
Much of the research on middle management (Gunter, 2001) could be applied to formal leaders in schools. However, I would highlight the extent of the accountabilities that contextualize Deputy or Junior Head positions, as significantly expanded. Also in relation to the notion of ‘team’, a Junior Head or Deputy cooperate together; work to build a cohesive school and carry the onerous responsibility for their particular level as well as an overview and responsibility for the whole school. As Thomas (1997) argues schools will “sink or swim by the effectiveness of their teams” (p. 332).

The work that deputies and Junior Heads’ do is demanding, varied and situated across different school contexts (Dinham & Scott, 2007, 2002). As Garrett and Mc Geachie’s (1999) research of primary heads found there were a total of 52 different roles in the primary context that they categorized into: Class teacher; co-coordinating; ensuring quality; external relations; general administration; professional development; strategic overview; school ethos and working with people (pp. 67-81). This analysis effectively links the impact of performance management, overlaid by historical and cultural legacies to the growth of managerialism and performativity.

While transformational /post-transformational leadership discourses may dominate Independent schools, distributing responsibility remains for many leaders and principals a strategic decision to delegate some tasks and responsibilities rather than an inherent distribution of authority. Therefore Garrett and Mc Geachie’s (1999) research of primary heads and Gunter’s challenge concerning the professional habitus of senior post-holders provides a strong argument for researching leaders’ in Independent schools.

As Zipin and Brennan (2003) indicate senior leaders require “significant savvy to stand up to performative pressures … [and] seek strategies for avoiding sanctions from above…as well as avoiding painful ethical self-questioning in fulfilling the dictates from above” (p. 364). Hence the dispersion of managerial responsibility particularly in senior leadership teams is “integral to the manufacture of consent and struggle over professionalism” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p.178).
Professional leadership

Professional leadership discourses arise out of how we understand and practice accountability which leads to debates about professionals and professionalism. Educational leaders draw on such discourses along with an underlying assumption that leaders’ will agree about what this means, what constitutes a professional educator and how one speaks and acts in a professional manner. Teacher ‘professionalism’ and what it means has emerged as a key issue for the next decade (Blackmore, 2006, p. 335).

Leadership discourses produce new work identities and meanings about what constitutes professionalism. As educational organizations “take on new responsibilities, functions and priorities; old knowledge hierarchies that once imparted prestige and power are supplanted with new hierarchies of performativity” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, the literature suggests that as a ‘professional’ ‘being seen to perform’ counts more than substantive social action such as addressing issues of inclusion/exclusion and social justice (Morley, 2003). Sachs (2003) concludes the concept and practice of professionalism is “a site of struggle, especially as it relates to meaning” (p. 6).

The professions, professionals and professionalism are “under pressure not just in education but across the public and private sectors” (Gunter, 2001, p. 140). Leadership discourses have shifted the domains of professionalism where position descriptions of leadership work reflect the system wide priorities of economy, efficiency and performativity. As Mahony and Hextall (2000, p. 79) argue there is a preferred reading of professional standards within dominant policy and practice that demands compliance, that is to “meet the Standards” you have to be the kind of person the standards have in mind.

These trends are not specific to Victoria or Australia but studies indicate managerial modes of professionalism have prompted researchers, Johansson et al., (2000) to note “different discourses of change are competing in society, and new contexts of meaning are challenging established roles and identities” (p. 4). Furthermore under managerialist conditions a cult of individualism has been reinvigorated as Hargreaves (1992) observes “individualism is primarily a shortcoming, not a
strength, not a possibility; something to be removed rather than something to be respected” (p. 171).

According to Gunter and Forrester (2010) what we call “a professional ‘doxa’ based on public service together with notions of care, commitment and inherent understandings of quality has been ridiculed as provider capture is constructed to protect self-serving bureaucratic systems and interests (Gewirtz, 2000). Hence the process of establishing a ‘new professionalism’ according to the doxa of good leadership practice is already underway.

Gunter and Forrester (2010) highlight that while “the doxa defines the ‘game’ [dominant leadership discourses] and field boundaries, the disposition to enter and play means that the doxa speaks to the person, where there is [a] …fundamental belief in the interest of the game and the value of the stakes which is inherent in that membership” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 11). The pressure on leaders to join the ‘game’ and the inherent benefits individuals achieve by ‘playing the game’ to the mutual advantage of both the individual leader and the economic managerialist purposes that drive the game, has generated dissonance between corporate professional identities and the development of a professional disposition. The direction such social policies create has the potential to undermine democratic ideals, moral purpose and agency.

Teacher professionalism is being redefined. Sachs (2003, p. 6) takes the view that to seek a fixed position is futile: professionalism has always been a changing concept rather than a generic one (Freidson, 1994). Furthermore as McCullock, Helsby & Knight (2000) point out “it could be argued that teaching is being reprofessionalized although the new professionalism is different from the mythical professionalism of forty years ago” (p. 110). Gunter and Forrester (2010) have proposed the new discourses of professionalism align with new right claims that leaders are self interested and not accountable.

The debates over what constitutes a profession have been informed by sustained arguments in education (Sachs, 2003, 2000, 1999; Helsby, 1999; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Ozga & Lawn, 1981). Moreover studies in the United Kingdom have revealed the paradox that is presented when educationalists focus on professionalism. According to Menter et al., (1997) primary teachers were initially accepting of new
challenges and roles, but increasingly referred to the dilemmas of the work and how they preferred to work with children. As Gunter (2001) points out: “The irony is not lost that they have been sold new responsibilities as being a means of enhanced professionalisation but, at the same time they are losing the capacity to exercise professional judgement” (p. 144).

Furthermore according to Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) previous resistance to professional status from government and business is presently being revised in Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. Currently teacher and principal professional standards discourse has been taken up by governments in professional standards, accreditation and the rise of quasi-autonomous or statutory authorities dealing with registration and accreditation such as Victorian Institute of Teachers, with similar authorities interstate and overseas.

Hence, claims about ‘reprofessionalisation’ are based on the opportunities that can be realized through the growth of new types of work. This is defined by Hoyle and John, (1995) as ‘extended professionals' through their increased orientation towards their clients (p. 60). According to Sinclair (2007) relationships between leaders and their workplaces can be problematic and a business oriented ‘reprofessionalisation’ is achieved “…by reinforcing individualism and playing to anxieties [to] promote corporate goals” (p. 132).

Gunter (2001) points out the struggle to “shift accountabilities in support of the neo-liberal version of the performing school [has resulted in] …the development of a form of teacher professionalism that fits in with and facilitates and organizational and market orientation” (p. 142). This raises a critical question as to whether the corporate reforms, ‘performativity’ and repositioning of leadership is central to the ‘deprofessionalising or reprofessionalising’ process. In this regard it is highly contentious as leader professional status and future teacher professional status is under review, at the state regulatory level.

Policy-makers are tending to de-professionalize teaching and academic work with increased performance based accountability and reduced possibilities for professional judgment and autonomy (Gunter, 2001). For some the work of teachers is being ‘deprofessionalised’ and technicised (Apple, 1999). A growing concern for
researchers and other professionals is the risk of the profession being fragmented and categorized as technicians rather than as policy makers or activist professionals. Such concerns about de-professionalising educational work prompts Gunter (2001) to argue “educational professionals are being objectified and stratified into leaders and followers… there is an attempt to structure professional identity through mandating and training the particular social relationships needed to sustain technicist job requirements” (p. 31).

**Re-positioning professional leader-identities**

According to Thomson (2001) neither the impartiality of old professional bureaucracies nor the seeming neutrality of managerialism is appropriate with the current politicization of education. More to the point the “impartiality, particularly for principals [and other educational leaders] is as much an ethical liability as it is a strength” (Thomson, 2001, p. 15).

There is significant discursive tension between what leaders see as professionalism and dominant discourses about leadership, managerialism and marketisation, (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Gherardi, 1995). As Sinclair (2007) puts it such tensions have, “… generated discourses about how to produce the ‘right’ leadership identity: confident, assertive…or in some circumstances reliable and without weakness” (p. 123). This has intensified with workplace conditions where there is constant surveillance, monitoring and individual performance evaluations (Townley, 1994, 1995).

Therefore discursively producing the ‘right leadership identity’ is contextualized, complex and uncertain. As Blackmore and Sachs (2007) highlight in their study; “…if individual leaders are immediately compliant they can be perceived by colleagues as ‘traitors’ or ‘puppets of the government’ [or principal/leadership team or school board]. “Often giving up on short-term issues gains more by strategizing for long term effects… compliance at one moment can have resistant effects in the long term” (p. 193). According to Hanlon (1998) there is a ‘struggle for the soul of professionalism’ while Ball (2000) cautions it “produces a new form of social and moral regulation… reframing and re-forming meaning and identity – producing … new professional subjectivities” (p. 2). Whereas Blackmore and Sachs (2007, pp. 2-3) propose there has been a symbolic shift in “sociopsychic and political economies
of education professionals and the renorming of the field of education. In practice, these discourses have heralded the emergence of ‘professional identity crisis’ concurrently with ‘the managerialised’ structural realignment of lived practices, social relations, and intersubjective dispositions (especially ethical dispositions)” (Zipin & Brennan, 2003, p. 352).

Despite the allure of professional status, the pressures driving new identity formations are evidently not entirely benign. As Rindova and Schultz (1998) argue, merging organizations (schools) and corporate identities enables researchers to “broaden the spectrum of managerial practices related to identity management” (p. 51). In this way organizations (schools) can address external corporate identity focused on marketplace positioning, image, branding while ‘managing’ the organisational identity of its members, by focusing on their internal beliefs and their sense of identification with the organization; their allegiance, commitment and consistency of actions. This manipulation can easily translate to schools and leaders, in that coercion and consensus are linked to ‘managing’ leaders and teachers’ identity so that it conforms to the school’s public image and reputation.

Summing up these concerns about image, identity and reputation I draw on Mac Lure (2003) as she contends “…many of the new social conflicts are about representation and subjectivity” (p. 5). Representation involves the production and consumption of discourses and the rights to name, to construe, to depict and to describe. In terms of ‘professional identity’ subjectivity would involve, “…how one is to be named, positioned, desired and described and in which language, texts and terms of reference” (Luke, 1995, pp. 5-6).

Therefore focusing on professionalism and leader identities should not be taken to suggest I am favouring any narrowly defined identity politics or cultural explanations. In this research I consider “culture to be not a ‘thing’ but a political process of contestation over the power to define concepts, including that of culture itself” (Wright, 1998, p. 12). In addition my theoretical approach draws on feminist poststructuralism and rejects any essentialism in the theorizing of both identity and culture.
Leadership discourses – challenges and tensions

Over a decade ago Hargreaves (1994) argued: “At the heart of these [reforms] is a fundamental choice between restructuring as bureaucratic control…and restructuring as professional empowerment…” (p. 50). Current research (Gunter & Forrester, 2010) into educational policy in England, demonstrates there is a leadership of schools ‘logic of practice’ based on a regime of social practice where politicians, advisors, researchers and practitioners have centralized reforms based on the neoliberal ‘financialization of everything’ (Harvey, 2007, p.33). Even Court’s (2003) research of co-headship and the management practices of shared leadership (two or more people who are accountable to the school board) is constrained by the ‘leadership of school’s logic’ as the doxa (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 11) of good leadership practice. Hence regardless of how leadership is organized, the continuation of a regime of social practice dictated by economic, political and educational capital investment in the production of leadership discourses based on private sector values; underpins leadership discourses.

According to Valentin (1999) not all discourses are equal: “The power embedded within them seeks to construct certain discourses as more valid, ‘truer’ than others” (p. 2). In particular, discourses such as, “transformational leadership and its newer claims to be ‘post-heroic’ have entrenched within the discourse an assumption that leaders should transform - rather than, say, preserve or disrupt” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 28). The performative culture has promoted ‘transformational, entrepreneurial, distributed – sustainable, shared and values-led (repositioned) professional leadership’, as valid descriptors which have become part of the popular lexicon of leadership. In this regard leadership is often described as if it were one coherent body of thinking. This has narrowed what it means to lead and what is legitimized and authorized in leadership discourses.

The narrowing of leadership discourses has led to broad generalizations about leadership such as, ‘transformational’ leadership which reveals the sabotage of its critical perspective within a management frame, substituted and labeled as ‘good leadership practice’ (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). According to Valentin (1999) “…this emphasis on critical thinking does not extend to criticizing the goals of the organization itself” (p. 3). Moreover Lankshear (1997) questions this process and the
sort of ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ for workers when they “…cannot question the ‘vision’, values, ends and goals of the new work order itself” (pp. 87-88).

Sinclair (2007) also foregrounds power and argues conventional wisdoms view leadership as ‘good, heroic, ahistorical, decontextualised, gender-neutral’ and a “rational activity that creates vision inspiring followers to new levels of moral elevation” as opposed to power which is “essentially a tool to get things done” (Sinclair, 2007, pp. 30-31). While it is important for principals to make statements about quality educational practice (corporate leadership) and establish efficient policies and routines (managerial leadership), this alone is not enough.

Similarly critical theorists argue ‘distributive’ leadership discourses may be viewed more as abdication of responsibility than diffusion of ownership (Valentin, 1999). Whereas Gronn, (2003b, p. 147) argues distributing leadership creates ‘additive’ and ‘addictive’ qualities juxtaposed to intensification of work with its connection to ‘greedy work.’ I would add that the micro-politics of distributing authority is complex and relational, challenging collegial relationships and expanding bureaucratic control while the ongoing burden of accountability remains with the principal. Also distributing leadership in the independent sector tends to create additional layers of authority devolves regulatory control and complicates the positioning of who answers to whom.

Other challenges and tensions within the leadership discourses that are predictably not mentioned are issues relating to relational and emotional work of leadership. According to Sinclair (2007) critiques of leadership should include what the dominant leadership discourses leave out such as, “hunger for power, power structures in society enabling some to rise easily to leadership; emotional / unconscious dynamics that afford more legitimacy to some; proving grounds for leadership including childhood / adolescence; physical and embodied side of leadership; sexual performance and sexual identities often played out in leadership; role of class, ethnic origins and historical leadership practices and long term outcomes of leadership” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 29).

Such challenges and tensions are often silenced, subordinated or marginalised in order to maintain the status quo. There are a number of scholars (Gronn, 2008;
Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Gunter, 2001; Grace, 2000) voicing concerns about the narrowness of leadership thinking among the most extensive critiques are those from feminist researchers, (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007; Hatcher, 2003; Hearn, 2002; Fletcher, 2001) who show how leadership has always been studied and performed around gendered assumptions.

In the Australian setting Sinclair (1995) highlights how the exclusivity of the executive ‘masculine’ culture has produced “conceptions of executive eligibility, success and performance, [and as such] is undiscussable” (p. 39). Yet leaders depend on others for responsive critical dialogues and interactions. How educational leaders and the wider community perceive and talk about leadership influences a school’s culture and changes or reinforces particular aspects of that culture. As Fullan (1993) states the potency of leadership discourses to engender ‘moral purpose’ is important, particularly as it has the potential to produce “deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents and others” (p. 41).

**Critical leadership discourses**

I have chosen to position the critical perspective after the leadership discourses and challenges to professional identity as such dominant discourses appear to have an underlying essentialism. Even when discourses overlap, contradict and colonise each other, they all portray a sense of certainty about their particular stance and overall gender-neutral positioning. The critical approach to leadership is not only a discourse but a discursive disposition that leaders bring to the leadership discourses. Therefore the critical paradigm aligns with feminist poststructural perspective and questions the questions one can and does ask.

It is my contention that critical leadership is a disposition, fluid, responsive and alert to the politics of relational and cultural contexts. Therefore it underpins leadership paradigms and intersects professional discourses. From a critical perspective, agency emerges as a result of leaders’ choice, decision-making and action enabling the critical work of building collegial social relationships, professional discretion and judgment while contending with ethical dilemmas. A critical perspective challenges leadership paradigms and the tenets of teacher professionalism and who and what it serves.
As Smyth et al., (2000) have shown aspects of critical research challenge accepted interpretations and assumptions by locating questions within social, political and economic contexts, as well as focusing on those who are marginalized. The ‘critical frame’ is emancipatory in seeking equity and is inclusive of the researcher in the research process. In particular, the critical perspective focuses on how theory and theorizing is central to how “power is conceptualized” within the critical paradigm (Gunter, 2001, p. 40).

Therefore the critical perspective has seen much debate about the relationship between the state and policy development with conflicting views between pluralist and neo-Marxist interpretations (Bowe et al., 1992; Gewirtz & Ozga, 1990). As Thrupp (2000) points out, critical stances identify the contradictory situations that affect positioning and the difficulty of being both critical of educational policy but at the same time seeking funding that is about policy implementation.

Such debates regarding leadership question leader’s motives and “whether a headteacher is positioned by economic interests…or is capable of agency through exercising professional judgment and discretion” (Gunter, 2001, p. 41). Thus reflecting on leadership discourses and practices means “…knowledge workers [are] concerned with [how] issues of power, social inequity, and injustices [are] produced through practices of schooling” (Gunter, 2001, p. 96).

Critical discourses also argue for democratic structures and processes. Distributive leadership discourses have appropriated what appears to be recognition of teacher leadership but without the democratic aspects that critical theorists would see as a basic condition. Transformational discourses have been co-opted within the school effectiveness discourse which has tended to ignore its critical and political origins. Moreover a critical leadership perspective argues leadership discourses have generated greater inequity and reinforced the status quo, through depoliticizing what is highly political. Critical leaders consider other dimensions of leadership that predictably are not mentioned in the leadership paradigms that is, issues relating to relational aspects of leading, gender equity and the emotional work of leadership (Sinclair, 2007; Court, 2004, 2003; Fletcher, 2001).
According to Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz (1995) critical discourse includes theory that rests upon “complexity, uncertainty and doubt and upon a reflexivity about its own production and its claims to knowledge about the social” (p. 269). Such theory challenges the traditional view of intellectual work and advocates for “a cultural critic offering perspective rather than truth” (Ball et al., 1995, p. 268). Questioning what is ‘normally excluded’ from leadership discourses is particularly important for this study. Therefore I draw attention to some of the counter-narratives (Sinclair, 2007) that explore possible critical alternatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional wisdoms</th>
<th>Critical alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is a good thing.</td>
<td>Leadership can be a bad thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes such as growth, efficiency, global expansion, dominance not questioned.</td>
<td>Purposes are questioned, when asking who or what leadership is for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is a single handed heroic performance that is: individual, ahistorical, and decontextualised.</td>
<td>Leadership is socially constructed, contextualized; theories determine leadership - ship and who personifies a leader; schools find leadership where they expect to find it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascension to leadership through experience, training and mentoring.</td>
<td>Leadership arises from backgrounds and how we respond to appetites and hungers: it requires identity work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on positive qualities leaders need.</td>
<td>Exploration of leaders’ dark sides, e.g. narcissism and grandiosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational leadership focuses on bold deeds, acts of courage and sacrifice. It is a rational activity and requires cognitive mastery, physical dimensions ignored.</td>
<td>Relational leadership includes interactional and emotional work and includes meaning /symbolic management emotional / physical work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and sexuality of leaders are invisible except women’s gender which is included as a variable to be studied.</td>
<td>Leadership assumes able-bodied male. Need to reveal gendered culture-centric assumptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders create visions; inspire followers to new levels of moral elevation.</td>
<td>Leaders create meaning, legitimacy …but may be a device for manipulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power is treated as a tool of leaders which is necessary to get things done.</td>
<td>Leadership is supported and mediated through structural power relations. Power precedes leadership, in turn reinforcing power relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership produces change.</td>
<td>Leadership is often invoked to avoid radical change, supports status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about leadership through study, large samples; reliable measures/instruments; replicability, validation, track down the truth which is empirically knowable and train in it.</td>
<td>Learn about leadership through: deep rich observation; reflection; case studies; ethnographies; histories; participant observation. Expose subtleties, complexities of authority and power relations within a context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7 (Sinclair, 2007): Modified (pp. 30-31).*
However, such critiques of leadership according to Sinclair (2007) can often be incorporated by dominant discourses with the result that those views endure as they appear more enlightened. Well intentioned critiques – “call for leaders to be more collaborative or relational – can be given lip-service while actually having the effect of more deeply entrenching the status quo, and leaving the power and privilege of leadership untouched” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 32). Such emotive, defensive responses indicate there is need for more transparent and critical reflection on the use of power, emotions and meanings attached to agency, autonomy and how these concepts relate to leaders and professionalism.

One of the major attributes of a critical discourse is that it questions the underlying issues and contradictions within the professional, distributive discourses and the corporate managerial discourses of transformation and entrepreneurialism. A critical view reveals certain dichotomies still at work: entrepreneurialism displaces rule bound bureaucracies, pragmatism displaces paternalism, diversity displaces equity, and instability displaces stability in the quasi-market cultures of the public and private sectors. These are not simple dualisms no borders, no uncontested space across organizational fault lines although some are more protected than others. These discourses overlap and take from one another, colonise and marginalize particular discourses that would undermine or confuse. Teachers and leaders are left to navigate new unmapped globalised territories seeking ‘new professional subjectivities’ and questioning what it means to lead.

**What is missing?**

There are a number of gaps that have already been revealed in the critical review of the leadership literature. The following highlights aspects that were not mentioned previously and summarizes a number of issues arising from this chapter.

First, the overall failure of the field to be informed by either critical organizational theory outside the field, or feminist, black and post-colonial theory within the field that see organizations as cultural sites structured by the social relations of gender, class and race (Alvesson & Due Billing, 2002; Hearn, 2002; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Blackmore (2008) goes on to note this “neglect is a central problem for the field of educational administration and leadership in terms of future analysis and promotion of organizational change and leadership identity formation in more culturally diverse, democratic and cosmopolitan societies” (p. 192).
Second, the research exposes the problem that men and women both experience the detrimental effects of ‘greedy organizations’ and the impact of increased workload stress and the failure of leadership discourses to address equity issues (Pocock, 2006; Franzway, 2001).

Third, from a cultural/political perspective the intensification of ‘executive masculinism’ inherent in the dominant leadership discourses has been consistently ignored. That is, globalization and wide-spread educational ‘patterns of change’ (Sinclair, 2007) have obscured the shift to a more gender-neutral, competitive individualism. Moreover corporate, competitive and individualized workplace cultures have naturalized what has become highly politicized. This has been reflected in how schools have managed contractual arrangements, image and reputation and how leadership is understood and enacted locally as a democratic or managerial, individual or collective, practice.

Fourth, there is an expectation and inference that taking up a formal Head’s position is equated to leadership. As Gunter (2001) argues “Headship is not necessarily leadership because holding a post does not necessarily imbue the person with the capabilities and capacities for leadership” (p. 104). Indeed the ‘visionary head’ is a popular idea and remains a stable feature of dominant leadership discourses. According to Hall and Southworth (1998), “beyond this assertion surprisingly little else is known and although the centrality of the head is widely acknowledged it has not been examined in very much depth” (pp. 164-165). Therefore extensive research acknowledging the complexity of situated leadership in diverse contexts is missing.

Fifth, leadership discourses have ignored the issue of power. In particular how power relations operate within leadership discourses and the associated concepts of professionalism and corporate managerialism (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007, 1998; Blackmore, 2006, 1999; Hearn, 2002; Thomson, 2001; Yeatman, 2000). Power relationships are rarely part of the framework of leadership discourse yet underpin the micro-politics of relating to others. According to Sinclair (2007) the key issue in theorizing about power concerns the degree to which “…power is predetermined by structural relations or available to individuals … [and] informed by contemporary economic ideology” (p. 83).
Sixth, research into how leadership identities and reputation are constructed is gaining ground in organizational theory but not in educational research. Sinclair (2007) states “…we need also to look at how leadership and the study of leadership are processes of construction of identity and reputation” (p. 33). Although researchers (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Blackmore, 1999) have exposed how power relations impact on leadership identities there is further work needed to examine the discourses that support ‘new professional identities’ and what sort of ‘professional identity is being promoted?

Seventh, from the reading of current literature on leadership context and discourses, it appears that what is missing is a critical dialogue (Sinclair, 2007) about leadership and the impact of such discourses on leaders, teachers and students in schools. As Blackmore (2005) insists there is a need to overcome the “current fetish about style and performativity, to reject the neo-modernist emphasis on standards and get back to the substance of leadership leading for whom and for what” (p.185).

In the next chapter I focus power and resistance. In particular how women are repositioned within the corporate and professional discourses and the impact of particular historical and structural ‘patterns of change’. I explore the discourses and current research that looks at how women leaders’ negotiate power relationships and their positioning within the ‘re-masculinised’ leadership discourses and the micro-politics of their workplace. Therefore the next chapter provides a closer more detailed investigation of the context for women leaders in education, working in gendered spaces and the current research linked to women in leadership in Australia and overseas.
CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Well while I’ve been here there has been three occasions when I’ve been treated almost like a naughty girl in the Principal’s Office and on those occasions I haven’t been naughty at all. I’ve stood my ground most strongly or gone away and written a paper about it and gone back and discussed it.
(Pam - Junior Head, 2006)

Positioning women in leadership discourses

In Chapters One and Two I reviewed the broad educational contexts, current research into leadership and critiqued the dominant leadership discourses. These dominant discourses surround women in leadership and foreground contradiction, ambiguity and silences in the literature and research. Such silences continue to shape the discursive repertoires available to women leaders’ situated in gendered workplaces. For instance, within the corporate and professional discourses there is a masculine logic of practice that is accepted as “natural and right” and equates to how issues of gender, power and resistance “collide and interact with each other and the paradoxical questions it raises for organizations and the people – especially women – who work in them” (Fletcher, 2001, p. 3).

The intention of this chapter is to employ a feminist poststructural lens to examine how women in leadership are positioned and marginalized within the leadership literature and how workplace discourses are gendered and discriminatory. In particular, the failure in the current leadership discourses to address theories of power, gender-equity, emotion and the complexity of situated leadership in diverse contexts.

Poststructural inquiry calls attention to the micro-politics of power relations and the taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning the dominant leadership discourses. This approach from a feminist perspective also brings into question the discursive positioning of women within cultural, political, and economic discourses that are currently endorsed within the field of educational leadership. For women Heads’ in Independent schools these workplace changes, shifts of power and relational
practices have intensified the contradictions they may already experience regarding their historical positioning as women in education.

**Women and the leadership paradox – re-viewing the ‘problem’**

Casting a feminist gaze upon the trend, to a renewed hegemonic masculinity, has revealed paradoxes for women positioned in senior leadership in schools. A critical review of the literature indicates that “reinvigorated masculinity” is likely to be problematic for women leaders’ as they struggle with a global economy that has “altered the contours of difference and otherness” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 27). Such problems have left leaders, particularly women ambiguously positioned between professional values-led leadership discourses, institutional expectations and corporate managerialism promoting the doxa of good leadership practice (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). According to Blackmore (1999) it has meant the “remaking of hegemonic masculinity away from the image of the rational bureaucrat to the multi-skilled, flexible, service oriented, facilitative and entrepreneurial manager” (p. 37).

**A number of problems emerge:**

First, there are numerous discourses mentioned in Chapters One and Two that women in leadership are already subject too. In particular, discourses of transformational and entrepreneurial leadership based on hegemonic masculinity, are problematic. This has already heralded renewed and reinvigorated performativity and the silencing of gendered discourses (Blackmore, 1999). The ideology underpinning such discourses not only reflects a certain reality but actively creates that reality and sustains the power relationships that depend on it. This has meant the ongoing renegotiation of the gendered division of labour in which men manage and women teach (Blackmore, 1999).

Second, the flow on effect of reinvigorated masculinity has contributed to a co-opting and colonizing of professional discourses as policy makers attempt to position new corporate values in constituting the “right leadership identity” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 123). As Sinclair (2007) states, “organizations such as schools and the individual leaders operating within them, tend to take on the responsibility of producing an appropriate leadership identity for themselves – one that is consistent with institutional expectations” (p. 133). Hence the rise of new professional leader-identities (Ball, 2000) has also repositioned women leaders in unequal ways e.g. job
redefinition, reallocation and repositioning as change agents. As identity pressures increase “particular types of leadership selves are being produced as the selves are, in deep and self disciplining ways, agents for maintaining the status quo” (Sinclair, 2007, p.132).

Furthermore having people worry about identity may well allow for new methods of institutional and social control (Sinclair, 2007). As leaders grow more concerned about achievements, career paths, lifestyles, how they present and ‘come across’ to others, they ‘become more pliable’ [and] “… may seek to reinforce a sense of self by finding workplaces consonant with personal values, but those very workplaces, by reinforcing individualism and playing to anxieties, promote corporate goals” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 132).

Third, feminist leadership discourses have the capacity to be normative, reinforcing rather than challenging the gendered binaries between rationality and emotionality, for instance, the notion of women’s styles of leadership which could reinforce stereotypes and be read in essentialist ways (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). According to Chase (1995) the leaders’ in her study engaged ‘professional’ discourses in order to negotiate their positions, and produce counter-narratives of the successful, accomplished professional woman as opposed to the dominant script for women’s lives which continues to emphasise “women’s selflessness and orientation to domestic concerns” (p. 213).

Fourth, women leaders, are familiar with such ‘domestic concerns’, issues including inequity and other historical legacies that portray professional behaviour as traditionally based on stereotypes in which issues of gender, age, sexuality and race have not been acknowledged as having an impact on identity (Blackmore, 1999). Such contradictions bring into question the capacity of professional discourses to redress the inequity that contextualizes school leadership today. In particular strategic management practices seek to exploit diversity discourses (gender, multiculturalism) to channel individual desires, passion and energy for organizational ends. Female leaders’ are faced with the issues of equity, with varying degrees of ambivalence. As Fletcher (1999) argues women in leadership contend with such discourses while they are positioned “through language, material practices and structural relationships” (p. 23).
Sachs (2003) highlights how historically the concept of ‘professionalism’ has been discriminatory and needs to be reworked. She argues the “traditional approaches are exclusionary”, and have mainly been concerned with the “…norm of white middle class maleness, failing to represent the wider populations that the professions claim to serve” (p. 340). However, as McCulloch et al., (2000) have shown ‘myth and memory’ endure amongst teachers providing a range of positions regarding their professional work. This makes how we see the impact of “restructuring as problematic because legacies of professionalism are deep within our professional biographies” (Gunter, 2001, p. 143).

Fifth, focus on the micro-politics of gender in schools points to significant silences in the women in leadership and change theory literature about masculinity, emotionality, authority, sexuality and the body. Such silences are problematic for women in leadership. In particular, Australian white middle-class feminism provides powerful discourses of solidarity and collectivism, discourses from which individual non-feminist women have also benefited, such discourses have failed to problematise the category of women (Blackmore, 1999). By marginalizing issues of race, class and ethnicity as well as different political value positions, such discourses can “become essentialising, silencing alternative ways of conceptualizing leadership” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 19).

Finally in summing up, I refer to Blackmore and Sachs’s (2007) research of Australian women educators to further contextualize the issues. Their research focused on how women negotiate the paradoxical relations of leadership in increasingly corporatised education systems. The interviews they conducted produced leadership narratives that portrayed a more holistic picture concerning the contradictions and problems facing women in leadership. For instance, “…women managers’ discourse invoked notions of a corporate culture, collegiality and purpose, a clear sense of mission, working with teams, initiating significant cultural change, sharing one’s sense of the future, providing a sense of a unified corporate self” (p. 178). These women leaders’ responded to questions about their work with a discourse that conveys the dichotomies of stability and flexibility, focused purpose and sharing with others while maintaining a positive, proactive image. Although they recognized the ambiguity and paradox of their positioning they remained fluid and adaptable. That is, senior leaders “become multilingual as they mobilized corporate,
community and professional discourses simultaneously” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 179). What is interesting in reading accounts of and by headteachers is the extent to which they are able to exercise agency and professional courage, and the extent to which they accept, go along with, and even collude with, “the ways in which headship is being designed and driven by policy-makers (and) not by practitioners” (Southworth, 1999b, p. 63).

**Women in Independent schools - leadership research**

Finding specific studies on women leaders’ in Independent schools is rare. Junior School Heads’ and/or Deputy Heads’ have been under-researched (Hughes & James, 1999). As Ribbins (1997c) states: “headteachers are interesting: deputy headteachers, it seems, are not” (p. 295). According to Gunter (2001, p.115) “deputies seek a role that has integrity, coherence and purpose in its own right”. The lack of clear definition of role for the headteacher is central to the ambiguities of senior management roles (Todd & Dennison, 1980). Also Ribbons (1997c) points out that deputy positions can be limited to particular administrative duties which can be gender stereotyped as “the administrator and the carer” (p. 298).

Australian research in recent years has indicated there has been a slight increase in the number of women in middle management (Lacey, 2004). Yet studies focused on women Junior Heads’ and/or Deputy Heads’ (Gunter, 2005, 2001) is limited. Indeed research focused on women leaders operating in Independent schools is often simply a category in larger scale studies. By comparison there has been considerable research surrounding principals and educational leadership per se (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007, 1998; Fullan, 2003, 2001; Gronn, 2003, 2002; Hill, 2003; Cranston, 2001; Ball, 2000; Blackmore, 1999; Townsend, 1999; Caldwell & Hayward, 1998). An example of principal focused research is Collard’s (2004) study: Self-Images of Victorian Principals in the 1990s. His study found:

…a lower proportion of women from Independent schools identified with the image of ‘leading learner’ and this can be linked to the lower numbers of primary principals in the sector [although] primary principals were markedly more likely to identify with this image than their secondary counterparts. Primary also preferred the image ‘advocates for children’. (Collard, 2004, pp. 45-8)
Collard also found that in the independent sector more women leaders (girls’ schools and primary schools) saw themselves as the *initiator* compared to men. Whereas men in Independent schools, saw themselves as *custodians* and appeared more constrained by traditional patriarchal styles than men from Catholic schools. Indeed the distinct religious cultures continue to exert a formative influence on the principals of Catholic and Independent boys’ schools. In the Catholic sector they appear to ameliorate differences between male and female leaders drawing them towards a shared self image. The reverse occurs in the non-Catholic Independent schools where there is a less pervasive presence of religious traditions particularly in girls’ schools compared to the conservative stance of their counterparts in boys’ schools.

The interesting aspect of Collard’s (2004) research is that it identifies stereotypes that are prevalent across sectors while highlighting the cultural/religious discourses within the independent sector. He refers to other scholars researching Australian school leadership who have “…noted the persistence of paternalistic images of *solitary, hard-driving men* (Gronn, 1995; Bate, 1990; Hansen, 1986). Also traditional images of female leaders as *matriarchs* and *nurturers* can also be identified in the histories of girls’ schools (Theobald, 1996, 1978; Gardiner, 1977; Fitzpatrick, 1975).

More recently, feminist writers have popularised images of women as *weavers* and *networkers* (Dunlap, 1995; Adler et al., 1993, Ozga, 1993) and such concepts have percolated into the consciousness of contemporary leaders” (p. 40). Collard (2004) sums up his findings and recommends “…a nuanced understanding of principal identity…one that recognizes the complex interactions between a range of social variables and the specific context in which a principal leads…as opposed to a reductionist understanding of the forces at work” (p. 40).

**Silences in the research**

There are a number of silences in the Australian research:

First, in Australia and overseas, mainstream research tends to overlook the fact that the majority of teachers are female and yet women are underrepresented in the sphere of educational administration and leadership (McCrea & Ehrich, 2000, 1998; Ehrich, 1998). Blackmore (2006) alludes to the gaps in educational administration texts and
indicates there is no chapter in the 2005 International Handbook on Educational Administration and Leadership, which relates to women in leadership.

Second there is evidence that mainstream educational research in management and administration has not been informed by feminist research. Male researchers are inclined to dismiss schools as ‘gendered places’ (Ely & Foldy, 2003; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Acker, 1991) and consequently overlook how gender inequality works through educational organisations, although there are exceptions. In particular, Hearn (2002) as a pro-feminist researcher problematises the notion of gender, identity and organizational culture. Other discourses that are silenced relate to the gendered nature of the emotional management work, middle/senior leadership teams, and how power and resistance function in organizational and leadership discourses.

Thirdly, women are rarely the subject of educational leadership research in Australia with a few exceptions (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Kenway, 1988). More to the point, research into Independent schools is also rare and it has not focused on women in leadership, specifically (senior leaders) Junior Heads. According to Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) research has failed to explore how women leaders in education are positioned within the “macro political arrangements and the micro practices that work on identity, body and sexuality” (p. 123). Hence there are relatively few Qualitative studies (Lacey, 2002). Although the Catholic system occasionally focuses on women, (Neidhart & Carlin, 2003) as part of larger studies, most tend to dismiss gender and focus on the moral dimensions of leadership (Cranston, 2007; Duignan, 2006; Spry, 2004; Carlin, D’Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; D’Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002).

**Female leaders’ in Independent schools – Junior Heads’ position**

In order to further position the women in this study within senior level leadership I draw your attention to the role and responsibilities of the Junior Head’s (Deputy Principal) position. In particular the recruitment policies and practices within senior leadership teams and the method of selection, induction and succession for such leaders. Investigating Junior Heads also provokes questions about how the position is conceptualized and implemented, as well as how particular leader-identities are promoted within Independent schools. By way of a disclaimer, I reiterate that these
recruiting processes are by no means specific but reflect the general approach undertaken in Independent schools.

**Junior Heads’ position**

In the majority of Independent schools formal leadership positions are contractual and defined by the principal. The principal’s accountability is to the School Board and various regulatory bodies such as the Registered Schools’ Board and Victorian Institute of Teaching. The Junior Heads’ position besides being contractual carries a range of expectations pastoral and professional, as well as corporate, that is, the delivery on outcomes and key performance measures. These internal processes are part of the private system where leaders are expected to meet the school’s strategic goals. In this regard organizational principles and practices are expected to conform to the wider educational reforms and corporate discourses. However, by way of mitigating their inherited corporate positioning, Independent schools have relied on their ethos and mission to sustain a level of democratic consultative practice and pastoral care that are part of their cultural heritage promoting a liberal education (Apple, 1999).

The formal position description of a Junior Head (JH) may also include additional responsibilities such as Deputy or Assistant Principal within the senior leadership team of a K-12 School. It is also important to note that the title Junior Head may apply to K-6 Independent School principal. Multiple titles convey the breadth of responsibilities a leader may be required to fulfill according to the terms of their individual contract or agreement. Senior leadership teams encompass those leaders that have a whole school focus and are reliant on the principal’s selection and formal delegation of responsibilities (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007; Court, 2003; Gronn, 2002).

The multi-layering of leadership that exists in most Independent schools is often perceived as a corporate line-manager approach to leadership (Yeatman, 1994). In this regard Gunter (2001) points out that “middle management …is used to position teachers with a subject / department and / or pastoral responsibility” in schools. Teachers who have a responsibility allowance together with a specified job description outlining duties in addition to classroom teaching are “located as ‘middle’ within the hierarchy” (p. 106).
Furthermore there is evidence from research of tensions between Senior Management Teams and teachers in the middle (Harris, Jamieson & Russ, 1995) where the latter are not always disposed to contribute to strategic policy processes (Brown & Rutherford 1998; Glover, Gleeson, Gough & Johnson, 1998). In this case Junior Heads’ and those in the Senior Leadership Team oversee the work of “middle management” and as Gunter (2001) explains, “tensions inevitably arise” (p. 113).

As a consequence, the responsibilities of a Junior Head encompass a broad range of tasks that often require strategic and systematic delegation of additional duties to teachers in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Junior Heads’ oversee and are accountable for all aspects of Junior School leadership and management as well as participating in whole school senior leadership team. Their responsibilities may include students ranging from 3 years to 18 years with specific accountabilities for Early Learning, Prep and primary students 3 to 12 years of age. In some of the larger schools there is often a Middle School catering for students from 11 years to 14 years. This arrangement cuts across upper primary and early secondary schooling and enlarges the senior leadership team to include a Middle School Head.

