

# **Women Councillors' Stories of Effectiveness in New Zealand Local Government: A Feminist Hermeneutic Inquiry**

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## Abstract

This thesis asks: ‘What are women councillors’ stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government?’

Guided by a constructivist epistemology, the experience of the women councillors in this study was situated according to the social, cultural and historically determined constructs of their lives. Feminist standpoint theory was the theoretical basis for the study, which assumed that the gendered construction of the women’s lives influenced their experiences of effectiveness in local government.

The methodological framework chosen was a feminist hermeneutic approach. Episodic narrative interviewing was the method for gathering the stories about the women's experiences of effectiveness, because women's stories are a way of examining reality and assisting with the interpretation and meaning that is given to individual experiences. Through the narrated expressions from the women councillors, analysis of the data took place through hermeneutic interpretation, using the analytic principles of ‘suspicion’ and ‘faith’.

Women's minority presence within the local government system, created by men, and which reflects masculinist values, has been a challenge for the women councillors’ effectiveness. The councillors’ different ways of being effective has been impacted by the persistent maleness of local government culture and structure, yet the women's particular ways of working have facilitated and benefited their personal and political effectiveness. Women’s gendered socialisation has influenced the style and focus of the councillors’ effectiveness. The women’s historically and culturally constructed gender roles have predisposed the women's representational styles to those that were embedded in relationships and connections and more closely attuned to an ethic of care.

An examination of 25 women councillors’ perceptions about what it means to be effective in local government has revealed it as complex, multi-dimensional, temporal and constructed according to the women's particular lived experiences. Through a hermeneutic exploration of the women councillors’ experiences of their effectiveness, the inquiry revealed effectiveness as operating at personal, political and community levels and related to outcomes, values and behaviours, and as something that was perceived, felt, received and conveyed.

The women's ways of being effective was characterised by an integration of their personal personas to their political personas. The women's stories highlighted that there were different orientations of effectiveness, degrees of effectiveness and ways of being effective. Assessments of effectiveness were both presentation and judgement; it was about meaning making. Effectiveness was a lived experience.

The inquiry presents a new perspective about the meaning of effectiveness, one that extends existing theory. The new interpretations provide a foundation of understanding that can be extended with further inquiry. It is a thesis that encourages further exploration, and thinking about new insights and understandings. The results of this inquiry add to the growing body of local government research through the focus on the lived experiences of the elected women councillors, and the consideration about what it means to be effective in local government. The inquiry is of particular importance to those with a scholarly interest in the lived experiences of women in the public and political domains, because of the new knowledge it generates about women's local government political participation, and the meanings they attach to their political work.

# Acknowledgements

Enjoy your life without comparing it to that of others. It is enough for you to know that you are good, without examining whether others are as good as you. Expect and demand from others only a little less than you would do for them. If you make sacrifices for them, appreciate them for what they really cost you and not according to the fact that they are sacrifices. Seek compensation for them in your reason, which will assure you that they would be reciprocated, and in your heart, which will tell you that they do not need to be. You will find that life in society is more pleasant and, dare I say, more convenient, if you live for others. Only then do you truly live for yourself. (Marquis de Condorcet, 1794, p. 83)

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### ***Attestation of authorship***

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning.

Louise Tester

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **Background to the Study**

Effectiveness is a particularly relevant concept to local government. It is a compelling issue for policy makers, practitioners and the community. There is a vast body of literature about what it means to be an effective leader, what makes organisations effective, and what, if any, the differences might be in relation to the leadership effectiveness between women and men. The requisites for, and the actualisation of, political effectiveness have been considered from both a structural and individual perspective, as have the different ways of working among men and women politicians, with contested findings about the gendered nature of men's and women's ways of political working. There is, however, little research about the nature of women councillors' ways of working in New Zealand local government, and an absence of research about what they define as effective, being effective, and the factors that may influence their effectiveness. The paucity of research in this area led to the following research question: 'What are women councillors' stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government?'

## **Research Questions**

In seeking to fulfil the rationale for the research, and the overall research question, the following questions guided the inquiry:

1. What does effectiveness mean to women councillors?
2. What influences women councillors' ability to be effective?
3. What does women councillors' effectiveness look like?

## **Context for the Inquiry**

### **Gender and politics.**

Historically, local authorities have been created by men; work practices, rewards systems, structures, power relations and norms tend to reflect masculine values (Broussine & Fox, 2002). As women councillors continue to navigate their presence in local politics, which is dominated by men, women's ways of being effective will be impacted by the persistent maleness of local government culture and its structures.



Women's lives are represented by a “multi-dimensional narrative” (Tuval-Mashiach, 2006, p. 250). Women’s experiences are scattered and fragmentary, and their experiences are borne out of individual interactions with and interpretations of the complex social, economic, political, historical and cultural nuances of their lives.

There is a body of literature about women and local government but overall the experiences of political women have limited representation in research. Roof (2007) wrote that the scholarly value in documenting the experiences of women is in demonstrating “the accomplishments of influential women and the women’s meaningful participation in cultural processes” (p. 429). This inquiry about women councillors’ effectiveness provided an opportunity to represent some of the experiences of women councillors’ participation in New Zealand local government.

In 2009, Goetz wrote that “local government will be the political arena of women’s participation to watch over the next decade” (p. 17). Part of this watching includes documenting the experiences of women and recording their stories. Beckwith (2007) suggested that research about women politicians should begin from the point when women are few in number, up to the point when women are politically present in large numbers. And, as Bosch (2009) posited, “if we do not develop the new biographical stories we want to listen to, others will repeat the old ones” (p. 32).

### **Local government women councillors.**

Scholarly research on local government councillors is important in its own right. New Zealand scholar Jean Drage (2004) referred to the “paucity of research of the elected councillor in local government” (p. 49), although research is increasing globally.

Internationally, women have more success in gaining political access to local government than national governments (Interparliamentary Union and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2008; Irwin, 2008; United Nations Development Programme, 2010). Following the 1989 New Zealand local government re-organisation, the numbers of women elected to local political office exceeded 25% for the first time (Amey, 2006; Drage, 2004). In 2010, 32% of New Zealand local government elected positions<sup>1</sup> were held by women (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011, p. 27), and 28.6% were women councillors (Human Rights Commission, 2010, pp. 41-42). However, in 2010, the year of thesis study 33.6% of New Zealand MPs were

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusive of community board members of which there were 574 at the 2010 local body elections, and seven women mayors.

women, a higher proportion than women who were elected as sub national (local government) political representatives (United Nations Development Programme, 2010, p.25). In 2013, 33% of all local government elected positions, and 30% of the councillor seats were held by women (Robert Hickson, Principal Advisor, Research & Evaluation, Strategy and Governance, Department of Internal Affairs, personal communication, May 2, 2014). Prior to the 2010 local body elections Drage (2009) highlighted the inherent maleness in New Zealand local government. The figures from the 2010 and 2013 elections show there has been little change. The election of women councillors (and MPs) in any reasonable number is still a recent phenomenon in New Zealand.

### **Effectiveness.**

The words *effective* and *effectiveness* derive from the late 14th-century middle English term *effect*, meaning result, accomplishment, performance. The origin is from the Latin term *effectivus*, which means creative, productive, of practical implementation (Barnhart, 1988).

There is a diverse body of social science literature on effectiveness. This has generally concentrated on assessing the effectiveness of leaders and organisations. Some works have presented the attributes of leadership effectiveness (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Evans, 2003; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Tremaine, 2000; Yukl, 2012; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010) while others have addressed political effectiveness (Finkel, 1985; Pearson & Dancey, 2011; Worth, 2002). Some have discussed gender and effectiveness (Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1995; Finkel, 1985; Grey, 2009; Gubrium, 2006; Pearson & Dancey, 2011). There have been attempts to quantify effectiveness, define its attributes, and develop models that would enable measurement and assessment of the indicators of effectiveness (Eagly et al., 1995; Hogan et al., 1994; Worth, 2002). Overall effectiveness appears within existing theory, largely as a concept that articulates the degree to which an outcome is realised. Limited research has considered the structural parameters of women's political effectiveness in local government (Goetz, 2002, 2003; Waring, 2011).

Australasian local government research (Drage, 2000b, 2004, 2009; Evans, 2003; Irwin, 2008; Tremaine, 2007) has considered, in part, the degree to which female local government political leaders were making a difference. Tremaine (2007) and Evans (2003) defined making a difference as contributing to change, achieving results for the community, and effecting cultural changes within an organisation. Drage (2000b)

presented policy and service delivery examples as indicators of women making a difference, and Irwin (2008) wrote of the difference that women make because of their presence as local representatives. Stories about where political women have made a difference can also be found in an increasing number of autobiographies, biographies and rhetorical biographies (Anderson, 2008; Casgrain, 1972; Harris, 2013; Kornelius, 2013; Kunin, 1994, 2008; Tizard, 2010; Welch, 2009).

The results from this inquiry have demonstrated that making a difference is part of what it means to be effective, but it is not the totality of its meaning. Between the years of 2011 and 2014 of thesis research, considerations about what it meant to be effective, from the perception of the woman local government councillor was absent from existing research literature.

### **A feminist hermeneutic inquiry.**

Recent Australasian research about women in local government (Drage, 2000b, 2004, 2009; Evans, 2003; Irwin, 2008; Tremaine, 2007) has been descriptive, phenomenological, and in some cases offered comparative analyses of experiences. The Australasian studies have, in the main, focussed on women mayors, and women as local government political leaders. At the time of submission, an exhaustive search of the literature suggests there was no feminist hermeneutic research on women in local government in either New Zealand or overseas. van Manen (1997) noted that stories of personal lived experiences have changed perceptions and built understanding through providing an affective impact. Andrews (2007) wrote about the political power of personal narratives. A feminist hermeneutic study can contribute to an understanding of the gendered nature of women's experiences in local government, through a representation of female councillors' voices. A feminist hermeneutic interpretation of women councillors' experiences of effectiveness represents a new approach to the study of women within New Zealand local government.

### **Rationale for the Study**

My particular interest in studying women councillors originates from my upbringing. Growing up in a household with a strong social conscience, with both parents active in a range of community positions, I developed an awareness of inequality and injustice at a young age. My interest in politics, gender, sociology and feminism was awakened at secondary school. These early influences coalesced into pursuing a career in local/government social policy. As I furthered my career, latterly had children, and

made a range of personal and professional decisions, I have lived a gendered life. I come to this study with pre-understandings that are grounded in my past experiences. Pre-understandings have inevitably influenced this research.

Prior to studying politics at university, I decided that I wanted to work in the public sector, believing it to be the domain where I could effect change. My working life has largely been local government based, with a secondment to the UK civil service (local government division) in the early 1990s. Early on in my career, I resolved that whilst the big policy decisions were effected at a national level, local democracy was a powerful and important place to empower communities. Working closely with councillors, over many years, I have witnessed their commitment to, and their work in, the community, but I was not sure whether this alone was effective, or whether they really do make a difference.

I came to New Zealand in 2003, and subsequently had two children. On becoming a mother, my partner and I resolved that we would both raise our children full time by each of us working part time. In these early years and at the start of this thesis journey we were very active in Playcentre. This has proved to influence my views about effectiveness. Playcentre, made up of parents (mainly women) who make a conscious choice to be engaged in their children's early childhood experiences demonstrated to me the incredible capabilities of women who ran their homes, their Playcentres, their centre associations, other voluntary and community work and in some cases work and / or study. These were busy impressive women. I judged the juggling acts that I witnessed on a daily basis as a hallmark of their being effective. I was unaware of the impact or effect of their actions, how they managed to do it all, and whether what I perceived as effective, really was.

Whilst I was one of these women juggling it all, my professional experiences were somewhat different and I did not feel effective. My choice to raise my children and work part time resulted in less opportunity, and accordingly second-class treatment. The potential to achieve professional standing required full-time presence in the local government environment, but I was not prepared to compromise, believing that I had a greater potential to be effective (whatever that meant) by combining my family, professional and community life, and not compromising one for another. The conflict between my public and private lives, and the confusion that arose from my perceptions and interpretations, led to me locating woman's effectiveness as political, gendered and

grounded in cultural tension.

As a local government officer for 20 years in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom, I have observed, and participated in, structural, legislative and political changes. Whilst undertaking my professional roles, I have worked alongside local government councillors, and observed and reflected on their ways of working. My interest in studying the role of the elected councillor was based on a search to understand how they may undertake their role effectively, amidst the legislative and structural constraints and the complex interfaces that take place between councillors, council officers, community and external stakeholders, and the complexity and challenges associated with representing broad and diverse communities.

My experience working alongside women councillors has been limited, because of their limited presence in the six local authorities where I have been employed. My personal experience and perceptions about the gendered nature of women's lives in local government, and the reality of women's limited presence as local government councillors has led me to want to ask those women who were present how they defined, perceived, negotiated, and demonstrated their effectiveness.

In parallel with my career, and raising a family, I have continued to study. Combined with my personal and professional interests, the gaps in scholarly knowledge became more evident. There was a paucity of research about women in local government, about the complexity of their experiences and how the masculinist environments in which they worked affected their interactions. The rationale for the study was to build my understanding and to develop knowledge that may support an understanding about the lived experiences of women in local government.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for the following reasons:

- 1 It records and presents the voices of women councillors amidst a period of significant local government change in New Zealand.
- 2 It provides a foundation of knowledge about what being effective in local government means to women councillors.
- 3 It documents how women councillors negotiate their efficacy and agency within a masculinist local government environment.
- 4 It provides a broader perspective to the meaning of effectiveness.

- 5 It undertakes a feminist hermeneutic inquiry about the lived experiences of women local government councillors.

## **Organisation of the Inquiry**

This study explored experiences of effectiveness in New Zealand local government from the perspective of 25 North Island women councillors from 20 local authorities, across all tiers. Via episodic narrative interviews, a variety of information was sought including stories of effectiveness, prior experiences, determinants of effectiveness, and perceptions of effectiveness. Feminist hermeneutic analysis was used to identify and analyse the manifested themes and explore the emergent attributes of the research phenomenon.

Engaging hermeneutically with texts is distinctive from other qualitative research. There is a different way of conducting a review of the literature and different ways of engaging in a dialogue between the various texts. These different processes results in different ways to present the various information (Smythe & Spence, 2012).

Literature reviews often start, as was the case for this inquiry, with a research idea. The review of literature followed a path, as a means to explore, uncover and understand the context for the inquiry. Engaging with the methodological and philosophical literature has been a parallel process to the conduct of the literature review. Using existing literature to frame the methodology, understand the philosophy and provide a context for the inquiry has supported a dialogue amongst texts to take place from the outset of the study. Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic (2010) refer to this process as the “search and acquisition circle” (p. 263). The process of developing understanding continues with the analysis and interpretation of the participant texts. As insights from the participants’ texts develop, “new sources and ways of interpreting and developing meanings” (p. 264) emerge. The recursive movement between the texts continues right to the point at which the researcher stops the process of interpretation and the associated writing.

The presentation of the hermeneutic inquiry is different to other qualitative research. “Philosophical literature is part both of methodology and discussion. . . Emergent thinking is often gifted from the prompt of another author” (Smyth & Spence, 2012, p.23). Within this inquiry, the philosophical, literary, theoretic, participant and research texts engage in a dialogic partnership with one another throughout the thesis, and there is an extensive use of quotes from theorists, literary sources, and the participants to

draw the reader into the circles of understanding, re-viewing and thinking. There is an appreciation that understanding of the text is best achieved via a mutual co-production of voices and horizons.

## **Chapter Structure**

The chapters of the thesis are organised as follows:

### ***Chapter 2- Context: women and politics.***

Chapter 2 sets out the context as it relates to women's political participation. The first section of the chapter provides a national context, and introduces New Zealand's political culture, and the nature of women's political activism and participation in policy agencies. This section also presents an overview of literature as it relates to women's descriptive and substantive representation. The second section of the chapter establishes a context for women's local government participation, providing an overview of the reasons women pursue political office, the numbers of women present as local government councillors in New Zealand, and the nature of New Zealand's local government environment. The chapter also introduces the existing research about women's experiences as local government representatives in New Zealand and overseas.

### ***Chapter 3 - Literature review: effectiveness.***

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of effectiveness, drawing on existing research and theory. The chapter is structured into four parts: theories of effectiveness, leadership effectiveness, political effectiveness, and local government effectiveness. Specifically, the chapter considers the different theoretical views of effectiveness, the contested nature of leadership effectiveness and the determinants of women's political effectiveness. The final section of the chapter provides an interpretation of local government effectiveness, and presents the limited research that exists about the effectiveness of New Zealand women mayors, and comparative research about the effectiveness of women in local government.

### ***Chapter 4 - Research methodology.***

Chapter 4 provides the methodological framework for the inquiry. The chapter introduces constructivist epistemology and feminist standpoint theory as the underpinning theoretical foundations for the research. The key feminist theorists that have guided the inquiry are Carol Gillian (1977, 1985, 2011), Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule (1997), Nancy Harstock (1983), Sandra

Harding (2004, 2004b), Susan Hekman (1997), and Alison Jaggar (2004). Secondly, the chapter introduces a feminist hermeneutic approach as the methodology focusing the inquiry. The assumptions of the hermeneutic approach underpinning the inquiry are: knowledge is socially constructed, historically effected and temporal; behaviour and interpretations of behaviour are subjective; people act with meaning; language is the means by which experience can be understood and interpreted; the researcher's pre-understandings are evident throughout the interpretation of the data (Walker, 1996). Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is the key hermeneutic text that guides the inquiry. The foundations of Gadamer's hermeneutics have been supplemented by text from the following feminist hermeneutists:- Gloria Bowles (1994), Eloise Buker (1990), Mojca Pajnik (2006), Nicole Pitre, Kaysi Kushner, Kim Raine and Kathy Hegadoren (2013), Kathleen Ryan and Elizabeth Natalie (2001) and Georgina Warnke (1993).

### ***Chapter 5 – Research methods and process.***

Chapter 5 presents the ethical considerations and methods that guided the research. The chapter introduces the following methods: purposive sampling, episodic narrative interviewing and feminist hermeneutic interpretive analysis. The interpretative approaches that guided the analysis of the data are Paul Ricoeur's (1991) 'hermeneutic of faith' with its attention to the representation and authority of the women councillors voices, and the 'hermeneutic of suspicion', a critical interpretative approach that can support a understanding of the historical and social foundations of the women's subjective experiences. The last section of the chapter sets out the approach taken to ensure rigour and robustness.

### ***Chapters 6 to 9 – Findings and Discussions.***

Chapters 6 to 9 each combine the findings from the research with a discussion that relates to the particular aspect of the phenomenon under inquiry. Congruent with a hermeneutic inquiry, the chapters present the participants voices alongside the researchers interpretations and pre understandings, and the standpoints of the feminist and hermeneutic philosophers. The weaving of the three knowledge strands provides a basis to present the emergent understandings about the women councillors' effectiveness.

Chapter 6 explores the women's past experiences and identifies the significance of the women's history and tradition for their perceptions about what being effective meant. The chapter highlights the importance of historicity and a historically effected



consciousness as the basis for the councillors' interpretations of their lived experiences.

Chapter 7 identifies the relational context for the councillors, presenting their attachments to people and places, and considers the importance of structural relationships for how they conducted their roles. The chapter signifies the critical role of relational attachment for the councillors' meanings and understanding about what it meant to be effective.

Chapter 8 discusses the structural determinants of the councillors' effectiveness and their experiences within their institutional environments. It highlights how a masculinist local government culture influences women's effectiveness and perceptions about what it means to be effective. The chapter also identifies how the prevailing structure and culture could be incongruent with the women's preferred ways of working, which could result in the women perceiving themselves, and being perceived as ineffective.

Chapter 9 presents the women councillors' representational effectiveness, and identifies the councillors' ways of being effective as gendered and different from their male colleagues.

### ***Chapter 10 – Conclusions.***

Chapter 10 synthesises the key themes emerging from the thesis: the women councillors' ways of working are gendered, relational and imbued with an ethic of care; effectiveness is a complex, political, gendered lived experience. The chapter presents the significance of the findings and makes recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Political, Government and Local Government Context**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of chapter 2 is to provide an overview of the political context for the research inquiry. An understanding of the context that frames the experiences of the female local government councillor can support an understanding about the nature of her perceived effectiveness. Hermeneutically it is important to identify the political context for the women councillors' participations in local government, because an understanding of their present is situated within an individual's historical consciousness and interpretation of the past. Gadamer (2006) wrote that being is historically conditioned, and such being is conditioned in relation to the other. Heidegger located being (Dasein) as entangled in historicity and temporality. Heidegger (1953/1996) called for an understanding of the historicity of being "in order to come to the positive appropriation of the past, to come into full possession of its most proper possibilities of inquiry" (p. 18). Women's political presence is grounded in history. Meaning and interpretation have been placed upon such history, a history that is largely masculinist. The chapter is organised as follows:

1. Politics is introduced as a predominately-male domain. This is followed by a discussion about women's political culture and political voice, and the nature of women's descriptive and substantive representation at a national political level.
2. New Zealand as a liberal democracy is introduced, with specific attention given to the implications for women's political representation and the representation of gendered interests. This is followed by a discussion about New Zealand women's political participation as political activists, the role of women's policy agencies and the role of women bureaucrats in government policy agencies.
3. Finally, a framework to understand the local government environment is established. This includes an exploration of the emergence of the woman local government councillor, an overview of the context for the local government councillor in New Zealand, and an introduction to the concept of effectiveness as it is understood in New Zealand local government.

## **A Gendered Political Narrative**

The traditional notion of politics is public power, with power emanating purely from the state (Brownhill & Halford, 1990). This research begins with the position that “politics is understood as a male centric culture – a deeply naturalised political master narrative that create[s] a particular kind of social world, with specified heroes and villains” (McGregor & Clover, 2011, p. 262). Such narratives embody particular discourses, dominant ideologies and ways of being in the world (Sandlin & Clarke, 2009). Women’s political lives, actions, interactions and interpretations are influenced by a masculinist narrative that permeates societal structures and culture (Harstock, 1983; Smith, 1987).

Bashevkin (2009) wrote about how gendered discourses permeate the ways by which political women are perceived and evaluated, particularly the historically naturalised perception that politics is a domain for men. McGregor and Clover (2011), reflecting on the work of Bashevkin, wrote, the “double bind of naturalised patriarchy and the continual devaluation of democratic processes has serious consequences for women” (p. 250). These consequences relate to women's potential to participate politically and the nature of their subsequent political presence. Bochel and Bochel (2004) wrote, “Women and men think of politics as a male domain because the empirical truth is such” (p. 48) and along with others, they have argued that gender parity could revitalise democracy, and transform its inherently male nature. Gender parity is important for democracy. Without it, wrote Alexander (2012), the empirical truth of a male-dominated culture remains the taken-for-granted state of affairs, and a consciousness of women’s discrimination becomes less visible, as does any focus on women’s participation in government and politics. This inquiry is grounded in the assumption that this gendered master political narrative influences women’s political participation in local government.

## **Women's Political Culture**

Heilbrun (1979) wrote that the dominance of male political identity shaped the political identity of women. While written 30 years ago, the statement remains a valid proposition to assert, largely because of men’s continued domination as political representatives.

Women conceive the world differently from men (Jaggar, 2004), and “society has organised for women a different relation to the world,” (Smith, 1987, p. 68). This

assertion lends itself to the proposition that women will have a political culture that is different from men's. Women's political culture may be different because women have been socialised in a different way and have different moral sensibilities (Auerbach, Blum, Smith, & Williams, 1985; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Gilligan, 1977; Harding, 2004a; Hundleby, 1998; Smith, 1987). Henry (2006) wrote that women's different political sensibilities would lead them to perform differently, particularly in professions traditionally dominated by men. That said, there is no single culture of or for women (Ehrenreich, 2005). Different groups of women, and individual women within groups of women, will each realise a distinctively different standpoint based on their lived experiences and interpretations of their past experiences and present realities (Baker, 1990; Hekman, 1997; Hirschmarm, 1998; Longino, 1993; Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013). The complex web of social, historical, and cultural influences, and the interpretive lens that shape individual women's lives, will result in each woman uniquely experiencing and interpreting her political culture.

### **Women's political voice.**

Research about women's political representation suggested that women's political presence is not simply about equality and justice, it is about the recognition that women do speak in a different voice. Gilligan's (1982) seminal work described the identity formation of women in the context of their early relational experiences. She stated that women's identities were shaped by a "fusing of attachment" (p. 8), and women's "sensitivity to the needs of others... lead women to attend to voices other than their own, and to include in their judgement other points of view" (p. 16). Women's political voice reflected a being in the world that exists in relation to others, (Freeman, 2007) and, through attention to the other, an understanding of the perspective of the other is possible (Ryan & Natalie, 2001). Narrative theorist Eakin (1999) wrote that an understanding of the manifestations of the individual requires an understanding of the relationships between people. An understanding of women's political voice is grounded in women's interdependent relational experiences and environments.