Therefore in most Independent schools senior leadership operates from an organizational hegemonic, top-down principal driven, system of management. The power relationships between the layers of leadership are often intensified due to integrating the regulatory demands of the national policy as distinct from religious, philosophical or traditional values that are culturally embedded in the Independent sector. Some Alternative and Cooperative Schools have a flattened management structure, more participatory and less hierarchical such as Steiner schools.

A hierarchical structure combined with a bureaucratization of schooling has contributed to an intensified regime of accountability. Difficulties facing women leaders’ in Independent schools can be partially ascertained by noting the micro-politics of strategic selection and induction of new leaders. In particular policies, strategic marketing and delegation of duties generate degrees of tension leading to increased workloads.
Selection, induction and succession

The strategic importance of selection and induction processes for Junior Head, Deputy or Assistant Principal is important to this discussion as it differs in a number of ways from the processes involved in government schools. In particular, most Independent schools are governed by a School Board or School Council. As Pascoe (1998) explains the powers of a governing body in an Independent School “are usually more extensive than the powers of a school council in a government school. These powers are in proportion to the degree of accountability which pertains to the governing body’s functions” (p. 7). One of their main functions is to appoint a Principal.

However, it is primarily the Principal and senior leadership team who will pre-view, pre-select and interview a potential leader for a new leadership position. Whereas in the state system principals’ are employed by the Department of Education and applicants are drawn from a cohort of eligible candidates but selected by a local selection panel that includes school council representatives, one of whom is trained in equal opportunity.

In the independent sector advertising for new leaders and staff is the principal’s decision usually in consultation with the leadership team. This process tends to favour leaders from outside the school as they bring a new dimension to the school’s leadership team. This approach offers a strategic way to renegotiate the organizational culture and introduce leaders as change agents (Blackmore, 1999). As Blackmore (1999) states: “Women have been typified in the media, professional development workshops, management discourses, and research on women and leadership as being more democratic, collegial, caring, curriculum and student focused as well as being good change agents” (p. 15). It is interesting to note that in the government sector often the incumbent acting principal is appointed—however, in this study only two of the twelve leaders had taught for a brief period of time in their respective schools prior to their appointment.

New leaders are encouraged to exert fresh impetus to reinvigorate school’s identity without challenging the status quo. That is, in terms of delegating revised responsibilities to those already in positions of responsibility or allocating responsibilities to those who may have previously been overlooked. Either way
delegation is a source of tension within schools. Strategic reshuffles change political landscapes; reframe leadership discourses and support a re-culturing process. Such measures reduce new leader’s workloads and strategically utilize the hierarchical infrastructure. Teachers take on additional responsibilities and more administrative work. Often informal delegation of work in an ad-hoc way can impact negatively on the whole school by increasing workload, stress and time constraints for class teachers.

Paradoxically the induction process also tends to reinforce schools’ cultural, political and ideological landscape. Schools tend to select a leader who articulates the senior leadership teams’ priorities and who best fits the needs of the school at the time, while offering continuity and homogeneity. This process is conceptualised by Blackmore et al., (2004) as ‘homosociability’, defined as the preference to work with like people and why people like to work with similar ‘others’. She goes on to note that this is “…the basis of male networking, emerging as a pattern with a critical mass of women in management … [However] peer relations for a woman in a male dominated environment were more unpredictable” (p. 182).

Although the rhetoric of appointment seeks change, leader selection is notably strategic in order to sustain the status quo. Succession planning for formal leadership is not a common practice, even though it provides a readymade leader who is positioned and groomed for the role. Either way selection is a highly political decision. According to Putnam and Mumby (2000) it is “through recruitment, selection, socialization and performance evaluations, organizations develop a social reality in which feelings become a commodity for achieving instrumental goals” (p. 37). Furthermore Sinclair (2007) concurs and argues that new recruits into organizations are tested to “gauge their potential and ‘fit’” (p. 27). However, as the principal and leadership team assesses attributes, values and affiliations of the candidate, “… the aspiring leader becomes compliant, earnestly performing within the regime of leadership while structural power remains masked” (Gunter, 2007, p. 27). At the same time new leaders are encouraged to take on their role as change agents with transformational zeal.
Working in gendered spaces

According to Kamler (2001) “…locations are never neutral…” one is always located, “as a situated subject in a mesh of discourses” (p. 8). Locating the “mesh of discourses” leader’s in this study draw on, contributes to both situating the researcher, the leaders and above all how they take up particular discourses to produce leadership narratives. From a feminist perspective, gender in organizations is systemic rather than individual and work, success and competence are not gender-neutral concepts but rather a reinvigoration of masculinist discourses. Such biases in educational leadership are central to how women in leadership negotiate discourses that frame their workplaces (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). The option to change workplace culture and structures is far more difficult than changing individual women (Gherardi, 1995; Itzin & Newman, 1995; Sinclair, 1994; Cockburn, 1991). The focus on women as ‘the problem’ has deflected attention away from the close connections between discourses of masculinity, rationality and leadership and left them relatively intact.

Many feminist scholars (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Weedon, 2004; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000) agree that women have a particular place which “is the basis not only of the social organization of a whole range of institutions from the family to the workplace” (McDowell, 1999, p. 12). Hence there is an underlying assumption about ‘women’s place’ in society that permeates meta-narratives about women, men, identities, organizations and leadership.

As a response to the gendering of leadership discourses, a range of organizational researchers and theorists have focused on the relationship between gender and workplace cultures (Ely, Foldy & Scully, 2003; Fletcher & Ely, 2003; Kolb, Fletcher, Meyerson, Merrill-Sands & Ely 1998; Acker, 1992, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1991). In particular, Fletcher and Ely (2003) point out that “…power is a core element of gender … [and] positions organizations as central to shaping the meaning of gender, enabling us to reflect more critically on current organisational life and how it could be different” (p. 4). It is interesting to note that in accounting for gender disparities, a wide range of research reveals certain ‘persistent and pervasive patterns’ (Acker, 1991). For instance: “Women’s opportunities for leadership are constrained by traditional gender stereotypes, inadequate access to mentors and
informal networks of support, and inflexible workplace structures” (Rhode, 2003, p. 161).

On the basis that there are ‘pervasive patterns’ of gender inequality the literature (Ely, Foldy & Scully, 2003) indicates that taking a critical perspective has contributed to the re-theorisation of gender as a “discursive construction and a performative fiction” and has influenced studies of the workplace (McDowell, 1999, p. 24). It has allowed a new set of questions to be asked about workplace cultures, and how gender identities are constructed through daily interactions at work. The recognition of difference and possible oppositional [discursive] strategies provide a nuanced way to think about the obstacles facing women in the workplace rather than the overarching discourses of patriarchal domination. The critical perspective has led to questioning language, gestures, speaking styles and bodily presentation (Halford, Savage & Witz, 1997; McDowell, 1999; Tannen, 1994).

This does not suggest that women are victims and the differences that separate women such as, class, ethnicity and place in the world, are not important issues, but it opens the discourses that constitute such dominant discourses to critical analysis. According to Fraser (1991) feminists “need both deconstruction and reconstruction, destabilization of meaning and projection of utopian hope” (p. 175). Moreover, what the cultural or deconstructive turn in feminism has achieved besides deconstructing the notion of a stable subject is the placing of arguments about specificity and particularity at the centre of comparative research.

McDowell (1999, p. 25) argues such questions about specificity and particularity are now “central to feminist scholarship”. This claim is made not only by other researchers (Katz & Smith, 1993) but scholars from a range of disciplines (Kirby, 1996; Grosz, 1994; Fraser, 1991). They emphasize the importance of place, location and positionality of the person making claims and how to listen to and interpret voices from the margins (McDowell, 1999).

**Historical narratives**

The genealogy of women’s historical positioning in education reveals the dominant discourses that associate rationality with masculinity in leadership, and thereby emotionality with teaching and femininity (Blackmore, 1999). From the beginning
“women were seldom heads of any but the smallest rural schools…. this unwritten law excluding women from …head teachership was a crucial mechanism in their professional confinement” (Theobald, 1996, p.191). In the late nineteenth century the male took precedence over the female teacher. The subsequent division of labour has sustained historical discourses reinvigorating the “politics of male privilege” in educational leadership (Blackmore, 1999).

Prior to the 1870s male and female teachers, worked as independent contractors in a deregulated market. These early schools were competitive reliant upon and inspector’s paternalism and the goodwill of the community to maintain numbers and prevent closure. Denominational and state aided schools competed with private working-class Dame schools to meet the needs of a growing professional and commercial middle class. Indeed the rise of educated middle class women as professional managers and educators saw the emergence of the professionalisation of teaching. This was predicated upon an increased male presence rather than improving the status of women teachers beyond “administrating the feminine” (Blackmore, 1999 p. 30).

Therefore the legacy from the past has led to a gendered polarization of male oriented (rational) educational administration and management compared to the more feminized (emotional) teacher classroom work that has traditionally been women’s domain. These traditional binaries have contributed to contemporary leadership discourses that factor out social, political and structural contexts, which continue to influence current thinking about educational leadership. The bureaucratization and professionalisation of education according to Blackmore (1999) was largely “…at the expense of women’s individuality and autonomy …and at the same time benefiting the escalating ‘capitalism and middle-class masculinity’” (p. 30).

Throughout the research literature, with rare exceptions women’s leadership work is made invisible (Fletcher, 1999) through new managerialism and corporate ‘masculinist’ discourses. Women leaders and those in senior leadership in schools have inherited the legacy of historical positionings and discriminatory practices. As Blackmore (1999) notes such practices were orchestrated through “the legislative and organizational gate-keeping mechanisms excluding women from leadership
established during the late nineteenth century… predicated upon the naturalness of male authority and female unsuitability for authority” (p. 27).

The literature indicates that, educational leadership is ‘gendered’ in its reinstatement of social, political and economic relationships in a number of ways that have ramifications for women teachers’ career choices, perceptions of leadership and the type of leadership that is expected of them once they take up a leadership role. Indeed these shifts in school/system power relations, replicated in all educational sectors and the workplace more generally, have broad social implications.

**Leadership myths and workplace changes**

Women in leadership or those seeking to lead in today’s schools will find the global/local discourses circulating about women and leadership; position women differently. What is different from the past is how the corporatisation and commodification of educational markets has strengthened the impact on the daily practices of schooling, in highly gendered ways. Corporate managerialism with its emphasis on efficiency, accountability and outcomes, privileges ‘hard’ management and entrepreneurial discourses of leadership over less instrumental more holistic and ‘softer’ feminized leadership discourses. The former depoliticizes the issue of gender by refusing to recognize “…how restructuring and shifts in cultural values continue to reshape and indeed constrain the possibilities for feminist leadership practices” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 4).

Although the discourse of women’s caring and sharing styles of leadership (soft discourses) empowers women collectively; it is a myth that appears to be perpetuated at women’s expense as it essentialises women as a homogeneous category, thus ignoring racial, ethnic, class and indeed value differences among women (and men) (Reay and Ball, 2000). Such a reading of the literature stereotypes women leaders’ and is due to populist versions promoted in the media of feminist discourses about women’s styles of leadership being more nurturing (Sinclair, 2007).

Promotion of this popular generality maintains traditional female stereotypes as women are seen to be more adept at personal change and changing others and also more amenable and compliant to ‘corporatization’ (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). Hence the ‘feminine’ skills of organization, perfection and presentation are seen to be of value in senior management and as Blackmore and Sachs’s (2007, p. 57)
research found, “Women prepared to do this form of domestic labour, ‘tidying up’ the policies and procedures, were well rewarded … [and] as managers of quality, were seen to be good corporate citizens (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996)”.

In a similar vein Hearn (2002) argues “(men’s) dominant forms of discourses of multiple masculinities, identities and organizational cultures [are transmitted through] …discourses of ‘authoritarian masculinity’ that bring together gender and force; ‘careerist masculinity’ gender and work; and ‘paternalist masculinity’ gender and family” (p. 45). Hearn’s thesis provides insight into how men’s material discursive practices have simultaneously reproduced management masculinities (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Similarly both men and women are subject to these ‘masculinity’ discourses and women in particular are delimited due to ‘otherness’ and the availability of discourses able to be mobilized by women.

The ‘delimiting’ effects of ‘otherness’ may also explain why some leaders, particularly women refuse the overarching title of leader yet they “are strongly influencing direction, defending standards, supporting and innovating in their workplaces and communities, yet …[they] don’t see such aspects of their own work as leadership” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 27). Rather than call upon the dominant discourses of leadership they prefer to call themselves ‘agents for change’, although they are undertaking leadership work (Sinclair, 2007). Individuals who do not connect with the contemporary corporate ‘masculinised’ leadership discourses often discount their reservations about it and disqualify themselves as leaders.

Workplace changes, shifts of power and relational practices have intensified the contradictions women leaders’ already experience regarding their historical positioning as women in education. The growth of new discourses of masculinity, such as entrepreneurial masculinity, has tapped into particular cultures to produce a range of exclusionary practices which position women in a certain place. At the same time, discourses about the doxa of good leadership practice, reinvent the notion that leadership is about “…bureaucratic rationality, unemotional arguments and hard decisions…the discourses of hegemonic masculinity” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 135). Such discourses continue to marginalize women and many men while enabling individual men to maintain their advantage.
No discourse is safe

Women themselves and feminists in particular have contributed to the production of universalizing discourses arising from regulatory tendencies of ‘feminisms’ social movements and disciplinary knowledge (Blackmore 1999). Such universalizing discourses have been popularized through the media and have promoted feminist discourses about women’s styles of leadership being more nurturing and at the same time stereotyped what is seen as women’s work within leadership and relegated such work to managerial tasks. Such discourses have “constitutive power of the micro (interactional), intermediate (institutional) and macro (societal) levels of discourse” (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. 28). That is, how women leaders acted and reacted was not only framed by (macro) policies, (intermediate) accountabilities and (micro) relations of power but also limiting gender scripts that informed others’ perceptions of their actions.

Women leaders are caught between the binaries, positioning them as being both in and out of control while they struggle with rationality/emotionality; mind/body, hard/soft, objectivity/subjectivity of their positioning. The constant struggle with gender and leadership has led to a conflation “…of ‘being female’ into ‘being feminist’ in highly essentialist ways and “ignores both the differences amongst women and the difficult political context in which leading women now work” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 3).

Besides Fletcher (1999) points out essentialism also applies when ‘being male’ is conflated into ‘being masculinist’ and not only ‘masculinised’ but represents a “privileging of instrumental processes that continually recreate and reinforce this image, … [and] that the social construction of this dichotomy along idealized gender lines has led to a certain way of seeing and representing work” (p. 28).

Although subject positions operate in both spheres, often simultaneously, the discourse continues to reinforce and textually represent men and women as separate, gendered and dichotomous. Such discourses highlight the binaries emotional/rational, logical/illogical, masculine/feminine and the managerial / professional dimensions of leadership. Within these discursive spaces there are three marginalized discourses that have been colonized to varying degrees by the corporate
and professional paradigms and somewhat obscured in the process; diversity and gender equity as well as emotional discourses.

Diversity
Diversity has been used to capture all manner of differences in the workplace including first order differences in social identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality and religion. Second order differences arise when there are differences in “organizational groups, such as functional or educational background and tenure; and differences in individual characteristics, such as idiosyncratic attitudes, values, cognitive styles and preferences” (Ely & Foldy, 2003, p. 321). Although many diversity initiatives have been introduced they have not, for the most part, delivered the fundamental changes that are necessary in workplaces for them to be effective. Prasad and Mills (1997) are critical of the ‘managing diversity’ “movement” for its “upbeat naivete” (p. 5) and general ignorance of “the multitude of political interactions between dominant and non-dominant groups within organizations” (p. 18). These authors argue that without direct attention to the power differentials among different groups in organizations, diversity initiatives will achieve little (Ely & Foldy, 2003, p. 323).

Contradictions and the discriminatory effects are sustained through policies that promote particular ideologies. This has meant shifts in the meaning of inequality in policy texts in Australia away from terms such as ‘social justice’ to those of ‘managing diversity’ in the context of a more conservative organisational politics. Diversity has been engaged to serve the neo-liberal market, intended “to assimilate, promote consensus or cohesion in order to contribute to the organization and a productive workforce” (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p.4). Gender equity policy draws on discourses relating to, masculinity, masculinism and patriarchy. Therefore discourses of diversity have been individualized, recognizing all forms of difference and readily support the managerial and market orientation of schooling, often displacing or co-opting professional discourses that have focused on inequality, discrimination and non-inclusiveness.

Furthermore governments and policy makers have ‘managed diversity’ through gender equity discourses that are focused on getting more women into leadership positions and thereby reducing the argument to more equitable (but not necessarily
equal) representation. Such ‘representational diversity’ recognizes women’s ways of leading and doing things differently as well as other outside groups but it poses a dilemma because of its essentialist connotations about women as a homogenous group. As Blackmore (2006, p.190) argues it ignores “first order differences among women based on race, class, ethnicity and how this is embodied through images of leadership; but also … contestations over values, ideologies, educational positions among women; that is ‘intellectual diversity’ (in Phillips, 1996)”. In addition, women leaders’ ‘token’ status heightens their visibility in these positions and so they are especially vulnerable to greater scrutiny and inflated expectations (Ely, 2003, p. 157).

**Gender equity**

Educational reforms have provided a strategic opportunity for the mobilization of individual, sometimes collective, male resistance to gender equity reform. Therefore ‘managing diversity’ has contributed to a re-masculinization of executive power as masculinity and capitalism take on a new mode of control. For women in leadership the shift in power relationships, according to Blackmore (2006) has meant that ‘equity’ depends on the “goodwill of individual executives to raise expectations through managerial fiat” (p. 187). Resistance to gender equity reform is “discursively played out through the appropriation and misreading of gender equity discourses” (p. 19).

The cultural ideology (masculinist, corporate managerialism) that underpins such ‘misreading’ of policy, highlights how inequality works not only through structures but also work cultures and relationships with personal and family life. Such gender equity policies reflect how power is exercised within institutions and although individual male behaviour may change over time, “masculinism or the ideology that justifies men’s domination over women and patriarchy” remains contentious (Brittan, 1989, pp. 3-5).

Women in educational leadership have continued to experience the outcomes of the reinvigoration of ‘masculinism’ marginalizing the Equal Opportunity discourses and Affirmative Action policies. There is considerable political, economic and social investment in reinforcing the ‘masculine’ corporate paradigm. For instance, women were brought into management particularly, middle management, because their
‘feminine selves’ ‘fitted’ the new corporate order, complementing, not challenging the male norm, ‘adding value’ through an ‘essential’ connectedness now necessary in organizations relying on people for sustained productivity (Blackmore, 1999).

The corporate approach has meant that if governments and policy-makers attend to gender equity at all, they equate equity to getting more women into leadership positions. The contradiction is foremost when policy-makers advocate flexibility, diversity and teamwork in the postmodern workplace and steer attention away from wider issues of structured gender inequality. Politicians and policy-makers continue to see structural reform as addressing educational issues, whereas change theorists have long argued the need to focus on the cultural aspects of school reform.

It appears in hindsight that gender equity initiatives, incorporated into new managerialism, have produced just another aspect of public relations, with little regard for any oppositional roots or emancipatory intentions. Equity policy has been co-opted to serve the corporate discourse and seems more ‘symbolic’ rather than ‘real,’ another aspect of ‘performativity’. Indeed, “the appropriation of gender equity discourses by management under such ambiguous conditions … [keeps] women in their place and thus another form of symbolic violence…” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 240). Hence organizational investments in managing gender equity are part of the difficulty in examining such disparities.

Blackmore and Sachs’s (2007) all female study, found there is no single oppositional moment that allows for collective action against the reconfiguration of the social relations of gender, just a “gradual erosion of benefits and the sidelining of structural concerns and a refocusing on managerialism” (p. 237). According to Sinclair (2000b) ‘erosion’ of gender equity issues can involve four responses: women just “don’t fit; some incremental adjustment occurs; institutions realize the costs as highly experienced women exit because they have no place; and finally, recognition that the lack of women is indicative of deeper organizational problems requiring a change in culture” (p. 143).

**Emotional work**
Recent educational administration, leadership theory and research (Bates, 2009; Blackmore, 2009, 2004; Zembylas, 2009, 2003; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Beatty
2007, 2006, 2005, 2000a; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999) has recognized emotions as part of everyday social, cultural and political life. The rise in interest concerning emotional discourses has the hallmarks of being 'high risk' for women, as Blackmore and Sachs (2007) point out, “… any rebellion against the instrumental logic of the practices of restructuring or …improved performance was readily typified as being irrational or emotional, illogical and to be ignored. Of this, women, who are stereotypically portrayed as the bearers of emotion, are highly aware” (p. 206).

According to Zembylas (2009) the politics of emotions “challenges the cultural and historical emotion norms with respect to what emotions are, how they are expressed, who gets to express them and under what circumstances” (p. 98). This, and the political struggle involved, is where the emotions of school leaders “highlights the connections among power relations, resistance and transformation” (Zembylas, 2009, p. 98).

Furthermore the emotional and psychological consequences and the new managerialism have impacted on leaders’ workload, morale and job security. As Smyth et al., (2000) point out competitiveness, secrecy and politicking has left teachers “… reeling from the effects of poorly conceptualized reform policies that have literally torn the heart out of their work” (p. 10). Such ‘affective economies’ according to Zembylas (2009) gives rise to ‘emotional ambivalence’ where “meaning is negotiated and individuals struggle with political and ethical dilemmas” (p. 98).

Leaders and teachers are sensitive to issues of trust and betrayal with colleagues (Hargreaves, 2003). As Beatty (2006) argues “emotional silence is part of a longstanding tradition and regularly positioned as a ‘professional’ imperative… it is time for the feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983) that demand emotional silence, self-denial and numbing repression to be challenged and changed” (pp. 5-6).

In addition the popularity of ‘emotional intelligence’ discourses grew out of 1980s bureaucratic change management practices and promoted social control rather than politics. According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) the emotional intelligence discourse “pretends to be morally neutral, another ‘attribute’ of the good leader (e.g., Goleman 1995)... [And that] human resource management domesticates emotions by
reducing it to conflict management or occupational stress. Mainstream educational management theory and managerial … practice retain the unhealthy rationality/emotionality binary (male/female split) that denies the emotional and the political” (p. 205).

From the historical perspective women have been ‘held responsible’ for the caring and emotional aspects of education and child development (Blackmore, 1999, p. 169). By default women became the moral negotiators of schooling, and now the “emotional managers of a quasi-market system where many women principals feel the burden of ‘guilt…and excessive commitments to care’ that prevent a feminist educational leadership practice” (Hargreaves, 1994, p.156). Thus the individualizing or denial of emotion is premised on a gendered divide between emotion and rationality and as such – emotion is a commodity, just another resource to be channelled into organizational ends, that is, the ‘management’ of emotion (Rose, 1990).

The underlying dilemma related to gender equity, diversity and emotional labour is the categorizing of such discourses while ignoring the power relations that maintain them. For instance, by failing to address the social relations of gender within the context of social justice and inequality and by maintaining categories (differences arising from race, class and sexuality) within the category of gender; such differences are rendered invisible. Thus there is the danger of naming the problem as ‘women’s under-representation’ and ‘individual deficiencies’ making women the problem rather than the structure and culture of organizations. However, altering policies and removing the category of women as an equity group; renders gender invisible, once again. In this way diversity policies and emotional discourses have equally been subsumed under broad ‘inclusive’ categories and as such difference and diversity have been rendered invisible.

**Disappearing acts**

Women leaders’ workplace changes have highlighted the coexistence of power and paradoxes in women’s lives specifically their experiences of vulnerability, strength and ambiguity (Chase, 1995). Situated educational leadership discourses are contested ‘discursive fields’ where women leaders’ experience the competing ways of giving meaning to their work (Weedon, 1987). Women, in particular struggle with
the emphasis on individual achievement and success surrounding corporate discourses on the one hand and the ongoing debates over the causes and meanings of inequality on the other (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007).

Many women in leadership experience increasing ambiguity. According to Chase (1995) this is due to gender expectations and stereotyping while committed to a discourse and rationale of social justice. Work by Hall and Southworth (1996) Smulyan (2000) and Strachan (1999) on women headteachers/principals “show how identity has been shaped by the interplay between the headteacher and the local/national setting in which they are working” (Gunter, 2001, p. 31). This would indicate leaders are subject to contradictory discourses about commitment to the school’s ethos, management practices, and to personal values and professionalism.

Problematizing power relationships and how leadership discourses are underpinned by the politics of historical positioning, gender relations, power and equity; foreshadows the contradictions facing women in leadership today. Such discourses are part of a larger debate in theorizing about power, specifically the degree to which power is predetermined by structural relations (corporate, formal authority) and at the same time available to individuals to assert their agency with personal action – thus creating a structure verses agency debate (Giddens, 1991).

Contemporary economic ideology and policies are created on the assumption that leadership discourses are based on individual power exercised through structures. However, this denies the effects of situated contexts, hierarchical structures, and cultural systemic and historical disadvantage. Through analysing the literature, questions arise about how power operates through leadership discourses and the current leadership theories and models that sustain them. In particular how power functions in regard to gender-neutral corporate and professional discourses as well as the impact on women leaders’ gendered work-identities and their access to particular discourses.

**Power – knowledge**

Discourses such as gender-equity, emotion and diversity highlight how power is pervasive and often unseen. From a feminist poststructural perspective, power offers insight into the micro-politics of how women leaders’ are positioned within
particular discourses. As Foucault asserts “power is everywhere” and “power is exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault, 1993, pp. 518-519). He believes power and knowledge mutually constitute each other; for Foucault (1980) power is implicated in how we make sense of the world and ourselves. But while making sense is more or less prescribed by structures of language, knowledge and power there is no ‘reality’ hidden within. Any way of thinking, any ideology can be mined for its distortions, assumptions and implications (Foldy, 2002, p. 96).

According to McNay (2000, p. 36) theorists Bourdieu and Foucault, regard large scale social inequalities as being produced through the subtle inculcation of power relations upon the bodies and dispositions of individuals. Foucault would see this as ‘discipline’; whereas Bourdieu would relate this to ‘symbolic violence’ exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity. Moreover the “…incorporation of the social into the corporeal is captured by Bourdieu in the idea of habitus, a system of durable, transposable dispositions that mediates the actions of an individual and the external conditions of production…the habitus is what enables the institution to attain full realization” (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 53-57).

Whether large scale social inequalities relate to ‘discipline, power relations and dispositions’ or ‘symbolic violence’ the potential of feminist poststructural work to draw on such theories enables a better understanding of the “interplay between agency and structure, [using] …theories of power as a lens through which to describe, understand and explain” (Gunter, 2001, p. 42).

According to Besley (2001) women’s knowledge has been devalued; on the one hand through “previously established, erudite knowledges that have been buried, hidden, disguised, masked, removed or written out by revisionist histories; and on the other local, popular or indigenous knowledges that are marginalized or denied space to perform adequately” (Besley, 2001, p. 78). However, examining the ways women’s knowledge/power has been subverted and marginalized draws me to Foucault’s (1981) more complex set of power relations as particularly insightful because this offers a decentered approach that does not assume in advance any unity of domination or centralization. Foucault draws attention to power as constituting a multiplicity of force relations:
Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support these forces find in one another… (Foucault, 1981, pp. 92-3)

Foucault’s (1981) ‘decentered’ approach is the outcome of his former position where he argued “…power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the [comparable] constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1977 p. 28). Foucault’s (1977) perspective on the situated and localized affect of how power relationships operate and the connection between power and knowledge suggests it is “…the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determine the forms and possible domains of knowledge” (p. 28). In his later works Foucault (1981, pp. 92-3) loosens power from ‘determining the forms and possible domains of knowledge’ to power which operates as a ‘multiplicity of force relations’ that are premised on discourse. In this regard his perspectives on power have evolved over time yet remain controversial among feminists.

According to Weedon (1999) feminist skepticism towards Foucault’s (1977) position regarding power was problematic because it denied women “a place exterior to power from which to ground transformative political action… [however, she continues] poststructuralist feminists argue that the theory that all discursive practices and all forms of subjectivity constitute and are constituted by relations of power is only disabling if power is seen as always necessarily repressive” (p. 126). Equally knowledge is only disabling if it is seen as always necessarily repressive.

**Power – discourse and identity**

Following Foucault’s (1981) ‘decentered’ image of power that focuses less on dominance and subordination and more on how power is dispersed across a range of social institutions and practices is particularly useful in exploring how power functions through the discursive constitution of individuals within discourses (Weedon, 2004). As we are all subject to multiple discourses, discourses are a medium through which power manifests and influences our thoughts and actions.
According to Weedon (1987):

Discourses, in Foucault’s work, are ways of constituting knowledge…
Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They
constitute the ‘nature of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and
emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern.
(Weedon, 1987, p. 108)

Rather than individuals being acted upon by power, manipulated by external forces,
Foucault (1981) understands individuals as being constructed through power
relations. Power, identity and discourse constitute each other as particular historical
power relations creating particular identities that serve to maintain power relations.
According to Knights and Willmott (1985) the process of identity formation is “a
medium as well as an outcome of the …relationships of power” (p. 41). Therefore
leadership discourses provide the mechanism for how power inscribes ways of
thinking and acting on individuals, while allowing for multiplicity and variation
(Foldy, 2002, p. 96).

The focus on women leaders in situated leadership practices questions how power,
identity and discourse operate within existing power relationships. This debate raises
questions about how conceptual understandings of ‘gender’ function as a product of
power, knowledge and discourse, in schools and society. In this respect leadership
discourses, regardless of how strategically they are deployed, are not always chosen,
as individuals are located, and contextualized by broader cultural narratives (Aaltio
& Mills, 2002). Yet individuals are able to choose discourses and position
themselves as both powerful and powerless.

The concept of Foucauldian “power and the distributive politics of discourse”
(Yeatman, 1990 p. 155), is premised on Foucault’s comments, “discourse is not
simply that which translates struggles or systems of determination, but it is the thing
for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be
seized” (Foucault, 1984, p. 110).

**Power and self regulation**

Power in organizations such as schools tends to be treated as a managerial
‘contingency’ (Hardy, 1998) as leaders evaluate how much power they have to make
planned changes and the strategies needed to execute their plan. Hence hierarchal
power became a tool to enhance control and minimize resistance (Sinclair, 2007, p. 82). Similarly power is also dispensed through new performativity practices of professional standards and through consensus building and encouraging teamwork in corporate managerialism.

Foucault (1984) would consider ‘managerial contingencies’ as various control mechanisms operating as a form of social governmentality or codes of meaning and practice. His argument about ‘governmentality’ has become influential particularly as research confirms “individuals police themselves and their peers more vigorously than a manager with a stopwatch can ever hope to” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 83). Self-surveillance as a condition of self appraisal highlights Foucault’s notion of control mechanisms ‘governmentality’ and draws attention to the ‘conduct of conduct’ which operates through what he termed ‘technologies of the self’ or ways individuals understand themselves and in turn self-regulate within particular codes of meaning and practice.

Underpinning the concept of ‘technologies of the self’ is the discursive dynamics of power and resistance. To explain this further I draw on St. Pierre’s (1995-2000) ethnographic research into women of Essex County – a rural community in southern United States, where she investigated how these particular women create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions. Above all I acknowledge how her study has informed my understanding about where I might position myself and approach the women in this study:

I have become increasingly interested in how women construct their subjectivities within the limits and possibilities of the discourses and cultural practices available to them. I have become intrigued with Foucault’s (1984, 1985/1984, 1986/1984) ethical analysis, care of the self, that focuses on the arts of existence, or technologies of the self, that people use to create themselves as the ethical subjects of their actions.
(St Pierre, 2000, p. 258)

‘Technologies of the self’ or ways individuals understand themselves within particular organizational codes of practice draws attention to the discursive mechanisms that contextualize women leaders ‘self-regulation’ and how they assemble leader-identities. Such positioning focuses on how power is present in all situations, not necessarily negative or coercive but also positive and empowering. Therefore drawing on Foucault (1980) to create a framework for understanding the
relationship between power and identity allows this study of women leaders’
workplace narratives to focus on how these women negotiate multiple discourses and
questions what particular discursive practices of resistance are employed in shaping
leader-identities. This approach draws attention to the often subtle exercise of power.

**Power and resistance**

Such resistance takes many forms challenging implicit dichotomies, revealing
suppressed contradictions and calling attention to what has been obscured or
silenced. For example, Sinclair (2007) argues “many organizational ‘culture change’
initiatives, aimed at creating a ‘family atmosphere’ or making people keen to come
to work are experienced as positive, even though at a tacit level power is exercised to
ensure everyone behaves like a ‘team player’ (Casey, 2004, 1995). She goes on to
note that power “can also be exercised by people at the bottom of hierarchies through
acts of resistance, humour and subtle sabotage as well as on the picket-line” (p. 83).

Moreover Meyerson and Scully (2000) suggest proactive individuals may be
‘tempered radicals’ who “identify with and are committed to their organizations and
also to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from and
possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of the organization” in this way they
exert a delicate balancing act: “fitting in just enough to stay in the game while using
an insiders leverage to change the game” (p. 266).

According to Sinclair (2007 p. 84) power works through what is valued in
organizations and “much valuable leadership and change work in organizations done
by women leaders is routinely undervalued” (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Meyerson,
2001). In this respect Fletcher (1999) uses the verb ‘to disappear’ to convey the
active way organizations de-legitimise the relational work of leading such as talking
and listening. Therefore acknowledging the contradictory nature of how power
works, is important particularly as individuals can feel both powerful and powerless
in different discursive spaces that enable different forms of agency. That is “power
…and is exercised rather than possessed’ by individuals on themselves as well as over
others and is not primarily repressive but productive” Such contradictions are central
to women’s experiences (Sawicki, 1991, pp. 21, 25).
By drawing attention to how power is exercised from ‘innumerable points’ (Foucault, 1993) focuses on those discourses that have been undermined or colonized by other more dominant discourses. As William’s (2000) argues such a process involves, “… making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter” (p. 180).

In the next chapter I explain the design of the study and the development of my theoretical and methodological framework. I detail my approach to feministpoststructural theory using narrative inquiry and positioning analysis to amplify the micro-politics, power relations and subjectivities, within the research participants’ discourses.

Aside - June 2006

What is leadership? Is it a ‘fabrication? A space inhabited by particular leadership discourses, bureaucratic and corporate discourses that are filled with the rhetoric of strategic planning, vision building and performance reviews? Have I been complicit in this process of choosing particular discourses and inadvertently reproducing the same discrimination? I would have to say yes. Leading in Independent schools means managing these discourses and practices daily while trying to prioritize time for students, teachers, and parents. And the question that really masks another more disturbing agenda about ‘performing schools’ and ‘capacity building’ for teachers are that these discourses seem to mask a myriad of exploitive discourses and practices leading to excessive stress, increased work-load and a focus on the politic of career building and strategic networking for personal and professional gain.

What leader-identities do organizations reward? I turn to Helen Gunter (2001) as she too seeks “…the spaces and places where intellectual work can continue to thrive when the dominant model of effective and improving leadership seeks to totalize who we are and what we can do…”(p. 48).

I think such ‘totalizing’ is a provocation to look more thoroughly into the history, discursive nuances and habits that constitute what we inherit as discourses and how they constitute what leaders choose and in turn create the repertoire that leaders draw on to position themselves in situations, conversations and locations. In a more substantive way it affords an opening of postmodern thought towards multiplicity and the opportunities feminists might take hold of by rewriting and retelling our stories. Is this what I seek? A path that offers an opportunity to build towards a more critical theory and generate different discourses from those we reproduce daily to self-regulate and manage ourselves and others. What processes of subjection brought us to this point in time? Are there other more powerful stories we might draw on? I mention these misgivings because research elicits questions not considered before and I wonder, are other women interested?
CHAPTER FOUR

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Theories are relevant intellectual recourses but they are not all of the same size, weight, complexity or quality. (Ozga, 2000, p. 43)

Introduction

In the previous Chapter I detailed the problematic nature of women in leadership, gendered organisations, and how women leaders’ contend with inequity, ambiguity and contradiction in their workplace. Leadership paradigms have reinforced ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and positioned women leaders within multiple discourses of gender, leadership and organisational politics that produce, paradox and complexity. In attempting to better understand and theorize the dominant leadership discourses and how such discourses might be taken up and woven into individual leadership narratives; I view the processes of systemic, organizational and personal change as gendered, as are their effects; a feature largely neglected in the literature on educational reforms and restructuring (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Together these discourses generate a discursive landscape that positions the women in this study.

This chapter extends what has already been mentioned regarding Foucauldian theories of power, leadership discourses and how women are stereotyped and historically positioned within dominant leadership discourses. In particular this chapter details a feminist poststructural research framework. The design, theory, methodological approaches and analyses arise from this framework. In particular I draw on poststructural theory (Foucault, 1997, 1993, 1991, 1977; Weedon, 2004, 1999) combined with feminist perspectives (Braidotti, 2002, 1994; Davies, 2000; Mc Nay, 2000; St Pierre, 2000, 1997) to position this investigation.

Theorists such as St. Pierre (1997) problematize research in which the researcher seeks to present a coherent, lineal account of the process, as if research design leads to knowledge production. Poststructural theory, with its focus on discontinuity, rejection of universal claims and on ambiguity, paradox and contradiction, seeks to engage theoretical and methodological tools to critically reflect and question this process. And asks who benefits, who speaks and who is silenced? Thus
deconstructing knowledge claims and questioning the motives underpinning such claims.

A feminist poststructural research frame provides language and conceptual tools to question the disparities within the leadership rhetoric and enables this study to begin from what is normally excluded. In particular how gender-neutral discourses marginalize women’s experience of leadership and “how that experience is perceived and internalized” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 19). Hence women leaders are not simply the receivers of these discourses but active subjects in negotiating discourses.

Moreover the research articulates how a feminist poststructural perspective sees the production of knowledge as an exercise of power where only some voices are heard and only some experience is counted as knowledge. This study is designed to connect rather than divide, to offer frameworks of understanding rather than assign blame or guilt. And it reflects my intention that deeper understandings of these issues can open up possibilities and ‘leverage points for change’, that can be created “even in large social systems that seem impervious to change” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 19).

Hence using a feminist lens to investigate the data I draw on narrative methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990) to further locate discourses and women leaders within situated contexts both global and local. The research literature (Chase, 1995; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) indicates that women bring individual histories, memories and dispositions to leadership as well as their positioning as women within institutions. Therefore they are situated within discriminatory politics while negotiating their leader-identities (Weedon, 2004; St Pierre, 2000; Davies & Harré, 1990). The feminist approach views women interviewees as ‘active subjects’ able to move back and forth between multiple subject positions with different degrees of agency by mobilizing a range of discursive practices.

Key concepts such as leadership, women, power and discourse arise from the literature framed by feminist, poststructural theory. This frame also shaped how I conducted the research and gathered the data. In particular why I consider the questionnaire to be an appropriate tool to elicit information from a range of different schools and why I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews.
Developing the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is supported by a reflexive investigation, founded on feminist arguments as they provide insights that assist with building from critical theory as an analysis tool. The study provides a space for professional women to share their leadership experiences and in doing so I too begin to critically reflect upon my position as a former Junior Head in the Independent sector. The process of conducting and reflecting on the data revealed how I am positioned and discursively constituted as were my participants, in ways that were both outside of my control and inherent in the situation. As a female researcher, studying women leaders, of a predominately female workforce, the layering of a gendered cultural context, is both its strength and its limitation. Therefore we need to theorize gender change better – “to consider both its textual nuances and the power of discourse in meaning making…the material and cultural conditions that produce particular leadership discourses that constrain women” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 222).


Feminist poststructural theory frames the rationale for the narrative inquiry approach and the concept of positioning. This frame adds “a specific marginalized voice to organizational discourse – women’s voice – and, by doing so, disrupts a particular system of power … [and reveals] the relationship between power and knowledge…[as well as] the role of language…in constructing experience, and its concept of resistance” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 21). Hence the narratives in this study are premised on a theoretical understanding that individuals are active subjects, discursively constituted through ‘positioning’ discourses - partial, changing and often contradictory; producing multiple subjectivities. Identifying competing discourses can offer insights into understanding relations between culture, narrative experience and what these women are telling us about power, subjection and the constitution of
leadership-identities through discourse. According to Weedon (2004) discursive fields “are themselves made up of competing discourses that produce different subject positions and forms of identity” (p. 17).

Poststructural theories have been attractive to feminists conducting research as St Pierre (2000) states: “The ‘linguistic turn’ in history has produced powerful and subversive analyses – e.g., deconstruction, queer theory, and rhizoanalysis - that educators (St. Pierre, 1997; Stronach & Mac Lure, 1997; McCoy, 1997; Pillow, 1997; Elam, 1994; Spanos, 1993; Spivak, 1993) have adopted in their work” (p. 8). Furthermore Davies (2000) argues that the power feminists (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Sinclair, 2007; Foldy, 2002; St Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1999) have found in poststructuralist theorizing is due to “the possibilities for undermining …particularly oppressive forms of subjection” (p.180). Making the constitutive force of discourse visible opens the discourse and the positioning of the self, to revision. Feminists have found poststructuralist theorizing particularly useful as it makes visible,

… the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter. In this way they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse to disrupt those of its effects they wish to disrupt.
(Davies, 2000, p. 180)

As Thompson (1999) argues: “There are many discourses, many different, overlapping, intersecting and competing sets of stories and practices … Foucault does not suggest that nothing exists outside discourse, but he does argue that nothing has meaning outside discourse” (p. 34). Foucault’s idea of discourse as a set – a formation of stories and practices that construct both knowledge and power relations informs this study by recognizing how collective and individual discourses of ‘resistance’ support an active subject position. Foucault (1978) argues “where there is power, there is resistance …We’re never trapped by power; it’s always possible to modify its hold, in determined conditions and following a precise strategy” (p. 95).

Meta-narratives - dominant discourses
Universalizing theories, termed ‘meta-narratives’ (Lyotard, 1984) or dominant discourses (Gee, 1996) indicate the knowledge transmitted by these narratives “…determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one
must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play… to be the object of a narrative” (Gee, 1996, p. 21). Researchers and theorists operating in the field of narrative inquiry and discourse analysis use a range of terms to describe meta-narratives or master narratives (Andrews, 2002; Mishler, 1995; Talbot et al., 1995), master plots (Abbott, 2002), culturally available narratives (Antaki, 1994; Ramsey, 1993), dominant discourses (Gee, 1996; Gergen, 1992) or simply cultural texts (Freeman, 2002; Denzin, 1992).

In this regard Bové (1990) questions the universalizing impact of meta-narratives and asks: "How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects? How does it exist?” (p. 54). This attention to context, process and effect is important as it requires listening closely to how women narrate their leadership stories in order to understand how dominant cultural and professional discourses (meta-narratives), are being used.

The strength of feminist poststructural accounts is questioning: Who gets to speak? And who is spoken for? Even more important, as St. Pierre (2000) argues “...the rules of discourse allow certain people to be subjects of statements and others to be objects. Discourse can never be just ‘linguistic’ since it organizes a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world” (p. 8). In this way St. Pierre highlights the cultural practice of constructing identities that appear cohesive and fixed yet are pervious and responsive to being shaped through multiple discourses and changing discursive practices. This is what Chase (1995) describes as the “discursive disjunction that shapes how women […] talk about their experiences of achievement and subjection” (p. xi).

Moreover subjects, speakers or ‘the person’ are always already positioned regardless of what is said and to whom it is directed. This perspective is not deterministic, fixed or given. On the contrary, discourses are situated in relation to their cultural and historical context. The power relations that govern them are open to possible resistance and change from individuals within particular discursive fields. As Weedon (1987) argues:
Discursive fields consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes...Some will account for and justify the appropriateness of the status quo. Others will...challenge existing practices from within or contest the very basis of current organization and the selective interests it represents. Such discourses are likely to be marginal to existing practices...
(Weedon, 1987, p. 35)

Feminist poststructural perspectives are a productive way to open the marginal and contested spaces for individuals to actively be agentive and discursively position themselves as powerful through the potential to change what is marginalizing. For instance, women may choose to mobilize different discourses, challenge the status quo, change their discursive practices and narrate their leadership in more productive ways.

**Discourse, gender and agency**

Critical feminist analyses begins by acknowledging how women are stereotyped as ‘other’ against the background of a masculine paradigm, embodied in the image of visionary, multi-skilled, entrepreneurial manager. The re-formation of the social relations of education, work and family in the past decade reveals the material and political effects for leaders; as women and as active subjects (Blackmore, 1999). Such active subjects are gendered and according to de Lauretis (1987) gender, “…is the product and process of a number of social technologies such as administration and schooling, of institutionalised discourses, epistemologies and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life” (pp. 2-3). Furthermore, Visweswaran (1994) points out women “…are constituted by relations of power … [that are] always historically determined” (p. 8).

Thus within the prevailing leadership discourses there is a failure to recognize gendered and relational practices (Fletcher, 1999) and aspects of feminine ways of working in leadership. For instance, “active listening, emotional commitment to people and the job and working collaboratively in teams” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 67). Such practices and the associated discourses are disconnected and devalued within ‘re-masculinised’ corporate discourses and discourses of professionalism (Fletcher, 1999; Sachs, 2003; Chase, 1995). This means that what is upheld as good leadership practice is gendered and uncontested (Gunter & Forrester, 2010).
However, the limiting effects of ‘re-masculinised’ leadership discourses can be contested as Butler (1993) argues, “…this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation external to power” (p. 15). In this way Butler’s appropriation of Foucauldian theory involves a decentred notion of the subject and of agency. Butler’s work indicates how all forms of subjectivity and discursive practices are constituted by, relations of power which is both enabling and repressive.

Discourse is more than ‘these rules’ which refer to the dominant hierarchal system of power relationships. A particular strength of poststructural theory is that it recognizes the positioning power of discourses “with the possibility of choice that is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the very persons who engage in them” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 46).

Therefore agency is premised on discursive practices and discourses or the “…ways we talk and write situated within social practices and historical conditions of meaning; positions from which texts are both produced and received” (Fenwick, 2002, p. 5). As Fenwick (2002) notes discourses are also received as dominant cultural, political or socially significant discourses that are active within the organization. Thus individuals are subject to these dominant discourses as Lather (1991) argues, “…through the discursive struggle for subjectivities people are active…and in this struggle, they occupy conflicting subject positions; both received and created…” (p. 118).

As leadership has become increasingly commodified, agency is activated, as the ‘discursive struggle for subjectivities’ pressure [leaders] to produce the ‘right’ leadership identity” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 131). The ‘right’ leadership identity according to Gunter and Forrester (2010) is about identifying the processes by which a ‘delivery disposition’ is achieved. That is, through social practices that reposition discourses and place an “emphasis on the heroic head as transformational leader…” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 59). Such concerns highlight the dilemmas in contemporary theorizing about agency, discourse and identity, that is; the extent to which individuals can discursively craft, negotiate and adjust their identities verses
the extent to which identities are prescriptive outcomes of societal structures of power, class, gender, racial and other relations (Sinclair, 2007).

Thus the feminist project is made possible by the discrepancy between the diverse lived realities of women and the totalities (gendered hierarchies). Cornell, (1995) points out that feminists adopt what she describes as the ethical attitude that aims for a nonviolent relationship to the ‘Other’ (Lacan, 1985) which includes the ‘Other’ within oneself. For Cornell, (1995) the transformative possibility of feminism lies with the idea there is no fixed signified for Woman within the masculine symbolic. However, Cornell’s view of language effectively “…erases conflicts of interpretation, discursive struggles and the specific positioning of different women, all of which are crucial to feminist theory” (Fraser, 1995, p. 165).

Differences, according to Cornell’s view overlook the meta-narratives and societal attitudes around gender and the tendency to universalize feminist discourses. Therefore poststructural feminists, such as Butler, (1995); St Pierre, (2000); Fraser, (1995); Lather, (2000); Davies, (2000) and Weedon, (1999) would disagree on many issues and articulate the complex ways they work with, within and against feminisms and poststructural theories. Hence systemic structural and cultural discourses limit inclusive, democratic discourses available to women leaders. Presence and voice is not enough and what is needed at this time is a more inclusive democratic process that enables agency and a capacity to influence decisions (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Deem & Ozga, 1997; Mitchell, 2001; Sinclair, 2000a, 2000b).

By selecting all women leaders in this research I am foregrounding differences amongst women and how the meaning of difference is being constructed. How is it being addressed? What is being silenced and what is being contested? How does gender intersect with other forms of difference? And in what contexts is gender foregrounded or ignored? This study focuses on white, female, middleclass leaders, thus foregrounding what I suggest are second order differences such as philosophical/religious preferences, age, experience and political dispositions. These women may foreground gender as relevant in one school context and irrelevant in another. However, when feminist discourses about difference are raised, issues about gender and power as well as how agency is exercised become significant.
Narrative methodology

Narrative inquiry and the concept of positioning provide the conceptual tools to examine women’s leadership narratives. This methodology enables the enactment of feminist theory when analyzing the data. Therefore analyzing women’s work narratives according to Chase’s (1995) national study revealed how contradictory experiences of power and subjection were embedded in the language these women used when talking about their leadership work. Through listening closely to their stories of success Chase (1995) showed how women superintendents, develop a range of narrative strategies to address the contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence surrounding their situations.

Chase (1995) found “women’s narratives are particular, they are not idiosyncratic; they represent several different ways that women might tell their stories about achievement and discrimination” and that “each woman’s narrative can be heard as an example of one particular kind of story successful women might tell in certain narrative contexts, at certain points in their careers, given certain kinds of work experiences and certain perceptions of their options” (Chase, 1995, p. 27). The multicultural, racial and gendered discourses revealed in Chase’s research highlights the premise that “…listening closely to how women narrate their experiences is necessary, if we want to understand how culture and narrative shape experience, as well as understand what professional women are telling us about their power and subjection” (Chase, 1995, p. xi).

Narrative approaches have broad appeal as a research approach (Reinharz, 1992) and as Mc Nay (2000) contends it is “the mode through which individuals attempt to integrate the non-synchronous and often conflictual elements of their lives and experiences” (p. 113). Hence there is a tendency for leaders to smooth over and integrate disjunctions and contradictions in order to narrate a consistent and professionally composed story that minimizes conflict and rationalizes and justifies their positioning. Awareness of this preference in relating leadership stories prompts a closer scrutiny and critical analysis about how these women leaders in educational settings, produce themselves as leaders.

Thus using a feminist lens to closely analyse women’s narratives in this study has the potential to expose how the micro-politics of power functions, within and across particular contexts and how these women negotiate such political/cultural domains.
What becomes significant is the range of discourses women are able to mobilize and how compliance and resistance produces one of many possible discursive constructions of leader-identity; situated and contextualised.

Narrative analysis is not a recipe but a very loose collection of approaches that researchers have variously interpreted (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Heilbrun, 1999; Barone, 1997; Czarniawska, 1997; Richardson, 1997; Casey, 1995, Gough, 1994). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) narratives are, “…the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18). Poststructuralists argue there are multiple narratives, some dominant, others less so and would reject one meta-narrative. Selecting narrative inquiry as a methodological approach fits well into a feminist research frame and easily incorporates the concept of ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990).

**Discursive positioning**

Positioning is an important conceptual tool that can inform narrative analysis and a feminist interpretation of the discourses while being framed by feminist poststructural theory (De Fina, Schiffirin & Bamberg, 2006; Zembylas, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; St Pierre, 2000; Richardson, 2000, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Heilbrun 1999; Czarniawska 1997; Gee, 1996; Rose, 1996; Gergen, 1992; Davies & Harré, 1990).

Therefore ‘positioning’ in this research is used to analyse and identify the mechanisms through which subjects take up different discourses and are produced as women leaders. Positioning is a discursive practice or strategy that sees conversation as a set of speech acts including non-verbal contributions and encompasses the joint action of participants (Davies & Harré, 1990). ‘Positioning’ is important, as “all identities are a fluid amalgam of memories of places and origins, constructed by and through fragments and nuances, journeys and rests of movements between. Thus the ‘between’ is itself a process or a dynamic, not just a stage on the way to a more final identity” (McDowell, 1999, p. 215).

In this research the concept of ‘positioning’ focuses “…attention on dynamic aspects of encounters [interviews] in contrast to the way in which the use of ‘role’ serves to highlight static, formal and ritualistic aspects” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 216). The
distinction between positioning and ‘role’ is important when drawing on feminist poststructural theory. Role, according to Davies (2000) is where “one can develop strategies for maintaining an illusion of a coherent unitary self through conceptualizing what we do in terms of roles or through denial of contradiction” (p. 71) e.g. leadership role.

This argument supports theoretical stances that assume our lives determine our narratives and an essentialist theory of self as a core essence (Bucholtz et al., 1999), defined and unified, operates from that premise. However, there has been considerable research in areas of discourse and organizational identities (Aaltio & Mills, 2002; Foldy, 2002; Hearn et al., 2001). Recent scholarship has emphasized that identity is a process that is always embedded in social practices (Foucault, 1984) within which discourse practices (Fairclough, 1989) are paramount.

Yeatman (1994) argues that “…discursive reality is not determined by any one discursive system because discourses depend on active subjects for their realization and these subjects are always positioned interdiscursively” (p. 164). In this way ‘positioning’ relates more to active subjects being constituted in and through discourses, often of their own making (e.g. women’s styles of leadership, the ethic of care) than about control and discipline.

Therefore ‘positions’ are discursively and interactively constituted and are open to multiple positionings as the discourses shift and change; “who I am potentially shifts with each speaking, each moment of being positioned within this or that discourse” and through taking up discourses (Davies, 2000, p. 71). According to Blackmore (1999) “To be constituted by discourses is not to be determined by discourse… Subjectivity conceptualizes identity formation as an on going contradictory, precarious and complex process … It imparts a sense of agency, reflexivity and contradiction often lost in theories of the unitary self” (p. 17). This locates the study methodologically within a narrative frame of reference and adds specificity to the feminist analysis of the narratives (De Fina et al., 2006; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Zembylas, 2003; Richardson, 2001; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Rose, 1996; Gergen, 1992; Chase, 1995; Davies & Harré, 1990).
The culturally embedded character of narrative produces situated knowledge and through its apparent logic, disjunctions and ruptures: an interior and exterior positioning and struggle for meaning. That is people negotiate meanings about their selves and the social world by strategically positioning themselves throughout the dialogue (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). But positions are ever shifting within a conversation, constantly and rapidly being renegotiated, driven sometimes by the interviewer and other times by the interviewee’s narrative (Taylor, Bougie & Caouette, 2003, p. 204).

Positioning focuses on conversations and builds on a theory that individuals are discursively positioned at several levels: through relationships between the speaker and what is being said; through relationships between self and other, in face to face interaction such as interviews; through relationships represented in the propositional content of talk; and through relationships to the dominant ideologies, widespread social practices and underlying power structures drawn together as Discourse (Gee, 1996). Interviewees’ narratives take from these broader social, cultural and political meta-narratives of gender, education and leadership. They also draw on particular and situated meaning systems and discourses within their schools and the leadership team.

Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) concluded “[that] most narratologists – […] assume that the explanations individuals offer of their lives are inevitably shaped by the prevailing norms of discourse within which they operate. [They have also concluded that] institutions have enormous power over the behaviour and life chances of individuals… [And] social influence shapes not only public action but also private self-understanding” (p. 5). The research approach taken in this study aligns with these understandings, where leader’s narratives incorporate repertoires related to particular metaphors, story lines, educational concepts, philosophies or religious affiliations which are made relevant within particular discourses. In this way, historical, socio-cultural forces in the form of dominant discourses position speakers in their situated practices. Also speakers are able to position themselves as co-constructors and agents who “choose the means by which they construct their identities vis-à-vis others as well as vis-à-vis dominant discourses and master narratives” (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 7).
**Feminist frameworks of interpretation**

Furthermore this study highlights the importance of working with a multiplicity of frameworks (feminist, poststructural, narrative inquiry/positioning, critical discourse analysis) rather than one. These frames are a partial mapping of the theoretical and methodological fields and overlap at times as well as highlight the gaps and silences. According to Kamler (2001) writing is “…a political project rather than a site of authenticity, emotion and true feelings [and offers] … a space for a politics of representation – for counter-narrative work which challenges dominant representations and storylines” (p. 173).

In this study such ‘counter-narrative work’ involves the critique of dominant paradigms such as corporate managerialism, professionalism and unraveling the overlapping discourses accommodated or resisted within a wider investigation of power relationships. In particular, how women in this study discursively position themselves (Davies & Harré, 1990) in their leadership narratives and how they mobilize such discourses and produce ‘counter-narratives’ as well as re-produce gendered leadership identities.

Therefore a feminist analysis requires uncovering layers of resistant or contradictory discourses (counter-narratives) within a situated leadership practice as each woman takes up discourses that illustrate how power works in ways that makes resistance one moment become agency the next. Moreover it resonates with the poststructural dynamics of location and change while not foreclosing on the specificity of individual discursive strategies. In turn, these women’s narratives show how particular resistant discourses and positioning strategies produce subjectivities that can connect or disconnect to meta-narratives of leadership to produce ambiguity and contradiction in terms of their professional beliefs.

Critical analysis and reflexive investigation provides insight into these women’s narratives. Unlike some narrative researchers, I do not ask ‘why’ each woman uses a particular discursive strategy in the sense of looking for meaning in her psychological or personal background. Rather I am interested in focusing on ‘what’ her discursive ‘positioning’ strategy is for mobilizing particular discourses and ‘how’ that strategy positions her and makes her contradictory experiences of achievement and subordination visible. The study provides a space for focusing on narration and
positioning strategies as an active, sense-making and communicative practice that emerges during the interview encounter between researcher and interviewee.

Moreover how I am positioned is problematic, particularly as I try to keep questions open ended and try not to steer or overly structure the interview but maintain an informal dialogue. I am aware of my motives in collecting and interpreting data and my continual struggle as a researcher with my own investment in particular political and social discourses. The disjunction is accentuated when I consider St Pierre (2000) and her rhetorical questioning about how theory influences what counts as data and what kind of knowledge and ethical issues produce this kind of disjunction.

Furthermore Fine (1984) cautions “the experiences of women researchers as we investigate the lives of women… [is a] forbidden pool of data…we collaborate in keeping the pool hidden out of fear that we will be accused of ‘biased scholarship’ or ‘over-identification’ with respondents [as] in this case, [or] not really poststructuralism. In this way we perpetuate the ‘historic silencing of women researchers’ active and often passionate reactions to our own research” (pp. 1-3).

According to Kamler (2001) the way we argue our positions “… is as significant as the critique we make. Oppositional thinking is ahistorical – it reduces the complexities of pedagogy and oversimplifies differences between positions. It constructs a politics of correctness as one side must be seen as right and true, the other as wrong or outdated or theoretically and ideologically suspect” (p. 22). Feminist poststructural theory challenges the ‘politics of correctness’ and questions how the researcher is positioned as are the interviewees, co-constructing their narratives of success.

Furthermore Kamler notes her discomfort at realizing that “systemic linguistic theory” offered little when it came to “gender and power relations in schools” but provided “rich descriptions of the invisible ways gender is constructed” (Kamler, 2001, p. 33). Feminist poststructural theorizing accentuates Kamler’s struggle with writing and narrative and focuses closer attention on textuality and representation. That is, through a reflexive uptake of the category of ‘woman’ the potential exists to explore the underlying concern with the universalizing of women’s accounts (this is
what women think about leadership) or the privileging of some narratives over others.

The interview context in this study situates narratives and provides a place to explore how the issues of gender, power and organizational culture collide and interact with each other and the paradoxical questions that it raises for women in leadership. As a former Junior Head, there is a sense of confidentiality, familiarity and disclosure. There is also the context of safe confidante, colleague and supporter providing a confessional space for declaring and sharing achievements and disappointments of leading. As Blackmore (1999, p. 62) notes, “…my history interrupts [these] …texts selectively at points of familiarity between my story and the storylines of those ‘interviewed’, as the open-ended conversations with …principals often slipped between autobiography, conversation, debate and therapy (Stanley 1993)”.

Due to the shared nature of the interview experience one needs to consider how the relationship of interviewer and interviewee reduces contestation in order to ‘fit’ the image of school leader and researcher, particularly as these women all volunteered to participate in the interviews and share their story coupled with my agenda to fulfill research requirements. I repeat Harding’s (1991) suggestion that we rescue the notion of “strong objectivity”. This fully reflexive notion of objectivity will not be value-free it will be value-full.

Creating rapport with interviewees means building trust and confidentiality. As Reinharz (1992) comments, “Achieving rapport should not become burdensome”, sometimes it can become an inappropriate, form of “emotional work” [Whereas] “…Relations of respect, shared information, openness and clarity of communication seem like reasonable substitute goals” (p. 267). As volunteers their willingness to share their leadership stories was primarily based on an interest in professional inquiry focused on women in leadership. Participating and contributing to research focused on their work was in some ways flattering and at the same time acknowledged the lack of research undertaken on women senior leaders’ and Heads’ in Independent schools.

According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) “Feminist researchers face ‘the conundrum of how not to undercut, discredit or write-off women’s consciousness”
(Stanley 1984: 201) when these differ from their own. At best you can be as aware as possible that interpretation is your exercise of power, that your decisions have consequences, and that you are accountable for your conclusions”. Moreover simple decisions over “how to categorize, what to include and what to exclude also carry theoretical, political and ethical implications” (Ramazanoglu et al., 2002, p. 161).

Therefore producing and presenting these women’s narratives draws attention to the critical analysis and reflexive practices of the researcher while acknowledging that the point of producing feminist knowledge according to Ramazanoglu et al., (2002) is to “understand the realities of gendered lives, and to be able to transform them.” [However] this is “rarely straight forward …because of the contradictions and complexities of gendered social life” (p. 163).

As Kamler (2001) points out all stories are partial; “they are particular rather than general, they represent a perspective, a way of seeing that is complex and multifaceted, rather than universal.” Hence readers can engage with “the specificity and locality of the narratives produced in each case and read against their own contexts for commonalities and differences”. However, she goes on to note, “…it is possible to read across chapters for genre-specific strategies” (Kamler, 2001, pp. 174-175).

**Interpreting texts**

The first phase analysis identified shared themes, dominant discourses and differences. As there is a tendency in interviews to smooth over and tell an orderly narrative when relating leadership stories a second analysis was applied (Reinharz, 1992). The second phase involved a deeper more critical analysis and questioning of how these women leaders’ in educational settings, position and produce themselves as leaders, what specific discursive strategies and discourses were they taking up to produce their leader-identities. In this regard Kamler’s (2001) notion of reading across narratives for ‘genre-specific strategies’ was a useful analytical tool particularly when applied as part of the second phase analysis. Hence, I covered both my research questions: What are the relations of power that produce particular leadership discourses for women? And what are the discursive practices and contexts whereby the female participants’ position and shape themselves as subjects in the leadership narratives?
Analyses of individual narratives taken from interview transcripts highlights the specificity of women’s work narratives that include specific discourses for different purposes differently located subjects and different institutional contexts. Such individual discourses reveal how women’s subjectivities are discursively being constituted as leader-identities as well as the conditions under which those subjectivities emerged.

Interpreting interview transcripts, selecting vignettes from each narrative and recreating the narrative is an act of interpretation. This act of interpretation is political act of recollection and re-interpretation of the collected data. The selected parts of the transcripts that appear in this study reflect the tools I have employed, the theory I have drawn on and my disposition as a former Junior Head and now researcher. Such discourses are a distinctive retelling of the original event and are therefore part fiction part fact but all partial and open to reinterpretation.

As the analyses were being conducted I was able to locate particular discourses that connected some narratives a little closer together than others. That is, the initial analysis of the narratives indicated how ‘dominant discourses’ and recurring themes also positioned the narratives in relationship to each other. The narrative analysis reveals a number of articulating themes or discursive strategies which these leaders’ activate in order to position themselves. Further analysis indicates leaders’ mobilize a set of discursive strategies encompassing paradox (balance), idealism (values) and dissent (resistance). The analysis also shows these leaders are able to move between and around these positioning strategies while tending to articulate their experience as allied to a particular constellation of discourses; corporate/professional – paradox; values/ethical – idealism, and critical/resistance – dissention. This framework emerged naturally from the analysis. I would emphasize that each woman telling her story offered a unique response to her particular situation and history, while mobilizing particular dominant discourses.

**Data methods**

Different feminist methods can be appropriate for different levels of inquiry and analysis. I began this study with a Questionnaire to obtain a sense of the leadership terrain, and broader issues. The Questionnaire involved open-ended questions to elicit information about dominant leadership discourses in Victoria’s independent
sector. This was followed up with interviews, the primary source and data-base of the study. The scope of this study therefore draws on three lines of inquiry:

- A questionnaire to elicit leadership discourses and issues across the broad range of Independent Schools in Victoria
- An in-depth, audiotape-recorded and fully transcribed interview gathered from each of the twelve women who had previously participated in a state-wide questionnaire and volunteered to participate further in the study.
- My reflexive journal containing field notes taken down at the time of the interviews. In this regard I have improvised an ‘aside’ which functions as a literary device to reflect on my experiences of leadership and offer additional considerations, misgivings and questions to further contextualize the study.

According to Ramazanoglu et al., (2002) “small scale qualitative/interactive approaches have been powerful and productive, feminists have offered spirited defenses of what can be learned using quantitative methods, and have proposed that feminists should avail themselves of what ever techniques are useful for investigating their research questions” (Kelly, Regan & Burton, 1995; Stanley, 1997; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). In this regard I defend my decision to incorporate a questionnaire; as feminist researchers not only promote sensitive, qualitative methods but also use: “large scale social surveys; statistical analysis; methods combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, ethnographic and participatory methods; explorations of discourses, texts or representations…” (Ramazanoglu et al., 2002, p. 155).

However, quantitative methods offer limited access to accounts of experiences, nuances of meaning and the micro-politics of situated contexts and the discursive shifts and contradictions that influence women leaders. Therefore due to the complexity of leadership practices and differing contexts I proceeded with the main focus of the research; in-depth interviews. Conducting interviews not only complements the questionnaire but adds a rich source of data focused on specificity and provides particularity to the analyses. This approach highlights my intention to use a feminist interpretation to analyse the data that was produced from both the questionnaire and the interviews (Schostak, 2006).

Employing a Questionnaire had advantages and disadvantages. The Questionnaire provided general descriptive information across the sector. As Reinharz (1992)
acknowledges the benefits of qualitative studies using multiple methods have been successful in the ways that: “Survey research can put a problem on the map by showing that it is more widespread than previously thought. Feminists have used survey research for precisely this purpose dispelling the common argument that the complaint of a particular woman is idiosyncratic” (p. 79).

While the Questionnaire could not be considered a survey with such a small sample, (see p. 132) it did offer valuable and unexpected insight into the discourses about leadership and how women respond when asked to write about women in leadership. Therefore the Questionnaire provided a platform, an opportunity for me to raise issues, ask questions and open a space for further conversation. My intention was to collect data that would provide a broad picture of the current discourses circulating and expose gaps and silences in the leadership research in relation to women’s leadership as Reinharz (1992) points out: “Feminist engagement in the production of women-centered …studies is thus a greatly needed corrective device in such disciplines as sociology” (p. 167).

The women’s responses provided for a comparative and thematic analysis and revealed particular discourses that positioned them within their ‘situated leadership’ setting. They wrote about how they experienced leadership, gender, diversity, equity and workplace issues. At the same time, these discourses and how they were mobilized by women in similar positions, across different Independent schools provided insight into the dominant discourses, contradictions and tensions they considered important.

Therefore inquiring about leadership through the questionnaire and informal interviews about ‘professional purpose’ was a provocation to encourage leaders to articulate how power relationships operate in their schools and how ‘gender’ relations are negotiated. Narrative inquiry provided the opportunity for leaders to talk about such strategies and is an appropriate method to employ for this study. It also offers valuable data for future leaders to interpret and further research.
Concluding comments

In this chapter I have drawn together a feminist theoretical position and research design. This highlights the importance of working with a multiplicity of frameworks (feminist, poststructural, narrative inquiry, critical discourse analysis) rather than one. In particular this research focuses on feminist poststructural theory and methodology to interpret the data, using the concept of positioning within the framework of narrative inquiry. I have also positioned poststructural theory within a Foucauldian notion of ‘decentered’ power and consider dominant leadership discourses as a site of ‘governmentality’ in which leaders self regulate, regulate others as well as being regulated (Foucault, 1991). Leadership, because of its symbolic power, highlights the operations of Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’ that leaders may employ to manage and discursively produce themselves as highly able leaders in schools.

In the next Chapter I introduce the women who responded to the preliminary questionnaire and analyse the first part of the data collection. The Questionnaire analysis examines the underlying question: ‘What discourses do these female leaders’ choose?

Aside: February 2007

The Questionnaire and the narratives proved more difficult to unravel than I had anticipated. At first they appeared to be strongly tied together textually and resisted disruption. Further analysis revealed the responses to the Questionnaire were relatively more open to interpretation and deconstruction than the interview narratives. Interview narratives are often erratic, spontaneously generated and decidedly more challenging, particularly considering these were mutually co-constructed. Elizabeth St. Pierre (2000, p. 262) refers to the ‘burden of authorship’ and states “The dilemma this burden produces is finding somewhere to stand in the text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment” (Geertz, 1988, p. 10). I have struggled with my own values, beliefs and biases. I have sought a place to be and not overshadow the text but deconstruct it. This has been an inside/outside folded over experience and I’m not sure where I have ended up…

The narrative interviews proved particularly resistant, partly due to my desire to be fair and translate, interrupt and deconstruct the leaders’ meanings and intent as clearly as possible. Transcribing and recalling the interviews also added to the layering of my first impressions and the consequent reflexive process that follows, particularly in relation to the leaders’ intentions and dispositions. However, following the initial analysis I was able to take up a second analysis and expose the overlapping of corporate and professional discourses and discursive practices of resistance. I selected specific extracts because they showed how leaders strategically mobilized particular discourses to position themselves. In this way the smooth, untroubled explanation of their corporate managerial work was opened to further deconstruction.
Many leaders mentioned the advantage of mentors; establishing rapport with principals; early detection of leader qualities and the pressure of increased workloads.
PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

What Discourses do these Female Leaders’ Choose?

Primary culture is different from secondary…Independent Schools are more ‘risk management’ orientated, conservative, pressured, restrictive, high status and can’t afford to fail…Staff feel angry and insecure. As the Principal feels threatened there is a growing agenda around anti-age and women, as males are being promoted to leadership. (Elaine, Junior Head)

Introduction

In the previous chapter poststructural theory and narrative methodology is framed by a feminist argument focused on how power/knowledge and discourse function across domains and are available to individuals (women Junior Heads) in the production of women’s leader-identities. In this way feminist poststructural narrative analysis provides a critical approach to collecting and interpreting the research data. The research data collection consists of two parts: Questionnaire and Interviews. The first part was designed to gain a representative sample of women’s perspectives outside of my own experience, about leadership across the independent sector. The second part involved an in-depth interview.

This chapter introduces the women leaders who participated in this research and provides an analysis of the Questionnaire.

Questionnaire – sample

In September, 2004 a Questionnaire was prepared. The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (A.I.S.V) Member’s Directory 2004, was used to identify 107 female Junior School Heads’ in K-12 and K-6 Independent Schools across Victoria. The I.S.V (Independent Schools’ Victoria) represents 98 percent of Victoria’s 218 schools. Invitations and consent forms were sent and twenty-eight women responded. Seventeen leaders returned the Questionnaire. Five Questionnaires were returned incomplete but offered comments that are included in the analysis. Twelve were returned completed. As the questions were open-ended, there was some discretion as to the length and style of the response. The twelve leaders who completed the Questionnaire were also the leaders who self-selected to be interviewed. The women
who participated in the Questionnaire and the interview process have been starred (Table 8). Before commencing the detailed analysis of the data pseudonyms were selected for the women and these names remain constant throughout the research. Also schools, student population and any identifying information, have been edited out to maintain confidentiality. All leaders’ responses cited in text are in quotation marks so as to give equal status to their opinions and values concerning leadership. Italics are used for single words used by the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Participants</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Single sex /Co-ed K-12 unless stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Claire</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Ellen</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Jan</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Meredith</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Julie</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Elaine</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Pam</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Sally</td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>Co-educational – K- 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Sarah</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Linda</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Sharon</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Christine</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>Co-educational – K – 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Carol</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Leaders and Schools in this study (2007)

The questionnaire elicited processes of self-selection, therefore the location and demographics of the schools surveyed was not totally representative but offered a partial cross-section of the independent sector. The sample also indicated the prevalence of low-fee paying Christian schools situated in semi-rural fringes around Melbourne. There are approximately six rural and semi-rural schools represented compared to eleven inner city-metropolitan schools and of the seventeen schools, six are single sex, all girls and eleven are co-educational schools.

Although half an A4 page was provided for each question, three women wrote additional information on the back of the Questionnaire. Many respondents wrote passionately about their commitment and a few shaped their statements using dot points. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for women leaders to express
thoughts about significant discourses that distinguish leadership in Independent schools. There were six broad ranging, open-ended questions:

1. What is unique about your leadership as a woman in a primary Independent School?
2. What primary leadership qualities are essential and which are changing?
3. Describe current leadership culture in your situation in relation to ethical responsibilities?
4. What factors stifle or support your talents, or innovations and why?
5. What serves as inspiration for you and how can it be invested in future educational directions?
6. Any other thoughts regarding women primary leaders?

Those who volunteered to be interviewed mentioned that it was the first time anyone had asked them about their leadership. They appreciated the opportunity to express their ideas particularly as pseudonyms and anonymity was assured. Confidentiality of the study allowed these women to speak and write more freely which paradoxically shows, how weighty power relations and gendered conventions are.

**Feminist interpretative analysis**

The analysis of the data began with an interpretative analysis to identify key words, themes and “genre specific strategies” (Kamler, 2001). Each response was analysed manually using qualitative coding methods described by Ely (1991) which led me to differentiate content ideas and identify categories and themes for individual respondents. I identified shared consistent discourses, biases and repetitions that provided the first level of analysis.

This was followed by a secondary analysis to move beyond shared themes and reveal marginal discourses or silences and difference. From this second analysis I found deeper struggles embedded in cultural, political and situated leadership discourses. In particular the secondary analysis uncovered the politics of gendering and a range of discursive strategies the women used to negotiate their positioning within specific contexts. Although I have drawn on both analyses; the first analysis identified the categories and the second more detailed analysis revealed the embedded ‘inferred’ discourses and emerging discourses (biases, emotions, resistances and inspirations). Such discourses added specificity to the shared dominant discourses.
Therefore the analysis is not directly linked to specific questions. Instead the analysis focuses on how these women have mobilized particular discourses within and across their responses, whether prompted by the questions or not. Indeed some of the more interesting rich, descriptive and frank responses were delivered as an afterthought, written on the back of the Questionnaire. This valuable discursive data was often embedded in rhetorical -idiomatic and colloquial expressions.

While a Questionnaire is not the usual poststructuralist method (Reinharz, 1992) it was useful in gaining a broad range of descriptive data about the sector and provided a partial mapping of the current dominant attitudes, values and discourses. Therefore I have arranged this Chapter using the first stage analysis of the dominant discourses: leadership; status; gender; management; caring; performativity; autonomy and the degree to which leaders identify with their school’s ideology and ethos.

**Leadership paradigms - corporate and professional paradoxes**

Sally typifies the broad leadership paradigms, outlined in the literature. Her response conveys the overlapping and paradoxical way leaders’ in this study mobilized a range of leadership discourses: corporate, transformational, professional and caring. Sally is Junior Head - Primary Principal of a K-6 School. Her response is succinct and reveals how leaders often hybridize different discourses, particularly as other leaders in K-12 schools expressed similar responses. She declares “leadership involves being your-self, authentic, autonomous, confident, optimistic and visionary. It also means I am responsible as a leader to be educating staff, Board and children”.

Sally continues to explain how women tend to have a transactional approach, more non-authoritative and are more collaborative. She also notes, “women are better at nurturing, dealing with parent pressures and able to multi-task’ and concludes by acknowledging that ‘leadership is different for me compared to other Junior Heads”.

(Sally)

Sally uses a gender-neutral corporate (autonomous, confident and visionary) discourse (Mulford, Kendall, Edmunds, Kendall, Ewing & Silins, 2008; Mulford, Kendall & Kendall, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). However, the corporate perspective is overlaid or perhaps complemented by a gendered discourse that positions women leaders as different. Her response acknowledges a gendered female
stereotype contrasted to a gender-neutral leadership discourse and combines this with professional values.

Sally’s professional discourse includes responsibility to educate others and an autonomy that implies a strong sense of purpose and agency. Agency it would appear is enacted through a combination of overlapping discourses. Such blending suggests she can move easily between discourses and position herself accordingly. As Thomson (2010) points out, “…the desire for autonomy and freedom comes with the contemporary headteachers’ job. To refuse it is to refuse the game. This does not mean accepting the game as it is. [Those who resist, who have] “contrary beliefs and play counter-games and who have the same desire for freedom are subject to the same constraints of the game” (Thomson, 2010, p. 16).

Sally’s response challenges what kind of autonomy and educating she might be referring to and how this relates to consultative, distributed or democratic discourses which are not mentioned? More to the point how do leaders sustain the paradox of a corporate leadership discourse alongside traditional professional values? Such questions focus attention on how leaders negotiate discourses and position themselves as leaders.

Christine is also a Primary Principal (Junior Head, K-6) and resists the corporate discourse by highlighting the presumed motives behind seeking leadership “there are many people out there trying to climb the corporate ladder - not necessarily there for the good of the children as their needs need to drive every decision we make”. She goes on to argue “it’s not all about the almighty dollar, how big or pretentious the school is that we lead!” Christine reflects her disdain for the neoliberal ‘marketisation and commodification’ discourses that are currently driving educational reforms along global economic lines.

Her comments also convey a strong conviction and disapproval of the current state of affairs as she perceives it. There is a subtext relating to prioritizing children’s needs as rationale for decision-making. Her opposition to the corporate discourse is lessened when she comments “leaders need to be holistic in your own approach if you preach this! That is, set the vision and direction”. Christine is aware of inequities within the structure yet she continues: “Leaders (VIPs) model the culture you want to
lead – get back to basics – respect, responsibility for ones actions, empathy and valuing of individual difference”. This response aligns with Gunter’s (2001) argument, “evidence suggests that teachers have not fully embraced the management imperative and language because there are deep contradictions in what they are being told is good performance management practice, and their experiences of what matters in their work with the children and the community” (p. 31).

Autonomy and accountability

Both Sally and Christine refer to two interrelated leadership discourses: Autonomy and accountability. They make a distinction between their capacity for autonomy and other Heads’ in K-12 schools. Indeed Pam felt stifled; Meredith believes, “the structure doesn’t allow for or promote autonomy” and Elaine, reflects: “In some ways being Vice Principal and Junior Head means one never experiences total autonomy”. According to Gronn (2009) “there are two twin towers of school reform …autonomy and accountability…it makes little sense to talk about autonomy in isolation” (p. 2). He points out the complexity of the “modes of decision-making” and how coalescing “who decides” and how autonomously decisions are taken “involves consultation independently, but within a framework set by a higher authority” (p. 3).

Sally and Christine would consider their autonomy as without the intrusion of outside influences. According to Eurydice’s Report (2008), there are three main distinctions concerning autonomy; “full autonomy, limited autonomy and none” (p. 17). Sally and Christine see other Junior Heads’ as exercising relatively limited autonomy. Yet even for them full autonomy is unlikely when they are both accountable to their respective School Boards. Moreover Olsen (2008) questions whether autonomy is an “appropriate concept” in a world of “increasing interdependencies and interaction” (p.13).