Bicquelet, Weale and Bara (2012) stated that "female politicians are far more likely to espouse an ethic of care concerned with responsibility and interpersonal relationships, while men are, by contrast, prone to embrace an ethic of justice" (p. 84) but they questioned whether men and women speak in different ways to "significant political effect" (p. 83). Hermeneutists Ryan and Natalie (2001) reflected on invitational rhetoric

as a counter-communicative theory to patriarchal forms of persuasion. An ethic of justice may seek to persuade; an ethic of care is more likely to embrace open dialogue and a willingness to yield to the perspective of the other. Whether or not women speak in a different political voice with significant political effect, the literature does highlight a different voice because of women's different gendered social, cultural and political past experiences and lives.

## **Women's Participation in National Politics: Descriptive and Substantive Representation**

Hanna Pitkin wrote in 1967 that substantive representation could be conceived as “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them,” (as cited in Chaney, 2012, p. 442). This can be interpreted to mean that women must be present as decision makers if they are to effect women's substantive representation. Since then, the considerable research about women's descriptive and substantive representation has continued to highlight the ongoing importance of research about women's political representation.

The debate about women's descriptive representation remains contested. Hind (2009) wrote “the number of women in parliament is a salient issue, one that is about justice and fairness, acknowledging that women's shared common ground requires women to represent their interest” (p. 109). Lovenduski and Norris (2003), reflecting on an earlier work by Kanter (1977) claimed that only when women's representation reaches the “tilted” group (of between 15% and 40% representation) can the minority group begin to assert itself, and the tipping point is achieved (p. 88). The 1997 General Recommendation on Article 7 of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stated, “Research demonstrates that if women's participation reaches 30 to 35 percent (generally termed a ‘critical mass’, there is a real impact on the political style and content of decisions, and political life is revitalized” (Sawer, 2014). Hind (2009) and Curtin (2008, 2009) have however challenged the idea that women's descriptive representation can alone provide substantive change to the dominant discourses. Gilling (2009) wrote, “critical mass is only useful if we discard the belief that numbers alone bring about substantive changes” (p. 204). Wängnerud (2009) suggested that critical acts were more significant. Clearly, the persistent under-representation of women and women's gendered interests is continuing to generate different understandings about the political representation of women.

Pearson and Dancey's (2011) assessment of American congresswomen's engagement in speeches highlighted the significance of critical acts. The research demonstrated that despite the smaller numbers of women representatives, their heightened participation in speeches not only increased their visibility, it gave an illusion of more women and it allowed women to be distinguished from the male congressional representatives, thereby enhancing their representational effects. Pearson and Dancey asserted that congresswomen's enhanced levels of engagement also served to increase their perceived "competence and influence" on issues broader than those traditionally perceived to be of interest to women (p. 910).

Several researchers have highlighted the role of critical actors. Young (2000) reflected on the placement of "critical actors" with a feminist consciousness as a means of delivering the substantive representation of women's interests. Murray (2008) referred to critical actors that included elected officials, and women in policy agencies, who were able to mobilise and influence political actors to support women's substantive interests. Curtin (2008) wrote that women's descriptive presence was not an indicator of women's "acceptance and influence within political elites." What mattered was the extent to which these women leaders were able to "capitalise on their leadership posts as progressive stepping stones to greater political influence" (p. 491). Research conducted by Chaney (2012), reviewing the policy-making participation from women MPs in the Scottish parliament, concluded that "female critical actors are shown to have disproportionate policy-making influence" (p. 454). The inquiry highlighted the need to research the interaction between the critical actor and the critical mass of women representatives. Sawyer's (2012) case study of Australian women politicians' successful passage of abortion drug legislation achieved through the women's cross party sponsorship and support demonstrated the important intersection between the critical mass and critical actors on a critical issue. The research from Chaney (2012) and Sawyer (2012) highlighted the significance of the cumulative effect of the actions of critical actors and the critical mass of other female political representatives for women's perceived descriptive presence and their substantive influence.

Waylen (2008), Gilling (2009) and Chaney (2012) each acknowledged that women's substantive representation relies on wider structural elements being in place. Waylen referred to a number of elements: the number of women present overall in the political system; the presence and inclusion of women's policy agencies; the links between women's organisations and the legislature; the presence of gender sensitive political

parties; the extent to which women's interests are embodied into policy-making processes (p. 532). Chaney (2012) commented that the complexity of the substantive representation of women requires cognisance of wider institutional and procedural factors and relationships.

Wängnerud (2009) suggested caution, perceiving the effects of substantive representation “to be smaller than anticipated in theory” (p. 64), which suggests that gender parity through women’s greater descriptive representation remains an important political goal.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed has highlighted that the cultural context for women's political presence has been subject to considerable research with different contested understandings. In the context of this inquiry, the following matters are identified as important knowledge guides to take forward:

1. Politics is gendered and masculinist in culture, which is likely to influence the nature of women's political presence. This inquiry explores the extent to which this may influence women councillors’ political effectiveness.
2. Women's political presence is derived from a complex web of gendered influences; however, there is an absence of research about the gendered influences guiding women councillors in their political roles.
3. Women speak in a different political voice, but the extent to which the voice is different in local government is not sufficiently known.
4. There is considerable contested research about women's descriptive and substantive representation at national political levels, there is a paucity of knowledge about this subject at a local government level. The contested knowledge about women's descriptive presence and the place of critical actors and critical acts can usefully be applied to an inquiry about women's presence in local government.
5. Women's substantive representation as it relates to local government councillors may influence the nature of women's local government representative presence.

The next section considers the New Zealand political environment.

### **The Political Place of Women in New Zealand Politics**

New Zealand is a liberal democracy (Ware, 1992) that is predominantly patriarchal, culturally heterogeneous. Individual responsibility is emphasised. Barker (2010) called for a more sophisticated understanding of the nuances of New Zealand’s political

culture in which the social role of the state is recognised alongside individual responsibility.

Grey (2008) wrote that the political intrusion into the cultural and private spheres of life had impacted on women. This claim was supported by McLeay (2009) who stated that the ethnic, cultural and political pluralism of New Zealand had resulted in competing interests and demands which have “often cut across and into women’s claims for descriptive and substantive representation” (p. 18). McLeay wrote that on the one hand government policy (welfare reform, employment, domestic violence, prostitution, civil unions, and the recognition of homosexual relationships) had led some to claim “women had won their demands” (p. 20). However, she suggested that the neo-liberal and social reforms, with their emphasis on private provision and the reduction of universal welfare provisions, had negatively impacted upon women's lives since 1984. McLeay wrote “clearly the political place of women... remained unequal and contested” (p. 21).

### **New Zealand Women's Political Activism**

New Zealand women have a tradition of political activism that has, in part, supported their descriptive and substantive representation (Grey, 2008). Grey (2009) wrote “successful movements interact with their environment,” and quoted Tilly:

Social movements sometimes succeed in their demands... and because the struggle between challengers and authorities itself produces alterations in toleration and repression, social movements contribute to the redefinition of routine politics (p. 252).

The positive impact of women’s political activism has been evident through political struggles. The New Zealand temperance movement (1880s) campaigned for women to vote in licensing elections. The suffrage movement, borne out of the temperance movement, strove for women’s votes. The pakeha<sup>2</sup> feminist movement of the 1970s fought to achieve social and economic gains for women, and emphasised women's formal engagement and responses to consultation processes (Grey, 2009; McLeay, 2009). The Māori women's movement of the 1970s organised around forums which included the Māori Women's Welfare League, iwi and hapū, focussed its efforts on long-standing grievances around land, culture and language (Larner, 1995; Ralston, 1993).

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<sup>2</sup> New Zealanders of European descent, and who is not of Māori descent.



New Zealand's 1970s women's movement (western) represented an important period of change for women. The movement was not wholly issue based. Friendship was an egalitarian concept at the heart of the movement, whereby "solidarity and sisterhood were seen as politically expedient tactics...[and] cohesion and common purpose were needed" (Devere & Curtin, 2009, p. 92) to effect the change. Devere and Curtin quoted Marilyn Friedman who reflected that friends allow people to "challenge existing traditions... and [friendship] has socially transformative potential... Commitment to persons, in particular our friends, offers us important possibilities for moral growth, and transformation of the abstract moral guidelines to which we are committed (p. 93). The communicative focus which characterised the women's relationships during this movement resonated with Ryan and Natalie's (2001) finding that "invitational rhetoric provides a mode of communication for women and other marginalised groups to use in their efforts to transform systems of domination and oppression" (p. 82).

By the 1990s, women's activism had moved inside the "professional" sphere with increasing numbers of women holding political office and holding significant institutional positions. Throughout this decade and into the 2000s women remained active in their communities, and women's community participation remained greater than men's (Grey, 2008, 2009). Women's political voice had become more present within institutional structures.

Women's activism has been cited as a significant precursor to women's engagements in formal local politics (Drage, 1999; Grey, 2009; Lowndes, 2004; Senol, 2009; Siebert, 2009; Smith, Reingold, & Owens, 2011). Grey (2008) and Drage (2009) commented that the absence of a current New Zealand women's political movement was a barrier for women within local government and for those who aspire to political office.

## **Women's Policy Agencies**

In several countries, policy agencies were set up as a result of demands from women's movements (Sawer, 2007). Weldon (2002) suggested, "women's movements and women's policy agencies may provide more effective avenues of expression for women's perspectives than the presence of women in the legislatures" (p. 1153), and Lovenduski (2005) wrote about the potential of women's policy agencies to enhance women's participation in political decision making. Wängnerud (2009) however, expressed caution with attempts to 'sidestep' the representation of women in parliaments. She wrote, "Female politicians contribute to strengthening the position of

women's interests” (p. 65). From the research literature, it was evident that women's political participation via policy agencies is as contested as their national political presence and the changing nature of women's political activism.

### **Ministry of Women's Affairs.**

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has been New Zealand's version of 'state feminism,' wrote Curtin and Teghtsoonian (2010, p. 545). The Ministry was established in 1986 against the backdrop of the New Zealand's women's movement, and offered a new approach from day one. In an effort to establish an independent women's affairs ministry, 1200 women were engaged in the early consultation (an unprecedented strategy in the 1980s), in a “participatory, consultative, bi-cultural approach that challenged existing bureaucratic culture and sought to minimise hierarchy” (p. 552). During their early years, the Ministry secured significant policy success. This was, in part, due to the other portfolios that MP Ann Hercus held in this period (Social Welfare and Police) according to Curtin and Teghtsoonian (2010, p. 554). Prue Hyman (2010), writing of her time working in the Ministry, recalled its effectiveness and wrote: “advice is only effective if the policies it advocates are adopted, and if these policies actually do what was intended” (p. 37). From 1986, in what was a period of antipathy to women's policy, Curtin and Teghtsoonian commented that the Ministry was an “interesting puzzle” (p. 546).

During the 1990s, the ministry developed guidelines for the mainstreaming of gender analysis in policy development. The guidelines recognised the differences amongst women's lives, stressing the diversity of experience and need amongst Māori and Pacific Island women and women with different familial, sexual orientation and economic statuses. Curtin and Teghtsoonian (2010) wrote: “it gave a visibility to the gendered dimensions of government policy that would have otherwise been ignored” (p. 558). The profile of the Ministry began to diminish from 1996, when for the first time the Minister for Women's Affairs was excluded from Cabinet.

During the Fifth Labour government, led by Helen Clark from 1999, further policy gains were made, and the Ministry turned away from advocacy work. A Ministry spokesperson said,

We do not act as advocates because we have found that simply advocating for issues is not an effective way for a policy agency to influence others to achieve outcomes for women. A persuasive case

backed up by convincing evidence is a far more powerful tool and assists with prioritisation. (as cited in Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010, pp. 561-562)

The degree of influence and effectiveness of the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been perceived variably. In 1990, McKinley asked self-proclaimed Ministry femocrats if they had made a difference. The women respondents stated that "the degree of change is usually less or not as complete as the women involved or women in the community may have wished" (as cited in Hyman, 2010, p. 42). In 2010, Curtin and Teghtsoonian wrote that the effectiveness of New Zealand femocrats had waned, with the changing emphasis of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

### **The role of femocrats.**

Despite the perspective that the influence of women's policy agencies has lessened (Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010; Sawer, 2007), femocrats have been acknowledged as important to furthering women's goals (Chappell, 2002; Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010; Goetz, 2009; Grey, 2009; Hyman, 2010; Sawer, 1999, 2012). Femocrats have been defined as "powerful women within government administration with an ideological and political commitment to feminism...[whose] objective is to influence policy through an explicitly feminist perspective" (Chappell, 2002, p. 86). A "femocrat strategy is about using public administration as a tool and an alternative avenue to advance the representation of women" (p. 85). A measure of the success of a femocrat strategy is the degree to which femocrats have gained institutional positions within the bureaucracy and the extent to which gender analysis has been applied to public policy making. A femocrat strategy may be a useful tool to progress gendered issues, with femocrat administrators pursuing women's interests more vigorously than predominantly male officials at both local and national government levels, because bureaucrats have not been elected to represent a broad community interest.