Julie also questions the extent of autonomy “after having experience in this role [Junior Head] in two Independent schools, I believe the culture of the school will determine the level of autonomy”. Along with Pam, Meredith and Elaine, Julie (Junior Heads’, K-12) also supports Christine and Sally’s assumption that those leading in K-12 schools have less autonomy (decision-making ability) within the
Senior Leadership team and are constrained by or reliant on the school’s culture to resolve their degree of autonomy. Julie’s reference to culture might be interpreted as; at the principal’s discretion, or the amount of flexibility in the Junior Heads’ contract.

According to Davies and Hentschke (1994) any particular decision is made up of many, “more specific decisions, which themselves are complex and interdependent” (p. 99). They introduce the notion of magnitude and suggest decision-making is in reality a clustering of decisions. Therefore Julie’s comment may refer to a shorthand way of indicating more complex, layered decision-making processes that require consultation with higher authorities. Hence the context and conditions of situating K-6 Junior Heads as opposed to K-12 Junior Heads is different; particularly in relation to autonomy.

**Agency, status and priorities**

The higher status and importance given to Senior School over Junior School was a shared discourse that circulated amongst almost all the respondents. Some only inferred there was a preference for the needs of the Secondary school but other were more explicit.

Elaine:
Besides lack of time, lack of money, lack of information and support and having to check all decisions with the Principal and fit in with whole school functions and meetings; the situation is exacerbated when the Principal is senior school focused.

Jill:
Some lack of understanding by secondary staff of primary education issues.

Both Jill and Elaine outline the frustrations of senior leadership in K-12 schools and confirm Meredith’s comments “there is elitism with anybody or anything to do with VCE” (Year 12 – Victorian Certificate of Education). Elaine takes this further and highlights a lack of support, trust and the politic of communication where she has limited authority or agency. Her positioning and ability to operate successfully within the school as a decision-maker and strategist is tightly regulated. The following comments sustain this discourse and query the politics that work against how these women leaders are positioned.
Meredith:
Still a higher status of male staff members compared to women. Need to always see the ‘bigger picture’ as you battle against the needs/interests of the secondary school that is VCE driven. It is a highly political environment.

Elaine:
Being Vice Principal and Junior Head means one never experiences total Junior school responsibilities.

Meredith and Elaine share the same narrative. Meredith infers there is a gendered division of labour and hegemonic structure that privileges males on staff. Also the status quo appears to be maintained through focusing on broad issues such as competitive marketing and students achieving high VCE scores. Elaine and Meredith’s relationships with their respective senior leadership teams and principals; is under pressure. Like Elaine, Jane is an Assistant Principal and also experiences the increased accountability with limited agency.

Jane:
I am responsible to carry out the directions from the Principal in my sub-school and I am answerable to the CEO of the whole school (who is actually the Principal) I am Assistant Principal – Head of Junior School!

Jane emphasizes a discourse of compliance where accountability is more like a military chain of command. This suggests frustration, limited agency and lack of trust. Her concern about her status regarding her area of responsibility, the Junior School, also suggests there is a lack of respect for her expertise and experience. This situation undermines her position and questions her competency.

As Assistant Principal one would assume Jane would be part of the decision-making process, however she seems to be taking orders and convincing herself of her status as she underlined her position within the school. Jane’s concern appears more than senior leadership frustration and brings into question the implementation of the corporate discourse and the accompanying performativity. In Jane’s situation the Principal is not consultative and expects her to conform. Hence her final comments are significant.

Jane resolves to “lead quietly without fanfare” and not seek “recognition or accolades”. She resists “climbing the career ladder” and discursively reframes her acquiescence by mobilizing discourses of care and nurturing, which is framed as
“contributing to children’s understanding” and adding “quality to family life”. It is also interesting to note that Jane generalizes her predicament to include all “women primary leaders” as both recognition of women’s historical positioning in education and her marginalized position. In this instance she is discursively resistant but remains compliant in her leadership practices as she argues “there are limited career opportunities”. Jane’s resistance to the overriding of her position appears ineffective. She rationalizes her situation as gendered and draws on the female stereotype where women do not seek recognition for themselves and focus on children and family life.

Conversely Meredith takes a different approach to the pressures and contradictions of leading. She identifies the same systemic problem of lack of consultation, decision-making and the rhetoric of ‘big picture’ bureaucratic managerialism.

Meredith:

In my current situation the responsibilities and accountability is all mine but when ‘things’ go well … credit is assumed at the higher level while blame always comes down. Mixed messages often given to parents and staff.

Meredith’s response brings into focus the mechanisms of relational power that creates such dissonance. Furthermore Pam acknowledges similar difficulties as, “the undermining of staff relationships” and the “expectations due to dual leadership models”. These marginalizing discourses that are expressed as Elaine’s limited-agency; Jane’s quiet leadership; Meredith’s mixed communication and Pam’s dual leadership confirm the undermining processes that impact on these leader’s formal positions in K-12 schools. Also Meredith’s comments support the disparity between the interests of senior school taking precedence over Junior school or sub-schools. These discourses of discrimination across different schools are emphasized in Meredith’s case when credit ascends to be claimed by the executive and liability is deflected down the line.

Behind these discourses there is a constant awareness of leader’s accountabilities and the competitiveness of educational markets. The elitism and market share generates a focus on delivering excellent VCE results. Therefore achieving high student scores for VCE provides the rationale for prioritizing resources and the needs of Senior as opposed to Junior school. Add to this the ongoing ‘commodification’ of education and aggressive marketing campaigns in all sectors; change is unlikely.
Hence Year 12 student success is prioritized and has become a K-12 imperative. This trend is exacerbated when organizational structures are dysfunctional or leaders are under pressure to ‘perform’. In this climate Junior schools are at risk of losing out and Junior Heads’ are feeling the strain. Despite this, the status quo is exacerbated when as Linda notes, there is “no systemic training and questionable pay and conditions”. She highlights the disincentives for Junior Heads’ when there is only intense workload and accountabilities to address.

**Performativity – struggle against the odds**

Underpinning the corporate discourse is a discourse of performativity that questions how entrepreneurial leadership is translated into managerial practices. Corporate leaders coerce compliance and consensus to a vision and purpose. Meredith, Jane and Pam have indicated how they experience and at times resist being co-opted to the strategic purpose usually Senior school focused. In these instances addressing the corporate demands is accomplished by mobilizing overlapping discourses highlighting people skills, conflict resolution and multi-tasking skills. Such responses sustain the status quo and the marginalizing of women leaders along with a performative culture.

Consequently Meredith refers to the term *superwomen* and implies a leader is “all things to all people”. This discourse of performativity is associated with “fabrication” (Ball, 2000). According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007), the “extent of institutional ‘fabrication’ required by the new performative regimes hit hardest for middle managers (heads of school and departments and principals) who were presented with images and strategic plans that did not represent the experiences, needs, or desires of those at the interface” (p. 211).

Performativity is often driven by emotional struggle and intellectual determination. According to Meredith, Junior Heads’ are well positioned to play the female protagonist.

Meredith:

[Leadership] you need to manage the politics from a range of areas. You need to be knowledgeable, able to deal with all manner of people and situations. You need to have business acumen and you need to be a ‘step ahead, try to anticipate ‘second guess’ as well as support and stand up for staff. Stoicism, doggedness and the need to keep going.
Meredith is frustrated and critical of her situation and draws on corporate and predictive strategies in order to achieve the school’s objectives. According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) there is a paradox concerning performativity as it “emphasizes a conformist and ‘managed self’ at a time when organisational productivity relies more on increased creativity and reflexivity” (p. 201). Meredith is disappointed by the lack of support from colleagues yet her frustration portrays the paradox that performative cultures are conservative. The additional effort to innovate or change challenges the hegemonic structure and undermines the corporate agenda.

As Meredith notes “a culture where top management will ‘hand pass’ problems for someone else to fix…while there are so many levels or pathways to go through to get approval by the time you finally get interest or support the momentum can be lost”. Linda agrees with Meredith and points out how the process is frustrated by conservatism and the “slow process to get ideas through school bureaucracy”. Perhaps Sarah best expresses the pressure and tension to perform as: “The pace and the number of things to do is stifling…I used to think I was someone who was innovative – now I feel sometimes I struggle to maintain calm in the face of all the deadlines”.

Meredith saw her school as emphasizing aspects that did not address her professional concerns. She has battled against the intense focus of materials and resources into the secondary school, along with disappointment that the freedom she seeks is curtailed by a discourse of hegemonic privilege and gender inequality. These comments foreground not only a contested situated leadership discourse but the politics of power relationships, status and gender that are part of the school’s culture and senior leadership team. There is a discourse of resistance as Meredith questions the exercise of power and corporate, marketing imperative that is focused on year twelve.

Meredith articulates the flaws in her experience of leadership and discriminates between what she can influence and what areas of leadership she will need to compromise. In this way she situates the level of agency she can strategically employ while reflexively scrutinizing herself as Junior Head. Such self regulatory practices are “a mixed blessing – a chance to be a leader – but it’s an oxymoron as you struggle against the odds!”
Hence the impact of corporate managerialism and the resultant performativity has shaped power relationships across the school aimed at leadership teams and specifically, how individuals are positioned within those teams. According to Ellen, “there must be continual pursuit of mastery for self and others” which suggests all her efforts to self-regulate have a performative discourse underpinning her desire to do and be her best. This situation brings into question the need to be accountable and more importantly be seen to perform according to corporate measures such as: increased enrolments, public relations, competitive marketing and strategic planning for expansion and school’s vision, along with building teams, staff consensus and high achieving students.

Yet Ellen responds with a discourse of resistance framed within a process of ongoing self improvement and therefore difficult to measure. This prompts questions about how to evaluate ‘quality of service’ and consider, is this strategy designed to alleviate the performative pressure? According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) “Leader/managers were now the key to the corporate heart, and they must be open to corporate values to be successful. In doing so, the multiplicities of logics, rationalities and techniques induced them to self-regulate about what is permissible to do and say” (p. 152).

Performativity links to accountability and power relationships. Where there are relationships of power there is resistance. As Foucault (1991) states, such discourses function as a site of governmentality in which leaders self-regulate as well as regulate others. Foucault (1977) points out that individuals “subjected to a field of visibility… assume responsibility for the constraints of power” within the field (p. 203). In this sense discourses are inscribed and part of the processes constituting the discursive production of suitable leader-identities; hence Ellen experiences a politic of internal and external self regulation.

Ellen’s self-regulation leads her to blend leadership discourses to “explain vision and strategic goals to ensure staff understand; develop time management skills such as prioritization and delegation and suggest leaders’ need a wide eclectic knowledge base and a passion for learning combined with inner desire to serve others”. These overlapping discourses convey the extensive and complex nature of Junior Heads’
work and the degree of consensus about performance measures that politically position them.

Performance can take various forms, as Jan comments there is an expectation that highly capable leaders “take a hands-on role with staff, have marketing, and fundraising skills, strategic planning abilities and significant knowledge based in financial matters combined with a greater understanding and awareness of policy, both Commonwealth and State”. However, leaders also commented on the invisible performative pressures such as, the micro-politics of negotiating sensitive parent issues, family court decisions that impact on children, “legal issues, mandatory reporting, supervision, decisions about health and safety, as well as leagues tables and how we are addressing those through the Prep program!” (Jan)

Elaine suggests the essential and sometimes unseen qualities of performance leadership include “communication skills, managing conflict and mediation skills between staff and parents, staff and students, listening, empathy, team building, articulating the vision, and working to ensure it is understood and shared by all members of the community”. Elaine makes a strong case for hybridizing corporate leadership discourses and harnessing discourses about moral values and principles that promote the schools’ ethos. In practice performative goals require compliance; multiple discourses and relational practices which are often unseen and undervalued (Fletcher, 1999).

Hence superwoman is troublesome unless she conforms. She is less of a problem if she is isolated, kept busy with increased workload and her multi-tasking abilities are fully utilized. As Blackmore (1999) notes, “the popularized superwoman image expects women to be successful mothers, wives, daughters, leaders and community workers, powerful on all fronts as well as good role models, mentors and advocates for other women at work…” (p. 82). Although the leaders in this study focused on their work, the intensity of responses to time constraints suggest leadership has expanded into their personal lives. Performative pressures are exhausting and demanding. The individual superwoman is positioned precariously.
Time and workloads

Women’s work histories differ from men’s in that their work tends to be interrupted with family and domestic responsibilities (Williams, 2000). As Pam highlights women’s additional responsibilities and how they are often put off applying for leadership due to “personality and family commitments, even when we know we are capable and experienced, we are overly careful to ensure we have the qualifications and experience and whatever”.

Hence workplace performance measures impact differently on female as opposed to male leaders due to most women “working the ‘triple shift’ of paid work, and unpaid domestic and community work” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 78). Women are also being positioned as “change agents”, because of their caring and people skills, yet they contend with the corporate paradigm without the benefits of male networks (Cox, 1996). Therefore the pressure on women has escalated.

Claire highlights the problem that once you become a leader finding time to take up tertiary studies while juggling family responsibilities is difficult. Claire sums up “you often find yourself in the [leadership] position by ‘chance’ and few leaders in this position have specific training for the role…you are expected to be ‘Jack-of-all-trades’ as the hours interrupt family life and make it very difficult for women with young families”.

All the women in this study commented; “there is never enough time” (Claire). Although school contexts differed, time was a scarce commodity. Four leaders wrote time in capital letters usually with multiple exclamation marks. Jan responded “due to lack of time everyday requirements take away from opportunities to look broader at developing future program possibilities’ and I find ‘emails have advantages and disadvantages” which I assume means emails do not save time. According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007), “the primary measure of commitment was the willingness to work longer hours, even less so than the capacity to produce outcomes. For these reasons, many women saw management positions as life consuming” (p. 137).

Lacey’s (2004) research confirmed the independent sector provides little support for Junior/Deputy Heads in terms of administrative assistance, such as secretarial
support or counseling services and Heads’ had limited access to mentors and peer group support. When compared to government schools; Independent Schools’ fared poorly and relied on professional associations to provide support.

Furthermore Irene (Junior Head K-12) declares lack of support and time constraints effect “administration requirements, student management issues and implementation of vision as well as lack of staff means time is swallowed up covering classrooms”. Christine notes that in small schools “time is spread thin”. Whereas Elaine comments “lack of time means less opportunity to research and network”. Sarah highlights time restraints “intensify the pace and the number of things to do”. Sally mentioned limited time for “dealing with parent demands and expectations and dealing with family issues, split families, behaviour management and special needs”. Whereas Pam suggests time is important because “often it is extremely challenging as many emotional issues emerge [that require] time and personal effort to deal with and often these take from the big picture”.

Time for these women is a valuable resource, and lack of time impacted on their capacity to prioritize issues they felt was being marginalized by the corporatism that has become part of leaders’ lives.

**Transformational leadership and gendered discourses**

It is interesting to note that alongside the transformational discourse particular female stereotypes are adopted to advantage women leaders. Sally commented earlier about the benefits of incorporating the female stereotype together with the corporate discourse. As Claire suggests [post] transformational leaders’ focus on: “Having a clear vision and adequately articulating it; providing strategic direction; cultivating strong people skills; conflict resolution and emotional intelligence”. Julie focuses on “not seeking a fuss and an open caring style with children, teachers and parents” as well as “approachability and being a good listener”. In this way she incorporates stoic professionalism while harnessing the values discourse to inspire and promote consensus.

Although some of these descriptors apply to corporate managerialism, the leaders in this study preferred the term, *transformational* leadership as a way of expressing an amalgam of multiple discourses including professional and values discourses.
Transformational discourses were employed most effectively when leaders were keen to articulate vision and minimize the financial, business, marketing or competitive side of the corporate approach.

The transformational discourse seems to provide for a degree of autonomy and agency within the school depending on the school’s culture, principal’s discretion or contractual agreement. As Julie comments leaders need to be “able to get on with the job”, whereas Claire emphasizes personal values and strategic positioning of staff.

Claire:

Be open, transparent and honest. Admit mistakes. Value staff and surround yourself with members of staff who know about things that are not your strengths.

Julie and Claire discursively position themselves in relation to ‘transformational’ leadership. Their comments would not apply to corporate discourses of performativity and would be antithetical and dangerous to a “leader-centric” image (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Both leaders’ weave transformational vision and no fuss approach with a professional discourse about valuing staff, acknowledging expertise and expressing empathy. These leaders confirm Gunter’s (2001) statement about leaders “who think, challenge and question both habits and reforms have a different engagement with pedagogy than the technical requirements of job descriptions and competency frameworks. It assumes that there is a human and political relationship …where pedagogy is a leadership relationship based on mutual learning and development” (Gunter, 2001, p. 75).

Hybrid discourses provide negotiating strategies and do not necessarily indicate competing discourses. However, there is instability within these discourses that leads to contradictions when caring for people and people management becomes strategic human resources where caring is over-ruled as not in the best interests of the school.

Claire, Sally, Julie and Christine recognize the disparities within the transformational discourse and have taken up a blended discourse that allows for degrees of agency through negotiating “power and the interplay between agency and structure” (Gunter, 2001 p. 75). The layering of transformational, professional and caring discourses highlights the paradox that situates these women leaders. Indeed such emphasis
questions what leaders understand as “good leaders” and “effective leadership” (Sharon).

**A good leader is an effective leader**

Emerging from the responses is the discourse of good leadership.

Sharon:

A good leader works for the common good, holds strong values such as trust and honesty and their leadership is inclusive and when leadership involves shared values, ethical processes and a striving for the common good we have ‘effective’ leadership.

Sarah:

The essential thing in educational leadership is to keep the focus on how we teach and learn…all the administrivia needs to be managed in such a way that does not impede this process.

Sharon and Sarah emphasise different aspects of what makes for good and effective leadership. These discourses complement each other and indicate they are employing a professional discourse. Successful leaders according to Sharon and Sarah cultivate a moral discourse which articulates shared values and pedagogical pursuits with a cursory reference to keeping the paperwork in check. Transformational leadership supports these discourses as necessary for social bonding, consensus and collegiality. Successful school leadership according to Sharon and Sarah would fall within the transformational leadership discourse along with a professional values discourse.

Duignan (2006) concurs, “Professional relationships must always be predicated on the core values of the organization. Being honest, trusting and trustworthy, respectful, tolerant, empathetic, open to critique, and willing to be a team person are as essential to professional relationships as they are to the development and maintenance of personal relationships” (p. 25). However, such discourses are not without inherent difficulties as some leaders have noted. As already evidenced by Meredith, schools’ corporate agendas require compliance and often create dissonance for Junior Heads’ to the extent they are conflicted personally or professionally with the strategies employed to achieve good leaders and effective leadership.
Professional discourses

Sharon:

I have been privileged to work with women leaders in the last 35 years, one being my mentor and a most wonderful role model. My current [female] Principal and Vice Principal’s values have been embraced by my-self.

Throughout her responses Sharon refers to women mentors who have been ‘wonderful role models’ and identifies strongly with her current principal and vice principal, both female. She also mentions “personally I don’t see female leadership as unique”. Sharon prefers not to connect gender to leadership discourses and implies that bringing gender into the leadership discourse may devalue her mentor and role model. This reference to gender may also undermine her traditional view of a professional educator and leadership.

Sharon was the only participant who responded to all the questions by making constant reference to others; her mentor or her principal’s leadership. Her actions were always framed by being in-tune with the key individuals in the school. Her sense of shared beliefs indicated a particularly strong values-led professional discourse was being mobilized - that reflected a sense of harmony and cohesion. Such a discourse promotes cultural, social and political agreement and underlines her leadership situation. She sees leadership as, “…relationships, commitment, trust and mutual respect”. This professional discourse highlighted what Bezzina (2008) argued was “shared moral purpose… collective action based on ownership, commitment and shared leadership” (p. 53). Sharon’s response elicited questions and comparisons between Ellen’s and other leader’s responses to the professional discourse.

Ellen appeared to be striving for a community of practice that appears to be more focused on broad humanitarian ideals and a modest attitude, while Sharon focuses almost exclusively on her relationship to her role models and their leadership dispositions. For instance Sharon comments her principal “sees a situation and deals with it through the people she works with…the staff come first”. She makes no comment about broader educational questions or the deficit of women in leadership across the broader educational sector. Although Sharon made no mention of a wider sense of professionalism in terms of diversity, particularly equity or relationships to outside professional associations, other schools or education; this may have been an oversight.
Her comments indicate a strong commitment to consensus-building with staff through mobilizing institutional, cultural and symbolic discourses about the school’s ethos and religious beliefs. Sharon focuses on micro-managing, how she leads and relationships with her principal and leadership team. Her conviction is reinforced when she states: “I guess having a shared belief of what’s best for children and building a comfortable environment for staff is a bonus”. As mentioned earlier Ryan and Sungaila (1995) argue that a “presumed consensus…helps to ensure a socially cohesive organization which endures across social space as well as over time” (p.160). This is particularly pertinent as Sharon is one of the longest serving Junior Heads.

In a similar way Julie also expressed a co-operative, supportive leadership environment. She notes that “when given the opportunity to plan and work co-operatively with their peers, they [women] are formidable… successful women primary leaders need to be recognized in some form”. She goes on to point out that “leading in today’s complexity of curriculum, administration and regulations, means that leading must be shared in an open, caring environment”. Julie’s responses are similar to Sharon’s as both Junior Heads’ have women principals with whom they relate well. Although in Julie’s case she indicates more awareness of the current political, social and equity issues facing education today. For instance Julie persuades others to “think beyond the school environment to encourage the school community to reach out to support others”.

Julie:

[Leadership] is about caring for those around you; be a good listener; avoid knee-jerk reactions; be open to suggestions and empower staff to pursue their ideas. Keep up- to-date and work closely with parents, staff. In my position, ethical responsibilities go hand in hand with the current leadership culture.

Julie appears more practical than Sharon or Ellen, when it comes to what educational leadership entails. Although the cultural contexts for Julie and Sharon suggest professional respect and democratic consultative processes contribute to how leadership is conducted in these schools. As Julie states: “My current position enables there to be emphasis on teamwork, co-operative planning school-wide (K-12) which sits neatly with the way I like to plan”. Julie’s responses indicate discourses about professionalism and how that might be achieved. She also blends aspects of the transformational discourse. Leadership means you have the ability to
“make the hard decisions” and “encourage excellence” along with a professional (values-led) discourse about “caring for those around you”. Both Sharon and Julie have developed strong professional relationships that indicate there is mutual respect and peer support for their leadership position and a supportive school environment.

Caring for others
Following on from professional discourses, elaborated by Julie and Sharon, Ellen (Junior Head, K-12) takes the values-led discourse further and portrays leadership as dependent on the degree of self-sacrifice and humility a leader brings to the position.

Ellen:
I believe it is essential that a leader has a notion of service, humbleness, humanness and a selfless desire to serve followers. There must be continual pursuit of mastery for self and others… I get bogged down in trivia.

Her attitude of ‘service’ in terms of vocation or ‘calling’ has a sacrificial element. This discourse supports moral and ethical leadership discourses that promote values. In Ellen’s case there is a sub-text that speaks of loyalty and altruism. In this regard Grace (2000) argues, “the discourse and understanding of management must be matched by a discourse and understanding of ethics, morality and spirituality, on humane educative principles” (p. 244). Ellen has taken up the professional discourse that places ethical values, education and children’s welfare first.

Moreover Greenleaf (1977) states “moral authority is achieved through servant-hood, service, [and] contribution” (p.11). Servant leadership opposes the corporate models of transformational and entrepreneurial leadership. The notion of humility and altruism is linked to ethical leadership by way of community service and the concept of care. Values-led leadership discourses have particular appeal in the independent sector as the schools are usually affiliated with a particular religious, ethical or cultural ethos (Starratt, 2004; Bruzzelli et al., 2002; Duignan, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Often the values-led, ethical dimension of leadership so favoured by these schools does not prohibit transformational or entrepreneurial leadership discourses. As mentioned earlier leaders use transformational discourses and co-opt values discourses to build vision and consensus but always in the context of a competitive
educational market. This is often a contested space as coercion and conformity to the shared moral purpose remove or sideline questions about strategic marketing, direction and economic purpose.

Ellen calls for *selfless* service and the need for constant reflexive self surveillance that is necessary in order to achieve *mastery*. Her comments about *mastery* and the constant effort to overcome prompt one to reflect on what she is trying to achieve. She also makes a strong case for Foucault’s (1988, 1984, 1977) ethical analysis, care of the self that focuses on the “arts of existence”, or the self-regulating “technologies of the self”, that individuals use to create themselves as the ethical subjects of their actions. Foucault’s approach theorized how individuals are subjected to regimes of self-discipline and surveillance more subtle and powerful, even at the highest levels of organizations.

Furthermore Sinclair (2007) states “Here the individual takes on the responsibility – rarely consciously – of producing an appropriate leadership identity for themselves - one that is consistent with institutional expectations” (p. 133). Ellen seems to be struggling and reflectively ponders: “It does not have to be this way…no-one forces me to do this”. Questioning, self reflecting on her motives and what drives her to such lengths; she is committed to disciplining her behaviour through self surveillance and infers there is another way, another story, another smarter option. She goes on to note:

Ellen:

Our relationships are characterized by a shared vision…a source of identity and affiliation…

Like Sally, Sarah, Julie, Christine and Claire; Ellen seeks communal agreement, consensus, and a discursive leader-identity that requires “reciprocity and mutuality” based on affiliation with the school’s culture and ethos (Fletcher, 1999). However, dedication to a shared vision through relational practices to achieve cohesion and unity may itself be problematic because the desire for consensus can be coercive, leading to ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves, 1994). Ellen’s commitment to a shared vision implies creating solidarity and a successful image of the school. However, her relational approach implies there is more to this than a focus on performativity (Blackmore, 2004; Regan & Brooks, 1995).
According to Ball (2000) performance initiates a “system of regulation, of organizations and the self, providing a measure of worth and of productivity against which individuals are judged” (p. 3). In Ellen’s case her concerns appear to focus on ‘providing a measure of worth’ and even greater pressure to “work smarter”. However, another reading might see her response as seeking a professional discourse that provides a “…framework for responding to the moral challenges educational leaders face” (Starratt, 2004, p. 5).

**Hard and soft discourses**

The emphasis on autocratic forms of management and entrepreneurial discourses of leadership that emerged during the 1990s has been termed ‘hard’ compared to the emphasis on teamwork, holistic, caring and empowering employees, which has been termed ‘soft’ or people management. Such ‘hard’ corporate discourses are central to ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and the management and leadership of many schools. ‘Hard’ discourses highlight individuals’ desire to be seen as competent, hard-working and able to make tough decisions. Therefore individual Junior Heads’ confront the paradox that depends on the extent to which they adopt hard (masculine, corporate) /soft (feminine, values) discourses.

As Elaine explains *hard* discourses involve “technological and communication skills, articulating the school’s vision and strategic goals, building staff consensus, managing conflicts and team building skills”. It is interesting to note how the *soft* discourses of competency and care often entrap women. Jill, Sarah and Claire (Junior Heads’ K-12) prioritize a gendered *caring* or soft discourse as a primary motivator behind their commitment to *nurturing*. (Jill)

**Jill:**

[Women]… have a greater understanding of nurturing and ability to multi-task in educational leadership (juggling many balls in the air at once). These are not necessarily ‘unique’ but far more common among women and in Independent schools.

**Sarah:**

As women, I think we are over conscientious we let the day expand, we are over intense and over reflective and we don’t enjoy the humour and light relationships as much as men do.

**Claire:**

[Primary leadership] is viewed by many (mostly men) as a ‘soft’ role.
Jill, Sarah and Claire view their role as soft. They assert that bureaucratic corporate managerialism has changed “the way leaders work as mentors, leaders and managers” (Claire). These changes suggest the qualities women bring to the Junior Head position are ‘soft’ and undervalued. Qualities such as nurturing, working conscientiously with an ethic of care offer an emotional and relational discourse focused on the pedagogical aspects of professional work. Jill’s nurturing women, Sarah’s over-conscientious women and Claire’s soft women reinforce the gendered discourses surrounding leadership, using social and historical meta-narratives about caring and gender stereotyping. Their view of leadership perpetuates male/female binaries and the social construction of gender.

Pam reflects how a culture of gender discrimination precedes and plays out in task allocation which privileges Senior (hard/male) and Junior (soft/female) school issues. “Males in leadership are happy to pass on policies and procedures such as EO (Equal Opportunity) and mandatory reporting, as well as potentially offensive emails or actions to female staff – Me!” Gunter, (2007) cautions, getting caught up in finding a balance which, “…allows [leaders] to become more passively situated in a game in which someone else is setting the rules…[and] in their preparedness to play by those rules, leaders become complicit in perpetuating them” (p. 135).

The cultures within these leaders’ (Jill, Sarah, Claire and Pam) schools suggest issues related to particular work regarded as soft is seen to be a concern for and of women. Furthermore delegation of duties and tasks is one way of discriminating between leaders in K-12 Schools and is also indicative of the broader gender division of labour (Blackmore, 1999). Hence the gendering of work regarding social issues such as: Family welfare, family law court issues, child welfare and sexual harassment policy as well as discrimination are considered women’s business. By trivializing such policies the culture in the school views social justice issues as soft. As Fletcher (1999) states “gender-linked expectations of supportive behaviour allow organizations to absorb the work generated by these expectations (such as relational practice) without rewarding it or even naming it as competence” (p. 137).
Boy’s clubs and networks

Pam:

I am the only female on the whole school Administration Team K – 12 so I sometimes feel left out of the loop, because of ‘bloksie’, ‘mateship’ or ‘old school ties’ to which I do not belong.

Pam’s response carries the colloquial expressions that convey the strength of the discriminatory culture that dominates her school’s culture and her marginalizing as a female leader within the school. According to Blackmore (1999) discourses of “masculinity tap into particular cultures to produce a range of exclusionary practices which ‘keep women in their place’, either as subordinate to men in power, or as different from men once in leadership” (p. 131). Pam is excluded from the dominant cultural discourse and her expression denotes a critical response as a form of resistance to the hegemonic masculinist culture.

As Blackmore (1999) points out, “the boys’ club was the most familiar, yet intangible aspect of organizational life to women” (p. 128). Pam’s comments about the bloksie culture and her experience of isolation is compounded when she states, “I am the only female” on the leadership team and “I do not belong”. Pam articulates her situation as a gendered politic of difference. That is, her feelings of alienation situate her as ‘othered’ and she is discursively positioned stereotypically. Pam uses the personal pronoun I three times, to emphasize her positioning in regard to the discourse around “boys’ networks” and indicates her resistance to such discourses.

Pam acknowledges exclusionary practices of particular masculinist discourses and suggests her presence at this level of leadership is tokenism; a symbolic performance to allay any discriminatory discourses or deny exclusionary practices. Leadership diversity as Blackmore (1999) argues “values difference, and all its nuances, without slipping into the regressive discourse about management of diversity which reduces difference to individual preference” (p. 203). Pam’s situation highlights a management of diversity that does not produce democratic or equity practices but reduces difference to ‘tokenism’.

The boys’ club according to Ramsay (1993) was “characterized as a range of practices that positioned women as being outsiders - storytelling, male bonding practices, social rituals, language, talking about football… and more formally, in
meetings, subtle discursive ploys of resistance…” (p. 48). Such practices came into play to position women as powerless one moment and co-opted the next. As common tactic was ‘professional betrayal’ when credit for a woman’s work was assumed by a senior male” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 132). Pam agrees with the “bloksie – boys’ club” positioning women as outsiders and identifies the disadvantages for women.

Jan:
The Junior School Heads’ Association (JSHAA) can be good as a network, but is very ‘old school tie’ and ‘respect’ is often based on longevity. I would suggest that if the Heads’ are indicative of the schools, we have many very traditional Independent schools.

Pam and Jan also highlight how easily the discourse about the ‘old school tie and boy’s network’ circulates amongst women. To a lesser degree Julie, Sarah, Jill and Claire echo similar sentiments with the exception of Julie who offers an explanation of why this might be the case when she states: “Their [women leaders] powers / desires for networking are not as strong as men”. This presumes networking is taken to mean opportunities for promotion, or that males are more ambitious and proactive in seeking leadership positions. However, networking appears to be a strategy men successfully employ to advance them-selves and foster solidarity. According to Cockburn (1991) feminists, have not engaged sufficiently well with the level of investment most men have in maintaining existing gender relations. She argues “There is active resistance [via networking] by men [as they] generate institutional impediments to stall women’s advancement in organizations” (p. 215).

Pam:
I notice that the male Heads’ at the JSHAA (Junior School Heads’ Association of Australia) are younger …

Pam points out the JSHAA (Junior School Heads’ Association of Australia) members consist of “male Heads” who are younger, inferring they had more networking opportunities that promoted them more quickly. Jan also supports Pam’s concerns about male advantage and questions how unfriendly the atmosphere of the professional association is; in relation to a new Head. While Jan has similar issues of “gender, ageism and ‘old school tie’ networks”, and she draws attention to the respect extended to traditional long serving members inferring that newcomers do not have this experience.
According to Blackmore (1999), “different women relate in different ways to this monoculture (Cockburn, 1991, p. 172) of the powerful, some more readily incorporated than others due to different personal philosophies and political beliefs, and some ready to ‘play the boy’s game’ with more intensity than others” (p. 202). Furthermore particular “discursive constructions of hegemonic masculinity position women as other and lesser… as young female staff spoke of how the ‘old boy’s club’ operated in otherwise innovative schools” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 202).

**Feminist discourses – equity and biases**

Christine (Junior Head, K-6) highlighted her resistance to the corporate discourse earlier and now declares “There are less of us!” Significantly her comment was all she wrote in response to the first question regarding women in leadership. Her emphatic statement may have indicated her awareness of the predominance of males across the wider field of educational leadership or she may be referring to how leadership discourses are silent on gender. As the Independent Schools’ Victoria (I.S.V) Directory of Members (2008) indicate women Junior Heads represented 48 percent therefore the assumption about gender and the broader issues of equity are more likely.

Claire notes, “[Junior Heads’]… don’t get the respect or recognition that male counterparts may get”. Pam responds to Claire’s concern about lack of equity and states it is due to: “Male domination and power seeking of senior male leaders [through delegation of specific tasks as well as] undermining of staff relationships, staff expectations of the role”. Whereas, Elaine positions herself: “As a woman one has to deal with some patriarchal, sexist attitudes from older male leaders in the school”. Christine, Claire, Pam and Elaine are highlighting the biases and inequities that surround their experiences of leadership. Thus understandings about diversity and equity for women, in many instances are reduced to gender-binaries premised on male attributes and female, disadvantage.

Sarah (Junior Head, K-12) comments, “I think we should be talking about primary leaders rather than female versus male ones…however, as a woman I have been subjected to bullying by male parents in the school, but maybe male Heads get this too!” She goes on “as a woman, maybe we are advantaged in being more easily able to do ten things at once!” And as an afterthought she writes: “As a woman (we) I go
home and cook the dinner, do the washing. Sometimes I think I need a wife!” Here the *we* is crossed out and replaced with an *I*, a palimpsest where crossed out words suggest a detour to consider what operates when she talks about the collective *we* and quickly changes to the *I*.

Why does Sarah decide to emphasize gender as not relevant to leadership and simultaneously argue her stand as a female and to stereotype herself woman as housekeeper, as an after thought? This paradox suggests she feels strongly about female stereotyping and finds the gender-neutral leadership discourses preferable and more empowering. That is, leadership for Sarah is neutral and non-gendered and subjectivity as fixed and stable. In this way she has already conflated neutral and masculine notions of leadership and as such, she supports the corporate discourse.

In hindsight, the Questionnaire could have been worded differently, to see if the issue of gender emerged naturally out of responses with regard to headship. However, by declaring an all female leaders’ research an opportunity was provided for participants to consider how they understand their positioning as women in leadership. This would have influenced their responses in highlighting gender as indicated by Sarah.

Moreover, my understanding of the transparency demanded by feminist research, “making visible why we do what we do – and how we do this” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 74) revealed my intentions to the participants and positioned me in a particular way. At the same time the majority of leaders’ commented they were interested in participating specifically because, as they indicated during the interviews, it was an all female leadership study. However, others may have been discouraged from participating for the same reason.

**Positioning - vulnerability and strength**

Chase (1995, p. 227) suggests that the gendered character of women’s stories of achievement lies in their orientation to others. In particular, the emotional interdependence they express in recounting their leadership experiences. Furthermore women’s disposition towards the affective domains of leadership reinforces society’s stereotypic image of the division of labour that operates within the education system and also leads to differences in expectations. Hence school leaders are confronted daily “with a variety of emotions – such as anger, bewilderment, anxiety, caring and
excitement— that are inextricably linked to personal, professional, relational, political
and cultural issues” (Zembylas, 2009, p. 97). Moreover school leaders’ handling of
emotions “shape and reflect the climate and culture” of their schools (Beatty, 2000a).

Pam reveals vulnerability when she states: “I feel there is tension and that sometimes
the Deputy Principal feels I’m stepping over the line. There were a few incidences –
he wouldn’t speak to me for months! …and she [teacher working in the Junior
School] tells him her perceptions about what is happening but that is not necessarily
how it is! I resent it incredibly”. Pam’s resentment is a response to feeling
undermined and at the same time unable to trust her staff member. In addition the
Deputy Head’s subversive tactics suggest she is being scrutinized. As Bates (2009)
suggests this often expresses itself as “burn-out …disaffection and alienation…” (p.
166).

Similarly many of the leaders in this study would agree to a level of tension and
resistance. According to Meredith: “leadership is challenged more… parents not
supportive and will go to a higher authority” and undermine the Junior Head’s
position. Moreover, Pam declares “Family-work balance is always a challenge for
women, hence my wait until children were older before applying for Headship
positions”. Sarah sees women as more vulnerable and “over intense” particularly
with increased workload, she cautions “we need to be careful not to drown in the
job”.

As Heads’ are ambiguously positioned and emotionally invest in their respective
schools they negotiate the distinctions between Senior and Junior school
responsibilities which strains power relationships and can inhibit trust and loyalty
(Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). According to Sinclair (2007), “…confronting and
working with taboos in leadership [opens up] ‘deeply embedded, emotional issues’
which become active when we start to talk about ‘gender and power-linked aspects
of self identity” (p. 32).

The emotional dimensions of leadership often arise from disjunctions between
workplace agendas, power relationships and different ways of seeing beliefs and
values. Meredith confirms this sense of alienation when she declares: “…every level
is so busy being accountable… there is a shame and blame – don’t rock the boat –
status quo that breeds a culture that is fear driven”. Meredith articulates the eroding of relationships between levels of management within the school and the personal impact of the culture. Sarah, Elaine and Meredith experience a range of tensions, contestations and conflicting allegiances within their workplaces.

In particular contexts women leaders may feel isolated and alienated. Jill feels the “bureaucratic part of working in a large school’ is related to the emotional factors ‘that can overwhelm leadership”. Sally is incensed when a neighbouring school does not split the cost of shared professional staff development. She declares “they would miss out on one planning day! I still can’t get over it! ...So I said forget the senior staff! – Where is the leadership that those teachers need? How can they get away with that?” Perhaps the cultural isolation for Sally is intensified by distance and competitive marketing which highlights the lack of cohesion between Independent schools.

In contrast Sharon (2005) conveys emotional stability and a sense of coherence, consensus and professional values.

Sharon:
My current principal together with her vice principal share the same values. My principal is a woman of wisdom and compassion, she sees a situation and deals with it through the people she works with…the staff come first, social justice and a sense of commitment serve the common good.

The emotional work of leadership involves making judgments that are salient to one’s sense of self-identity and how one feels, sees and thinks about the world (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). The politics, emotions, and values women leaders bring to their workplace are a significant part of their individual discursive repertoire.

**Discourses of resistance**
The leader’s responses reveal ambiguity, in terms of powerful, powerless, vulnerable, strong, questioning their status, autonomy and how to achieve good leadership. Also some leaders commented on the gendered division of labour and the impact of a blokesy culture within their particular schools. Marginalizing Junior school also played into how the majority of these leaders were ambiguously positioned within their school structure as Junior Heads.
The leaders’ in this study mobilized multiple discourses: Corporate, transformational, professional and values-led. Discursive strategies of resistance were part of their repertoire as they shifted from one discourse to another. However, when internal contradictions become evident; strong emotions were exposed and generated responses such as feeling disempowered, exploited, sidelined or marginalized. The affects of these discourses were feelings of isolation and being discriminated against. As Elaine highlights her experience of the unfriendly Junior Heads’ Network and how “many older women network amongst past colleagues and do not welcome younger members”.

Paradoxically the seeming gender-neutral stance of professional and values-led discourses based on neutral terms of merit, competence and values was taken up by some of the leaders as a discourse of resistance. As Blackmore (1999) points out, women leaders “were still judged, often quite harshly, not only against the benchmark male leader, but also against criteria of an idealized or simplistic version of feminist leadership that ignored the complexities of women working in a system not of their making” (p. 190).

Sarah, Meredith and Jill preferred the corporate and gender-neutral stance of professional discourses. Meredith critiques “the politics”, while Sarah rejects the “feminist discourse” and the domestic female stereotype. As Blackmore (1999) argues “while some women … [leaders] disclaimed feminism, particularly its more extreme forms, others were distinctly anti-feminist (Weiner, 1995b). These women – ‘social males’, ‘the queen bees’, isolates’ – were often described by colleagues as aggressive, dominant, competitive, individualistic and non-supportive, if not antagonistic to other women” (p. 192). Conversely, Sally, Sharon, Claire, Julie, Christine and Ellen commented on the positive influence of a female stereotype of nurturer and carer, concerned with supporting staff and students.

**Why do leaders stay in leadership?**

Leaders responded to what inspires them to stay and the ideals and values that guide them. Although the data indicates leadership is under pressure, leaders were inspired by a range of discourses. Elaine, Ellen and Carol favoured pedagogical perspectives Reggio Emilia, Steiner, and educational theory. They particularly highlighted how
they enjoyed ongoing learning and professional development as it expanded their pedagogical understandings and challenged their educational philosophies and broadened their horizons. Religious inspiration motivated Linda and Irene as they believed education was part of their faith and purpose in life.

By far the majority of respondents regarded working with children as the most important inspiration that prompted them to take up teaching in the first place. Making a difference in children’s lives and seeing them grow and change was a constant pleasure for Sarah, Sharon, Pam, Julie, Jane, Meredith, Claire and Jill. For Jan, Sally and Grace the professional image of teachers and the education industry, keeping good teachers in the profession, building teams and positive people provided incentive and motivation for these leaders. For Christine it was her family values and getting back to the simple things that inspired her to keep going.

Concluding comments
The Questionnaire revealed how my position as researcher influenced the construction of the questions in respect to feminist research. By offering open questions I am aware of the limitations of the study, its imperfect, partial representation of responses and the workings of subjectivity. That is, how research questions are problematic and the politic regarding which questions get asked and which do not. Furthermore questioning how power functions in research, relates to my relationship with the participants and with the research. Does my prior experience mean I am more open or closed to these women’s responses? And equally how are they more open or closed to me as a researcher?

The findings indicate a general openness and frankness which provided a partial overview of the discourses circulating about how women leaders’ in Independent schools are discursively and politically situated. Analysis revealed leaders’ use multiple discourses; corporate managerialism, transformational leadership and professional paradigms to position themselves within their situated leadership context. These leaders’ tended to privilege a corporate discourse in one sentence and make reference to a gendered discourse about women’s disadvantage or the benefits of stereotypical female qualities, in the next. Leaders’ were frustrated by the changed nature of Junior Heads’ work such as: time constraints; performative expectations and the intensification of work or “dilemmas of management” (Bowe & Ball, 1992).
Leaders also wrote about not being recognized for their relational skills such as, approachability, ability to nurture, empathize, multi-task and demonstrate superior people skills. These capacities tended to be invisible but expected of a Junior Head.

Leaders’ contended with hegemonic school structures, male staff privilege and lower status given to Junior school. Also the historical positioning of women in education was reflected in discourses about the old school tie and bloksie culture which contextualized a few of the leaders in the study. In particular, Pam, Sarah, Jill, Claire, Elaine and Linda articulated a gendered division of labour within the workplace and expressed a need for constant reflexivity in order to position themselves more favourably within the dominant corporate/professional gender-neutral discourses. Such discursive practices of positioning reflect Foucault’s work on subjectivity that highlights political agency as an aspect of ‘subjectification’ and the relational nature of how power operates in organizations.

Discourses that promote vision, strategic goals and building staff cohesion and consensus tended to affirm leadership in middle management is about identifying and aligning with the school’s culture. In particular Sarah, Sally, Christine, and Linda appeared to benefit from this alliance, as they held in balance their sense of idealism and professional discourse on the one hand and corporate discourses on the other. These leaders’ manage to hold the paradox of competing discourses and maintain a balance.

Sharon, Jan, Ellen and Julie’s responses stand out as they appear to fit well into their respective school’s culture, values and practices, particularly in terms of promotion and tenure. These leaders draw on more idealistic discourses about professional/educational purpose, concerns for equity, democratic, inclusive and caring practices that prioritize students, learning and well-being – the liberal democratic educator. Such discourses were often used by these leaders to counter the ‘hard’ discourse of corporatism. Evidence of idealistic discourses circulating amongst these leaders shows how they strategically employ professional reflexivity to reinforce values and the school ethos.

Analysis exposed silences related to distributive discourses and shared leadership in particular, executive team work and shared decision-making. Although leaders’
referred to discourses about equality and professional values to position themselves in relation to the school’s culture, they did not critically evaluate the implications for leadership within their school or the wider community. Sharon and Julie appeared to successfully position themselves and benefit from a professional discourse of equality and shared decision making. Sally and Christine, (Heads, K-6) appeared to be able to position themselves with a greater potential for autonomy and agency. However, Elaine, Pam and Meredith found autonomy and agency regarding decision-making, problematic. These leaders’ appeared to resist their positioning and mobilize dissenting strategies in order to gain positioning power.

Gender equity issues were referred to with differing intensity. Linda, Pam, Meredith, Elaine and Sarah were adamant about the gendered division of labour and to a lesser degree, Julie and Sally. Although leaders’ resisted being ‘othered’ or marginalized the dominant discourses left little room for negotiating a better more equitable professionalism. All leaders used discourses and reflexive practices involving discipline, control and self-regulation as all are accountable to a higher authority. Analysis reveals that leaders’ dispositions are influenced by how they are positioned within the school and the degree to which their careers and reputations are invested in “playing the game”. It would appear “leaders are players” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 58).

In the following Chapter I introduce the interview transcripts, vignettes. Interview encounters offer further opportunity to investigate how leaders’ discursively position their subjectivities in relation to assembling leader-identities. The women’s narratives indicate a heightened sense of place and specificity that written responses rarely reveal.

Aside: July 2007

What struggles beneath the surface of encounters?
As I question and write I produce my story in conjunction with the women’s stories and this discursive social practice also has its protocols and conventions and limits what can be done. However, this context is not static and I relish the diversity, contestation and constant change processes. This reproducing is part fiction and part history within an ‘agentic’ process of reconstructing encounters. To this end I am rationalizing that this thesis contributes to understanding how to be ‘responsible’ and ‘helpful’ to women seeking to move into leadership and serve their school communities in more decisive ways. It relates to how I choose to be positioned within the discourses available, as my participants were, during the encounters. These thoughts propel my work and position me as Lisa Heldke (1998) describes as “a
I question the discursive constituting of subjectivities and positioning that shapes leader-identities built around an artificial inside/outside. Add to this my understanding that the transparency demanded by a feminist doing research, “making visible why we do what we do – and how we do this” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 74) means I am fully involved in the study, which becomes as much about my discursive positioning as about the women with whom I am working.
CHAPTER SIX

NARRATIVE ENCOUNTERS

In the previous Chapter the discourse analysis revealed that leadership for women in Independent schools is complex, gendered and at times contested. The micro-politics of power relationships which contextualized these leaders’ revealed leadership was problematic, both as a woman and as an educator, particularly in K-12 schools. Leaders’ used overlapping discourses; transformational, professional and particularly values discourses, to gain positioning power. Underpinning these discourses was their tacit commitment to accountability and self regulation. From the previous data analysis managing leadership occurred through negotiating paradox and the extremes of idealism and dissent. In mediating leadership discourses these women also drew from other sources (religious and philosophical) to maintain a professional disposition (Thomson, 2001).

It needs to be reiterated that the contexts for each leader varies considerably. Although similar discourses are mobilized by individual leaders the responses and positioning strategies consequently have differing effects. Drawing these discursive practices together offers a partial mapping of the narrative field these leaders’ occupy and is an insightful way of analyzing while negotiating the data. The women in the study have not been collapsed into one universal ‘woman’ or ‘female leader’ or any similar archetype. Each woman wrestles with positioning, meaning and identities while their situated practice allows for specificity and particularity.

Participants’ Contexts

The following Table 9 introduces the interview participants (see p. 129). These leaders are all Anglo-middleclass females where all but two have been or currently are still engaged in the “triple shift” which refers to paid work, (full-time) unpaid domestic/family work and community work (Blackmore, 1999). Double shift indicates paid work, (full-time) and community work.
This Chapter offers a detailed narrative analysis of the interview transcripts. The analysis builds on discourses already active in the study. As I have mentioned in Chapter Four, my approach to narrative analysis is premised on a theoretical understanding that individuals are active subjects, discursively constituted through positioning discourses - partial, changing and often contradictory; producing multiple subjectivities. Identifying competing discourses can offer insights into understanding relations between culture, narrative experience and what these women are telling us about power, subjection and the constitution of leadership-identities through discourse. As Weedon (2004) notes, discursive fields are “made up of competing discourses that produce different subject positions and forms of identity” (p. 17).

Foucault theorized how individuals are subjected to regimes of self-discipline and surveillance focused on the relationship between subjectivity and power. Therefore using Foucault’s (1997, 1991, 1988) ethical analysis - care of the self, I am drawing attention to the technologies of the self, that individuals use to create themselves as the ethical subjects of their actions. For my purposes examining how leaders’ mobilize particular narrative strategies to assemble their subjectivities; exposes the mechanisms, technologies of the self that produce particular leader-identities. The women’s narratives reveal how they used self-regulating practices to position themselves in relation to corporate managerialism and professional gender-neutral discourses as well as values-led discourses. These processes confirm the Foucauldian
concept that leadership functions as a site of *governmentality* in which leaders’ self-regulate and in turn are regulated by others.

The analysis of the twelve women interviewed is based on a close reading of their narratives. The vignettes provide instances where nuances such as, long pauses, sighs and laughter, add texture and enhanced the dialogue. Such non-verbal cues strengthen underlying meanings and inferences including subordinate voices, counter-narratives and latent resistances that lurk behind and within leadership narratives. Besides more obvious positioning through word choices (pronoun usage) and use of direct or reported speech, leaders sought to give themselves or others a sense of agency.

The analytical focus was on how these women are embodied through mobilizing particular narrative strategies that not only situate and contextualize them but allow the individual women’s positioning to emerge. Each leader’s discursive repertoire offers a partial assemblage of possible subjectivities constituted through power relations and temporarily tied to an en-gendered situated leadership-identity.

The narrative analysis reveals a number of articulating themes or discursive strategies which these leaders’ activate in order to position themselves. Analysis indicates leaders’ mobilize a set of discursive practices encompassing *paradox* (balance), *idealism* (values) and *dissent* (resistance). The analysis also shows these leaders are able to move between and around these positioning strategies while tending to articulate their experience as allied to a particular constellation of discourses; corporate/professional – paradox; values/ethical – idealism, and critical/resistance – dissension.

Therefore this Chapter is arranged according to the discursive strategies of *paradox*, *idealism* and *dissent* that leaders used to position their subjectivities. Sarah is an example of the ‘balancing act’ or paradox where disparate corporate – professional discourses circulate and work against change to maintain the status quo. Christine, Sally and Linda’s discourses are of paradox also. Carol’s discourse is an example of the idealistic professional values that tend to overcome disjunction through democratic and collaborative practices. Julie, Jan, Ellen and Sharon also share the discourse of idealism.
While Elaine employs strategies of dissent to critique leading and managing in order to renegotiate a more favourable position. Meredith and Pam equally have a discourse of dissent.

**Paradox - keeping the balance**

Although all the leaders’ narratives reflect particular tendencies towards holding the paradox of opposing and complementary discourses; Sarah actively mobilizes discursive strategies of paradox to position herself and sustain a situated leadership identity that she regulates and modifies. Christine, Sally and Linda also activate similar discursive strategies and contend with the paradox arising from their situated practice. Christine and Sally are Junior Heads’ in K-6 schools, while Linda is a Junior Head, Deputy Principal K-12 school. These four leaders’ operate in co-educational settings and Sarah is positioned within a male leadership team.

**Sarah: This isn’t helpful… it’s just not helpful!**

Sarah is Junior Head of a Primary Campus within a much larger multi-campus K-12 school. The Primary Campus is located in one of Melbourne’s inner eastern suburbs. Previously Sarah spent 8 years as Junior Head in a small Independent School and has been Junior Head at this school for four years. Reflecting on her career she says she feels driven and considers herself “a change agent”. She believes change is necessary as “this is the natural state of things which translates as lifelong learning”.

Sarah begins her narrative by explaining the school’s male dominated culture. However, she emphasizes this is different from other large elite traditional schools that are bound by their “Old Boy” culture. She contends “this school is about the individual in the school and it has a great acceptance of the individual and I think that’s its strength”. Sarah continues: “I am the ‘token’ female on the all male leadership team”. As the only woman, “it pays to have a female to balance”. The ambiguity is accentuated when she highlights gender equity as “an issue and always needs to be addressed”. Although she agrees her position is tokenistic she continues to rationalize the paradox of “gender equity” as being dealt with through individualism and refuses subordination by insisting “this situation does not influence me unduly” (Sarah). Here managing diversity is about female ‘tokenism’ and Sarah’s acceptance of such ambiguity is significant.
Linda is a Deputy Principal and has been Acting Principal for some time. She is adamant there needs to be a gender balance at the leadership level where they have a female Principal. Therefore a new (male) Deputy has been installed to share her Deputy role. Throughout the rest of her narrative, Linda draws on a gender-neutral discourse that advantages males while she emphasizes her competence, length of service and knowledge of the whole school. She highlights her disappointment after grooming a number of male teachers (Junior School) who were seconded to Senior school and declares, “the people I lost from Junior School were very valuable” in terms of experience and gender.

Linda declares her allegiance to the school as these staff movements are “for the good of the school” and emphasizes the gendered division of labour where leadership promotion focuses on males. She favours gender-neutral discourses and tokenism at the leadership level; she insists on gender balancing and declares, “If I get a choice I would deliberately choose male leaders to balance”. Linda preferences a male patriarchal order by mobilizing a discourse of male disadvantage and argues “I believe we need male role models but I guess, in very [Christian] churches, men are seen as head of the household, men are seen as Head of the Church… a very patriarchal system”.

Indeed Sarah and Linda disregard the social, cultural and political inequity and the discrimination of women in the workplace by reinforcing a hegemonic structure. The implications for female teachers at Linda’s school suggests limited access to promotion, often referred to as the “glass escalator” where men get more rapid promotion than women in female dominated professions (Blackmore, 1999). Hence the “gender neutrality of the corporate discourse has often been seen to lead to a resurgence of ‘masculinism’ and in this instance, discourses of male disadvantage and role models have led to its reinvigoration” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 79).

Sally and Christine are Principals of their respective (K-6) schools and like Sarah, their narratives highlight individualism and a corporate leadership discourse. These leaders’ redefine and contemporize their cultures by renouncing uncooperative parents and staff; achieving approval and being your authentic self. Christine identifies with the vision and values of the Montessori school, in ways that strengthen her allegiance to school community and the Board. However, this requires
her to generate constant vigilance with herself and staff as she insists a “leader must
walk the talk”.

Sally’s leadership is underpinned by the endorsement of the School Board that
proved their loyalty by “wanting me to continue as Head while I had my children”. In
return she worked hard because “I knew I just had too as I didn’t want to risk it
not working”. Sally balances family and work commitments (triple shift) with
constant self-discipline and a determination to succeed and not disappoint her School
Board or other women. These four leaders’ mobilize “individual leader-centric”
discourses and maintain the status quo. However, they see themselves as “change
agents” actively promoting (predetermined) school vision and values (Gunter &
Forrester, 2010).

Sarah mentions, “we need to function as the best organization that we can, I mean
that’s fundamental to any corporation…you have to look at how this school operates
and be successful…so its not that I’m just sitting back and doing a management job
very day, but you have to be fiscal everyday… provide value for money”. Sarah
explains her priorities, responsibilities and her alliance to the school’s purpose and
corporate culture. Her narrative suggests she understands these demands and adopts
or been co-opted to the rhetoric of masculinist corporate managerialism.

Sarah situates herself within a discursive paradox that makes heavy demands on her,
particularly as she feels she is not motivated by ambition and too readily defers to
colleagues who she argues; “have the power to ‘position’ you because they believe
you can do it”. Sarah identifies with the Senior leadership team and the associated
political strength this carries within the school. Yet this uneasy alliance suggests she
suspects there is a “tenuous” belief in her abilities as she feels pressured and needs to
constantly prove her worth. Sewell (1999) suggests “that senior leadership teams and
teamwork, with its allusions to equity, empowerment and inclusion, can also be the
vehicle of intense peer-group pressure, normalization and stress” (p. 29).

Sarah describes the tensions and inflationary demands as expanding: “Government
requirements, whole school strategic planning and campus strategic plans,
accountability to Registered Schools Board (RSB) and International Baccalaureate
(IB) and keeping some laughter in the place! Make planning time so hard in a job
that is people centered, meeting people regularly as well as drop-ins, follow up parent requests, issues this is all changing, becoming more frenetic, more demanding….” My suggestion to alleviate pressure by sharing leadership appeared cursory as Sarah explained she would “not want a co-principal but really values her deputy and team as in the end I might decide this is where we are going!”

Sarah’s adherence to the corporate discourse was challenged when I asked her what she thought was valuable, rich and meaningful about leadership. She repeated the question slowly and proceeded: “Working with the teachers so that they are leaders with the children – is the really important thing. And for me to trust them… to do it… they need to own what they’re doing – you can’t tell them what to do and how to do it but you need to show them where the bar is and lift it”. For the first time her focus shifts to the relational practices of leadership. She highlights trust and continues to reflect, “Sometimes in these jobs (sigh) you can’t be the creative self you once thought you were; this job is pressured by politics and demands … I think creativity is gone!” Sarah reveals how she raises standards, negotiates performance and insists on staff’s trust and compliance. However, she feels disconnected from her more creative, innovative self and sets up a tension that suggests a counter-narrative where greater agency was once possible.

Christine was also challenged to build staff cohesion and core values within the Montessori school. A schism had developed that divided the school community and she had been installed to address the discontent. She began with a “visioning day” that generated a reinvigorated “contemporary dynamic and a very responsive school for today’s society based on the principle: Montessori education is education for life”. Vision-building unified and clarified the school’s core values. Christine followed this process with staff appraisals which she strategically renamed “yearly reviews and professional portfolios”. She successfully deflected attention from performance appraisal towards staff empowerment and goal setting that emphasized commitment to the vision.

In the same way Sally establishes control and regulatory practices for her staff and adamantly stipulates “I’ve made a particular stand. We do our indigenous program every year – we have developed our own curriculum … I really had to put our staff out there because there was a degree of reluctance to do it”. Sally’s discursive
positioning emerges as she moves between *I’ve* and the collective “we and our staff” in order to achieve her goals for the school. She also comments “we do it together because they need to learn”. Therefore in order to achieve staff cohesion Sally orchestrates the whole school program. In this way she establishes commitment to vision, consensus and a performative if not socially aware school (Ball, 2000; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995).

Sarah also mentions the burdens of management which are exacerbated when staff is less than supportive. She declares “the staff has to be loyal and know confidentiality rules – have too!” The need for staff loyalty and confidentiality take on an intensity which implies there are deeper emotional reasons for her adamant stand on “working together”. This is evident particularly when she asserts “we have very little, very, very little – backstabbing very little there’s hardly any clique-i-ness, they’re a great team!” Such repetitions and validations suggest there have been issues as her following statement confirms: “If a parent comes in and says so and so said this about me, I go to that person and I say to her - You know this is not helpful! This isn’t helpful, this is just not helpful!” (Sarah)

Sarah uses repetition as a narrative strategy to reinforce regulatory control within the hierarchical structure. More importantly it allows her to reiterate a collective code of practice and gain positioning power by insisting on loyalty. She is upset and concerned about the level of *confidentiality* and suspects there may be more staff members opposed to her management practices. She concedes the possibility of a marginal group within staff ranks who may contest her authority as one staff member has already demonstrated; therefore her insistence on loyalty. However, trust, loyalty and faith were also valued by other leaders. Sarah provides an example of paradox with the balancing of collegial relations, discipline and control by drawing on professional values.

Confidentiality and trust also raise questions about leaders protecting reputations and whether there is a sense of fairness, transparency and inclusive practices within the school community. Some staff may feel alienated, exploited or simply oppose the corporate, performativity being imposed upon them. Sarah mobilizes paradoxical discourses about loyalty and disloyalty, *teamwork* and *clique-i-ness* with cohesion and sabotage. Again her insistence and repetition, “it’s not helpful it’s just not
helpful”, indicate a sub-text of resistance where staff politics may destabilize cohesion and ultimately threaten to undermine her position.

Equally Linda, Christine and Sally articulate a corporate doxa that advocates building consensus and cohesion for achieving goals and the school’s vision. Hence it appears these leaders are exercising a “logic of practice” (Bourdieu, 1992) that authorizes a leadership “delivery disposition” where the leadership paradox requires them to balance competing discourses (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Such positioning strategies place an “emphasis on the transformational leader, and has contributed to the re-emergence of a ‘leader-centric’ strategy” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 59). As Sinclair (2007) points out “one of the goals of transformational leadership is to mobilize employee aspirations and co-opt them for organizational purposes. Through these processes, the identities of employees become interwoven with organizational interests”. In this context leaders are “not outside this process, but enmeshed in it… [In] deep and self-disciplining ways, [leaders are] agents for maintaining the cultural status quo” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 132).

Sarah negotiates a balancing act where she seeks to reconcile various subject positions by generating “optimism and keeping things in perspective, not getting fussed when big challenges are thrown up… making other people believe that too”. Such self-regulating practices are shaped by a discursive strategy that emphasizes trust, loyalty and consensus where Sarah’s responsibility is to convince others that her leadership is positive. She deflects attention from any contradictory subtext to those of performativity, management and time constraint as these are less conflicting, procedural and more easily controlled. Managing emotions for Sarah is about dealing with pressure, insisting on trust and loyalty while shoring up collegiality, albeit possibly “contrived collegiality” (Hargreaves, 1994).

Sarah’s narrative strategies reflect how her subjectivities are constructed through the paradox of social and structural constraints. She attributes much of the pressure to ensuring the primary campus is highly regarded by the senior school administrators. To achieve the school’s strategic goals and present a seamless school from K-12 she argues: “I think you have to be (pauses) looking at the definition of the school (sigh) that you’re only a part of a bigger school so you’ve got to look at where the whole school is going”. Sarah continues to think out loud: “How does that interpret for our
campus?" Sarah reflects on the interface between Junior and Senior campuses where one needs to balance Junior school needs with the demands of the whole school. This juggling exercise leads her to surmise, “you cannot do it all yourself… and teachers need to own it”.

**Negotiating paradoxes**

At the outset I was aware Sarah was uneasy about the all female approach to this study and wary about questions concerning gender. She deliberately distanced herself from such issues by focusing on individuality and management practices. At the same time, Sarah claimed individuality as a refuge from the collective gender stereotyping of women. By not dwelling on inequality and advocating individualism she articulates how she has developed a strong sense of her own leader-identity using a corporate discourse which presumes a disembodied self.

According to Sachs (2003) Individualism is in stark contrast to collaboration and collegiality and promotes an “entrepreneurial identity; individualistic, competitive, controlling and regulative, externally defined and standards led” (p. 130). Sarah, Christine, Sally and Linda construct leader-identities in impersonal and uncritical terms demanded by their performative cultures and refuse any discourse which might position them as marginalized. These leaders’ positioning strategies involve multiple corporate and professional discourses along with self-regulatory practices that focus on building loyal, unified school communities.

Sally, Linda and Christine’s narratives also gave evidence of parallel discourses and discursive strategies focused on overcoming any sense of marginalization or powerlessness. The paradox inherent in their positioning strategies required leaders to mobilize corporate managerialism on the one hand and complementary discourses of professionalism – school values on the other, to maintain their position and the status quo. Indeed their sensitivity to the politics of power-relationships explains Sarah’s positioning strategy of individuality; Christine’s reliance on a contemporary Montessori vision; Sally’s insistence on an annual whole school program and Linda’s deference to patriarchal order.

The narrative analysis reveals how these leaders’ built communities of practice that reflect their schools’ ethos. This discursive engagement has strengthened these
leaders’ commitment to institutional politics and reflects a corporate leader-identity. However, their positioning did not indicate changed practices or that they necessarily introduced different practices, or changed overall value systems. They sought to deflect attention from leader accountability to staff performativity by matching actions to management agendas, insisting on compliance and upholding predetermined school values. The discourses of paradox indicate leaders are upholding parallel discourses of their individuality and the compliance or performativity of others.

These leaders also found ways to graft relational practices onto regulatory control. For instance, Christine employs cyclic reviews, which require staff to maintain portfolios and reassess themselves each year, against the school’s goals. While Sally’s yearly indigenous program presents as obligatory and isolates social justice issues to a once a year event. Sarah insists on showing staff “where the bar is and lifting it” by using a Five Year Plan and Annual Personal Development Review. Linda’s approach to relational practices and control involves ensuring whole school participation in regular, daily twenty minute morning devotional sessions along with providing only one staffroom.

These mechanisms were not exclusive to these leaders but in these discourses, staff was viewed as a collective. Rarely were they commented on other than Linda’s concern for male staff disadvantage. All of which reinforce regulatory practices and ‘control of activity’ as Foucault (1977) points out: “Its three great methods – establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, and regulate the cycles of repetition” (p. 149). Hence such controls reinforce unity and maintain ‘performative’ practices and accountabilities.

Sarah, Christine, Linda and Sally negotiated the micro-politics of power and co-opted professional discourses to smooth over any dissonances or contradictions within their repertoires that overtly challenged their corporate leadership habitus. These leaders’ demonstrate how they negotiated belonging to an organizational culture and how belonging is inscribed in ritualized semiotic and material practices. In particular, Christine sees her role as “like a rudder on a boat that steers the School towards the vision” complemented by a non-negotiable stance where all staff must commit to a contemporary version of Montessori education.
Paradoxically Sally asserts that she “is not an authoritative figure” while insisting all staff deliver the School’s social justice program. Linda maintains a seamless whole school Christian values approach that favours Senior school and promotes male teachers over female teachers. Whereas, Sarah insists on staff allegiance, overlaid with the rhetoric of individuality. Such paradoxical positioning is significant as it conveys how these leaders’ manage to maintain disparate discourses and a sense of belonging.

Decision-making for Linda and Sarah seemed to be focused at the highest level with the Principal and allowed for minimal consultation. They appeared somewhat removed from strategic decision-making and to have less autonomy to operate on their own initiatives. Conversely Christine and Sally developed repertoires that revealed a high level of autonomy and parity with their respective School Boards. Both Sally and Christine were able to develop communities of practice where compliance was required and willingness to adapt values to accommodate a corporate paradigm was necessary. Hence they highlight the paradox that sees trust, loyalty and educative principles combined with regulatory control, accountability and performativity; as complementary.

These discourses also depict how gender equity was assumed, as Sarah’s gender-balance (tokenism) conveys, or as Sally’s commitment to combine work and motherhood to demonstrate it can be done. Notably Christine was silent on the issue of gender-equity while Linda perceived and addressed male disadvantage. According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) “Despite… the apparent ‘successes’ of individual women, there remained significant resistance to the gender-equity agenda. The take-up was partial, fragmented across systems and within schools, with significant opposition in some sites” (p. 235).

**Idealism and professional power**

Navigating professional discourses and the ideals of leadership have been a safe haven for some women. They have embraced the notion of facilitator and nurturer as ethical principles of caring and taken up greater moral responsibility for themselves and others. This also includes smoothing over dissonance and idealizing values of equality, choice democracy, relationship and meritocracy. Carol, Jan, Julie, Ellen and Sharon take up these discourses of idealism.
According to Forester (1999) “deciding to do the ‘right thing’ is only a small part of ‘doing the right thing’ and principles of care, trust, respect collegiality and a sense of equity provide a basis for democratic practices and building social cohesion” (p. 221). Carol, Jan, Ellen, Julie and Sharon’s positioning strategies were dominated by idealism and valuing educative and consultative practices along with caring for others. These leaders conveyed a quiet sense of accomplishment and confidence. The length of tenure for all but one would in some measure contribute to my initial impression along with their strong allegiance and dedication to their respective school communities. Although Jan has only had a few years of leadership she revealed the same confidence and relaxed manner. This is significant because it testifies to the idea of leader habitus: as embodied as well as enacted (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007).

In these discourses there is only a cursory mention of Senior leadership teams and a greater reliance on mentors, the principal and/or College of Teachers, which is highly referential. These leaders’ recognize the difficulties inherent in their situated practice and engage the rhetoric of a professional “ethic of care” (Code, 2003). Their discursive strategies focus on values and idealism which occasionally override the self-regulating practices that inhibit agency while maintaining allegiance to principal and institutional discourses.

Carol’s narrative context is organizationally different from the hierarchical structures that Jan, Ellen, Julie and Sharon’s vignettes portray. These leaders’ reflexively adopt positioning strategies of idealism that somewhat separates them from, or co-opts them to, the micro-politics of power relations. Their narratives are swayed by the notion of democratic and educative ideals.

**Carol: It’s the men that can really carry it!**

Carol is a Steiner teacher, K-12 school. Her narrative is significant as she only partially completed the Questionnaire. She felt it did not apply to her situation. Her preference was for a one to one interview where an interactive encounter offered a richer and more meaningful experience which was more conducive to her sensibilities and the philosophy of the school. Although Carol appears to fall outside the Junior Heads’ group I consider her responsibilities comparable. The school remains connected to other Independent K-12 schools due to national and state
policies, funding and regulatory requirements yet maintains a participative leadership model.

The Steiner school has a non-hierarchical structure where all the teachers form a decision-making structure or College of Teachers. Court (2003) notes, collectivities, flatten leadership hierarchies “by completely replacing the headteacher /principal position, sharing between them all the school wide administration, policy-making and planning responsibilities” (p. 18). Therefore Carol’s expertise within an alternative setting offers a different perspective and opportunity for further insights.

Carol is a long serving member of the College of Teachers’ and describes how leadership/management practices have developed over a 50 year history. Despite the school’s overt lack of hierarchy, power relationships exist in all group dynamics and in some instances have strong philosophical or cultural links within wider social institutions such as organized religions, and other educational philosophies. Carol’s narrative highlights the historical role of women in education when she states, “we are lucky we have a lot of men on staff and we are very practical in our school. Women are the ones who lug the chairs around for the meetings and we pick up more of the nitty-gritty, well our trainings pretty good for that! But it’s the men that can really carry it! Men express the philosophy much better than the women”. However, she insists its “more personality than gender”.

Carol refers to “a woman’s training” as a preparation for them to be active, practical and hands-on. She indicates a gendered division of labour and describes male/female stereotypes. Carol mobilizes a subtle discourse of idealism that speaks of an admiration for men’s contributions even though they occasionally bale-out and do not follow through. She maintains a gender-neutral rhetoric relating to male accomplishment while mobilizing a contradictory discourse about male/female binary. That is, she positions men as visionary – thinkers and women as practical – doers.

Earlier Carol had argued it was not a matter of gender but personality; here she offers a gendered discourse around notions of professional competence and ability. In realizing this binary, she interjects “…there are women who can do it”. However, the embedded nature of the male/female binary is clearly delineated. Discourses
surrounding women’s work evoke stereotypical images and dualisms that are particularly strong when referencing equality. It is Carol’s idealistic assertion “we are all equal and you…you have to believe that first” that signifies the disjunction between Steiner philosophies as articulated (by men) and in practice (by women).

Carol tends to mask any criticism in order to present a cohesive story by smoothing over disjunctions, valorizing men’s merit while mobilizing an equity discourse. Furthermore she identifies length of service or “the age of staff” as significant, yet when I question seniority she responds emphatically “well that’s invalid! It’s not a hierarchical structure”, although she had indicated she was a senior staff member, “see it depends on your age group and life’s stations” (Carol). This appears to contradict “we are all equal” by inferring a hierarchy of seniority premised upon a gendered division of labour that is also intergenerational.

However, Carol may have simply meant older staff particularly the originators who carried more responsibility to share and articulate the vision, in the early days. Also her exception to the term seniority implies an idealism as any reference regarding a hegemonic structure would mean inequitable relationships of power. From her idealistic discourse she maintains there is equality for all, even though male teachers contribute differently she denies any discrimination including gender, putting it down to personality or life’s experiences. Furthermore, she shows deference to males and the ‘othering’ of women by not acknowledging the historical positioning of women as complementary to men in the cultural, social and political discourses surrounding patriarchy.

The Steiner Teachers’ Collective has male and female members whereas; Julie, Sharon, Jan and Ellen work in predominantly female leadership teams. Like Carol, Jan sees women’s practicality and admires “strong female leaders…who are prepared to work and get in and have a go”. Julie remarks “of course a lot of men love to brag and say how good they are – they’re great promoters of themselves [sigh]” and at the same time she comments “women don’t do this!” Jan and Julie admire women’s strengths and Carol positions women as equal but different whereas, Ellen and Sharon are silent on gender.
Carol highlights features of the school’s collaborative approach to shared decision-making and draws attention to a clear democratic structure and process; a distributed leadership discourse (Court, 2003; Gronn, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Carol explains “we have a volunteer Chair of College and an Administration Group who prepares the agenda”. The idealism inherent in Carol’s narrative centres on the mechanisms of democratic structures and equity practices, yet preparing agendas and control of information by a few appears open to distortion and misuse of power. It suggests democratic practices are partial and limited. The ideal of democracy and its achievability is questionable.

Although Carol notes there are only a few teachers who set the management agenda it appears that the teachers’ collective arrangement has served the school well with strong links to shared leadership discourses, self-managing schools and participatory democracy. Shared leadership acknowledges diversity in our educational communities; it is people focused, encourages collaboration towards shared goals; is based on trust and the distribution of power by merit and expertise rather than formal positions (Court, 2003). This ideal arrangement highlights relationships and meritocracy which may also go some way to account for Carol’s acceptance of the gendered status quo.

Carol:  
Steiner helped me see a groups’ inner dynamics but I’m still choosing – I’m freer in that choice. When issues arise the process is, introduce, discuss and later maybe a decision or resolution.

Carol explains, “Sub-committees are formed” to resolve issues when consensus is not achievable. However, she mentions that sometimes an important decision may take a few days during which the ‘issue’ is left to percolate in the minds of the teachers before coming together to be finally resolved. As Nussbaum (1990) argues “good deliberation” requires a form of “perceptive moral improvisation” that requires greater attention to relationships with others, “provisional agreements, temporary accommodations, working with contingency, enjoying surprise, but always with particular principles in mind as reference points…” (p. 79).

Carol’s narrative also suggests different readings. For instance there are other possible interpretations of the school’s meeting agenda, collated by a few, prior to
the College of Teachers’ meetings. As she idealistically points out “we don’t argue” without acknowledging the potential for misuse by those choosing what issues will or will not go to the teachers’ collective. In the same way Sharon declares “we have never argued” and Ellen advocates the benefits of staff and parents shared collaboration where “we all support each other”.

Such arrangements can facilitate a “contrived collegiality” and “consensus driven” management practice (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 208). Although, Carol indicates the screening process is a practical solution provides an idealistic justification “teachers don’t want long meetings”. This may also be a subtle way of shifting, what is or is not made public, individual preferences and regulatory control of what information is communicated or silenced.

Also being tapped on the shoulder, “or say to someone you’ve got skills, come onto that committee” is an effective strategy for political ‘stacking’ or maneuvering of people into positions that influence outcomes—or idealistically it may be seen as encouraging others to be involved. Regardless of its orchestration the nature of participatory decision-making and shared leadership as well as hierarchical models are open to political pressure and misuse. Carol reveals, almost as an afterthought, that within the College of Teachers’ there is a tendency towards egoism and an “underlying rivalry, unspoken rank/hierarchy; very subtle”. This was the only comment that reflected relational practices might not be entirely smooth and unproblematic.

Carol qualifies the ambiguity of the processes when she idealistically declares: “If you are frazzled it’s because you are not trusting! Personally it’s difficult and those who don’t share the philosophy are generally disadvantaged”. She emphasizes “you have to have faith, belief and trust” as a foundation for maintaining a democratic (participatory) leadership structure. Rather than assuming consensus there are structures and codes of practice to ensure deliberative processes are built into the cultural fabric of the school. Such participatory processes of decision-making is an “ecological appreciation of practice” in which ethics reflect the complexity of professional: “one which ensures that they as individuals and as a profession are aware of developments within their society and are able to locate their practice within the wider picture of social and political issues” (Bottery, 1998, p. 170).
Hence Carol’s idealism smoothes over disjunctions and offers a realistic account of how democratic processes require trust and decision-making structures as well as ‘sub-committees’ that are flexible, task oriented and strategic. Carol describes her adjustment, perseverance and commitment to her values and the school’s philosophy as an outcome of her ideological labour and reflexive practice. Although the analysis reveals a bias related to gendered stereotypes and workplace division of labour, where she oscillates between discourses about gendered competencies, premised on a binary of men’s intellect and women’s practicality and their presumed stereotypical intellectual/practical abilities; she refuses any subordination.

The major part of Carol’s narrative is anchored within a discourse of idealism that relates to: Decision-making processes; critical reflective practices; a passionate defense of equity; along with social, cultural and philosophical modalities underpinned by a code of democratic equality; shared leadership and participatory practices. Her narrative suggests she makes choices and exercises agency regarding her level of involvement.

**Professional power and negotiating right fit**

In the world of leadership the dominant meta-narrative that leadership is male oriented is somewhat comforting even if at the everyday level the discourse assumes gender neutrality. This co-option of professionalism that does not constitute equality or democratic practice has been part of the traditional definition of white, male, middle-class expertise and elitism. Therefore to fall back on well established patterns and hierarchy as the norm; is comforting for both men and women. The more women discover their own vulnerabilities; the easier it is to return to the gender-neutral corporate and traditional professional discourse to overcome any sense of disempowerment.

Carol spent over twenty-five years in the Steiner school and Julie, Ellen and Sharon have also experienced long histories in high performing academic schools that convey a sense of solidarity and continuity. Jan is a recently appointed Junior Head in a long standing, high performing Catholic girls’ school. According to Hatcher (2003) leaders are “expected to actively shape themselves in the likeness of prevailing cultural and social models” (p. 329). These leaders’ tapped into a discourse valuing professional ideals, educative principles and competence. Their
idealism and inspiration derived from philosophical (Steiner) and religious (Anglican/Catholic/Jewish) principles, along with acknowledging the support of “strong female leaders and mentors”. (Jan)

These leaders’ focus on ideals that seek to promote a “moral purpose” that flows through their leadership discourses (Fullan, 1993). This was highlighted through Carol’s dedication to the ideals of democracy, reciprocity and spiritual practice. Julie’s focus on collegial respect and consultation; expressed as “I wouldn’t do that out of sheer professional courtesy”. Sharon’s “working alongside staff, showing empathy and caring… where trust and honesty are so important!” Jan’s leadership indicates she values compassion, mentoring and stewardship. She is particularly aware of her moral and ethical responsibilities where ‘stewardship’ implies being responsible for the ethical dimensions of leadership particularly caretaking the values of the Catholic school and service to the community. Ellen also highlighted “service to others” and the ideals of “humbleness, humanness and a selfless desire to serve”. Her idealism and moral purpose were activated through encouraging collaborative practices and the concept of care.