Femocrats were successfully institutionalised in Australian politics, with a model that was different from New Zealand's standalone Ministry of Women's Affairs. The Australian national-level women's affairs femocrats were positioned within "a women's co-ordination unit within the central policy co-ordinating agency of government linked to a network of departmental women's units responsible for monitoring policy at the point of initiation" (Sawer, 1999, p. 92).

Sawer wrote that the location of gender as a portfolio of the Prime Minister “proved useful for across-the-board policy interventions. It helped naturalise feminist policy perspectives at the heart of government” (p. 93). The mainstreaming of the femocrats within the Australian policy-making structures supported the women as internal advocates who were able to bring the women’s movements from outside into the mainstream of policy considerations.

Whilst Sawer (1999, 2007) defined the success of the Australian model, she also reflected that the gender work had been captured by bureaucracy. From a New Zealand perspective, Hyman (2010) reported that the women from the Ministry talked of the “mixed feelings about what can be accomplished, and whether working inside or outside the system is a better strategy” with “most femocrats see[ing] themselves as walking a tightrope, working very hard to achieve gains for women in complex and difficult situations” (p. 38). She continued that feminists who had worked in the Ministry reflected on “the constraints and compromises involved, the kind of bilingualism required in dominant and oppositional discourses and the need for strong pressure from outside to be effective” (p. 38). The research is strongly suggestive of the challenges that femocrats faced when operating within a dominant masculinist political culture, and the need for the women bureaucrats to carefully negotiate their ‘otherness’ in order for them to achieve policy gains for women.

Curtin and Teghtsoonian (2010) wrote that many people had expressed caution about the close proximity of femocrats to the governing institutions, warning that it may undermine the capacity of the femocrats to advocate effectively on behalf of women (p.548). They referenced Franzway et al., who warned, in 1989, “if femocrats could achieve a more central location, their capacity to advocate clear feminist policy might be blunted by close involvement in the state directorate’s own strategies” (p. 547). However, the successes in Australia (Sawer, 1999, 2007) present a counter to this proposition. Whilst women's distance or detachment from the prevailing political authority could be an inhibitor to effectiveness, their close juxtaposition to the prevailing authority could be equally problematic. What is clear is, while there is an important role for femocrats, they should not exist at the expense of women's political representation.

At the time of thesis research, an exhaustive search of the literature failed to reveal research about the presence of femocrats within New Zealand local government.

Research about the significance of local government femocrats is an issue worthy of inquiry, in order to understand the presence and success of women bureaucrats in local government and what this may mean for women's political and substantive representation.

The next section presents the context for New Zealand local government.

## **New Zealand Local Government**

Local government is not distinguished by the services it provides, important though they are to its working. Other bodies can and in some cases do provide those services. It is distinguished by its basis in local democracy. The strength of local government depends therefore on its basis in local democracy and from that basis it gains legitimacy. (Professor John Stewart (1998) as cited in McKinlay, 2010, p. 10)

Since 1989, New Zealand local government has undergone significant transformation. In 1997, McKinlay wrote of the increasing commercialisation of local government and the increasing requirement of fiscal reporting. He suggested that decisions should be moved out to the communities they served. The period was characterised by greater accountability and transparency, an increased differentiation between the governance and management of the local authority, and a push for citizens to be more actively involved in decision making (Drage & Tremaine, 2011).

A major legislative shift took place with the introduction of the Local Government Act 2002 by the fifth Labour government. The Act defined the purpose of local government as enabling democratic decision-making by, and on behalf of, communities and promoting communities' social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing. The Act further increased levels of reporting and accountability requirements.

From 2009, the National government embarked on its reform of local government, with further legislative change and the amalgamation of six separate councils in Auckland into a single 'super city' council. In 2010, an amendment to the Local Government Act 2002 removed councils from their obligations to involve communities in decisions they had an interest in or may be affected by. The consequence, wrote Drage and Tremaine (2011) was councils and councillors have taken responsibility for determining the parameters of wellbeing on behalf of the community, and show signs of "ignoring the community" (p. 189).

In 2010, McKinlay wrote of the need for a new understanding of local government, stating:

That it is (or should be) fundamentally about governance NOT service delivery. And it is a governance role that needs to be strategic and ‘whole of community’ in its focus, NOT simply about better governance of existing services... it is the ‘guardian and the facilitator’ of local governance (p. 19).

McKinlay also commented on the need to reposition local government as “the critical player” in community leadership (p. 21).

Since 2010, a small number of high profile events have impacted governance and democracy in particular local authority areas, and these have influenced general perceptions about local government. In each case, government (or its agents) stepped in. This represented a democratic challenge to the role and efforts of the elected councillors and the democratic basis of the organisations. The following examples demonstrate the complexity of local government. Subject to multiple influences, local democracy is political and contested, and its success is perspectival, temporal and contingent on a broad range of issues and circumstances, some of which are beyond its control.

Following the Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, and the establishment of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA), the foundations of local democracy in the region were rocked. Whilst acknowledging the pressure and efforts of Christchurch city councillors, Hayward (2012) described the cracks in local democracy. The CERA Act 2011 afforded a “new command and control model of recovery” (para. 15), she said, whereby communications with the community and the local council staff and councillors lessened, and closed-door council meetings increased. Hayward wrote, “engaged listening, transparent decision-making and locally mandated leadership is vital to effective community recovery” (para. 15), and described the Community Forum set up under CERA as “a poor substitute for publicly accountable, local decision making” (para. 21). The experiences in Christchurch support McKinlay’s (2010) assertion about the critical role of local government and councillors facilitating and enabling effective local democracy.

Concerns about Environment Canterbury’s ability to undertake their fresh water management role, raised by District Mayors to the Local Government Minister, resulted in the dismissal of the Environment Canterbury councillors in 2010, in favour of government-appointed commissioners. This was viewed by some as an erosion of local

democracy with the commissioners seen as “unelected dictators” (“A Permanent Dictatorship”, 2012, para. 1.) For others, however, the commissioners were seen as doing a “good job to date in addressing some of the challenging issues” (Young & Cairns, 2012, para. 25). In September 2012, the government announced its intention to maintain the Environment Canterbury commissioners until 2016. Prime Minister John Key, at a press conference, stated:

We want to go back to democracy, we understand the issues and we considered them very closely, but in the end the primary factor was that we thought there needed to be a successful outcome and the job wasn't yet done. (Young & Cairns, 2012, para. 5)

The on-going presence of the ECAN commissioners challenged perceptions about the ability of locally elected officials to deliver the environmental outcomes wanted by the Government.

Auckland Council, which came into effect in November 2010, was in response to the perceived inability of the separate Auckland councils to collectively plan and respond to the region’s infrastructure needs (Aulich et al., 2011, p. 36). The amalgamation greatly reduced the number of directly elected councillors. Since the amalgamation, many council-owned services have been placed into Council Controlled Organisations. Combined with a business style of operation, Drage and Tremaine (2011) have predicted this would have a negative impact on the democratic role of the council and its councillors.

In 2010, Kaipara District Council invited the government to appoint a team of commissioners to support their organisation. A finding in the report of the government-appointed review team was “challenges facing the Council are beyond the current councillors’ ability to resolve” (Gent, Auton, & Tennent, 2012, p. 2). The conclusion of the review team was that there had been a failure in governance, a poor understanding of the role of the elected representative, and insufficient and poor advice, which led to a succession of decisions that caused concern in the community. With the appointment of government commissioners and the council not holding a local election in 2013, the principles of local democracy were undermined. The community’s dissatisfaction with the council and its councillors, which prompted the government’s intervention, highlighted accountability and general competency as important indicators of local government performance.

## **Local government effectiveness.**

The concept of effectiveness has been a part of the local government legislative shifts since 2002. Within the Local Government Act 2002 (amended 2012) the terms ‘effective’, ‘effectively’ or ‘effectiveness’ appear 35 times within 25 sections of the Act. The purpose of the Act (Section 3) is set out as follows:

...to provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities; and, to that end, this Act—

- (a) states the purpose of local government; and
- (b) provides a framework and powers for local authorities to decide which activities they undertake and the manner in which they will undertake them; and
- (c) promotes the accountability of local authorities to their communities; and
- (d) provides for local authorities to play a broad role in meeting the current and future needs of their communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions.

The subparts to section 3 provide a context to measure the extent to which local government may be perceived as effective. Section 10 defines the purpose of local government:

- (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
  - (b) to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.
- (2) In this Act, **good-quality**, in relation to local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions, means infrastructure, services, and performance that are—
- (a) efficient; and
  - (b) effective; and
  - (c) appropriate to present and anticipated future circumstances.

The National government’s reforms for local government (2010-2013) also included the establishment of a Local Government Efficiency Taskforce, and a Productivity



Commission, which respectively undertook exercises to improve the effectiveness of local government. In the Taskforce and Commission's reports, the terms 'effective' and 'effectiveness' were used extensively (Department of Internal Affairs, 2012; Local Government Act, 2012; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2012).

Following an inquiry to the Productivity Commission about the use of the term 'effectiveness', in a personal communication, the Commission clarified that effectiveness in the context of the report meant "effectiveness of regulation."

Effectiveness with which regulations are implemented... Simply stated, the term is used to describe whether the regulatory regime is achieving the desired change in behaviour envisaged by Parliament (or the Executive). For example, a reduction in air-pollution, dog attacks, or incidence of waterborne illness...

The effectiveness of regulations can be impacted by many factors... For example, poorly designed regulations are unlikely to result in the desired outcomes – that is, they will be ineffective. Similarly, if compliance is not monitored and enforced, people may not comply with a regulation, rendering it ineffective (James Soligo, Senior Advisor, Productivity Commission, Productivity Commission, 2013, January 7).

Following a similar inquiry to the Department of Internal Affairs, the Department advised that effectiveness was intended to mean the same as that which is defined in a dictionary (3, January 13).

Following their publication of local government efficiency and effectiveness stories (Office of the Auditor General, 2012), an enquiry was made to the Office of the Auditor General about what they defined effectiveness to mean. The Office stated, "the term is not defined and therefore ultimately it will be a matter for the Courts to determine as and when relevant matters come before them" (Jude Hutton, Inquiries Co-ordinator, Office of the Auditor General, personal communication, 2013, February 1).

It was clear that even within the Government's departments and that of its agencies, perceptions about local government effectiveness were complex, ambiguous, not politically neutral and assessed at an organisational level in relation to visible outcomes.

The changes and challenges that have taken place across New Zealand local government since 1989, and the complex social, political, cultural and economic environments in which local government has operated since 2002, provided the institutional foundation for New Zealand elected councillors in 2013.

The next section provides the context for women local government councillors.

## **Women Councillors**

### **Reasons women pursue local government office.**

There is a growing body of literature about women in local government, both in New Zealand and overseas, and whilst the social, cultural and political contexts of local government vary, the literature generally contends that women do not enter politics on an equal footing with men. Irwin (2009) provided an overview of women's political participation across 67 countries. At the time of the research, the average figure of women representatives in local government was 20.9%, with participation rates ranging from 1% in Turkey to 45% in Namibia (p. 3).

There is considerable research that provides information about the reasons why women enter local government. The reasons include:

- there are (on the whole) less stringent access criteria (Beall, 2009);
- there is an ability to combine the role with other activities (often in the home or community) (Ryan, Pini, & Brown, 2005);
- it can act as a springboard for national politics (Beall, 2009; Smith et al., 2011);
- local government is a place to gain skills and experience (Beall, 2009; Everett, 2009; Siebert, 2009);
- local government connects more closely to communities (Drage, 1999; Goetz, 2009; Senol, 2009);
- women are the major users of council services (Goetz, 2009);
- women participate more in their local communities (Beall, 2009; Drage, 1999; Everett, 2009; Hind, 2009);
- local government is an environment where women have an increased potential to impact resource allocation and public decisions (Everett, 2009);
- there is a greater potential to make a difference (Drage, 2000b; Rombough & Keithly, 2010); and
- the slow pace at which governance reforms have taken place at a national level, in many countries, has drawn women to governance reform at a local government level (Goetz, 2009).