In particular, idealism and pursuing ethical leadership was not without its tensions. Jan was promoted over the incumbent while working with the staff of Junior school and declared “it was probably the most difficult ten weeks of my life”. Even though she had a politically unstable start with divided staff and unsupportive parents, she remained unquestioning of the processes, power relationships and decisions generated by the principal and leadership team. They had selected and installed her. She had been co-opted as a collaborator in that process. Although she is relatively young and inexperienced her loyalty and idealism overcome her shaky start. She is committed to the ethos of the school and has a sense of professionalism that encompasses a moral responsibility to others. She considers herself a change agent positioned by the Senior leadership team to reinvigorate the Junior school and she is determined to prove her capacity to do the job.

Julie’s anxieties are uncovered when she discloses, “documenting is everything it helps clarify your view of what the outcomes need to be”. Julie’s ideals are more pragmatic and her focus is also politically astute as text can influence and mediate power relations and inform decisions. Control over documents also provides Julie
with a strategic tool as she is the translator and therefore framer of conversations and what is valued. Ideally power for her can be exercised through what is included and excluded in any text. Prudent documenting means texts are not left as open to reinterpretation. Power is also exercised not only through what is recorded but also to whom it is circulated.

Julie’s practical idealism is premised on relational values, respect and a degree of autonomy related to the level of responsibilities delegated to her by the principal. However, she notes not all Junior Heads have this strong relationship with their principals. Julie insists “it is an understanding with the Principal and she knows I wouldn’t dream of appointing a new staff member without her meeting her, yet she wouldn’t be fussed. But I would never do that! It’s a professional courtesy and she trusts my judgment about things. Trust is ‘implicit’ in everything we do!” Here Julie idealizes the relational aspects of leadership coupled with courtesy, professional respect and trust. Such ideals when combined with a sense of autonomy mean Julie has high expectations and exercises an increasing level of moral and ethical responsibility towards her school community and the broader professional organization.

Sharon’s dedication and allegiance to the school’s cultural values places her under pressure as she recognizes her bias and the need for diplomacy particularly when negotiating with parents of mixed faith: “That I find difficult (sigh) I find it very difficult. Whenever I pick up the phone (softly) I have to be very, very careful what I say and how I say it”. However, her idealism embraces trust, respect and nurturing of staff and she concludes by reaffirming the collegiality of the leadership team as “we’ve never had a conflict”. She weaves her conversation back to school community, cultural values and relationships with the Principal and Vice Principal. Her idealism is reflected in a values-led discourse of ethical professionalism. Difficulties require discursive strategies that mobilize impartiality, equity and trust while building professional accord and a faithful “community of practice” (Sachs, 2003).

Ellen’s leadership ideals are premised on her own self improvement and her commitment to perfection. That is, Ellen’s perfection is a quest for higher and higher standards – for herself, students’ academic results, parent approval and a morally
strong, collaborative, caring school community. She sums up her experience of leadership as a reflexive practice in self regulation and “being mindful, precise and organized”. She sees a need to work on these attributes as others’ judge her on these things and she is afraid she cannot defend herself against the “left brain dominant people’ who can ‘shoot her down with an argument”. As a result her critical self-analysis seeks more creative solutions while recognizing her own ambivalence. She has an intrinsic sense of moral responsibility and confesses “what is wrong with me?” when a parent survey measured her performance and popularity (along with students’ performance in standardized tests).

Ellen stresses, “Leaders must be authentic by both outer and inner directed motives and traits”. Such high personal expectations and ideals reflected in relational practices manifest as a constant desire to develop greater capacities. Perhaps Ellen’s self regulation is partly due to the school’s internal performative demands. As Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, (2002) argue “the more intense the gaze of the audit, the less trust invested in the moral competence of the practioners to respond to the needs of those they serve” (p. 341).

According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) “many of our educational managers, [and women in this study] while disagreeing with dominant managerial discourses, were framed by them” (p. 167). Hence Carol, Jan, Julie, Sharon and Ellen use discursive strategies to reconfigure meaning, for example, by using ideals (stewardship, trust and caring) and professional discourses (democratic decision-making, documentation, professional courtesy) to promote moral principles and an ethical sense of justice within educational practice. As Thomson (2001) notes they “work against demoralizing institutional technologies by tactically taking up submerged and lesser discourses, mobilizing other aspects of the non-unitary self” (p.15).

Often the ethical idealism and values-led dimension of leadership so favoured by Independent schools draws unproblematically on a transformational leadership discourse. This corporate discourse co-opts values discourses as leader’s vision and consensus building relates easily to a shared moral purpose but always in the context of a competitive educational market. However, these leaders’ positioning strategies prioritized idealism with its ethical and moral discourses, over more corporate discourses. Thus providing a strong framework that overshadowed some of the more
confronting attitudes they encountered. For Carol, Jan, Ellen, Julie and Sharon their respective school’s ethos supported their discourses of idealism.

The discursive strategies of idealism were taken up by these leaders to critique gender differences, equity and disadvantage. For Carol difference focused on male and female stereotypes with a deference to males but was ameliorated through democratic practices of equality; for Jan hegemonic masculinity in the form of hard decision-making meant promotion and approval which she countered by advocating moral responsibility and “working alongside staff”; Ellen used self-regulatory practices to develop more corporate thinking and continually improve her ideal of relational performance, while practicing an ethic of care; Julie contended with the gender inequity of the Professional Association yet continued to “offer support and mentoring” to new leaders while Sharon confronted diversity and “mixed faith parents” by taking up a discourse of empathy and patience.

Rather than calling on transformational discourses to unify their school communities these leaders’ chose to articulate a professional discourse. That is, Carol’s democratic participatory management model ensured a sense of equity and shared values; Jan developed her stewardship and shared practices; Ellen used relational discourses to inspire a collaborative learning community. Julie focused on staff ownership of the processes along with mutual respect and collegial relations while Sharon built a strong faith-based commitment to the school’s culture.

These leader’s narratives are underpinned by a discourse that supports a high level of autonomy. For Sharon and Julie this is premised on the positive, professional and collegial relationships they have developed with their principals over the years. For Jan and Ellen successful student and staff outcomes ensure they are supported and are able to exercise a certain amount of autonomy but unlike Sharon and Julie they feel continual self improvement is needed as well as ongoing professional development to ensure high standards of achievement. Whereas, Carol’s values-led professional narrative emphasized her choice in continuing her position and choosing to stay because “it’s still a better place to work than anywhere else!”

Foucault (1972) would have viewed these self regulating strategies in terms of *governmentality* as he saw individuals as self-determining agents capable of
challenging and resisting social structures. These narratives reveal leader’s agency and the deafening silence of subordinate discourses when asserting choice, authority, responsibility and reflexivity. Their idealism provides a discursive resilience when faced with controversial issues. They draw on the school’s values and relational practice to address marginalising elements while maintaining the persona of being diplomatic, prudent and compassionate.

The dispositions of these high achieving, confident women appears to derive from their close association with the school and collegial relationships. These leaders appear to embrace their respective school’s values with no apparent interrogation of the culture, philosophical/religious principles that govern the social, political relationships that make up the school’s culture. These leaders articulate an idealistic sense of purpose that goes beyond their individual advancement and attributes their professional standing and leader-identities to practicing beliefs, values and reflexivity.

These women regularly question whether what they do is still relevant, successful and inspiring to their communities. This intrinsic questioning of motives and strategies becomes a strength they utilize. There is a sense that they feel responsible to the wider professional community and to other women who would seek leadership. This was reflected for example in Julie’s efforts and ultimate disappointment in professional organizations that do not support women.

**Dissent: Caught in the middle – questioning power**

Dissenting discourses confront the question of power and the biases that are uncovered when leaders’ critical reflexive practices expose organizational and relational dilemmas. Elaine, Meredith and Pam find the boys’ club, corporate discourses and performativity, problematic. They strengthen their resolve to resist the discourses of vulnerability through greater application of critique and strategic thinking.

These leaders question the cost of preserving their reputation and professional identities. Elaine, Meredith and Pam struggle with being positioned by others. By engaging their critical capacities they experience clarity, which also brings choice. As Thomson, (2010) argues, “…headteachers’ desires for autonomy are logical. The
quest for more freedom is a necessary positional disposition, which drives agent’s actions (their practice) to shore up their position and …the desire for autonomy and freedom comes with the contemporary headteacher’s job” (p. 16).

**Elaine: I commented on that…I shouldn’t have!**

Elaine has been a Deputy Principal for three years prior to her current position Assistant Principal/Junior Head. Her speedy career acceleration was due to two schools’ amalgamating along with her appointment to oversee the restructuring process. She comments, “It was a total upheaval for parents, staff and students – everything from uniforms, handbooks to merging the social and cultural identity (sigh) but it provided an opportunity for me to demonstrate my skills”. Elaine sums up her leadership as “I think that who you are as a person is basically who you are as a leader…and leadership means I’m giving teachers’ empowerment, skills, resources and giving them some vision and a framework of where we are going (smile)… and lots of consultation”.

She acknowledges how important her former principal was as a mentor. He encouraged her to submit applications for positions she felt were fairly high profile but within her range and capability. She masks her ambition with a disclaimer that he recognized her talents and persuaded her to “go for it”. As Frye (1990) argues it is generally white middle-class males that have access to ‘moral authority’, through which white middle-class females can gain access through their sponsorship thus “One’s rightness is not really one’s own, in this case, but it is one’s sponsor’s rightness” (p. 134). Frye indicates how race, gender and class play a major role in social access.

Although Elaine was highly successful in her former position where she enjoyed the encouragement and forthrightness of her mentor, her current situation has left her disillusioned. For her there is a sense of being disconnected from the decision-making and consultative process as changes are implemented without her knowledge or participation. Elaine attributes her lack of enthusiasm as an outcome of her move from one system to the independent sector and concludes, “I feel as though this school and therefore myself are in a bit of a defensive situation… it detracts from a school that really wants to be forward thinking, creative, innovative, taking
risks…although any risks you take have to turn out positively as the stakes seem to be very high!”

Pam is also finds her position challenging. As a relatively new Junior Head and recalls how she applied for a Deputy position in her former school and recalls, “there were strong internal applicants however, the principal recommended someone else apply, they did and they got the job”. She adds “I decided I would never do that! I have prided myself on being as professional as I can be to the staff here and I never give any of them preferential treatment”. Pam did not have the advantage of mentors and considers them a great advantage; “even when I have offered mentoring to others – women are quite taken aback”. She considers luck and daring to “take risks and take on opportunities” are the reasons she has been successful in her current position.

Elaine feels the negative consequences of risk-taking stifle forward thinking and innovation. Such conservatism has meant greater attention to liability issues and school’s reputation in competitive markets. This “high stakes sensitivity” is partly due to recent public attention to schooling in which parents, particularly middle-class parents, are encouraged to take a greater interest and choice in schooling for their children. Indeed parent power parentocracy (Brown, 1990) and interventions; especially by middle-class parents are readily discernible in schools of the twenty-first century (Brown, 1990). Hence parents are exploring new roles, as partners and customers in the schooling of their children’ (Campbell et al., 2009, p.184).

Elaine finds herself uncomfortably positioned as dependent and subordinate. She declares “the principal has controlled my position through lack of money (pause) she gives me so little to work with (shakes head) and I come up with a few innovative ideas for the girls and her first response is always ‘where are you paying this from?’” She notes that when she finds a cheaper option the principal is unimpressed. According to Elaine the money is a control mechanism. Her frustration about lack of funds that limit what she can do is significant, as she is the only leader in this study to specifically mention money.

When leaders are surrounded by demands for performance, accountability and high expectations from parents; not delivering due to lack of funds rather than lack of innovation, is a major setback both personally and professionally. Furthermore
Elaine’s concerns over restrictive funding she felt impacted on her capacity to develop innovative programs that could enhance the school’s reputation by projecting a positive marketing image. Regardless of the fiscal situation Elaine resists such restriction and what she believes is unfair positioning by the principal.

In Meredith’s case it is the school’s accountability practices that are problematic. She is frustrated by the “bureaucratic paper trail that passes for control and efficient management practices, repetitive communications, no time to explain or remedy situations, consulting at all levels without resolving action and most of the time the principal refuses to accept recommendations and discussion begins all over again”. Such ineffective circular processes are indicative of the excessive accountabilities flowing down the line to middle-managers (Blackmore, 1999).

Elaine also explains how her school’s overall management has gone through incredible number of changes. During her first year as Assistant Principal she notes there were thirteen Senior leaders and now after three years none of the original members have an executive role in the school except Elaine: “I commented on that, I shouldn’t have!” Furthermore the principal is currently restructuring again to remove Assistant Principals. Elaine was hoping to go back to being Head of Junior School rather than the proposed changes where there is no Junior Head or Deputy Position. As Elaine points out management is “reactive, not a lot of long term vision, we run in short cycles as the principal likes to talk about ideas and gets sucked in to some people’s proposals and doesn’t look at things analytically enough, so we’ve gone down many trails”.

The pressure to perform encourages superficial changes and not deep-seated or owned throughout the organization, “with knee-jerk short term reactions to problems rather than informed and creative responses that question the assumptions underpinning how the organization works: that is, first loop and not second loop learning” (Blackmore & Sachs 2007, p. 218). As Elaine points out, “the stability of the school is questionable particularly in the Senior School … [it] is incredibly unstable in terms of staffing and I hate – going to whole school meetings where the staff are quite belligerent. There is anger – even with the new staff they seem to have adopted that culture’.
Like Elaine, Meredith’s sense of isolation, suggests a politic of discriminatory discourses about authority and control. She manages alone with limited opportunities for teamwork. She experiences a lack of horizontal collegiality and support, and feels vulnerable to ongoing changes, performance reviews and line management up and down the school. Both leaders’ articulate a crisis management culture where they question autonomy and how it relates to authority and accountability. These dissenting discourses compete and inter-relate. On the one hand, accountability, which tends to reinforce the status quo, depends on the extent to which authority over decision-making has been delegated and authorized. On the other hand there is a professional desire for autonomy that challenges the corporate system and seeks greater agency.

Both Elaine and Meredith’s comments outline the struggle between performative and professional dispositions within the leadership habitus. Meredith’s critical evaluation of her situation within a managerial régime means she acknowledges the ‘game’ but does not accept the ‘game’ as it is (Thomson, 2010). She highlights the resulting harmful work practices and resists the fear-driven discourses. Elaine also focuses on problematizing corporate purposes and seeking ways around management dilemmas. According to Blackmore and Sachs (2007) “emotions (e.g., anger, stress) are often the surface responses to deeper issues around organizational malaise, political conflict, and values dissonance… often expressed collectively as part of what we call the ‘sociopsychic economy’ of education”. Such economies are due to the paradigmatic shifts in leadership habitus and values which have “led to a sense of anomie, alienation and disengagement…” (p. 206).

In the context of upheaval and fragmentation; leadership is complex. Elaine has responded by producing a paper outlining her strategic goals for 2010. Her intention was to address the lack of policy, direction, procedures and management by proposing infrastructure changes that would ensure future stability and a positive workplace environment. Currently she believes the school climate of insecurity, anger and ambivalence towards executive leadership has hampered her in delivering quality educational leadership.

Blackmore and Sachs (2007) research noted how managers came to see the main aspect of their job as “managing conflict” because a team approach was not
encouraged. Along with anxiety, turmoil and tension, leaders and “those who stayed in management adopted a range of survival strategies that were expressed as don’t retreat, argue more or sit back and listen, avoid conflict by blanking it out, never respond and just gloss over the rudeness and conflict, work around it …” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 71).

Working within difficult and emotive work environments contextualized Meredith, Pam and Elaine’s leadership narratives. Yet these leaders continue to agitate for change in accord with their desire for agency and a sense of autonomy. Agency according to Davies (1990-1999) is where the “speaking/writing subject can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject her, can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she speaks in relation to the subjectivities of others” (p. 60). To this extent Elaine is a protagonist inside the storylines she is living out and it is not always easy “to engage in the act of choosing to speak … [with the] possibility of authority…to bring about fundamental changes in the possible ways of being that are available to oneself and others” (Davies, 1999, p. 67).

The apparent lack of whole school vision and direction along with perceived ad hoc, reactionary, crisis management is exacerbated when Elaine is well organized, capable and strategic in her leadership. Unequal power relationships pose a challenge to the principal’s authority when the Junior Head is a ‘forward thinking’ leader. Therefore the principal may have interpreted Elaine’s 2010 paper as undermining her authority. This may have triggered a “crisis management reaction” and the principal’s decision “to remove formal positions and introduce a flattened management structure”. However, a shared distributive model (Court, 2003) is unlikely, as parent expectations and marketing imperatives require strong competitive leadership more akin to transformational leadership. Thus exogenous pressures dampen democratic, ethical and equity discourses.

Furthermore Elaine’s frustration with the principal’s decision to abandon all leadership roles in the school, led her to consider opting for the lesser role of Junior Head. If she lost the Junior Head title she would be unable to implement her creative ideas in the Junior school or participate in external professional organizations.
According to Blackmore (1999) “For those women in leadership who did draw their strength from more politicized notions of what it means to be a feminist and a leader, but who lacked the power and resources to practice what they valued as desirable forms of leadership, the effect was frustrating” (p. 197).

Elaine’s response to her contested situation has been to mobilize discourses about the benefits of transformational leadership such as clear purpose, structure and boundaries, and professional discourses about collegial relationships and consultative practices. She continues to resist and agitate for change in accord with her desire for agency as a professional leader and educator. She negotiates between becoming a “managed” professional and being reflexive, critical and self-managing (Rhoades, 1996). The extent to which individuals resist or engage with these discourses of the managed self is dependent on their personal and ethical disposition.

Elaine appeared to be deeply aware of the dangers that flow from her position. “Any professional mythologies of autonomous judgment were being replaced by a sense of contradictoriness of purpose and blurred motivations” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p.89). Part of Elaine’s discourse of dissent is resistance premised on her professional values; equity and fairness that could endanger her (contract) position and continue the marginalization of Junior School. At the same time, she reframes contested issues as strategic opportunities and continues to explore her professional options. As Blackmore and Sachs (2007) explain “relations of power are therefore simultaneous processes of resistance, reproduction and transformation” (p. 167)

The political, social and structural nature of power relationships obliges individuals to mobilise multiple often contradictory discourses as part of their leadership repertoire. Elaine responded to her perception of vulnerability by reflexively attempting to reposition herself in various ways. She became task oriented by problematizing the situation and proceeded to critically review and strategize her options. She worked longer and harder to cover costs and keep up with parent issues. She focused on procedures and processes for long term planning as a way of creating order and stability and she ‘spoke up’. According to Brooks (2001) “it requires considerable courage to acknowledge the potentially damaging effect of lack of congruence between beliefs and behaviour, values and action, and decide there may be other ways of achieving goals” (p. 25).
Dissenting strategies - negotiating unequal power

The women’s discourses emphasized resistance and how they dealt with contentious issues, corporate cultures and professional values. They discursively positioned themselves as reflexive, strategic problem-solvers as well as out-spoken and agentic leaders. These leader dispositions challenge the status quo. Elaine, Meredith and Pam feel isolated from supportive colleagues, mentors or professionals that might smooth their way politically to achieve their ambition to be the kind of leader that prioritizes professional purpose and pedagogical principles. Disappointment and frustration is evident in the data. These narratives express a discursive disjunction for example Thomson (2010) takes up the leadership dilemma and argues “…heads are key players and while they work for their schools, and students, what they do – their agency – is always framed by a decision about whether they are prepared to ‘play’ to their own positional detriment” (p. 17).

Rather than focusing on marginalizing experiences, these women seek to understand how power relationships work and how it is possible to modify, refuse or reframe discourses that are detrimental to their careers, their values and professional purposes. The leader dispositions most prominent in these stories are those of dissent, determination, courage and resistance as well as critical reflection and viewing their situations as problematic.

Elaine’s narrative reveals the intensity of leadership under pressure to conform to the norm. Leadership for Pam and Meredith also suggests a “crisis of professional leader-identity” where leaders struggle and at times disengage from the processes that frustrate their capacities to act (Winter, Taylor & Sarros, 2000, p. 283; Gronn & Rawlings Sanaei, 2003). Pam reflects on the inherent gender inequality in her workplace; whereas Elaine and Meredith question the lack of strategic direction, consultative processes and the marginalizing of Junior School. However, such disjunctions are overlaid with discourses about the need to express strong sense of efficiency and professionalism.

Elaine seeks ways to strategize and deal with her situation and the principal’s demands and expectations. Like Elaine, Pam writes about her strategic vision, requests reviews and avoids relaxing her guard. She self-regulates her discourses and frames them in a corporate doxa. But this is demanding and Pam concludes “I am
hardly ever out of the school, and there’s this tension about trying to keep the big picture!” For Meredith the academic and pastoral curriculum was met “with increasing suspicion”. She declares “I couldn’t be bothered responding to yet another nitpicking challenge from co-management colleagues who think they see the big picture but who in fact can’t work out how to create it”.

Meredith describes her situation as “survival or crisis management where autonomy is expected but not permitted” and as a consequence, “there is isolation!” Her position is destabilized even more when she comments “although you’re entrusted with accountability and responsibility you actually have no real authority as some staff won’t back you; others question and challenge and others still go over your head – behind your back or just plain refuse up front!”

Pam also relates to the consequences of undermining and usurping by Junior School staff and Deputy Principal; who question her authority. This threat to destabilize her leadership provokes her to confront the principal and question: “Who is the Head of the Junior School?” And further on “I want to clarify my role and what decisions I can make”. This is not the usual overt discourse of the women leaders’ in this study. According to Schaef (1992) “Men who stand up for themselves are competent and assertive; women who do the same are obnoxious and aggressive” (p. 78). However, Elaine, Pam and Meredith take up a ‘masculinist’ corporate discourse that enables them, in different ways, to challenge the principal to clarify their authority. These leaders attempt to stabilize their position and neutralize opposition while their determination exemplifies stoicism and vulnerability.

Pam reflects: “I was the first woman and still the only one…So I said to the Deputy have you thought about this – the leadership team is very ‘bloksie’ and they were all horrified. It’s a co-educational school and there are girls sitting out there and what is it saying to them that only men can do these things?” Pam points out the tensions and unspoken undercurrents that operate at the leadership level. Tokenism incenses Pam. The data reveals that Pam only refers to gender bias as stemming from systemic, cultural and political factors which she recognises as positioning women unfavourably. In particular contexts a forcible feminism, such as that presenting in Pam’s discourse could be counter-productive as there is a price to pay if one rebels about sexism (Blackmore, 1999).
The analysis suggests that Elaine, Meredith and Pam were determined to improve their leadership through resisting ineffective managerialism where possible and develop negotiating skills and problem solving strategies. Their willingness to share leadership struggles through telling their stories was a demonstration of trust and the importance of voicing the concerns of women in leadership. Hence participating in the interview offered each individual a space where modifications could be experimented with and the speaker could listen again to their story and rephrase, redistribute emphasis and redefine such experiences in order to regain positioning power.

These narratives suggest leaders’ subjectivities were tempered through constant critique of the school and leadership environments requiring significant emotional labour due to the struggle to maintain their values as well as strategic analysis of situations, people and conditions. The micro-politics and ambiguous positioning appeared to produce stoic leader-identities; determined, ambitious, yet vulnerable. In the years following the interviews Pam, Elaine and Meredith all moved on and obtained leadership positions elsewhere. One went to an international school; the others went to an Independent and a Government School respectively.

Aside: September, 2007

Carol and Elaine’s narratives were particularly interesting to me for different reasons. As I reflected on Carol’s story two impressions stood out. One was the inspiring learning and teaching environment and the creative group process of decision-making. The other was the sense of deference and discipline that flowed through her story. She had shaped herself to ‘fit in’ and at the same time remain open to the creative aspects of her work and her outside interests. Carol’s narrative shifted from reflection to explanation through mobilizing binary (male/female, intellectual/practical and collective/individual) discourses. This discursive strategy was challenging and inspiring all at the same time. Carol assembled a rich, textured account of her experiences directed by strong professional values.

Elaine is a highly able Junior Head / Deputy Principal. She struggles with the micro-politics of the leadership arrangements and her principal’s decisions. I arrived ten minutes early for the interview, and she immediately ushered me in. Elaine was busy; although it was holiday time, and sighed “I need to get sorted”. Then she lowered her voice while making sure the door was shut and commented “you don’t know who might be listening”. A sense of subversive ‘politics’ made me uneasy and I in turn, lowered my voice. Her office was cramped but tidy, and her talents seemed constricted in this tight office space. Her educational accomplishments both prior to this position and during her time at this school had been significant. She commented that there was no appreciation or even acknowledgement of her efforts and successes. The latest restructure of the School’s Leadership / Management Team was a surprise, as things had been agreed before she took leave – all was going to change.
Following the interview I reflected: What a waste of a creative, talented educator who offered the school so much. She has been there a number of years and the continual reduction of her profile has been obvious. The power play was not conducive to empowering so where was the focus being directed and who benefited? Surely not the primary section of the school! I thought it won’t be long before her diminished responsibilities and desire for an authentic implementation of the educational values she believes in, lead her to other opportunities.
CHAPTER SEVEN

GENDER AND POWER AT WORK

Where there is power, there is resistance … We’re never trapped by power; it’s always possible to modify its hold, in determined conditions and following a precise strategy. (Foucault, 1978, p. 95)

Overview

The women’s narratives are compelling not only for the complex power relations but for their familiarity. With the corporatisation of education, management became conflated into leadership and Independent schools have seen a reinvigoration of corporate masculinity. Hence leadership for these women is about exercising multiple modes of power and influence while negotiating the paradoxes arising from competing logics of practice. They are expected to mediate the broad macro-politics of local/global relations and navigate the micro-politics of relational power within their particular school. For most of the women the attraction of school leadership was to do it differently, to improve the pedagogical practices and understandings of educators; while focused on the managerial imperatives of performativity.

Paradoxically, this sets up a contradictory tension between a ‘seductive discourse’ of team building and its implied participatory activities and line management’s hierarchical relationships based on functionality and strategic planning (Sinclair, 1995).

This Chapter focuses on the difficulties that persist in negotiating the discursive terrain of leadership, particularly while there is no neutral administrative logic to which women can safely appeal. From a feminist poststructural perspective I draw attention to the broader Australian cultural context where women leaders contend with substantive differences (gender, race, class etc) along with the stereotyping of gender and populist versions promoted in the media of feminist discourses about women’s styles of leadership being more nurturing (Sinclair, 2007). Added to this is the relativism and situatedness of all discourses and how women leaders’ positioning emerges out of these contextually diverse and specifically negotiated relationships within schools.
The women in this study appealed to corporate and professional discourses (implying neutrality) and working for social justice (gender-equity) while avoiding discourses that could be labeled ‘ideological’, particularly where overt value commitments (being feminist) might undermine their credibility and in turn their professionalism. As Blackmore (1999) argues, “There is no shared understanding of what feminism means to women and feminism has displayed its own normative and regulatory tendencies upon which we need to reflect” (p. 215). Such reflexivity when applied to feminism and its claims to truth and power challenges women to examine any such claims to a higher moral position; marginality does not guarantee critical insight (Blackmore, 1999).

Despite these difficulties the women in this study readily exercise the power gained through formal authority as it imparts to them the capacity to “get things done” (Sharon). Yet they remained uncomfortable with the language of power, recognizing that for a female to be powerful was unfeminine. Also realizing power relations are mostly one-sided and that their power was contingent on the material and discursive conditions of practice; they strategically position themselves. For example, Sharon distances herself from power and hierarchical relationships by drawing attention to her mentor who “was a true leader, she loved the children, she wasn’t there for the power at all, she had a passion”. Whereas Julie argues power is “in a way part territorial, as women in leadership we don’t know how to express our talents and skills, we don’t blow our own horn”.

These more confronting discourses of gender and power unsettle the smooth transformational rhetoric and leaders often view the dissonance as not helpful to career or promotion. As Blackmore (1999) points out women in positions of legitimate power (authority) often view this as repressive, negative and masculinist and as a consequence resort to more idealized conceptions of power as represented in discourses of maternal power or “power from within” rather than “power over” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 185). She argues “the view that one can ‘empower’ also smacks of paternalism, denying agency (and indeed resistance), which may also mean resistance to ‘empowering’ feminist discourses” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 185).

The narrative analysis reveals leaders’ exercised executive authority, premised on contractual responsibilities and accountabilities up and down the line. Middle
management means power relationships are negotiable and the women in this study recognized women’s strengths and the shortcomings that hinder a more dynamic stance. While some women were more open to meeting organizational goals (sometimes uncritically) others were more resistant, particularly if it did not benefit Junior School students or teachers.

Although the interview context in part truncates and silences the possibility of theorizing or envisioning alternative discourses or strategies for conveying successful leader-identities and leaves the masculine ‘logic of practice’ unchallenged; it does however, offer perspectives (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). The interviews open a critical leadership dialogue that encourages reflexivity and a critically aware leader-identity. For this reason the study makes an important contribution to the field of educational leadership as it critiques the strategies women leaders use to discursively position themselves and enables a better understanding of how this silencing occurs.

The women’s narratives reveal how they used self-regulating discourses to position themselves in relation to corporate managerialism and professional gender-neutral discourses as well as values-led discourses. Employing such discourses meant they were constrained as women and as leaders. These processes confirm the Foucauldian concept that leadership functions as a site of *governmentality* in which leaders’ self-regulate and in turn are regulated by others. Consequently, leadership can be seen to operate as a mechanism for activating “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1991). Such technologies as this study indicates, do not apply equally or in the same way to all the women.

Self regulating technologies or positioning strategies, (Davies & Harré, 1990) were used by the women to navigate the organizational rhetoric and try to get around or beyond it. Narrative data exposed the politics and discursive preferences that influenced how leader’s subjectivities are assembled, shaped and changed through such technologies. By focusing on leaders’ situated practice, narrative data enables the exposure of the layers of meaning and individual positioning strategies. The analysis identified leader’s draw on three discourses: *paradox*, *idealism* and *dissent*. These self-regulating ‘technologies’ were engaged to position an active subject, seeking to manage herself through such repertoires and produce a leader-identity.
In identifying leader’s discursive ‘technologies’, no claim is being put forward that any interpretation is more true than any other. Furthermore, understanding leaders’ situated contexts from their individual narratives is problematic and raises the poststructuralist issue of experience and interpretation. That is, in poststructuralist terms the research interview space was not neutral or empty, but shaped by various discourses – of research interviews, feminist solidarity, gender, careers and leadership to name a few. Also my positioning within the research and focus on leadership was present in the interview space and may have influenced the women’s narratives. In this process particular types of subject positions were produced.

**Positioning strategies**

Discourses of *paradox* were identified as constituting corporate neo-liberal economic rationalism. These strategies refer to the complementary balancing of the gender-neutral corporate discourses and managerial professionalism where performativity and hegemonic masculinity, is privileged. Professionalism in this context refers to the new managerial professional who is focused on achieving the corporate goals of the school through strategic business practices, building consensus and maintaining the status quo. This often requires leaders to co-opt values of loyalty and trust to ensure whole school commitment to the shared vision. These leaders’ mobilized transformational leadership discourses, using terms such as “change agent” (Sarah). They sought validation from peers and principal and considered entrepreneurial approaches valuable but not always possible.

While a sense of the collective is empowering there is the tendency for women’s leadership stories to be about what can and cannot be said and done, particularly if critical dialogues are not included. As Cox (1996) points out we need to recognize the ways in which we often self sabotage our own efforts such as, “judging ourselves and other women by rules we haven’t had a say in making, we act as agents of special control to restrict the activities of women…” [Furthermore] those who identify with, and or are validated by, the current models act as gatekeepers for them, but, more surprisingly so do many women who see themselves as change agents. These women often do not see their own complicity in the process of denying other women power” (pp. 13-14).
Discourses of idealism focused attention on values and the school’s ethos. This strategy emphasizes relational and ethical dialogues, skills and competencies, democratic, collaborative sharing and caring for others. While the ideals of democracy, equity and social justice are desirable they are difficult to address and are idealistic goals and are embedded in discursive practices. Such discourses undermine the corporate managerial ‘talk’ and give rise to the traditional professional discourses about agency, autonomy and ethical purpose. Such professionalism suggests remnants of the “old knowledge hierarchies that once imparted prestige and power” along with a subtext that tacitly acknowledges the “new hierarchies of performativity” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 2). Thus an understanding about diversity and equity for women, in many instances is reduced to a dialogue of gender-binaries premised on an implicit and unrecognized gendered division of labour. These leader repertoires continue to refer back to the naturalness of the gendered workplace as an extension of the domestic, nurturing sphere or dismissed gender altogether.

Passion for education was more evident in these discourses and the dissenting discourses than the discourses of paradox. Although educational passion permeated all discussions, these leaders’ were inspired by their school ethos, belief systems and cultural values which contributed to how they rationalized their self regulating practices. The historical /biographical backgrounds of these leaders also played a part in influencing their attraction to a particular school’s values and their long term commitment to the school. Such leader dispositions and situated practices validate these leaders’ pedagogical and ethical values which in turn produces an idealistic repertoire that responds to the principles of altruism. This was most evident when discourses focused on religious/ philosophical beliefs.

The third positioning strategy was identified as discourses of dissent. These discourses were used to resist the taken-for-granted hegemonic masculinity norms, question assumptions about leadership, decision-making, organizational learning and reflect on the relational aspects of power. Leaders also highlighted organizational biases and inequities. These discursive strategies were employed to resist the inefficiency of managerialism where possible and develop negotiation and problem solving skills as well as uncovering biases about how embedded gender inequality is
in their workplaces. These leaders emphasize the lack of democratic, consultative processes and how women and Junior School leaders are marginalized.

While these descriptors of the women’s leadership repertoires (paradox, idealism and dissent) provide a broad brush stroke of the positioning strategies these leaders’ employed (Davies & Harré, 1990) they also constitute their subject formation which is always partial, changing and never fixed. There is a constant tension between the changing expectations and conditions of their workplace and the drive to produce an appropriate leader-identity. Identity-work rather than being produced in a vacuum by individuals is constantly being constructed in response to social, political and economic pressures, while being “constrained by power relationships and shaped by dominant mythologies” to which individuals subscribe (Sinclair, 2007). Therefore it is only “by developing a wider and more critically informed understanding of identity formation that leaders may be able to navigate identity pressures more mindfully” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 139).

**Engaging discourses of paradox**

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the landscape of educational leadership has changed and so has the role of Junior Head in the Independent sector. The impact of wider educational reforms and policies (Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2006) on Victoria’s Independent Schools has seen a shift in their cultural ideologies to accommodate a reinvigorated corporatism. As Dinham (2007) points out leadership has become increasingly more complex for educators as the “… language, techniques and mindsets of the corporate sector became preeminent in education” (p. 21).

Independent school leaders in this study were expected to perform within a strong marketing and competitive domain and generate discourses of continuity and stability. As Chapter Two points out, the consequences of this enterprise reinforce the assumption that Independent schools’ strong ethos fosters a sense of consensus and solidarity (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995). The study confirms some leaders more than others, are highly aware of the broader political/economic issues confronting the independent sector. However, they were all mindful of the micro-politics and the implicit understanding that a leader is required to maintain a strong allegiance to the school’s goals. All the leaders’ were expected to smooth over resistance and emphasize loyalty and reliability.
Sarah, Christine, Sally and Linda’s leadership repertoires emphasize discourses of paradox while positioned within this tension between corporate performativity and performing well by managing oneself better. Such corporate – professional discourses were expected to provide “good leadership practice” yet, I suggest far from enhancing leadership many of their solutions and performative expectations locked them into more tightly prescribed performances (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). That is, the influence of broad policy changes and educational reforms combined with a school’s micro-politics and gendered power relationships make available particular subject positions or ways of thinking about oneself, which are constrained. These leaders felt they were expected to position themselves as both business-minded, helpful and good listeners.

Discourses of paradox reveal business motives and do little to inspire loyalty. As a consequence corporate discourses do not resonate well with teachers. Therefore taking up the corporate canon and the leader archetypes this inspires, tends towards simplification and stereotyping. Stereotypes that promote the transformational, entrepreneurial leader become institutionalized and are imposed on organizations and leaders, becoming the standard upon which leaders are measured, hired, fired, rewarded and punished. “There is a tremendous impulse in this country to institutionalize the stereotype…. [Where] individual expression of the corporate canon – contains at root an overwhelming need for control, diverse expressions of leadership are constrained or disallowed” (Dym & Hutson, 2005, p. 53).

In Sarah’s case, staff “lack of confidentiality” sends a potential message of no confidence to the broader community and in particular to the senior leadership team. The situation appears to threaten and undermine her authority. In an effort to portray a stable public image, staff solidarity and regain control; she tightens her grip using strong deterrents such as implying disloyalty to the school and betrayal of collegial trust. Questioning leadership, risk-taking and leading with the heart, is dominated by the more important needs of loyalty, predictability and closure with this form of leadership. The paradox for Sarah is the split between the corporate discourse privileging individuation, agency and authority along with the devaluing of relational discourses that build unity.
Such paradoxes reinforce leaders’ ambivalence towards an economic enterprise that has changed the type of responsibilities Heads are expected to mobilise. The corporate rhetoric has challenged the dispositions of leaders as their focus distances them from teaching and learning to managing the conditions in which teaching takes place, such as buildings and budgets (Gunter, 2001). But more importantly it distances them from the relational practices that enhance teachers’ work, such as; collaborative practices, collegial support and critical dialogues. As researchers (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Thomson, 2010) have argued, policy reforms generate a separation of “delivery positions” for teachers and leaders. That is, to ensure the educational reforms produce viable economic enterprises such “delivery positions” make increasing demands on them to perform (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). The separation of accountabilities is divisive as leaders are seen as bureaucrats and teachers as technicians. Both are required to provide a constant production of evidence, that one is in fact “making an enterprise of oneself” (Olssen, 1996). Hence the current focus on personal career goals and individualism.

Leaders in this study responded in different ways to the qualitative shift in educational leadership. Sally and Christine can be viewed as transformational leaders who have built enterprising reputations. As Sinclair (2007) notes “the individual identifies so strongly with this enterprise that they merge: the individual’s interests become its interests; the leader is the enterprise” (p. 140). The danger for leaders is the changing conditions of their situated practice within a performative frame that does not provide the types of outcomes they desire. The enterprise system is particularly volatile during enterprise phases such as succession planning or entering a new growth phase, where the leader may experience being side-lined or removed. However, if the leader initiates the new growth phase as Christine did with her “visioning day” they are well placed to take the school forward along with the personal and professional rewards that are generated by the enterprise.

Often the middle-manager of a multi-campus school does not have the enterprising options available and the transformational identity that promised so much can also become overly self-monitoring and disciplinary; particularly when the leader’s performance comes up short, is below expectation or staff is less than supportive. Therefore leaders tend to respond by reinforcing the school culture and call on values
such as loyalty, to bolster their position as Sarah did when there is a question of confidentiality.

Despite the rhetoric there is a determinism and essentialising process in these presumed enhanced choices leaders are encouraged to take-up. To a significant extent these narratives are scripted to organizational norms. Therefore why would Sarah take up a position that was devalued within the systemic model of her school? Indeed her narrative suggests otherwise and although she appears caught in the paradox where corporate strategies take precedence over the other discourses, she recalls a time when she was more creative and had more freedom to be innovative.

Other examples of the discourses of paradox are revealed when corporate team-building days or visioning days means leaders feel more driven to work harder, deliver benefits and set an example by working longer hours which are discouraging for younger women who wish to have a work/life balance. Such initiatives keep leaders, particularly middle managers, in the office trapped in repaying value added incentives with greater loyalty. Indeed it is interesting to note that loyalty was more overt and framed as a discursive strategy by those leaders (Sarah, Sally, Christine and Linda) who favoured a more corporate discourse, than those who focused on traditional professional and values discourses, where loyalty was implicit and more culturally embedded in practice.

Further the strategy of paradox indicates how leaders’ repertoires promote a reductionist understanding of the forces at work, often in stereotypical shorthand. Collard’s (2004) research (Chapter Two) identified stereotypes across all sectors. Junior Heads’ in the independent sector preferred terms like “advocates for children or the initiator” (pp. 45-48). Traditional images of female leaders as matriarchs and nurturers (Theobald, 1996, 1978) and popularised images of women as weavers and net-workers (Adler et al., 1993, Ozga, 1993) were also mentioned. However, leaders in this study preferred; change-agent (Sarah, Sally) visionary (Christine), strategic (Meredith, Elaine, Linda) risk-taker (Pam) ethical (Sharon, Julie, Jan) democratic (Carol) and facilitator (Ellen).

The women in this study did not use Collard’s descriptors, which may reflect the timing of Collard’s 1990s research; as discourses of leadership have shifted. I would
argue the leaders chose descriptors that reveal leadership has become more corporate and at the same time more values focused. This focus on values has either been co-opted to the corporate discourse or used as a reaction against such corporatisation. However, the desire to be a single-handed, transformative leader is compelling particularly as it fits into the dominant economic and managerial values of competitive individualism.

Leadership practice situated within the masculine hegemonic, silences and marginalizes gender equity issues. As Sarah’s narrative indicates there is no direct reference to any expectations placed on her by the principal and/or other senior leaders. Yet her desire to fit into the corporate managerial paradigm brings into question the silence in her narrative regarding gender, the principal and cross campus politics between leaders. This suggests a “classic boundary position-between top management and departmental staff, moving in and between two different gendered cultures” (Hearn, 2002, p. 171). Sarah was the token female in her words and tended to conflate the Senior Campus, principal and leadership team with the whole school, “…we need to be where they are!” (Sarah)

Sarah’s situation also raises the question of institutional power and how women in formal leadership exercise their authority. Sarah distances herself from feminist discourses and any sense of powerlessness. She appears to work at maintaining power over and engage the approval of “the boys club” juxtaposed to a desire to earn the respect and loyalty of the staff. The danger in seeking to belong to the leadership team, even as the “token female”, is the uncritical acceptance of the corporate logics of practice. Such tacit agreement undermines her as well as future women leaders within the school. As Blackmore and Sachs (2007) point out women “could lose the very subversive aspect of leadership that made it ethical and capable of deep-seated change” (p. 171).

Moreover the isolation that comes with a culture where individuality rules, ensures leaders are continually under surveillance and emotions are kept in check; creating tension and doubt. This in turn requires leaders to focus on shoring up consensus and commitment to the vision while being seen to perform within a system of regulation, and self discipline which silences debate. Performativity for Sarah means she must provide “a measure of worth and of productivity” against which she will be judged.
She is systematically being regulated and in turn self-regulates against a performative agenda. As Hatcher (2003) argues: “Managers are now the key to the corporate heart and they must be open to corporate values to be successful. In so doing, the multiplicities of logics, rationalities, and techniques induced them to self-regulate about what is permissible to do or say” (p. 393).

On another level Christine reflects: “I found a system that matches my personal beliefs about life and my professional beliefs about how education should work and therefore there’s not the tension that other people were experiencing”. She positions herself in relation to other leaders’ situations and leadership issues. This indicates her broader view of women in leadership and reinforces her sense of purpose by refocusing her energies on building community and consensus. Therefore she appears to overcome any sense of rejection or isolation, she believes other leaders experience. She goes on to explain performativity and the notion of value-added by discussing how each staff member might further contribute to the school. This individual assessment opens up “some interest they have that actually links back to what the schools trying to achieve and you can question staff… Have you ever considered? If this is your passion are you interested in and feeding into that area of the school?” (Christine).

Both Sarah and Christine employ the discourses of paradox and position subjectivities that orchestrate an “exchange of capitals” between themselves and authority figures; colleagues and peers; the school community and the culture within their respective schools (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). This positioning process is achieved through maintaining a corporate agenda while bargaining with self and others as to how to achieve “best practice” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Such relational work involves “codifying delivery” providing a “consistent message” and “using particular language” to fix and reposition the intended meaning of leadership language, thus achieving predictable outcomes (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Christine mobilized the Montessori visioning rhetoric while Sarah used the dialogue of individuality where resistance to these scripted discourses was unacceptable. In Sarah’s words “this is not helpful.”

The transformational leader-centric discourse is often silent on how corporate ethics, social justice or social responsibilities are being addressed. Corporate discourses
replace “agentic ethics” with a heteronomy of “instrumental and procedural rationalities” (Bauman, 1993, p. 124). By creating a plethora of procedural responsibilities and accountabilities that cover all the requirements for an efficient and successful organization; ethics and agentic practices are nonessential. Work on critical leadership argues that the current model of transformational leadership lacks the necessary radicalism needed to pursue issues of gender equity and social justice (Grace, 1997). As Thomson (2001) points out organizations take on the responsibilities for agency and distributed ethics while situating it elsewhere – that is, “everywhere and nowhere” (p. 14). From this discussion it is not what is true, but rather how might such rationalities be resisted, altered or refused so that new ways of working might be considered?

Engaging discourses of idealism

The discourses of idealism reveal a number of themes: relationship; democracy; meritocracy, professionalism and autonomy. Relationship with others includes professional and values discourses. Democracy and equality were features of Carol’s narrative repertoire and although the Steiner school structure supported a distributive, inclusive democratic approach the discourses reveal how democratic idealism can be undone through shortcuts and time saving for teachers. The practicalities of implementing an ideal democratic process were compromised. Yet as Carol’s narrative reveals inclusive practice and democratic ideals have proved sustainable.

Carol also described a gendered meritocracy where males were able to carry and articulate the philosophy better than females. The valuing of relational and moral practice does not necessarily challenge the gendered division of labour, soft discourses or glassceilings. Sarah and Linda also deferred to males but their situations gave rise to Linda’s determination to address male disadvantage and Sarah’s willingness to comply with an imposed tokenism. Thomson (2001) suggests that if Heads are to act as moral subjects then they must find and use recourses that are outside the dominant amoral disciplinary managerial discursive formation, despite the push by organizations to “neutralize the organizational subject’s moral impulses” (p. 15). Therefore the pressure on women leaders to find discourses that exist outside the leadership paradigms is imperative.
Carol, Jan, Julie, Ellen and Sharon focused on professional discourses and relational practices shaped by the cultural, religious and ethical discourses of their schools. Such discourses offered these experienced leaders’ status and stability. Although Jan was relatively new she set about consolidating her position by engaging the historical and religious values of the school for solidarity with the principal and senior leaders. Hence while leaders’ reputations and leadership practices were guided by their school’s ethos they appeared to combine school values and ideals with their own. By identifying strongly with the schools values these leaders were more able to exercise greater degrees of autonomy and agency. However, calling on moral discourses did not appear to change the inequities within the system but continued to maintain the status quo.

Research into relational practices in the workplace has identified mutuality and reciprocity as problematic, particularly regarding power and gender-equity issues. En-gendering relational practices have meant women have been disappeared along with such practices (Fletcher, 1999). Therefore moral responsibilities, mutuality and reciprocity are positive aspects of a professional values-led discourse yet these discourses do not question changing the hegemonic masculinity that drives school cultures.

As Thomson (2010) argues, “headteachers are disposed through their positions and their life-histories of playing the educational game to act …in the interests of their schools” (p. 14). Moreover the actions they take – the strategies that they adopt which feel completely natural to them – are also in their own interests. This may be viewed politically as a deliberate intention to enhance the individual and the school’s reputation. However, these particular leaders may or may not perceive such colonizing practices as incentives and/or coercions in their workplaces.

For these women the pleasure of leadership came from a strong commitment to education and the capacity to exercise relational ethics (Gilligan, 1982). Being in a position to communicate what was happening and why, to nurturing good relationships with colleagues was about quality and care for community and student needs. These leaders invested their cultural capital and brought a professional leadership habitus to their respective workplaces.
Jan confesses her lack of confidence and vulnerability; yet she notes how she has learnt to trust herself by focusing on her stewardship of the Junior School. According to Duignan (2006) the active quality of stewardship articulates an idealism that “drives leader’s positioning as it encourages questioning assumptions, injustices and an obligation to intervene and challenge inequities” (p. 12). Such ideals involve inclusive practices, collaboration and service for the common good. As a leadership practice it also emphasizes ethical and socially responsible behaviours and promotes pedagogical principles (Duignan, 2006). In the same way these leaders advocate leadership as essentially a moral activity with a moral purpose.

Moral leadership in this research invoked mutuality, reciprocity and inclusiveness. Julie, Sharon, Jan, Ellen and Carol take up the moral discourses with reference to “service to others” (Ellen) “ethical, caring” (Sharon) and “respect for others” (Julie). These leaders are highly assimilated and develop subjectivities to reflect the ideals of their respective school cultures and in turn produce an ideal leader-identity. There is little that differentiates the leader’s subjectivities from the school’s ethos and this brings with it a profound sense of purpose while placing ongoing pressure on the leader to become even more morally responsible to and for the school and its community. In a more critical sense, I would argue, there is a tendency for schools to capitalize on the moral purpose of its leaders and commodify the leader’s altruism.

These leaders’ sense of selflessness also brings into focus the notion of tempering right-fit for leader and school. Carol advocated “equality…faith, and belief” while Jan sought to develop stewardship, Ellen focused on “humbleness, humanness and humility”. Julie valued “professional courtesies” and Sharon idealized her mentors and endeavoured to emulate their example of leadership as “shared values, ethical processes and striving for the common good and truly caring for everybody in the organization”.

As indicated in the study leaders’ who focused on professional-values such as justice and the common good made consistent reference to the importance of trust as a vital ingredient in professional relationships. Trust, according to Sachs (2003) reduces complexity, acts as a form of social shorthand based on shared cultural values and “is critical to the predictability and reliability of interactions” (p. 139). For instance, Julie values her trusting relationship with the principal as she is a confidante and
peer. Carol mentions: “You have to have trust” while Jan insists “trusting people” is important. For Julie “trust is implicit” along with her principal’s professional support for her abilities that reinforces her professional identity as a leader. Sharon asserts; “trust and honesty is so important” and Ellen sums up “leadership is about trust and relationships between all the people within the school community”. Such mutual reciprocity fosters trust and is a form of social capital that benefits the larger community. In this regard these particular women leaders reflect the two-way, multi-layered aspects of trust; reinforced through networks and norms of reciprocity (Sachs, 2003).

The data reflects leaders’ emotional investment concerning matters of trust; values and ethics emerge as important discourses. Building social trust requires patience it is probably never completely attained or attainable. However, it is instrumental in moving leaders beyond self-interested conceptions of professionalism which defend threatened interests, deny accusations of derogatory personality traits and claim only laudable characteristics. Within the discourse of idealism trust is premised on relational practices of mutuality and reciprocity along with emotional commitments and shared social values appear closely tied to personal and professional identity and the discourse of politics.

The leaders who shared the discourse of idealism valued relational practices, communication and encouraging educational quality and care. However, they focused attention on those individuals down the line (teachers, students and parents) not on their peers or superiors. Such positioning was not mentioned during the interviews. Therefore these narratives are silent on the politics surrounding their particular school’s purposes or strategic goals. This indicates two dilemmas, one that leaders did not have access to alternative discourses other than the values-led organizational script. Two, that critical, reflexive practices were not part of their school’s culture. These dilemmas highlight the need for a critical discourse focused on professional issues that allows small incremental changes to occur and over time generate major changes from within traditional institutions, without resorting “to the pace and risks of entrepreneurship” (Meyerson, 2001, p. xv). The discursive strength of shared trust and ethical practices is the potential to question inequalities and address what is missing.
Discourses of professionalism appear out of step with the times. Relying on moral purpose alone appears to silence organizational strategic goals and reveals how professional discourses in educational leadership are in need of re-working. Professionalism in this context promotes a traditional stereotype where gender, age, sexuality and race have not been acknowledged as having an impact on identity (Blackmore, 1999). While all leaders are subject to issues of relational power and their place within it: as performativity is today’s currency; these particular leaders conveyed a sense of being in step with their leadership situation and their ideals. However, it is interesting to note they valued the intrinsic reward of working with people and providing a service to their school community that is of particular importance to these Heads. In this regard these leaders considered ethical practices, altruism and self-sacrifice as constituting professional behaviour.

Radical professionality requires ‘radical collegiality’ (Fielding, 1999b) and this needs to ensure trust is developed in ways that a disposition towards caring is not taken and reworked into a competency but is central to leadership that encompasses people and enables learning. Caring transcends the corporate systems of efficiencies and the workaholic entrepreneurial cultures. These Heads’ value altruism, putting others first and building collegial relationships, such as the often invisible and mundane activity of chatting in the corridor (Smyth et al., 2000).

Such radical re-professionalisation is highly political and I cannot claim neutrality as the theory and method used to conduct this study is designed to deconstruct accepted norms, including the moral values Heads mobilize to position them-selves. Questioning the level of reflexivity these Heads’ bring to professional discourses is open to debate. The intentionality and preparedness to take up a deliberate critical analysis of the professional discourse through self reflexive practices appears cursory in the data. The narratives also suggest it is risky; as values such as trust, loyalty, caring and ethical practice are embedded in educational biographies about professionalism. These values are highly acceptable and more satisfying, yet all the more open to misuse, corporate advantage and maintaining inequities and the status quo.

Therefore there is a greater need to question values, and the assumptions they generate by reflexively questioning motives, being open and making work narratives
visible and open to critique. The dialogue I have tried to support is important for its own sake and not just because it may lead to some clarity. This dialogue is not complete or impartial but struggles with the risky business of applying a feminist critique of values and practices.

Engaging discourses of dissent
Some of the leaders in this study walk a fine line between feeling exploited and being appreciated and valued. For Elaine, Meredith and Pam, relational discourses are somewhat submerged by doubt and disillusionment. These leaders were frustrated in their attempts to improve their positioning and continue to agitate for change by critiquing their respective school’s bureaucratic practices. They persist within low-trust cultures to redress the inequities. As Bates (2003) argues ethical discourses, mutual respect and collaborating together seem to disappear when leaders feel excluded (p. 2).

Elaine, Pam and Meredith could be described as experiencing organizational displacement and values dissonance. Their repertoires revealed the emotional and professional investment in their respective schools and education. These Heads’ highlighted transformational discourses – visionary, strategic, and competitive juxtaposed to their feelings of frustration with managerial incompetence, suspicion and lack of trust. These competing discourses sharpened their reflexive capacities and foreground their concerns for social justice and democratic practice; at least on a consultative, decision-making basis. These leaders’ positioning strategies implied there was more to their struggles and suggested a history of prior experiences driving their narratives.

Elaine, Pam and Meredith mention their experiences in previous schools where resilience, determination and critical reflection were needed. Their histories have encouraged resistance by providing a background to experiences of subordination and marginalization. Meredith refers to feeling “under-valued or disadvantaged through a reshuffle within the organization. When this has happened I have moved on, that is, changed schools or institutions”. Pam recalls how she was passed over when she applied for a Deputy position in her previous school and the principal recommended someone else apply, they did and they got the job. She adds “I decided I would never do that! I have prided myself on being as professional as I can be to
the staff here and I never give any of them preferential treatment” (Pam). Whereas Elaine reflects on her leadership in another system where she felt empowered and valued compared to feeling hindered, underestimated and devalued in her current position.

The acquisition of formal leadership positions such as Junior Head/Deputy Head is dependent on those who are organizationally superior to them (Chapter Three). Their role and the associated work depend strongly on transformational behaviours and their individual dispositions as a way of addressing principal and role expectations (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In these narratives it was evident how constraining resourcing and entrepreneurial priorities can be in alienating leader-managers from the core work of teaching and team-building. It is not surprising that senior leaders mostly see formal leadership as being about management not educational leadership. Equally it is not surprising that Heads’ even under pressure, can refuse subordination and challenge the status quo. Radicals are few in the educational leadership realm but make a valuable addition to the reprofessionalizing of leadership through reflexively critiquing of what we do and why we do it.

For example Elaine, Meredith and Pam the attraction of the job was to try to do it differently (e.g., Court, 1998, 2004) because they saw leadership and management as being about problem-solving. For Meredith and Elaine the job was about managing serial crises, ineffective procedures and practices that often sabotaged their efforts to improve communication and administration. For Pam identifying issues and implementing changes in Junior school was particularly difficult as they dealt with the constraining effects of gender and status.

These Heads’ experienced frustration with transformational and instrumental discourses that value ambition and conformity as worthy pursuits. Their professional values, belief in fairness, justice and consultative practices are in direct contrast to their particular school’s corporate culture and leadership executive. They confront the discourses of control with forbearance and an attitude of optimism for the future. Each leader approached her dilemma with what I would describe as a tenacious frame of mind that challenged ambition and desire to be a leader. However, these leaders’ dilemmas cannot be portrayed as simply a matter of tenacity or willpower particularly as structural variables are central to women’s subordination. Therefore to
suggest leaders’ dispositions alone can redress the dilemmas “is to wildly overstate people’s choices and underestimate systemic obstacles and distribution of power within organizations” (Sinclair, 1998, p. 145).

As I have argued performance management and the distribution of authority has shifted the responsibility for staff management, lifting of student achievement standards and the accountability processes down the line. Such line-management practices indicate Senior leaders and managers are responsible for getting teaching and learning done, measured and made visible in externally visible ways that enhance the schools reputation and public image (Thomson, 2004). According to Glover et al., (1998) the “essential feature of ‘middleness’ appears to be that subject leaders and others [Junior Heads] are translators and mediators rather than originators of the policy and culture of the school” (p. 286). Hence Junior Heads’ are responsible for school policy delivery and performance expectations.

Meredith’s narrative, for example, highlights the downward flow of accountabilities and her lack of access to authorizing discourses that may well reposition her with more strategic agency. She experiences a sense of futility and frustration with performative agendas that lack educational direction and pedagogical purpose. (see p. 141). Despite such dilemmas she is reflexive and refocuses her efforts by questioning the corporate discourse as a way of problematizing and critiquing predetermined standards; rather than accept the game and the status quo (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). She also addresses broader professional discourses about equity and values, and declares “… youth is being privileged over age and experience, both in educational settings and in the broader community” (Meredith).

Meredith’s career extends over thirty-five years and her leadership ambitions have increased pressure on her to gain advanced qualifications. Prior to this appointment she held leading roles in two other schools; Deputy Principal and Head of Middle School within the Catholic sector. She suggests there have been other instances when she has felt marginalized, under-valued or passed-over. Despite these experiences she refuses subordination and disengages from trying to influence forces outside her control. She considers these problems to be systemic and embedded in historical traditions and contemporary culture.
For these leaders’ professional discourses are premised on activist dispositions where leaders are challenged to take up the marginalizing effects that are prevalent across the broader social domain. Meredith argues: “Respect and being valued are issues the profession is not addressing at present and it is impacting both economically and politically in our society to the detriment of students and their families”. Her concerns for social justice issues extend to incorporate the diversity and equity discourse involving the general community and highlighting the systemic problems facing society and the inequality it breeds. Such leader experiences reveal a political terrain that has contributed to the women’s sense of dislocation, subordination and inequality.

**Positioning gender and feminist discourses**

The women interviewed did not name themselves feminists, yet nearly all appealed to feminist discourses about women’s styles of leadership. This tendency to deny feminism signifies uncertainties about gender identity and highlights the professional risks associated with feminism, particularly in leadership. Indeed being aggressively feminist was seen as detrimental, unprofessional and not strategic; particularly when it comes to promotion, in a corporate setting (Blackmore, 1999). When successful women narrate disparate and complementary discourses, often in contradictory ways they can obscure the underlying relations of power, gender and social inequality, operating within schools and society at large (Chase, 1995).

Such feminist discourses offer the possibility of resisting the marginalizing effects women leaders contend with in the workplace. Discrimination against women today lingers in a plethora of work practices and cultural norms that only appear unbiased (Chapter Three). They are common and mundane, woven into the fabric of the organizational status quo. “But they create a subtle pattern of systemic disadvantage which blocks all but a few women from career advancement” (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000, p. 128). When women undertake educational leadership the gendered perspective takes on additional emphasis when being female is conflated with femininity. Women experience two negative effects from this situation. First they fear the label feminine because femininity is routinely considered inappropriate in the workplace. Second they fear exploitation by the “expectation that they will operate out of a context of mutuality” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 118).
Pam in particular, contended with the “expectation of mutuality” and the marginalizing effects of discriminatory practices; yet she continued to negotiate a better position for herself (Fletcher, 1999). Pam and Sarah highlighted the ambiguities and how a reinvigorated *masculinity* is problematic for women leaders’ and encourages *tokenism* (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). Such problems have left women leaders precariously positioned between professional values-led leadership discourses, institutional expectations and corporate managerialism promoting the doxa of “good leadership practice” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010).

Pam experienced such marginalizing effects and was routinely being asked to pick up additional administrative tasks such as writing the Equal Opportunity Policy for the school and taking care of sexual harassment issues. Such tasks were considered soft people management issues. She recognized being taken advantage of, but was flattered to be asked to take on the task. Limiting her willingness to take on additional work may have impacted negatively on her reputation and her position. As a female leader in an all male leadership team she was caught in the cycle of contradiction; wanting to work differently while colluding with the normative patriarchic culture and needing to be performative and efficient. In this way leaders’ experience “the power-knowledge system of patriarchy that works to suppress: relational activity is not needed and women must provide it” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 112).

Furthermore the historical positioning of women in education was particularly relevant to Pam’s dilemma. She had consistently tried to overcome any reference to the stereotypical image of the “emotional and irrational” female. However, a meeting with the Principal left her regretful and disappointed, as Pam notes “I have worked really hard never to dissolve in tears, and I did! I said the only time some women get things done in the school is when they finally dissolve in tears…I’m not going to do that, I will be professional to the core, I’m not going to be emotional, I’ll be objective”. Pam’s passionate concern to remain objective and be taken seriously by the Principal and leadership team highlight the pressures exerted on women leaders particularly when they contend with female stereotyping and tokenism.

Rather than focusing on marginalizing experiences Pam focused on how power relationships work (see p. 155) and how it is possible to modify, refuse or reframe discourses that were detrimental to her position. Although she experiences small
defeats; she has agency and is willing to use it particularly in regard to what she believes she did not have during her rise to leadership: “What I’ve noticed is what’s missing in the whole leadership succession thing...There ought to be people looking after their protégés; yet as women (sigh) I don’t think we have mentors or we are not mentored like men” (Pam). She responded to this lack of support by offering to mentor staff even when it was dismissed by the female staff and taken up by a male.

Here is an example of the “activist teaching professional” (Sachs, 2000). Her professional disposition as an educator and leader interested in promoting women through mentoring and succession planning is driven by gender equity issues and the kind of professional leadership identity she values.

Although the women’s narratives were not explicit about “needing to be liked or taking things personally” (Fletcher, 1999) there was a subtext that suggested these concerns needed to be addressed if leadership was to succeed in rallying the staff to unite for the good of the school. For instance, Pam took it personally when the Deputy Principal cross-examined a Junior School staff member to find out more about Junior School and as a result felt under-mined and saw this as disrupting her authority. Furthermore the values and professional discourses suggested these leaders’ desired to be liked. Indeed this tendency was often directed into mentoring others as a way of building relationships of trust. Julie cultivated a consultative approach to managing staff and was surprised to find her popularity was not unanimous: “I always thought that people automatically liked me. Well it just never occurred to me that there might be someone out there that doesn’t like me!”

The historical positioning of women and the trend to a renewed hegemonic masculinity has reinvigorated the paradox for women in senior leadership in schools (Chapter Three). Such discursive positioning highlights the circular nature of the problem and since the experience of leadership does not exist outside the current gender/power relationship, the only discourses available are ones that have been created to sustain the status quo in which women’s work is devalued. As I have argued, women have few discursive options for creating strong alternative descriptors of leadership. Finding words that capture women’s experiences meant leaders’ called on the disciplines of philosophy/ethics and religion as well as nurturing ideals associated with femininity. For example, “equality, faith and life
stations” (Carol) “professional courtesy”, (Julie) *stewardship* (Jan) and “working alongside staff, showing empathy, caring, trust and honesty” (Sharon) were articulated. I suspect these words may not have been used indiscriminately as they allude to the professional and feminine, soft discourses. Such discourses are atypical within corporate masculinity. Leaders’ would have considered the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and incorporated the soft discourses to cultivate a more cohesive, committed and productive staff.

Further complication occurs when words like hands-on, marketing, transparency or performance outcomes are incorporated into other key organizational concepts such as achievement and self-efficacy. For some of the leaders’ self esteem and self efficacy was challenged. Sarah struggled to prove her competency by maintaining firm control and articulating a positive demeanor; Carol refused the subordinating of women in education and called on democratic discourses of equality; while Pam challenged the all male leadership team to confront their “Old Boy” culture and tokenism.

**Female stereotypes**

Leadership narratives indicate there are systemic issues facing women in Independent schools and how they are positioned. Indeed, the binary of compliance/resistance could not account for the complexity of the processes of positioning and being positioned with the discursive formations of work, gender and the transgressive ways women counteract or subvert positioning by others. Hence questioning norms constructed through such binaries (rational/irrational; emotional/logical; masculinity/femininity; hard/soft) that are used to locate our selves or others according to such terms; challenges the status quo. Furthermore the uncertainty and ambivalence generated by oppositional discourses, holds the potential for moving beyond such binaries and exploring the productive potential of such tensions.

As the women in this study were positioned and framed by a gendered discourse many adopted the discourses of gender-neutral, corporate managerialism to position and empower themselves. For instance leaders who were uneasy used words and phrases such as, “competence, corporate, walk-the-talk and annual performance reviews” along with Christine’s metaphor of the captain steering the school, “like a
rudder on a boat”. Whereas, Sally, Christine, Jan, Julie and Sharon felt comfortable with their gendered roles being helpful, good listeners and caring, which reinforced their image as committed and caring women as well as capable leaders.

However, references to nurturing in schools, where there is a culture of strong hegemonic masculinity reinforced a bias to marginalize Junior school and the Head as soft, feminized and devalued. For Pam, Elaine, Meredith and Sarah the workplace was more rigid and leaders’ articulated a more defensive position. These leaders did not use such descriptors and worked hard to ensure they were not positioned as (feminist/soft) but professional, competent and outcomes focused. Rather than challenge the status quo they negotiated their way through a maze of expectations both corporate and gendered. In other words data concurs women leaders are vulnerable and easily conflated with images of femininity and motherhood. Some leaders benefited and used caring/nurturing discourses to their advantage others did not.

Some leaders were biased either for or against the gendered stereotyping that they experienced in their workplace. The narratives indicate that stereotyping was a powerful tool to be reworked. Indeed Julie’s consultative, caring approach to managing staff and collegial respect was vindicated when she reflected “if people really like you, you can make dreadful mistakes, but they will forgive them because they know it is an innocent thing”. Although Sarah found a dismissive position was preferable when female stereotyping would have undermined her position.

This study reveals the social construction of gender suppresses the contradictions inherent in the dominant discourses. For hegemonic masculinity to remain undisturbed it needs to be unchallenged. As Linda accepts, “we have a new Deputy Principal (male) to balance” and Sarah’s resolution, “this situation does not influence me unduly” indicate leader’s acceptance of such ambiguity is significant. Advocating gender balance means there can be women in the Deputy Principal position to balance the male principals or vice versa, but an all male leadership team is rarely questioned as imbalanced. For women in leadership to move forward it is necessary for them to “unpack the origins of their dutifulness and their historic patterns of succeeding” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 66). This involves a process of deconstructing their
own conditioning, assumptions and stereotypes about leadership may strengthen their capacities for leadership and open new ways of work.

**Tempered radicals**

The questions that arise from this discussion highlight the need for alternative positioning strategies from those already discussed. How do women leaders contend with subjectification? What repositioning strategies can women access? What discursive scaffolding is needed to redress marginalization and the systemic problems that position women in leadership? According to Fletcher (1999) the “need for new strategies is critical” as she highlights the challenge facing women in leadership (p. 119). Meredith, Pam and Elaine were frustrated by their inability to effect changes in their workplaces that challenged organizational norms and they opted to resign. Contrary to popular belief these women did not leave due to family and work conflict but as their narratives suggest; they felt stymied in their attempts to change their workplaces and were unable to work with its inefficiencies.

The dissonance evident in some of the narratives prompts the more urgent question: What strategies are available to women who get caught in the negative effects of positioning? Such questions emerging from the findings highlight the subtext where women leaders in particular situations, seek to change organizational cultures on different levels and for different purposes. Meyerson (2001) would argue there is a way to move beyond the choice of either fitting in or moving out.

In this regard Meyerson (2001) suggests, “It is more likely that neither a radical nor an incremental approach alone is sufficient; and usually both are crucial” (p. xvi). Meyerson and Scully (1995) offer a way out of the paradox that often engulfs women in leadership. They offer *tempered radicalism*. Being a tempered radical means challenging the status quo strongly enough to have an impact on it but not enough that one cannot succeed within it. This approach means questioning and challenging organizational norms by taking into account the realities of being a woman in a predominately masculine value system. The “small wins approach presumes an agenda for change and a proactive approach to seeking opportunities to put the agenda in motion” (Meyerson, 2001, p. 102).
Discursive reframing of meaning to address how tempered radicals make a difference begins with questioning the power relationships inherent in the micro-politics of the workplace. Some of the leaders in this study were already taking up a tempered radical approach. They engaged successfully with informal interactions, conversations with principal, colleagues or peers as Julie mentions “professional courtesies and respect” extended to her principal and staff. In addition these leaders reframed formal/structured conversations such as meetings, speeches and performance reviews such as; Christine’s yearly cyclic review and individual portfolio and Sarah’s insistence on an Annual Review.

Such practices are common in schools and offer an opportunity to introduce change through more transforming conversations. Also written and symbolic communication offered leaders opportunities to negotiate discourses in subtle but powerful ways particularly if a small wins approach is taken. For instance, reports, articles, newsletters, memos, emails and vision statements respond well to the re-culturing process as Julie noted the power of documentation to reframe meetings, communicate understandings, formalize agreements and clarify meanings.

For the leaders in this study to be tempered radicals requires being alert to opportunities, using skillful improvisation rather than brilliant strategy. Leaders’ were discriminating and would take up challenges if they were doable, incremental and made a difference. Small wins are driven by beliefs, values and identities. They are actions of self, “that can shape people’s values by acting on them as people affirm, extend and revise their selves” (Meyerson, 2001, p. 119). Leaders in this study suggest a ‘tempered’ strategy could include choosing one’s battles providing for small wins, supporting values and effecting change without directly confronting the system head on. However, as this study indicates such practices may have a use by date in relation to the volatile and often demanding compromises that are required to stay in the game. The burn-out that can occur due to prolonged self-monitoring, reflective action and positive small moves delivered overtime can become difficult to sustain. These self-regulating practices that demand complete awareness of the game and the positioning strategies being generated would not suit all leaders’ workplaces.

As Pam, Meredith and Elaine’s situated practice required positioning strategies that generated subversive discourses. They responded to opportunities for change by
identifying the flaws and the politics inherent in the dominant discourses. Even as small alterations in language can have a cumulative effect; these more ‘radical’ than ‘tempered’ leaders indicated their constraining conditions made leveraging small wins difficult. They exhausted considerable effort but were not able to effect any significant change (see Chapter Five).

For the leaders in this study Meyerson’s (2001) tempered radicalism becomes more effective when linked to Fletcher’s (1999) relational practices that highlight the gendered practices that constrain women in the workplace. When the radical and relational practices are considered in conjunction with the discursive strategies of paradox, idealism and dissent identified in this research; these discursive strategies become valuable insights into the self-regulating mechanisms and technologies these women used produce themselves and perform as leaders. Leader’s values, practices and motivations impact significantly on how they self-regulate and how they discursively position themselves while being positioned by others. Such discourses constitute a powerful biographical, iterative and reflexive narrative that can have a potent effect on organizational cultures.

**Leader-identities – authority and agency**

As leader-identities are improvised and accomplished rather than completely scripted the biographical, reflexive potential to change individual discursive strategies is opened up to offer leaders more strategic agency. From a feminist poststructural perspective such agency generates critical self-reflexive practices that challenge what discourses are silenced. Corporate managerialism silences ‘inclusive - social equity and organizational ethics’ questions and undermines the discursive strategies that might overcome these gaps and deliver a more robust professionally en-gendered discourse. The corporate discourse cannot stand alone and has not prevailed completely; as leaders continue to draw on multiple discourses of leadership. Leaders’ power derives from emphasizing values discourses; albeit co-opted to corporate ends; they are always working with and against the managerial paradigm.

Throughout the study leaders articulated a strong commitment to education, not only vocationally but for its intrinsic value as a vehicle for social change. Most of the women leaders conveyed a commitment that went beyond individual advancement and focused on individual beliefs, guiding principles and values along with dominant
leadership discourses. Such educational purpose is not neutral and often leaders were challenged to reflect on their situation and consider their ambiguous positioning. At these times leaders used contradictory and ambivalent discourses. This was closely linked to leaders’ production of professional identities.

In Chapter One I referred to leadership and the new performativity as “a site of struggle,” especially as it relates to meaning (Sachs, 2003). Due to the macro/micro power relationships and constraints on leaders to mobilize particular discourses; leaders negotiate meaning. That is, they are predisposed to rationalize the benefits of slightly shifting meaning to accommodate a more influential position for themselves or for the benefit of the school.

Linda questioned the meaning behind the Principal’s decision to move her valuable male staff from Junior to Senior school. Yet she acquiesced to the Principal’s wishes when she might have negotiated a planned succession of key staff to the Senior school. As Linda notes: “There’s a bit of a compromise…sometimes I don’t agree with decisions…but this is what we do in a corporate group…sometimes you have quite a lot of freedom and sometimes I feel totally frustrated…there is a fine balance”. She may also have had previous experience in these matters and choosing to abide by the Principal’s decision may leverage more strategic alternatives at a later date.

Although leaders’ in this study conveyed the idea they were relatively ‘free agents’ making choices about their identities, careers and leadership there was a strong impression that like Linda, they needed to compromise. As Sinclair (2007) argues “the reality is that they are actively inscribing themselves into predetermined positions within systems of power” (p, 139). In this sense these women leaders were challenged by their ambiguous placement, and at the same time alienated by the gender-neutral corporate discourses that operated within their schools. Hence these leaders were driven with contradictory pressures, contingencies and contested representations that ensures: “Identity is never stable nor a final achievement” (Clegg, 1998, p. 29).

The discursive construction of a narrative identity is a process of continual change involving shifts in meaning; ambiguous and contradictory. As a consequence the
discursive subject moves through a field of practice for example, as an emergent or stated professional. As Dent and Whitehead (2002) indicate “they can only achieve legitimation through taking up those signifying practices… offered to them and which are located within the field of knowledge prior to their entry” (p. 11). Such legitimizing within the culture of a new global economy and the need for corporate performativity have meant signifying practices involve increased organizational compliance, loyalty and allegiance to strategic targets and building consensus. Ironically, the growing importance of cooperative relationships takes place in the wider context of “the erosion of trust production” (Dent & Whitehead, 2002, p. 19). Significantly trust was highlighted by almost all the participant’s in this research as critical to successful leadership.

Elaine, Meredith and Pam challenged the status quo and the micro-politics of power within their schools. As Pam reflects “it’s because I’m feeling undermined and usurped by some staff, just one or two”. These leader-identities highlight a state of flux, critically responsive to the turmoil and systemic pressures while negotiating the politics within their respective schools. The task of overcoming subjection for these women required perseverance, clarifying purposes and reframing and challenging inequities. In particular they struggled with internal usurping of authority and the biased allocation of tasks. As Pam found her whole school policy writing was absorbed with little reference to her efforts. Elaine found all her creative and economical ideas for the Junior school were ignored, while Meredith found her innovative pastoral curriculum was sidelined.

As data suggests in relation to ongoing performative demands leaders were disinclined to discuss the subterranean motivations behind their desire for leadership such as, seeking approval, shoring up insecurities or the ego desire to be ‘somebody’ contextualized in the culture of the school. Most leaders tended to rationalize meaning in line with the school’s vision, rather than confront the undoing of their somewhat comfortable and workable leader-identities. Data indicates that letting go of ambitions, questioning why we do what we do would substantially challenge and impact on leaders’ narrative self – formation.

However, within these leaders’ narratives there is a subtle counter-narrative that suggests a few leaders (Meredith, Elaine and Pam) were able and willing to step back
from the process of reactive identities and move towards loosening up such imposed constraints that have been internalized as self-regulating practices. According to Sinclair (2007) some leaders “find ways to resist the processes by which their personhood, their experience of self, is defined for them. They do this… through various forms of subtle, conscious and unconscious resistance: disbelief, incredulity, passivity, cynicism, avoidance, sabotage” (p. 142).

Leader-identities are never complete or fully coherent but complex, changing and in a state of be-coming. Within this positive dynamic there is “the potential to respond in a non-defensive and occasionally creative fashion to complexity and contradiction regardless of whether these differences are effectively reconciled or not” (Mc Nay, 2000, p. 102). Meredith, Elaine and Pam’s leader-identities suggest there are discursive threads of creativity running through their inter-subjective negotiations and erupting as positive self awareness where more negative responses could have been exchanged. These leaders’ recognize there is a price on ambition as data revealed they question the cost of preserving their reputations and professional identities.

**Technologies of the self**

Within an explicitly feminist and politically discursive framework, leadership for women (unlike men) means something different, and offers different kinds of ‘identity options’ or subject positions to the women involved. Mc Nay (2000) argues for a more generative account of narrative identity than the negative paradigm that resistance and dislocation have fostered. That is, to mitigate the dualisms within the discursive constituting of subjectivity she recommends an open process of “active appropriation immanent in construction of narrative identity [and] suggests a more autonomous model of agency than is offered in the negative paradigm” (p. 27). This more generative understanding of subjectification supplements the Foucauldian analysis by emphasizing the active rather than passive moment of subjection and opens the possibility for explaining how individuals may respond in unanticipated or creative ways to complex social relations. This enhancement of subjectivity through power relations maintains discursive positioning but offers a more active and nuanced account of agency as a “technology of the self” (Foucault, 1991).
By moving beyond dualisms and the power relations that govern positioning there is the potential to explore a more creative subset active within these discourses. In particular, the emerging themes of trust, ethical responsibility, agency, re-professionalisation and the significance of critical leadership dialogues have been identified in this study. These discourses and the positioning strategies the women chose to take up or refuse in order to produce leadership identities are complex, multiple, iterative, biographical as well as contradictory and contested. Narrative-identity formation reveals a potential for reconceptualising leader-identities and how this might redress the gendered workplace and the dominant leadership discourses.

Moreover Bruni and Gherardi (2002) conclude “En-gendering a professional subjectivity is an interactive process of collective signification and re-signification which takes place in symbolic territories at the borders of ambiguity, where being and non-being merge”. Furthermore, an en-gendered subjectivity is the outcome of a discursive process of negotiation. As Bruni and Gherardi (2002) explain such processes “of acceptance/refusal of gender codes, of assertiveness/erasure of the identity of the ‘Other’…[are] learnt and enacted as a situated practice and the codes of an organizational gendered subjectivity are passed on to new participants as an integrative part of an organizational culture” (pp. 36-37).