Rao (2005) reflected on the different motivations between men and women pursuing political office. Rao quoted Stewart (1980), who conjectured that “men with an activist

orientation perceive local politics as a stepping stone,” whilst some women may see local politics as “a political sphere in which one can make meaningful changes” (p. 332). Drawing on research conducted by the UK Electoral Study (2004), Rao suggested that women's political participation remained impaired. Rao wrote of women’s “attenuated sense of their ability to be politically effective” (p. 326) which accounted for the continued gender gap in political participation. Rao also contended that the persistence of practical barriers, such as a lack of childcare, education and economic resources impaired women's political presence and participation.

### **The global emergence of women councillors.**

Between the late 1800s and early 1900s Australia, England, and America began electing women to local political office. The early councillors received much publicity and were successful in securing policy and service delivery changes within their communities. Dora Salter, the first woman mayor (in the USA, elected in 1887) was reported as “fully equal to the requirements of the position” which was “corroborated by all persons who based their judgement on an observation of the administration” (Billington, 1954). Grace Benny, South Australia’s first women councillor, (elected in 1919) successfully secured equality for women during divorce (Australian Local Government Association, 2010). Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and the five other women, who were elected as councillors in England in 1908, delivered many initiatives for infants, health, housing and education (Game, 2009). With the presence of these formative political women, women's gendered voice was immediately heard.

### **New Zealand’s first women councillors.**

New Zealand women achieved universal suffrage in 1893. A limited number of property-owning rate-paying women were entitled to vote in municipal elections in Otago and Nelson from 1867 (Drage, 1999, p. 83). Voting was extended throughout New Zealand in 1876 (Grimshaw, 1972, p. 16). By 1885, all women were entitled to vote in local body and hospital board elections (Devaliant, 1996). In New Zealand, the addition of women as voters was based on the belief that their inclusion would improve local government (Drage, 2000a).

Women’s pursuit of elected office closely followed the achievement of suffrage. White Ribbon (in 1893) reported that the election of women “would lead to sweeter manners [and] purer laws,” and Kate Sheppard, prominent member of the suffrage movement said, “It is desirable that women should occupy seats on all local bodies” (as cited in

Drage, 1993, p. 88). From 1893, a small number of women attained the position of councillor. However, there is little information relating to the achievements of these women (Local Government Business Group, 1993).

Early New Zealand women councillors received considerable media attention. Elizabeth Yates, the first woman mayor (Onehunga, elected in 1893), was no exception. During her office, she was the most reported person in New Zealand (Devaliant, 1996). The press reports were a mix of encouraging, negative, and misogynist representations. Yates secured major service and fiscal achievements in a very short period in political office (Devaliant, 1996; Grimshaw, 1972; Local Government Business Group, 1993), but her political term was described as being characterised by unreasonable expectations placed on her by male counterparts who felt challenged and undermined by her leadership of the council.

Drage (1993) wrote that the challenges early women councillors faced has been well reported and often “women’s substantive suggestions were squashed” (p. 85). The literature about these early councillors stated that some of the women stood down from office because of their frustration and isolation. Others were excluded for being too outspoken, too critical or too closely associated with women’s groups (Devaliant, 1996; Drage, 1993). New Zealand’s early women councillors were assessed largely by their survival in a male-dominated political environment.

### **Election of women to New Zealand local government.**

The percentage of women elected as councillors in New Zealand, since 1959 is shown in Tables 1 to 3. The most notable increase in the number of women representatives came in 1980, and then again in 1989 (following local government reorganisation).

**Table 1: Women elected as councillors 1959-1980**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Women Councillors</b>	<b>Men Councillors</b>
1959	2.6%	97.4%
1971	5.7%	94.3%
1980	14.1%	85.9%

(Drage, 2004, p. 161)

**Table 2: Women elected as councillors 1989-2010**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Regional Councillor</b>	<b>City Councillor</b>	<b>District Councillor</b>	<b>City Mayor</b>	<b>District Mayor</b>
1989	22%	35%	19%	29%	10%
1992	25%	35%	23%	27%	15%
1995	29%	33%	26%	20%	20%
1998	28%	36%	27%	27%	25%
2001	26%	39%	26%	27%	14%
2004	25%	34%	26%	25%	17%
2007	27%	37%	28%	19%	18%
2010 <sup>3</sup>	24%	35%	28%	25%	17%

(Department of Internal Affairs, 2011)

**Table 3: Women elected as councillors at the 2013 local body elections**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Regional Councillor</b>	<b>City Councillor</b>	<b>District Councillor</b>	<b>City Mayor</b>	<b>District Mayor</b>
2013 <sup>4</sup>	21%	33%	29%	30%	17%

(Robert Hickson, Principal Advisor, Research & Evaluation, Strategy and Governance, Department of Internal Affairs, personal communication, 2014, May 2)

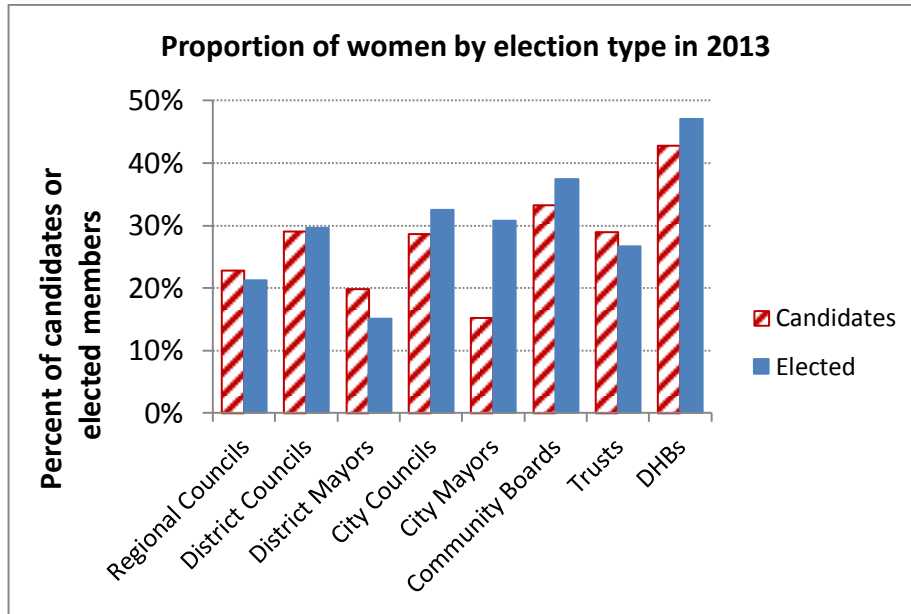
In 2010, 28.6% of councillors and mayoral positions were held by women. The 2010 local election data demonstrates that women candidates had an even chance of being elected, and were elected in the same proportion as they stood for office (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011). The 2010 election data highlights five councils that achieved gender parity of at least 50% female representation. One male-only council remained, and seven councils had less than 10% of the political representation held by women (Human Rights Commission, 2010, pp. 40-41). Women elected at the 2010 election were sampled for this study.

The provisional data from the 2013 local government elections showed that 29% of councillor and mayoral seats were held by women. The data also revealed that women candidates, in most areas, had a better than even chance of being elected.

<sup>3</sup> 27% of Auckland mayoral candidates were women, 35% of Auckland City councillors were women, and 33% of the Auckland community boards (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> Excludes Kaipara District Council, which did not hold an election.

Diagram 1: Proportion of women candidates and women elected in the 2013 local body elections.



(Robert Hickson, Principal Advisor, Research & Evaluation, Strategy and Governance, Department of Internal Affairs, personal communication, 2014, May 2).

In 2013 the number of female mayors had increased to 13 (out of 66) across New Zealand (19%)<sup>5</sup>. The number of women elected to district councils increased. The number of women councillors elected to regional councils and city councils fell (Robert Hickson, Principal Advisor, Research & Evaluation, Strategy and Governance, Department of Internal Affairs, personal communication, 2014, May 2).

As Tables 1 to 3 show, there was a significant increase in the number of women councillors following the 1989 local government reorganisation. The Local Government Act 2002 did not lead to further increases in women’s political representation. Nor has there been any further demonstrable increase in women’s political representation beyond the 29.7% achieved in 1995 (Drage, 2004, p. 161). There is little evidence to suggest why the figures have stagnated but Drage (2009) wrote of the “enduring barriers” that make the election and participation of women “even more difficult” (p. 171), and conjectured with Tremaine (2011) that the new super-city style of council will further exacerbate this. The authors predicted the “local” will be removed from local government, and less participation with the community will take place, with mayors serving as chairs of the board, which may adversely “affect... women’s relationship with local government” (p. 189).

<sup>5</sup> There was a rise in women elected as City Mayors from 23% in 2010 to 31% in 2013, but there was a fall in the number of women elected as District Mayors, from 17% in 2010 to 15% in 2013.

In summary, the stagnated levels of women local authority election candidates and women's electoral achievement since 1995 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011, 2014), coupled with the inherent maleness of local government (Drage, 2009), and the commercial and business focus of councils (Drage & Tremaine, 2011; McKinlay, 1997), are key parts of the national context for New Zealand's women local government councillors.

### **Context for the New Zealand local government councillor.**

The structural and legislative framework of New Zealand local government provides a context for the local government councillor. The general lack of politicisation is something that distinguishes the New Zealand local government model (Tremaine, 2007) from other local government systems (Australia, the UK and America for example). Outside of the main metropolitan areas councils are, overall, not politicised although there are a number of councillors, mayors and election candidates with political affiliations and prior experience in party politics (including some who participated in this study).

Mike Reid of Local Government New Zealand, writing in 1994, described the role of the councillor "as anticipating the needs of the community, not just as it is but how it could be" and a role which was "complex, multi-faceted and requiring creativity and imagination" (as cited in Tremaine, 2007, p. 81). Since this quote, councils have been subject to structural and legislative change, but the role of the councillor has not changed, and Reid's description remains valid. Despite the clarity of Reid's description, McKinlay (1997) wrote about the confusion of the role of the elected councillor. A similar ambiguity was asserted by Buck (2008) who described the role of the UK councillor as "hazy" (p. 18). Evans (2003) also suggested that New Zealand mayors required a job description. More recently, McKinlay (2010) described the role of councils, and therefore councillors, as conduits for community leadership and governance, as his expectations for the role.

The role and purpose of the New Zealand councillor in 2013 remained uncertain, particularly in light of the structural reforms and speculations about further super-city local government. Drage and Tremaine (2011) have predicted that an extension of the super-city model will distance mayors (and councillors) from the communities, and will provide "power at a distance, while not necessarily providing the power to make a difference" (p. 191). Wellington Region Local Government Review Panel (2012)

proposed a new metropolitan unitary council for the Wellington region, which could reduce the number of councillors from 107 to 28. A reduction in the number of elected representatives could pose a challenge for councillors to connect to, and therefore lead their communities, in the way presented by McKinlay (2010). With further re-focussing of the councillor role (as a consequence of a super-city type model and legislative and governance shifts) there could be a negative effect on women's ability to pursue the role of councillor, in ways that are meaningful to them, as already conjectured by Drage and Tremaine (2011) and Lacy (2010).

## **Women's Experiences as Local Government Representatives**

### **New Zealand research.**

Research about women in local government provides a useful background to this inquiry. Reflecting about the difference that women make as councillors, Tremaine said they "have a different focus and life experience... and often different motivation" (as cited in Lacy, 2010). Evans (2005) profiled the successes of women mayors in the 1990s, and stated that women mayors added value by raising the bar, looking outwards, being expert and inspired, forging relationships, collaborating and listening, finding out what works, and using knowledge and inspiration to lead their council. Tremaine (2000) claimed strong evidence of communities' preference for women mayors, because of their impressive record of accomplishment and ability to bring "a cohesive cooperative climate within the Council Chamber" (p. 247). Tremaine and Evan's theses on women's mayoral leadership found it complex, multi-faceted, volatile and situated. Leadership was reported as being dependent on the qualities of each individual as well as the environment and climate in which the individual operated.

### **Comparative research.**

A number of comparative studies were also reviewed for this research. The role and experience of women in local government in countries similar to New Zealand (Germany, the UK, Scotland, Canada, Australia and the USA) in terms of their democratic positions was appraised. (Australian Local Government Association, 2010; Brisson, 2010; A. Dunn, 2001; Government of Western Australia, 2009; Irwin, 2008; Rao, 2005; Rombough & Keithly, 2010; Ryan et al., 2005; Sawer, 2001; Siebert, 2009; Smith et al., 2011; van Hoven, 2002; Welsh & Halcli, 2003). Also appraised were the experiences of women from countries which were still democratising and reforming (Uganda, Durban, South Africa) (Beall, 2009; Goetz, 2002, 2003; Maharaj & Maharaj,



2004) and from those who had less similar local government models (India, China, Japan) (Bochel & Bochel, 2005; Everett, 2009; Howell, 2006; Wang, 2001).

Women's experience in the private sphere was articulated as important in much of the literature, as was the importance of political women as role models for other women. Many of the writings emphasised the organisational and structural barriers that influenced women's political participation. Council's operations often do not align with women's wider personal and community responsibilities, and women representatives regularly encounter discrimination, prejudice, and sexism. In some countries, it would appear that the mainstreaming of women politicians into the system has not improved the potential of the women to make a difference.

Making a difference was cited as an important determinant of success in some studies. Rombough and Keithly's (2010) study of Latino Hispanic women leaders in US local politics reported that all 40 of their sample entered politics to make a difference. Drage's (2000) comparative assessment of women in local government in 13 Asia-Pacific countries asked women about the difference their representation made. The literature did not seek to measure objectively whether making a difference could be equated as political success. In Drage's research, the women self-reported that they made a difference across the scope of local government activity - employment, community development, health, education, cultural, leisure and economic activities (p. 50). The women reported that they made a difference because of their knowledge, skills and experience, style and modes of operations, dedication, focus on change, different agenda and different approach to governance and engagement (p. 48). The women interviewed in Drage's study believed that they were accelerating the pace of change because of their political presence (p. 46), which would imply a degree of self-perceived success.

Overall, the comparative studies positively demonstrated women's increasing access to local government systems. The studies highlighted women's attraction to local government because of a desire to engage and invest in community. In general, the studies were less conclusive in demonstrating the effects of women's participation, although some research presented examples of where women have influenced policy, resource allocation and service delivery (Beall, 2009; Drage, 2000b; Maharaj & Maharaj, 2004; Rombough & Keithly, 2010; Ryan et al., 2005; Sawer, 2001).

## Chapter Summary

Human experience occurs temporally within a historical framework, and an understanding of the present requires connection to an understanding of the past (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1953/1996). For the purpose of this inquiry, the context for the women councillors' participation has been located within an interpretation of national and local political contexts from the 1970s until 2013. The context frames politics as the domain of men, which makes women's political participation challenging and interesting. Women in politics are subject to a double bind of patriarchy – by the way in which politics ordinarily operates with its masculinist culture, and the incongruity with women's historically naturalised position within society. With women's political presence still in the minority, the impact of women as political activists and within government bureaucracy as femocrats has been felt. The debate about women's descriptive representation remains strong, with women's critical acts and their role as critical actors an important means to understand the effects of their political participation.

Within New Zealand, local government has been subject to considerable transformation since 1989. The changing role and structure of local government is requiring councillors to work in different ways. Research has suggested that models of local government that focus on fewer representatives to represent more people, and business-centric modes of governance, may impede women's effective participation. Whilst women local government councillors have faced challenges, the reasons why women enter local politics, and the difference that women's political presence can make, highlight the important role that women councillors play for communities and local democracy.

Chapter 3 explores existing theories about effectiveness and what the research might mean for this inquiry regarding women councillors' interpretations of effectiveness.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review: Effectiveness

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of effectiveness. The focus of the effectiveness literature reviewed related to leadership effectiveness, based on the proposition that councillors are leaders in their own right; the nature of being politically effective; and women councillors' experiences of being effective in local government. Interpretations about the meaning of effectiveness, within this chapter, form a foundation for the inquiry's pre-understandings about what effectiveness could mean for the local government councillor. The chapter is organised as follows:

1. Introducing different theories and perspectives of effectiveness.
2. Presenting the different views about what may constitute an effective leader, with specific regard to women's leadership effectiveness.
3. The determinants of political effectiveness are explored.
4. A brief outline is given of women politicians' accounts of being effective.

### Differing Views of Effectiveness

Understanding the meaning of effectiveness is a hermeneutic process. Understanding is the means by which "we sort our way through life" wrote Grondin (2002, p. 3). Every understanding presupposes an interpretation. Grondin reflected on Gadamer's understanding of the concept of understanding, which places meaning in relation to the situation, the context of the text. Grondin also reflected that Gadamer assumed a degree of agreement of a given understanding, something that occurs through the hermeneutic conversation. And, when agreement ceases, understanding and interpretation further evolves. The development of theory about effectiveness demonstrates the hermeneutic evolution of meaning through time and context.

The words *effectiveness* and *effective* derive from the terms *effect* and *efficacy*. The *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* locates the word 'efficacy' from around 1200 and the word 'effect' from 1385, both deriving from ancient French, and meaning *to bring about, work out or accomplish* (Barnhart, 1988). The dictionary definition of 'effectiveness' is "the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result; success" (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 1990).

Whilst the literature about effectiveness is vast (across many disciplines), Eagly et al.

(1995) stated that effectiveness “should ordinarily be defined as an outcome” (p. 128). However it cannot be measured precisely, because it is influenced by so many factors, wrote Hogan et al. (1994).

Within existing literature, effectiveness has been addressed predominantly as it relates to the achievement of an outcome. Where behavioural components have been considered, these have also been addressed in relation to the attainment of goals or results. Worth’s (2002) paper on the political effectiveness of advocacy agencies provided insight into the development of effectiveness theory. Goodman and Penning’s surmised, “Effectiveness is one of the strongest and most persistent themes in the literature of organisations... [However] there is little evidence of any culmination of knowledge concerning the ... organisational characteristics of effectiveness” (as cited in Worth, 2002, p. 5).

Worth reported that the goal attainment approach dominated early effectiveness theory. As theories about effectiveness developed, the definition evolved and broadened to a systems theory approach. Etzioni (1960) advocated that systems theory was a more useful means of understanding effectiveness, and commented on the need to understand an organisation as a vehicle that could produce goals. Etzioni reported on the functionality of an organisation’s effectiveness that is to maintain itself as an ongoing organism. Connolly, Conlon, and Deutsch (1980) further advanced effectiveness theory, and claimed the concept as a “multi-constituency social construction.” They wrote, “The multiple-constituency approach to effectiveness treats both goal and systems theories as valuable, though partial, insights into the linkages between the organization's activities and its constituencies” (p. 216). Instead, they argued for a better appreciation of the complex contingencies that affect the concept of effectiveness, and argued against the “obsessional search for a single measure” (p. 216) of organisational effectiveness. Melucci (1989), writing about the effectiveness of social movements, reflected how views of effectiveness differed between the ruling elite and the broader community. The perspectival and contested nature about what effectiveness means among different groups of people with different positions and interests poses problems for the pursuit of a universal definition about what effectiveness might mean. Worth’s (2002) assessment of effectiveness theories concluded that the construction of effectiveness will “differ over time and with the values of the enveloping popular and political cultures and values of that time” (p. 17).

Effectiveness is contested, complex, and political. Waring (2011), in her review of women in politics and aid effectiveness, concluded that “effectiveness is not a politically neutral term” (p. 6):

Effectiveness is about power: it is a political process, not a technical one. It requires will, commitment, information, resources, capacity, training, ownership, transparency and accountability... It requires direct participation of gender leaders with significant experience, both from inside the agency and from the community... it is about justice, not good will. (p.7)

The hermeneutic notions of historicity, tradition and temporality are clearly embedded within the different theories and perspectives about what effectiveness means.

### **Leadership Effectiveness**

The research from Eagly et al. (1995) about leadership and gender effectiveness stated that effectiveness is “ordinarily regarded as an outcome of leaders’ behaviour, rather than a type of behaviour” (p. 128). Hogan et al. (1994) conjectured that indices of effectiveness are “hard to specify and frequently affected by factors beyond a leader’s control, but that effectiveness is the standard by which a leader should be judged” (p. 4). Perceptions and determinations about what may be construed as effective therefore appear to be contingent on interpretations of the context and relationships with others.

Yukl (2012) wrote “thousands of studies on leader behaviour and its effects have been conducted over the past half century, but the bewildering variety of behaviour constructs used for this research makes it difficult to compare and integrate the findings” (p. 66). Yukl proposed a series of leadership behaviours that his research defined as influencing the performance of teams. It is reasonable to assert that the traits defined in the taxonomy may be characteristic of attributes that may define effective leaders.

**Table 4: Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviours**

Task-oriented	Clarifying Planning Monitoring operations Problem solving
Relations-oriented	Supporting Developing Recognising Empowering
Change-oriented	Advocating change

	Envisioning change Encouraging innovation Facilitating collective learning
External	Networking External monitoring Representing

(Yukl, 2012, p. 68)

Yukl appeared to draw on a contingency theory of effectiveness. He wrote, “The relevance of each component behaviour depends on aspects of the situation, and the effect is not always positive for the primary objective or for other outcomes (p. 68). The assertion by Yukl recognises the importance of action as a basis for understanding the nature and possible meanings of effectiveness.

Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia, & Walumbwa (2011) also considered the contingency of effective leadership behaviours, in relation to a systems theory perspective. They wrote:

Local council employees viewed effective leadership as one in which aspects of effective leader attributes were “blended” to enhance organizational outcomes. This “blended leadership” concept (Collison & Collison, 2009) should be viewed as employees’ preference for leadership which only avails the best leader attributes and practices out of the myriad of “competing” leadership conceptualisations, and uses them in complementary and mutual benefiting ways. (p. 487)

The attributes of effective leaders are difficult to identify. Effective leaders require a flexible and adaptive approach (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010), and have a style that is contingent to the system, the context for the performance and the actors involved. Leadership effectiveness does not emerge as an easily measurable or static concept.

### **Women’s leadership effectiveness.**

There is no common position about what constitutes an effective style of women’s leadership, and the considerable research has offered contrasting perceptions about women's leadership effectiveness (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Appelbaum, Shapiro, Didus, Luongo, & Paz, 2013a, 2013b; Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1995; Kanter, 1977; Kaufman & Grace, 2011; Muchiri et al., 2011; Powell, 2012; Rosener, 1990; Tucker, McCarthy, & Jones, 1999). Much of the research conclusions associated “male leadership styles with instrumental, agentic or “transactional” qualities, and female leadership styles with more “communal, nurturing, and people-oriented qualities” (Appelbaum et al., 2013a, p. 52). Appelbaum et al. (2013a, 2013b) cited research which suggested that women leaders tend to be

slightly more transformational, democratic, participative and inclusive, whereas men were more autocratic and task oriented. This view corroborated Eagly and Johnson (1990) and Eagly and Chin (2010) who concluded that women generally exhibited a more interpersonal and democratic style of leadership, yet Appelbaum et al. (2013a, 2013b) commented that it is men, not women, who are more commonly rewarded for the traits of effective leadership. They quoted Sheaffer's (2011) study of leadership attributes, which stated that men are most likely to possess characteristics associated with managerial success (assertive, self-reliant, competitive, objective, forceful, ambitious, emotionally stable and self-confident), and that such assumptions have not changed over time (p. 112).

Eagly and her co-researchers have written extensively about the different nature of women's leadership effectiveness, and the barriers to women being perceived as effective leaders (Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1995). In 1995, Eagly et al. defined effectiveness in the context of "social role theory"; the theory that people behave in accordance with the culturally defined expectations of them. The authors also drew on contingency theory, suggesting that leadership effectiveness depends on the style of leading required by the particular features of the situation. They concluded that men and women may differ in their leadership effectiveness "to the extent that they have chronically different leadership styles" (p. 127).

Muchiri et al. (2011) examined perceptions about what constitutes effective leadership from a gender and positional perspective (managers and non-managers) and concluded, along with others, (Appelbaum et al., 2013a, 2013b; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly et al., 1995; Kaufman & Grace, 2011; Powell, 2012) that transformational leadership traits were more commonly identified as the traits of an effective leader. Their research also concluded that men and women perceived effective leadership differently, with women participants emphasising communication, decision-making ability, vision and leadership support as important factors that they perceived as central for an organisation's overall effectiveness. The research from Muchiri et al. did not focus on differences in leadership styles between men and women, but concluded that the different definitions among men and women may influence subsequent leadership behaviours. Muchiri et al. stated that "gender roles may influence discretionary [leadership] behaviour" (p. 486). The authors asserted that leaders "need to be attuned to the larger social, cultural tasks and interpersonal contexts" (p. 486), inferring that men and women are likely to

interpret their social contexts differently because of different historically naturalised gender roles. The study concurred with Eagly et al. (1995), who suggested that the behaviours of different people within the same organisational framework would be influenced by social norms. The findings from the research demonstrated the important influence of the wider social context and past experiences as influencing an individual's interpretations about leadership effectiveness.