Concluding comments
Leadership cannot be readily identified and categorized as some management theory suggests. Discussion of the research findings support the premise that leadership is complex, multi-layered, socially constructed, contextualized and politically and economically situated. This study identified how leaders’ negotiate discourses of **paradox**, **idealism** and **dissent** to gain positioning power. They questioned the corporate rationale and the leadership purposes it serves but used the discourse when necessary, to advantage and secure their position. Although leaders used corporate discourses to promote the “logic of practice”, as well as codify and fix leadership language to fit the neo-liberal agenda; they also used a professional, values-led discourses of idealism (Bourdieu, 1992). At times these hybridized discourses were dominated by entrepreneurial zeal and a desire to control staff at other times a more socially aware and relationally meaningful dialogue emerged. Regardless of the choices, **paradox** and **idealism** maintained the status quo and suppressed radical
change, whereas discourses of dissent focused on critical reflection and challenging the status quo.

The study revealed a number of shared concerns and issues which women leaders’ in Independent Schools, contend such as, the historical positioning and stereotyping of women along with expectations about women’s nurturing style of leadership. Moreover the study suggests women seek leadership but are not always comfortable with the power-relations that generate subordinate and devaluing discourses particularly when associated with acknowledged superior status of secondary over primary and men to women. The micro-politics of power relationships within situated practice played a significant part in how these women responded to their positioning and how they discursively negotiated alternative positions. Some of the women relied on oppositional discourses to describe and locate themselves and others mobilized the gender-neutral discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore the gendered workplace posed specific equity issues for many leaders and each dealt with this reality individually. Such biases challenge the question: “Are feminists who work for change while they succeed in male dominated corporations ‘selling out’ and therefore not real feminists?” (Meyerson, 2001) Sarah for example resisted any association with feminism, and she openly resisted the gendered perspective as her situated practice was embedded in the masculine hegemonic of corporate managerialism. Linda and Carol accommodated the patriarchic culture within their schools while Pam resisted it. All the women leaders in this study to varying degrees navigated the corporate demands of hegemonic masculinity and the biases that accompany these practices to ameliorate disruption “for the benefit of the whole school” (Linda). In particular Linda, Sarah and Pam’s presence within their respective schools provoked a gendered culture-centric situation that permeated their leadership discourses.

The findings from the study indicate how the masculine logic of practice underlying school cultures and discursive practices shapes the experience and understanding of women leaders in relation to what is seen and valued. This in turn discursively impacts on which discourses these women mobilized to produce leader-identities. As Sinclair (2007) points out “By understanding the social processes of identity
production, leaders become thoughtful about systemic constraints as well as the spaces and moments for resistance and micro-emancipation” (p. 143).

The discursive struggles identified in this study also bring into question my own attempts to not position the women, assign them one or other identity, by describing this leader is ‘like this’ or that leader is ‘like that’. To resist such temptation I have drawn on the feminist poststructural argument to maintain a critical perspective while analyzing the women’s discourses. As the researcher I have reflected on my need to allocate, or fix the leaders even for a short while so that I can say something definitive about the women and leadership in order to bring new insight. Although this does not absolve me I draw on the potential to re-position myself as gendered, constrained and, as the women in this study I also tended to dismiss the impact of hegemonic masculinity on my career and work around it.

My position as a former insider, Junior Head in an Independent School, now positioned as researcher and concerned with the interests of women while explicit, would have contributed to the analysis of the discursive context of the narratives. Moreover my selection of the narrative excerpts for critical analysis foregrounds particular discourses that are under critique in this thesis. In this regard I am involved in the same way the leaders in this study were complicit in their own constituting of subjectivity. Like these women I have moved my position reflexively from colleague, researcher and former Junior Head. Sometimes I have been positioned as a director and the leaders are actors on a stage who enter and leave with their lines to recite; at other times I am with them on stage and we improvise. Such movements conscious and unconscious have produced my narrative and its contribution.

Therefore the degree of inter-subjectivity (between interviewer and interviewee) is also a part of this feminist research and therefore played a part in the narratives. Interview contexts are never neutral and my questions and responses may have led leaders to speak of leadership in highly positive ways or alternatively negative comments might have been intensified. Finally my intention to unpack some of the assumptions and contradictions about women leaders and leadership has at times felt a risky undertaking as the current political climate does not sustain deeper questions about equity where gender-neutral discourses and choice have been re-engineered to satisfy the corporate paradigm.
In the end it is important for researchers and leaders alike to constantly unsettle what it means for women in leadership to be positioned and to position themselves. I conclude by considering implications for further research directions and future inquiry.

**Aside: October 2008**

How has the poststructural premise I have set positioned me and the participants? Few leaders have engaged in such theorizing and my dilemma is will they find it too dense, less than useful or worse irrelevant. Besides such misgivings, I recall the discussions that generated this project; a sense of alienation from their professional purpose and the aspects of leading that were most rewarding. Such comments were articulated by my peers in Independent schools, prior to taking up this research. Such concerns respond more readily to a qualitative approach to leadership that affords an opportunity for leaders to question reflect and discursively address these issues. From this perspective Sinclair (2007) states “… leadership is both intensely personal and a relational process of constructing meaning and purpose” (p. xix).

Reflecting on how I have constructed my argument I imagine a few leaders will find my theoretical position confronting and more politically biased than is particularly helpful. In particular I have found as a Junior Head and/or Deputy you walk a fine line between power and politics. Indeed you are often situated in a vulnerable position and confronted with ethical dilemmas; between the directions of the principal and the concerns of the teachers, children and parents you have to confront your divided loyalties. My experiences have highlighted this disjuncture and the paradox of finding you are positioned as both powerful and powerless in emotionally challenging and pedagogically significant ways. I would encourage leaders to take from this research what you need, at the time you need it, as a practical solution to the embedded nature of some of the theory. I would also challenge you to move beyond the local politics, bureaucratic censoring and diminished discretionally capacity that encompasses leadership, and consider how your powerful personal agency is centered in the aspirational narratives we tell each other. Such stories are valuable.
CHAPTER EIGHT

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: EMBODIED AGENCY

...agency is itself an effect, a distributed outcome of particular technologies of subjectification that invoke human beings as subjects of a certain type of freedom and supply the norms and techniques by which that freedom is to be recognized, assembled and played out in specific domains. (Rose, 1996, p. 187)

Overview
There has been significant interest in educational leadership over the last twenty years across a number of interdisciplinary fields; however, there has been relatively little research into women and leadership in the independent sector in Australia. In particular there has been minimal research about women in middle management/leadership roles in Independent schools. This thesis contributes to building theory in relation to women in educational leadership in a number of ways:

1. Independent school Heads’ feel the pressures of performativity as those in public schools because of new accountabilities as well as increased market pressures.
2. Women Junior Heads’ in K-12 Schools are positioned and ‘othered’ which is indicative of the gender division of labour and gender-equity issues that are ongoing even as women enter the principalship.
3. The complementary discourses corporate/professional managerialism leads to a sense of ambivalence towards leadership that encourages compromise and complicity, even disengagement where some leaders are co-opted, others refocus on values and some exit because of values dissonance.
4. This study offers a significant theoretical strand to the field of educational leadership. First that leadership operates as a site of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Second, women leaders’ employ particular “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1991) to construct their leadership repertoires focused on discourses of paradox; idealism and dissent.
5. This study of women leaders’ narratives reveals the need for critical dialogues and new discursive strategies. Reflexive critiques of positioning
discourses articulate an engendered leadership-identity. Such critiques also offer insight into producing alternative leader-identities and a re-professionalisation of teachers, leaders and educational leadership.

These five issues are recognition of the complexity women leaders’ face due to gender, and in doing so identify the need for further research in this area. Leadership is more complex and complicated for women Heads than current educational leadership and management theory suggests. National policy reforms and economic/political imperatives, hegemonic structures, leadership and gender-equity discourses position women leaders in particular ways. Such contextual constraints work together to silence women’s ability to confront organizational assumptions about achievement, success and effectiveness. As evident in the data-analysis, leaders are not simply the receivers of these discourses but active subjects in negotiating them within their respective school contexts. As middle managers, whether in K-12 or K-6 schools they “…continuously mediate competing institutional logics (market rationality, bureaucratic rationality, community obligations, professional commitment) about educational work and purpose” (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007, p. 173).

In this thesis I argue that the production of women leaders’ subjectivities positioned and constituted through power relations is better understood as a set of discursive practices, biographical, iterative and changing. Such practices I contend emerge as “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1991) and render a partial and changing assemblage of possible subjectivities temporarily tied to an en-gendered situated leader-identity. This dynamic process is rendered more problematic, when leadership is understood from a feminist poststructural framework as it highlights gender-[in] equity and the position of women in Senior leadership in schools.

Foucauldian concepts of power and discourse were adopted to question and inquire into current leadership discourses as a means of exposing the more complex, relational and discursive dimensions of leading in schools. It was also essential to draw on feminist perspectives as this enabled me to problematise how women in this study negotiated their positioning. The adoption of both frameworks allowed a transparency within the women’s narratives to reveal the discursive practices used by
them to produce professional identities (Dent & Whitehead, 2002; McNay, 2000; O’Doherty, 2002).

In this study particular “technologies of the self” were evident, as the women leaders negotiated power relations and the micro-politics of their situated practice; in order to discursively position themselves (Davies & Harré, 1990). Such positioning strategies are negotiated through discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent. What became evident is that these leaders re/produce gendered leadership identities.

Leadership I argue, not only provides a context for activating the operation of “technologies of the self” but functions as a site of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) in which women leaders’ self regulate and in turn are regulated. Acknowledging the symbolic and relational power aspects of leadership informs how Junior Heads’ subjectivities are assembled through the dominant discourses of educational leadership circulating in Victoria’s Independent schools.

In this Chapter, I reflect once more on the findings of the research that was driven by the two interrelated questions posed in Chapter One: What are the relations of power that produce particular leadership discourses for women? What are the discursive practices and contexts whereby the female participants’ position and shape themselves as subjects in producing leader-identities?

I approached these questions from three perspectives. The first was a review of the leadership state of play and flow on effects of government reforms as they impact on Independent schools in Victoria. The second was to identify the dominant leadership discourses and emerging themes from the analysis of the Questionnaire which provided an antecedent to the third perspective; the narrative analysis of the interview transcripts. From the narrative analysis the findings revealed how these leaders’ engage “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1991) to construct their subjectivities and mobilize discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent. Leaders’ used these discourses to position themselves and produce leader-identities.

Finally I consider the provocation to move beyond such positioning strategies and outline the broader implications drawn from this study that indicates opportunities for further research.
New paradoxes, power and the ‘state of play’

A number of recurring paradoxes bind this thesis together. The first paradox is the big picture new global economy driving national policies and the business of educational delivery where the neo-liberal economic enterprise promoting capitalism and privatization within a competitive market economy has generated a re-culturing of education and the commodification of educational delivery. In particular, competition between schools; both independent and public is focused on funding, performativity and parent choice. The social/cultural domain and education in particular has been subjected to increased regulation; control and standardization. Education has become a focus for the social re-engineering of values and practices in line with an economic imperative.

The paradox of neo-liberal economic globalization and commodification of education has reinvigorated corporate managerialism and marketisation for both Independent and public sector schooling. Such economic enterprises are juxtaposed to discourses promoting the importance of cultural values, citizenship, and equity in education. The independent sector has historically been situated in the paradox of needing to address market values, contractual arrangements and funding issues while permeated by cultural (philosophical/religious) value systems. The majority of Independent schools have been complicit with government policy and funding arrangements. They are well positioned to promote and capitalize on parent choice and cultural capital, through marketing and advertising campaigns that target middle class parents and their desire for cultural and social capital.

This study indicates that Independent K-12 schools generate individual contexts that have to be negotiated by Junior School Heads. Parents are more likely to financially commit to secondary education than Junior schooling. In K-12 schools; Junior schools are under resourced and tend to be undervalued as marketing and funds are directed to the competitive end of the Upper school. Senior school student success is also the primary indicator of school success, and is a factor informing parent decisions to move students from public to private education. Many parents, due to recent funding rules, are now prepared to finance their children through 13 years of primary and secondary education to gain an individual competitive edge. In the current political and economic climate Independent, Catholic and Alternative schools with different religious/philosophical orientations flourish; public schools have
suffered “despite discourses about market responsiveness to diversity, the market norm of a ‘good school’ is an elite private school” (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007, p. 253). There has been a decline in comprehensiveness in favour of an increased selectivity, specialization and re-privileging of academic/liberal education as the curriculum of distinction (Campbell, 2003).

Second, I have argued that much of the research indicates that school leadership discourses have been taken over by the corporate paradigm which has co-opted and colonized the professional paradigm. That is, the corporate leader is modelled on particular hegemonic male images of being strong, able to make hard decisions, being independent and taking unilateral action (Blackmore, 2005). Dominant discourses focus on the entrepreneurial, hard headed and strategic imageries of leadership (Middlehurst and Campbell, 2001).

Therefore understanding how the ‘logic of the field’ (Bourdieu, 1992) contributes to the new doxa of what is promoted by governments and private enterprise as “good leadership” is based on “the centrality of the leader for effectiveness” promoted through discourses of corporate managerialism and entrepreneurship in the educational field (Gunter & Forrester, 2010, p. 61). As the leaders in this study were disposed to act in the interests of their schools – that is to retain and possibly advance their relative position in the field – in order to survive. This means playing the game and understanding the rules of the game. Leaders’ activities that are normally described as school leadership practice – organizational systems, symbolic work, strategic development and planning, governance and leadership pedagogies as well as alliances and promotional work “are the set of moves heads take to ensure that actors within the school also conform to the logic of the field” (Thomson, 2010, p. 14). The corporate logic and doxa normalizes a corporate masculine entrepreneurial leader and portrays leadership as a gender-neutral discourse.

Yet almost half the leaders in this study as well as researchers continue to advocate for a values-led leadership model (e.g. Duignan, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2005; Starratt, 2004; Begley, 2004; Duignan et al., 2003b; Buzzelli et al., 2002). These researchers’ argue that in postmodern times leaders need to be flexible, democratic and able to distribute leadership through the school. They call for leaders to be more caring, critically reflexive, and collaborative while complying with moral and ethical
standards in their relationships and practices (Fullan, 2003). This paradox is overlaid with the emergence of international and national professional standards movements which increase the influence of professional associations and markets on curriculum and pedagogy. In view of the current changes and the anticipated shortage of principals in the near future, schools will need to seek leaders that are flexible, strategic, visionary, and technologically able with the capacity for discernment and an ethic of care. School leaders will require skills that enable the interrogation of knowledge claims, power relations and the application of discursive practices that generate multiple stories of leadership in order to change the discursive strategies of subjection to ones of facility.

A third paradox reveals how the leadership habitus has shifted and for women, in particular the discourses have changed and aligned more formidably with an implicit re-masculinised ‘norming’ of educational leadership. Women now mediate and negotiate work cultures that have been reconstituted yet again as a masculinist project characterized by “overly rational, disembodied and instrumental pursuits” (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996 p. 37). According to Sinclair (1998) managerial masculinity re-emerged in organisational life in new/old forms of “traditional authoritarianism (bullying and fear), a gentleman’s club (protective paternalism), entrepreneurialism (task focused workaholism), informalism (larrikin-like cultures, sports and sex), and careerism (expert and detached)” (p. 61).

The women in this study experienced the flow-on effect of the political re-masculinised norming of educational leadership. The big picture reforms have produced corporate, transformational discourses and re-positioned women leaders’ as othered by reinforcing the binaries; male/female, rational/irrational, logical/emotional (Blackmore, 1999). Such discourses constrain critical, professional discourses and the varying degrees of agency and autonomy Junior Heads’ are able to exercise. According to du Gay (1996) “New wave management is concerned with changing people’s values, norms and attitudes so that they make the ‘right’ and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work” (pp. 57-58).

Leadership discourses include a sense of political correctness which can stifle a leader’s articulation of contested values about fairness, equity, ethical practices and
sharing responsibilities. Independent school leaders’ (women middle managers) in these examples felt the contradiction deeply as their allegiance to a particular school’s ethos, religious or philosophical approach is contested more openly and values are redirected to corporate ends while pedagogy and relational practices are sidelined.

The women’s leadership narratives convey these contradictory messages as the women employ discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent to locate themselves in the contested field of educational leadership. Indeed the independent sector, because of the need to maintain market positioning, is dominated by hegemonic structures that increase the challenge for these women (middle managers) and how they navigate the power relationships with discretion and critical reflection while remaining dedicated to the school ethos.

The leadership habitus for women in this study indicated leaders’ experience either directly or indirectly the marginalization and subordination that has produced more generally “a reflexive awareness of the potential damage of power imbalances that, just as much as gender, influence whether individuals conform to, or challenge, orthodox ‘masculine’ ways of managing in the contemporary marketplace” (Reay & Ball, 2000, p. 149). It is not surprising that Sarah, Meredith, Elaine and Pam, are no longer at their respective schools (see p. 197). It could be inferred that they have moved on as a result of the lack of equity and opportunity to exercise any key critical discernment, autonomy or agency.

The gendering of educational leadership discourses was particularly evident for Sarah, Linda, Carol and Pam’s narratives and indicated leaders’ who operate in co-educational schools, with male principals (except for Linda and Carol) and all male leadership teams, articulated the stereotyping of women leaders. In Pam’s narrative she mentions feeling excluded by male dominated discourses and blokesiness boys’ club cultures that positioned her as tokenistic. As with the appointment of women as assistant principals, one woman tokenism is seen to represent all and to satisfy the diversity/choice policies. Gender inequity and the gendered division of labour were more pronounced in these settings than in all female leadership teams. However, Meredith and Elaine experienced the bias of a masculine hegemonic within their situated practice although both schools were all girls and had female principals.
These leaders’ drew heavily on professional values discourses to counter corporate, bureaucratic managerialism. However, they were still trapped by a masculine hegemonic implicit in professional discourses.

Sarah, Linda, Christine and Sally tell stories of achievement and vulnerability while focusing on competence, desire for consensus and loyalty. Yet, the data analysis revealed, these leaders made direct reference to inequalities such as, the division of labour along gendered lines and for Sarah and Linda, the devaluing of their Junior schools. This sense of ambiguity highlighted the paradox of how the professional discourses were being colonized by managerialist discourses “for the good of the school” (Linda). At such times these leaders felt marginalized and isolated.

Julie, Sharon, Jan, Ellen, Christine and Sally, revealed the intensity of the leader’s persistence as self-determining agents able to refuse subordinate discourses by asserting choice, authority and reflexivity. This does not ensure collegiality or critical reflexivity but does indicate a drive for consensus and a strategic orientation to achieving school goals and vision. In this way leader’s developed resilience and demonstrated a willingness to adapt and draw on the school’s culture and hierarchical structure to overcome obstacles. These women in particular, were able to maneuver within the context of a corporatised mode of educational governance and conservative gender politics. They realized the traps of such “normative femininities yet still believe that organizations premised upon care, collaboration and communication are better for both educators and students alike” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 265). These women in particular, showed that they were uncomfortable with the notion of power over others and saw this as overbearing and non productive, preferring to work with or alongside teachers.

Power for the women in this study had negative connotations, often equated to control, oppression or domination. Blackmore (1999) notes that “…the pleasure gained from being able to influence through power matched by a fear of power was typical of how many women felt about leadership…The ongoing dilemma remained, however: to desire or claim power was in itself unwomanly… neither feminine nor feminist women are meant to be powerful” (p. 161). The women in this study indicated power and agency are embedded in values discourses and relational practices that circulate within leadership discourses; often experienced as
discriminatory practices (unequal authority and biases) and gendered discourses within educational leadership. In this respect Weedon (1987) states: “Where there is a space between the position of subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced…The discursive constitution of subjects, both compliant and resistant, is part of a wider social play for power” (p. 107).

Moreover, white middle class women in this study may be considered relatively privileged. However, as educators in this study they struggled with managing the wider impact of neo-liberal policy and the corporate takeover. This was particularly evident in Elaine, Meredith and Pam’s discourses of dissent where the potential for agency was limited and leader disengagement was heightened. Leader disengagement is also the result of “unanticipated outcomes of new government modes which have reconstituted leadership aspirations, career trajectories, and professional identities” (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003, p. 172). As this study indicates this alienation arises from contestation over the moral purpose; ethical practices and the inefficiency of bureaucratic management practices. “The question remains whether women who move into positions of power in the new context of [performativity] disciplines and incentives and its debased moral environment are able to resist its influences and maintain their existing values” (Reay & Ball, 2000, p. 150).

Such questions expose the fault lines within leadership discourses and the silences regarding ethical practices and gender-equity discourses and whether leadership is the solution or the problem. This study indicates leadership for women Junior Heads is a pressure point within school leadership. However, this tension is an opportunity for critical dialogues and further research into these issues and how women are complicit in the processes of subjectification. As Hey and Bradford (2004) note “women continue to do the emotional and quality housekeeping” (p. 701).

**Emerging themes – trust, professionality and agency**

The positioning discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent reveal how the women in this study assert their legitimate authority (power) and choose to challenge marginalizing practices. The findings also indicate that many of these women exercise degrees of agency and some would consider they claim leadership and
exercise their full authority. However, from the broad cultural and gendered contexts women in leadership inhabit; all are compromised. Yet there is the potential to address marginal practices through greater insight into how one might begin to reposition one’s discursive strategies and exercise greater agency. Indeed, the simplified performativity criteria popular at present leaves considerable room for introducing change, renegotiating positioning through reflexive practices and critical dialogues.

Leaders in this study took into account the “thick context” of interpersonal relations, habits, and customs that determine the meanings and associated expectations of formal rules. Many women in this study considered leadership was not the issue, as they had been leading teachers before and spent many years in minor leadership roles. However, the formal positions they now occupied imparted institutional legitimacy, and this changed their relationships to their teacher colleagues, students, management and communities. Thus the systemic line manager positioning was based on authority rather than trust. Trust has been made more difficult by “the problems of scale, complexity and interdependency that often work to limit democratic [and consultative] ways of decision making and create functional pressures for trust” (Warren, 1999, p. 2).

When trust is suspect or missing, schools face a moral vacuum and confusion with regard to the purpose of education other than just efficiency regimes and working smarter rhetoric. Educators and women leaders in Independent schools are seeking to reinvigorate the values of trust, collegiality and ethical practice for a renewal of professionalism. This study indicates that such renewal would need to be premised on the potential inherent in the leader’s self-regulating mechanism. That is, the leaders’ capacity to alter, reposition and step aside. As Bourdieu (1980) comments “One thus only has to go back to one’s own games, one’s own playing of the social game, to realize that the sense of the game is at once the realization of the theory of the game and its negation qua theory” (p. 81). When one discovers the theoretical error one is able to reposition themselves, perhaps beyond the game.

Emerging themes of trust and professional practice indicate leadership discourses are drawing on values discourses that inadvertently screen and diffuse the need to engage in a critical debate about these urgent issues being threatened by the “new
orthodoxy of good leadership practice” (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). All the leaders in this study regardless of their situated practice, i.e., Steiner school, Montessori etc… referred to trust, loyalty, and autonomy. These values and relational practices required “mutual reciprocity” and connect strongly to the sense of agency they desire and the professional values these leaders advocate and what they thought was being leached out of educational leadership (Fletcher, 1999). For these women power relationships function within changing situations shaping discourses and resistances whether personal, social, or institutional.

A key aspect of a leaders’ success was understanding their own and others’ investment in the status quo, in their institutional and professional identities, and therefore how some individuals are, due to their habitus and location, more open to change on some things, though resistant on others. As Chase (1995) also found in her study, “culture constrains talk about professional women’s experiences” and so “analysis of women’s narrative strategies shifts our attention to how they struggle with those constraints” (p. 23). Chase notes that a woman often tells this story when she feels that her success - her ability to do her work well - is contingent upon fitting herself into the established, settled patterns of professional discourse. A leader’s narrative may not engage directly with experiences of subordination, yet there is the “sense that the white-male dominated professional world… [and women’s work] are segregated and stratified” (Chase, 1995, p. 93).

Hence engaging in a more ‘critical’ professionalism would provide “a set of literacies that enable us to ‘read’ various scenarios within the educational field and to promote them effectively offer us something good to think with” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002, pp. 141-42). Providing “a set of literacies” would offer a deliberate, more radical professionality, one that addresses gender equity and broader social issues. Such literacies begin with revealing the discourses Heads’ mobilize to position themselves and how the discourses identified in this study supports Webb et al., (2002) proposition. Leaders would be less reliant on the traditional and new performative professionalism that is tied to corporate discourses, currently overtaking educational leadership. The question is how can professional development produce such literacies and how might they be explored?
Along with the renewal of professionality and “a set of literacies” (Webb et al., 2002) is how women’s subjectivities are produced through their history of positioning providing strong debate about what it is to be positioned as a female and as such, lends itself to emancipatory politics and further theorizing that does not foreclose on scope, diversity and the potential for agency. Mc Nay’s (2000) suggests a re-conceptualizing of agency as the “…role played by the imagination in the institution of inter-subjective relations… [and] the tendency to neglect the role of the inter-subjective dynamics in favour of the monological dynamic between subject and symbolic structure leaves it with a similarly diminished understanding of the creative substrate to action” (p. 101). In this context agency flows through discourses of resistance, creatively repositioning subjects:

It is crucial to conceptualize these creative or productive aspects immanent to agency in order to explain how, when faced with complexity and difference, individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyze social change. (Mc Nay, 2000, p. 4)

The limitations inherent in this concept of agency are ameliorated to the extent that difference and complexity are acknowledged and individuals’ mobilize their discursive capacity to change subversive and resistant discourses towards enabling agency. It offers a more generative concept of agency through a reconfiguring of subjectivity; a discursive reassembling to overcome static dualisms, binary options and symbolic mechanisms operating within power relations, inequalities and gender. Foucault (1991) would have viewed this in terms of governance as he saw individuals as “self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society” (Mc Nay, 1992, p. 4.). Foucault’s theory of power relations draws on the concept of multiplicities that are not fixed, negative or belong to individuals but are "unbalanced, heterogeneous, unstable, and tense" (Foucault, 1980, p. 93).

More to the point it can be asserted that individual leaders’ dispositions also shape leader-identities in a nuanced way. That is by influencing leader’s choice of discourses, relational and embodied discursive constitutions and actions. Indeed the simplistic notion that choosing discourses and positioning are not influenced by personal past experiences is untenable. A leader’s orientation towards different discourses is not only influenced but prejudiced on these former experiences. This
stance offers the rich, textual meaning which leaders in this study bring to their stories. In most cases it was not obvious but circulated through opinions and privileges as to why they were where they were. Indeed what brought them to this position was still active within the context of their narratives and guided their decision-making, values and reflexive critical assessment.

Therefore leader [pre] dispositions in this study offered insight into the deeper layering of leader-identity production which is continually being added to and modified in relation to ongoing discourses and positioning strategies. Such values-based leader discourses operated as a moral compass when positioning left the leader marginalized. Such deeply held beliefs in social justice and making a difference in children’s lives accompanied active professional discourses and transformational discourses. These women leaders’ constantly repositioned themselves as confident, strong, resilient, adaptable, authoritative and educative. In producing themselves as leadership subjects, they continually redefine themselves as leaders within the discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent.

**Implications for future directions**

In my thesis I have drawn attention to the fact that power, agency were negotiated through discourses of paradox, idealism and dissent. These discourses were used by the women to produce leader identities. Further studies are needed to investigate why this dimension of women’s leadership (as with the feminist perspective) is not always acknowledged and may in fact be, overlooked. This is particularly relevant when researching white, middle class women leaders’ in the independent sector as they would be regarded as relatively privileged and have significant social and cultural capital invested in the status quo. That is, reputation, career goals and promotion play into the leaders’ repertoires and yet these women tell stories about being marginalized, feeling isolated, and ambiguously positioned within the corporate milieu. Indeed they regret the demise of those values that promote pedagogical and educational critique as well as making a difference in children’s lives.

This study of women Heads’ in leadership positions in Independent schools raises the question about how the interpellation of particular Heads’ dispositions inform their practice at the level of Junior School Head/Deputy Principal within a school’s
leadership team. The data analysis revealed these women were active not passive subjects of a range of discourses circulating within the field of educational policy, professionalism and Independent schools. These leaders’ work narratives not only revealed their discursive positioning strategies – but highlighted particular values such as, reciprocity, trust and the interdependence of leadership practice; a finding that can inform our understandings about gendered workplaces. Furthermore the “concept of mutuality” would assist in understanding interactions such as, those inherent in a range of communities of practice - multi-functional and leadership teams, strategic alliances and collaborations (Fletcher, 1999). Within this broader concept of mutuality, the data analysis also indicated the centrality of feelings of empathy, authenticity, empowerment and expertise; and how these help develop “growth-fostering relationships” (Fletcher, 1999).

At the same time, many of the women in this study indicated they felt their work in Junior school was overlooked and in turn devalued particularly when so much of the work of middle managers is relational. This devaluing of work is often associated with soft feminine stereotyping, just as the reification of certain forms and modes of work associated with hard masculinity is valued regardless of whether they are ineffective work practices. That is, discourses and practices are in place not because they are particularly effective but because they are in line with masculine corporatism (although not all men are included or feel disposed favourably towards corporatism). To value and critique the discursive practices of leadership questions the gender/power inequities and requires the essentialising equation of female with change agency, pastoral care, welfare and social justice; to be problematised. Men too can and should see discursive strategies as relational work and central to leadership.

What is missing in the gender and leadership literatures are longitudinal studies of women in leadership understood from different theoretical perspectives. Theories of management and the organizational workplace would be a useful direction to take. In addition the biographical, critically reflexive process of documenting and reiterating leadership narratives offers potential for change. This study challenges and questions the political implications of gendered leadership discourses and how these are promoted through teacher professional development programs, purposes and content.
Rather than try to resolve these tensions and contradictions that typify the current processes an opportunity exists to use these tensions in terms of their productive potential for disrupting the gendered work experiences of women in leadership. As this study indicates women position themselves not only according to those discourses available to them but are influenced by what predisposes them to choose particular discourses that conform to their beliefs, memories and past experiences. Such personal narratives would offer additional insight into specific positioning strategies. Such a reflexive self-questioning suggests that further biographical work with leaders would be most useful. Investigating [pre]dispositions may be a productive line of investigation and a provocation for further research.

It is hoped that by analyzing women leaders’ work narratives teachers will recognise their own practices as leadership work, and aspire to formal leadership positions, but with some understanding of the contradictions, complexities and challenges women Heads’ experience. If we want to build a new form of professionalism then these narratives of leadership offer evidence of the critical reflexive practice needed to understand the complexities and possibilities for women in leadership.
Appendices

Appendix A

Background – Independent schools in Australia

History
Australia’s educational landscape has evolved, from a deregulated colonial system of Denominational Schools; Catholic, Protestant and ‘Dame’ schools. From the 1860s to the 1890s economic and social differentiation of the colonies produced some variety in the educational systems. Schooling was divided along class lines (Barcan, 1964). The long standing traditional schools and grammar schools have been part of Australia’s educational past. Following the education acts of 1872 which specified free compulsory and secular elementary education, the principle of non-funding of religious schools was established (Pascoe, 1998). During the early 1900s increased state regulation requiring registration closed the Dames schools. However, Denominational Schools prevailed and preserved much of their history and traditions despite the rise of mass public elementary but particularly secondary schooling until well after the 1950s (Pascoe, 1998).

During the 1970s an uneasy co-existence between government and non-government schools was resolved to some extent by a federal Labor government’s extension of Commonwealth funding to Catholic and Independent schools based on a principle of ‘equity of provision’ for all Australian students (Connors 1990). The Interim Committee of the Schools Commission (1973) proposed that government funds for Catholic schools be allocated to each State for disbursement through centralized systems. The funding principle was based on need and facilitated the expansion of the Catholic and other private school sectors. This contributed to the expansion of the poorer faith based systems of schools such as Lutherans and Seventh-day Adventists benefiting from high subsidies and lower administrative costs arising from scale (Marginson, 1997b).

Policy and federal funding
Funding in Australia has played a contentious role in the politics of provision of education. The recurrent funding for non-government schools is primarily drawn from the Australian Government. In the past it was distributed according to disadvantage. Currently it is distributed according to post-code and the amount for
which students are eligible varies from school to school according to school population. Public education is funded mainly by State and Territory revenue (about 92 percent); following Federal Government disbursement of funds through negotiated arrangements with State governments. The majority of federal funds for education go to non-government schools (Connell, 1992; Marginson, 1993). All students receive some support from both their state or territory government and the Australian Government.

Since Whitlam’s Labor Government released the Karmel Inquiry’s report (1973), ‘Schools in Australia’, substantial levels of funding were increased and made available to the independent sector. Funding policies since 1974 have helped the Independent schools prosper, with the Catholic sector expanding initially (Pascoe, 1998). Until 1975 religious schools had not been funded by government since the Education Act, in 1872. As Pascoe (1998) points out: “Education was to be free, compulsory and secular, and funding for denominational schools was to be abolished” (p. 2). Therefore the importance of the Karmel Report (1973) for non-government schools in Australia came at a critical time financially when they needed to regenerate (Pascoe, 1998). All schools were categorized into ten ranks according to need and according to assets (Marginson, 1993). While the elite Independent schools did not benefit because of their significant assets and high fees, it did facilitate the expansion of the Catholic and other private school sectors. According to Praetz (1974) “…it is not simply that richer schools have profited from governments attempts to help the poorer schools. Rather, despite the contraction in the number of religious order teachers, administrators of the Catholic school sector have elected to build new low-fee paying schools and to improve existing schools over a longer time span” (p. 39).

In particular the ‘equity agenda’ in the Karmel Report ‘Schools in Australia’ highlighted three basic values, “…‘devolution of responsibility’, ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ and the place of public and private schools and community involvement in respect to those values” (Lingard, 1998 p. 7). Hence the focus on the ‘individual rights’ movement, advocating ‘rights of the child’ and ‘rights of the student’ in education, was promoted. This progressive stance has under conservative governments and neo-liberal market policies, was mobilized to become the ‘right of the parents’ to choose schools across all sectors.
Following on from these reforms the States Grants (Assistance) Bill in 2000 was passed and altered the historical balance of sectored funding to address disadvantaged schools to one based on postcodes. Under the Howard government, funding based on postcodes was not necessarily a good indicator of the student profile as it did not take into account existing assets (grounds, trusts etc). This has meant most Independent schools have received significant increases in funding (Lingard, 1998).

Federal funding and legislation have had major implications for the provision of government and non-government schooling. As a result state schools have lost disproportionate levels of funds due to students moving to the private sector as small private schools increased and were allowed to compete with public schools (Morrow et al., 1998). It is clear that Federal Governments support for schools has been motivated by electoral advantage. These political and economic movements relate to the way policy and particular class interests intersect to create …possibilities for some and reduced options for others; that is, “the expansion of the rights discourse to the detriment of the equity discourse” (Morgan et al., 2007 p. 2).

**Australia’s independent sector**

Today Independent schools account for 18 percent of total full-time equivalent (FTE) secondary enrolments (45 percent of non-government), and 11 percent of full-time primary enrolments (37 percent of non-government) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Schools Australia 1993 - 2009 (publication no. 4221.0). In the last decade, independent sector enrolments have increased by 43.5 percent particularly at the secondary level whilst enrolments in government schools grew by 1.7 percent in the same period of a shrinking student pool (ABS, Schools Australia 2009).

The majority of Independent schools are open entry for all students. There are obligations on all schools to enroll and educate students with disabilities (Discrimination Act 1992). In 2007 there were 9,961 students with disability enrolled in Independent schools, more than double the numbers in 1997 but a small number proportionately of total population compared to those that go to state schools (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools, 2009).
Victoria’s independent sector

During the 1990s Victoria experienced a rapid expansion of the sector; particularly the low-fee paying schools in and around Melbourne’s fringe suburbs and the new population growth corridors in Victoria (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools, 2009). In Victoria’s independent sector enrolments have continued to increase as a proportion of the total enrolments from 10.9 percent to 14.0 percent of enrolments. (ABS, Census of Non-Government Schools 2009 no. 4221)
APPENDIX B

Sample – Letter to Junior Heads and Consent Form

Date
Head of Junior School
School
Address

Dear ………,

This letter is to invite you to participate in a research project focused on Junior School Heads entitled: ‘Women in Leadership in Victorian Independent Schools’. I am enrolled as a PhD student at Deakin University and my Supervisor, Dr Evelyn Johnson, is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education’s School of Social and Cultural Studies. Findings of the research will be documented in a Doctoral Thesis submitted to Deakin University. This is a two part project:

(a) Questionnaire.

(b) An in-depth interview. (A sample group of self-selected participants).

The project is being proposed because there are acknowledged gaps in the theory and practice of women leaders in Junior Schools and their position in senior leadership teams in Independent Schools (K-12). The aim of this research is to investigate how you experience leadership within the situated context of your particular school.

Specifically, this research aims to investigate:

• Leadership discourses and professional views on gender and the micro-politics that encompasses the role of a primary leader.

• Women in relation to policies, practices, knowledge, experience and values about leading and managing schools.

• Untapped potentials, agency and the challenges facing women in leadership.

If you decide to participate I would like you to complete the attached consent form. On receipt of your consent form a questionnaire will be forwarded by mail or via email. The questionnaire completes the first part of this project and will take about 20 minutes of your time. The potential risks regarding the questionnaire and how these risks will be minimized /prevented are outlined below:

• Confidentiality is provided and pseudonyms will be used.

• Identifiable consent forms will be stored separately. Questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in accordance with Deakin University guidelines, for six years and then shredded.
• You have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process.
• I do not anticipate any ethical dilemmas and I intend no coercion of potential participants.
• I acknowledge that I have a professional background, relationship and experience in this field of primary educational leadership. I wish to ensure free and informed consent, therefore as a potential participant I am approaching you by mail.
• If participation is withdrawn, any information gathered will not be used. In accordance to the preference of the withdrawing participant the information will be returned or destroyed.
• Given the precautions described, it is not expected that any emotional or psychological harm will occur to participants as a result of the questionnaire.

The questions are provided here so that you may decide freely and fully:

1. What is unique about your leadership as a woman in a primary Independent School?
2. What primary leadership qualities are essential and which are changing?
3. Describe current leadership culture in your situation in relation to ethical responsibilities?
4. What factors stifle or support your talents, or innovations and why?
5. What serves as inspiration for you and how can it be invested in future educational directions?
6. Any other thoughts regarding women primary leaders?

Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation,

Noella Kershaw  noellak@optusnet.com.au

Please find attached consent form, should you wish to participate in the proposed project. Please place the consent form in the attached self addressed envelope if you intend to participate in the proposed project, having considered this letter of invitation. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123).
I, of

**Hereby consent** to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken

By **Noella Kershaw**

and I understand that the purpose of the research is:

_to conduct a questionnaire about women in primary educational leadership in Victorian Independent Schools and that professional views will be solicited on gender politics and the role of leadership in the representation of women as agents of change, including resistances and the relevance of inspiration._

**I acknowledge that**

1. Upon receipt, my questionnaire will be coded and my name and address kept separately from it.
2. Any information that I provide will not be made public in any form that could reveal my identity to an outside party i.e. that I will remain fully anonymous.
3. Aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results **will not** be released to any person except at my request and on my authorization.
5. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

**Questionnaires will be posted if you prefer the questionnaire via email please include your email address:**

Signature: Date:

Please place the consent form in the attached self-addressed envelope if you intend to participate in the proposed project, having considered the enclosed letter of invitation which sets out the points you would want to consider when making your decision as to whether you would wish to participate in the questionnaire, or not.
REFERENCES


Davies, B. (2000). (In) scribing Body/landscape Relations. Walnut Creek, Alta Mira Press.


Challenging Circumstances. Nottingham, National College of School Leadership.


Morgan, R. (2003). The Impact of education markets on the practices and relationships of schooling, PhD Colloquium proposal. Faculty of Education. Melbourne, Deakin University.