The persistent challenge for women in leadership positions has been the enduring stereotypes that have limited their leadership self-efficacy (Appelbaum et al., 2013a, 2013b; Broussine & Fox, 2002; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kaufman & Grace, 2011). There is an extensive body of literature about the gendered nature of leadership perceptions. In 1990, Rosener asserted that interactive leadership was perceived as feminine and was therefore more likely to be resisted. Watson (1988), Lyness and Heilman (2006), Gill (2009), Wolverton, Bower, and Hyle (2009) each concluded that women who exhibit male behaviours or qualities are often viewed less favourably, which may impact on their potential for influence and perceptions of their effectiveness. Appelbaum et al. quoted Heilman (1983) who wrote:

To put it plainly, if female leaders behave like women, they do not fit the leader's role. If they are successful leaders, they do not fit their gender role. This means that no matter how female leaders behave, they will always be rated unfavourably. (p. 113)

More recently, Sinclair (2011) whose research highlights leadership within the context of identity construction reflected that women leaders "camouflage aspects of their gender, their children and sexualities" (p. 511). It is evident that women's leadership continues to be judged according to masculinist perceptions. Eagly and Karau (2002) wrote that, according to role congruity theory, women's perceived leadership effectiveness will be prejudiced because of the perceptions about gender roles and the different expectations of leader roles. They stated that even if there were no gender differences in effectiveness, the effect of gender assessments on leadership behaviour is relevant. They wrote, "Because the communal characteristics ascribed to women are different from the predominantly agentic characteristics ascribed to leaders, this combining would produce disadvantage for women, especially in leadership roles given more masculine definitions" (p. 586). Clearly, the nature of women's leadership is contested, and the perceptions and expectations about women's leadership are prejudiced and biased.



Broussine and Fox's (2002) research about UK local government chief executives reported a "feminine leadership style" (p. 94). Their research presented four processes which perpetuated notions of local government leadership, and negatively affected perceptions about the women chief executives. The processes were:

1. The predominance of men at senior levels;
2. Elected member prejudice when selecting a chief executive;
3. Inhibitors to women executives' effectiveness; and
4. The reinforcement of "macho" styles through the modernisation agenda (p. 96).

The study referred to the subtle and blatant ways in which organisations transmitted messages about "the proper place of women", the sexism, the disproportionate level of scrutiny on women's leadership, and the councillors' resistance to change initiated by women leaders (p. 100).

Kaufman and Grace's (2011) case study about the experiences of women who participated in governance leadership roles in grassroots organisations that were dominated by men, reported similar findings to Broussine and Fox. The study revealed persistent stereotypes and bias, strong feelings of separation and isolation, and limited potential for the women to effect change. The studies revealed how effectiveness can be difficult for women to negotiate within masculinist political environments, and corroborated the finding from Rosener (1990) that gendered leadership, exhibited by women, was more likely to be resisted.

Lyness and Heilman (2006) wrote about the double standard women have been subject to:

Lower status individuals (i.e. women) held to stricter standards and require more evidence of competence than higher status individuals (i.e. men). They are also consistent with anecdotal claims that women have to work harder to get to the same place, doing more and doing it better than men in similar positions. (p. 783)

Alexander-Snow (2010) reviewed Wolverton, Bower and Hyles' (2009) narrative study of nine women US college or university presidents which stated that "effective leaders, male or female, subscribe to similar beliefs about leadership and act more similarly than differently when they enact those roles" (p. 779). Alexander-Snow reflected about how the study of Wolverton et al. explored the double standard that existed when defining men and women as effective leaders. Alexander-Snow highlighted the significance of

the social context amongst the leaders' narratives, and wrote:

We see leadership in social context as often lonely and isolating, defined and shaped by the double standard for men and women in life choices, such as the raising of a family, finding and sustaining life partnerships, professional development and support networks (or the lack thereof). For most of these nine women presidents, it is about “fit”, for others, “challenge”, and, for all, “life balance”. Of the three, all expressed “life balance” as the most elusive; and yet essential for sustainable, effective leadership. The women understand that leadership success reflects the harmony of personal choice informed by their cultural lenses—marital status, age, professional and personal life experiences—and that of the organizational cultures of their institutions. What is illuminating are the women's selfless commitment to their institutions, their greater sense of purpose or meaning (“the most significant thing is to live a life of meaning” Wolverton, et al. [p. 121]), and to engage in continual reflection and renewal, asking such questions as: “Where am I going? What am I doing? What is the meaning of what I do? And who am I? Where do I come from? How do I own my roots? How do I use my roots to express who I am? And finally, how do I matter?” (p. 781)

The quote exemplified the tensions that some women may face when trying to negotiate the double standard of a gendered life. Specifically, how did the women endeavour to reconcile their personal lives, and interpret and give meaning to gendered experiences within their professional lives, when the contexts in which they operated required them to sustain a gendered private life, yet compromise their gendered experiences in the public domain. It highlighted the significance and importance of women's multiple identities, and the challenge that women face to develop, retain and maintain a leadership identity that does not collude with the masculinist individualistic notions of leadership that still dominate. The contradiction demonstrated a challenge for women's interpretations of their effectiveness.

Eagly et al. (1995), concurring with some previous research, stated that there was no difference between men's and women's effectiveness, although women “begin with an initial hurdle to gain legitimacy” (p. 125). They revealed equal levels of effectiveness between men and women leaders “in the aggregate, when generalized across a variety of studies in a variety of settings” (p. 138). The study did not consider whether there were different ways to be effective. Adler (1996) considered women's political leadership and concluded that women and men do not necessarily lead differently, nor do they necessarily lead the same, and what was important was the ability to effect meaningful change. It is clear that there is still a need to understand, better, the ideology and

discourse surrounding perceptions about what defines effective leadership.

Adler (1996) expressed caution with promoting a woman's leadership style, because leadership models were inherited from historic male models. Powell (2012) quoted Bem who wrote in 1978, "behaviour should have no gender." Powell refocused the statement as "leader behaviour should have no gender," and that the gender "of individuals who hold leader roles should be of little concern" (p. 135). Eagly and Chin (2010), however, perceived that women leaders are pushed towards androgynous leadership, in order to be perceived as effective, because of gender prejudice and masculinist conceptions of effective leadership. While the research does not overwhelmingly assert a distinctly different female leadership style, there is an acknowledgement that models of effective leadership are constructed from masculinist models. This has influenced the way women's leadership is perceived (Sinclair, 2014). The problem therefore remains that interpretation is a strong determinant about what constitutes effective leadership, and in order to understand whether women lead in different ways from men, research must continue to pay attention to women's leadership voices.

Assessments of leadership effectiveness are located according to context, tradition and time; they are differently observed and perceived. By listening to, and recording, the voices of women leaders, it is possible to continue to expand an understanding about what it means to be an effective woman leader.

Within this thesis, a small fraction of the available literature about leadership and women's leadership has been highlighted. Literature about women's leadership and perceptions about women's leadership has been presented because women councillors provide strategic leadership to their councils and communities. The literature reviewed has a degree of resonance to this inquiry, and has demonstrated a lack of data about effectiveness as a construct in its own right and what this may mean for research about leadership.

The literature reviewed has provided some important considerations that will be reflected upon as the stories of the councillors effectiveness are interpreted:-

1. Leadership effectiveness is largely measured according to the outcome achieved, as opposed to a type of behaviour. This assertion is mechanistic in its assumption. The councillors' stories will be reflected on in order to consider whether the goal attainment theory of effectiveness is the dominate force for the councillors

perceptions of effectiveness, or whether women councillors effectiveness is more strongly grounded in a gendered identity.

2. Women's leadership effectiveness has been perceived as more democratic and communal, women leaders have been judged in relation to the extent to which their behaviours are in accordance with socially defined expectations, yet women are equally required to moderate their gendered identities if they are to be considered effective leaders. These statements suggest that women may have a different style of effectiveness and leadership than men. Whilst this study does not engage men in the research, and cannot therefore offer comparison, the inquiry may reveal the extent of a gendered effectiveness as told by the women themselves.
3. Women leaders continue to experience barriers and bias, and can be judged unfavourably if they behave like a women, and do not fit the conceptions about what a successful leader look like, or if they behave like a man and do not fit their gender role. The assertions from the literature signals the cultural and institutional challenges that affect how women perform their leadership role, and highlight the difficulty that women leaders may face with being judged equally and fairly, as effective. The prevalence of the dominant culture may emerge as an issue that is equally relevant and significant for the women councillors.

## **Political Effectiveness**

Worth (2002) quoted Peter Drucker who, in 1997, told Forbes Magazine, “efficiency is doing the thing right and effectiveness is doing the right thing” (p. 17). But what is the right thing? As stated in the previous chapter, effectiveness in New Zealand local government appears attuned to the definition of efficiency. Political effectiveness is clearly contested - the ‘right thing’ and ‘doing the thing right’ will be contingent on the features and assessments of the situation, and the interpretations and responses of the actors involved.

### **Determinants of political effectiveness.**

In 1975, Schumaker outlined how a protest organisation could assess its policy success. In his paper about the construction of political effectiveness, Worth summarised Schumaker’s five steps to political effectiveness:

- 1) Access responsiveness (willingness to hear a concern);
- 2) Agenda responsiveness (willingness to place concerns on the agenda);
- 3) Policy responsiveness (willingness to adopt the concerns);

- 4) Output responsiveness (willingness to implement concerns); and
- 5) Impact responsiveness (degree to which external actions have alleviated the grievances of the organisation). (p. 8)

Schumaker's continuum of political effectiveness, in which 'responsiveness' or taking action was the central theme, provides a useful barometer for considering the degree to which both a political organisation and its political actors may be considered effective. The continuum of political effectiveness characterises the notions of influence, efficacy, and agency as important. Each of these concepts is now explored.

### **Influence.**

Influence as a political skill has been defined as an important requisite for effective behaviour, affecting the effectiveness of organisations as well as the perceived and actual effectiveness of individuals (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewt, 2005).

Kolodinsky, Treadway, and Ferris (2007) considered influence as a determinant of political effectiveness. Their study reconceptualised Ferris and Judge's (1991) influence effectiveness model and referred to the "what" (the tactics and methods) and the "how" (assessing the situation) of influence effectiveness. The authors stated that political skill to exert the appropriate form of influence at the right time was critical to effective political performance. When viewed from a gendered position, the theory presupposes equal access and participation within the political system, and equal consideration of the perspectives of all actors seeking to exert influence.

Influence exerted from an external source can be an equally important determinant for perceptions of political effectiveness, particularly for women. Fountaine's (2002) analysis of media framing demonstrated the influence that media reporting had on emerging political women. Fountaine reviewed research about the 1993 Canadian political leadership election debates and concluded that the gendered nature of political news, with its metaphors of war and conflict, subtly reinforced politics as a male arena, and created challenges for perceptions about women leaders' capabilities. The assessment of media coverage also suggested that women candidates ran a risk of being interpreted negatively, if their behaviours were contrary to expectations about how women should behave (Fountaine, 2002, p. 2), corroborating similar findings from the leadership research (Gill, 2009; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Watson, 1988; Wolverton et al., 2009).

Wasburn and Wasburn (2011) analysis of the media reporting of Sarah Palin's 2012 American election campaigning revealed the significance of external influence on perceptions of the potential for political influence. Reflecting on previous research, they highlighted five characteristics of media reporting that could influence perceptions of women's (potential) political effectiveness:

1. Women receive less media coverage;
2. Coverage is more trivial and pays attention to the women's appearance, lifestyle and family;
3. Women are subject to greater levels of negative reporting which challenges their capabilities;
4. Issue positions are focussed around 'women's issues', as opposed to 'men's' issues; and
5. The extent of a woman's potential influence is more likely to be questioned' (pp. 1027-1028).

The media, as a major source of "symbolic material out of which people construct their understanding and evaluation of political actors" (p. 1028), challenges a position that influence is purely a political skill. For political women, the potential for influence is subject to the masculinist assumptions that frame political participation and the political agenda.

Political influence requires an institutional foundation to have effect. Goetz (2009) wrote, "Influence is about more than numbers. It is about more than constituency presence. It is about more than political skills. It is about institutional change" (p. 7). The potential to influence institutional change requires the 'other' voice to be present to represent that interest. Whilst influence is about more than numbers, the presence of critical actors is fundamental. The potential for political women to exert influence in political office is contingent on women being present, in numbers, and in all spheres of public and political life, to change the structural foundations that dictate the nature and extent of their participation. With this, women have a greater potential to influence the public agenda and the external framing of their effectiveness in the public domain.

### **Efficacy.**

Finkel (1985), drawing on the work of Pateman (1970) and Thompson (1970), wrote that the test of participatory democracy is political efficacy, "the sense of being capable of acting effectively in the political realm" (p. 892). Finkel referred to feelings of

internal efficacy, “the component of efficacy corresponding to feelings of personal political effectiveness, or the perception that the self is capable of influencing government and politics” (p. 893).

Bandura has written extensively on conceptions and perceptions of self-efficacy, noting the importance of a person’s efficacy beliefs in enabling them to exert effort (1989), and the significance of efficacy as a motivational construct that influences activity choices. In 1995, Bandura wrote, “People strive to exercise control over events that affect their lives. By exerting influence in spheres over which they can command some control, they are better able to realize desired futures and to forestall undesired ones” (p. 1).

Bandura wrote that perceptions of self-efficacy were impacted by four key areas:

1. The mastery of activities;
2. Vicarious experiences through social models giving a sense that other similar people have succeeded;
3. Social persuasion, whereby people are told by others that they have the capability to succeed; and
4. Physiological and emotional states.

Referencing research from Bandura (1989) and others, Hoyt (2005) described three processes underlying a person’s ability to be effective:

1. Cognitive processes - the extent to which the individual focusses on the possible and the potential;
2. Affective processes - the individual’s belief that he/she could manage threats and challenges; and
3. The locus of control - the person’s overall belief that he/she had the capacity to affect a change.

Both Bandura and Hoyt signalled the importance of prior social experiences.

Assessments about the potential for self-efficacy are products of an individual’s interpretation of their experiences, and the extent of the belief that his/her actions will yield results.

### ***Political efficacy.***

Rao (2005) stated that the test of political efficacy was the proposition that “people like me can have a real influence on politics if they are prepared to get involved” (p. 327).

Kahne and Westheimer (2006), building on previous research, proposed a sense of efficacy as a key building block for civic commitment. They quoted Almond and Verba's landmark study, *The Civic Culture* (1963), which stated, "The belief in one's competence is a key political attitude. The self-confident citizen appears to be the democratic citizen... He does not merely think he can participate in politics, he is likely to be more active" (p. 289).

### **Agency.**

Political agency is correlated to political competence, to feelings of self-efficacy and confidence (Bandura, 1989, 1995, 2012; Hoyt, 2005; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Zulkosky, 2009). In 1970, Pateman wrote about the significance of participatory democracy. Reflecting on the writings of Rousseau, which stated that political participation can increase a person's freedom, and, that through such participation, citizens feel more integrated to their communities, Pateman stated, "The experience of participation in decision-making itself, and the complex totality of results to which it is seen to lead, both for the individual and for the whole political system; this experience attaches the individual to his society" (p. 27).

Finkel (1985), reflecting on the work of Pateman wrote:

As one participates in politics, one acquires political skills and perceptions of self-competence, qualities thought necessary for popular self-government and effective control over one's environment. In addition, the development of this attitude makes it more likely that individuals will participate in the future, and thus participation sets in motion a circular causal process, whereby the very qualities that are required of citizens, if the system is to work successfully, are those that participation itself determines and fosters... The more the individual citizen participates, the better he is able to do so. (p. 893)

Finkel's assessment of political agency demonstrated a strong resonance to Hoyt (2005) and Bandura's (1995) assessment of self-efficacy, and highlights how increased feelings of efficacy increase the feelings of agency. In 2012, Bandura demonstrated the interconnection between efficacy, influence, and different forms of agency:

People exercise their influence through different forms of agency rooted in corresponding types of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997, 2000). In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear on what they can control directly. However, in many spheres of functioning, people do not have direct control over conditions that affect their lives. They exercise proxy agency. This requires influencing others who have the resources, knowledge, and



means to act on their behalf to secure the outcomes they desire. People do not live their lives in social isolation. Many of the things they seek are achievable only by working together. In the exercise of collective agency, they pool their knowledge, skills, and resources and act in concert to shape their future. To do so they have to achieve unity of effort for common purpose within diverse self-interests, and distribute and coordinate subfunctions across individuals of differing competencies. The more heavily group performance depends on interdependent effort, the greater the contribution of collective efficacy to group productivity. (p. 12)

Feelings about the extent of one's political agency are correlated to the connection and engagement that a person has with their community. Agency is affected by efficacy and vice versa. In the context of this inquiry, agency is perceived as a conscious awareness about the potential of an individual's actions. Agency is a construct that can be realised individually or as part of a collective. It is temporally and historically situated. Agency assumes a capacity to act freely, but in the context of understanding effectiveness within a political context, agency will be affected by structure, those institutional arrangements and cultural patterns that influence and affect interpretation and action.

### **Structural determinants of women's political efficacy and agency**

Whilst an individual's political effectiveness is contingent on influence, efficacy, and agency, research has also highlighted the significance of structural determinants as an aid to political efficacy and agency.

Norris and Lovenduski (1995) identified three sets of factors that influenced women's efficacy and agency, once in political office:

1. Systemic factors - the formal legal framework, the number of women in the legislature, the electoral system, party systems, and general political opportunities.
2. Political factors - party ideologies and rules, the culture and organisation of parties and candidate selection processes.
3. Social factors - an individual's ability to compete in the system, including women's lower incomes, different employment, and other familial responsibilities.

In 2003, Goetz wrote about the determinants of women's political effectiveness, in non-Western and democratising cultures, and suggested that women's effectiveness depended on the extent to which women were institutionalised in the five key areas:

1. Civil society, which highlighted the strength and autonomy of a women's movement,

in its ability to challenge gender-biased conceptions of women's needs, roles, and rights.

2. Political system, through political parties and their ideologies, the relative importance of various discourses of particularity or unity, the breadth and depth of democracy, and the nature of the electoral system.
3. State, through the configuration of the executive, judiciary, legislative, military, and administrative power, and the degree to which democracy and accountability is enabled.
4. Economic market and the economic prospects and bargaining power of women.
5. The extent of social power given to the family. (p. 39)

In considering the determinants of women's political effectiveness, Goetz (2003) proposed a model similar to the 'responsiveness' model developed by Schumaker (1975). Goetz also proposed it would be realised in stages:

1. Access (opening areas up);
2. Presence (institutionalising participation in decision-making); and
3. Influence (translation of participation and engagement into tangible impacts).

Goetz concluded that structural operations act as both enabler and inhibitor to women's effectiveness, and wrote, the "voices of women will not in itself change policy or the behaviour of bureaucrats, without some changes in the norms and procedures of accountability institutions" (p. 29). Goetz posited:

If more effective interest articulation and representation were all that there was to the accountability struggle, then the focus of our concern with women's political effectiveness would be better understood... However, what is required is an understanding of the institutional arrangements that can foster effective engagement of women in the state. (p. 34)

Bochel and Bochel (2004) wrote, "There are too many situational and structural obstacles for women's concerns to gain salience and to be taken seriously if they are being promoted by token or marginalised voices" (p. 48). Waylen (2008) also defined the political and structural context as a significant factor in determining the ability of women to actualise their political effectiveness (p. 526), and referenced the ideological position of political parties as key, alongside a government's commitment to gender equality (p. 527).

The shift towards the political effectiveness of women in public office requires the institutionalised patterns of keeping women in a “subordinate position” to be challenged by the critical mass of women who can act as role models for other women and can support a shift in policy concerns (Goetz, 2009, p. 6). The “presence of women in politics readjusts the inequalities in the distribution of political values” wrote Bochel and Bochel (2004, p. 48). Increasing the number of women who hold political office remains an important determinant for political effectiveness, as does the adjustment of structural inhibitors, “it requires commitment” (Waring, 2011, p. 7).

## **Women’s Political Effectiveness**

Women's political effectiveness is understood as the ability to use ‘voice’ to politicise certain issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands to decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs, and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women's equal rights. (Goetz, 2003, p. 29)

The definition of success in the political arena is, however, “elusive; subject, among other factors, to the political perspective of the assessor” (Goetz, 2003, p. 30). Adler (1996) reflected that the challenge for women to be perceived as politically effective is their ability to overcome the prejudice they may encounter because of the male paradigm that dominates politics. She quoted Benazir Bhutto who, in 1995, said, “women who take on tough issues and stake out new territory are often on the receiving end of ignorance” (p. 155).

Perceptions about women's political effectiveness have often been measured through the lens of the dominant (male) group. Jeydel and Taylor’s (2003) study of US congresswomen’s legislative effectiveness stated:

An institution created by men will reward individuals who possess quintessentially ‘male’ qualities such as competitiveness and individualism. These ‘skills’ are very different from the female approach to law-making which, the literature has argued, is more integrative, collaborative, and consensual. (p. 19)

From a local government perspective, councillors are elected “to deliver on the promises they make to the public,” and electorates are not concerned with who performs, only with what is achieved, thus making task accomplishment a determinant of success in local government (Haidar, Reid, & Spooner, 2011, p. 466). Whilst the research from Jeydel and Taylor (2003), Wängnerud (2009) and Haidar, Reid and

Spooner (2011) challenged notions that political effectiveness may be gendered, Pearson and Dancy's (2011) study of congresswomen's speech participation identified the importance of woman's gendered presence. The inquiry revealed how the women's speech participation gave a perception of their being less outnumbered during debates. The research concluded that the women's enhanced debate and speech participation was "rooted in women's persistent under-representation," and through speech engagement, congresswomen could "give voice" to constituents, prove expertise and contribute new ideas to a policy arena (p. 911). The women's congressional participation increased the women's perceived "competence and influence" on issues beyond those that were perceived as being women's interests (p. 910). Pearson and Dancy's work confirmed the importance of the critical actor and the critical act for the women to role model, and to display influence effectiveness.

More recently, Alexander (2012) wrote of "the virtuous cycle of mutually reinforcing changes in women's empowerment as political leaders" through women's political representation and agency (p. 460). Women political leaders "achieve offices of power and influence, in part, because of the diligence with which they advance their political ideologies and the success they achieve in operationalizing these priorities" (Marshall & Mayhead, 2008, p. 186). Women's political effectiveness is visible through their negotiation of the dominant masculinist structure, their application of skill, knowledge and effort, combined with the belief that their contributions can make a difference.

### **Women's political agency.**

Women's political integration gives rise to the possibilities of women's agency (Briskin, 1989). Women's agency is key to understanding the ways in which "women endeavour to take part in the polity, and to change it" wrote McLeay (2009, p. 21). The interactions between the contexts of women's political agency (individual and collective, formal and informal) "affect and are affected by women, and their claim for voices to be heard and heeded" (p. 23). McLeay considered women's political agency, and asked about the extent New Zealand women have regarding the "opportunity to choose how to spend their lives as mothers, carers of other people, paid full-time workers, part-time workers or volunteers. How easily can they shift these roles?" (p. 21). If women's choices are limited, their political agency and efficacy, and the remit of their effectiveness, may be constrained to where they operate, and the rules and traditions which govern that participation.

Bandura (2012) reflected on the relationship between individual agency and the contribution to the collective agency; Chaney (2012) reflected on the need to better understand the role of the critical actor to the critical mass; Curtin (2008) identified the need to consider critical acts in the context within which they were being made. An understanding of the interrelationship between individual acts and a political group is an important means to understand how political effectiveness may be achieved. Individual political agency should thus be understood within the context of its contribution to, and influence from, the wider group.

The impact of a politician's agency is dependent on factors beyond skill and capability alone (Bandura, 2012). Institutional foundations for meaningful participations are required (Goetz, 2003, 2009). Hind (2009) reflected that leadership positions are often based on seniority (p. 53), and Wängnerud (2009) wrote, "being new in parliament is widely recognised as a factor that diminishes possibilities for impact" (p. 60). The attainment of leadership, or senior positions, requires a safe political seat to ensure longevity of office; professional development through strategic service; debating chamber experience; representing a party in government; and experience in intra party or political or factional machinations (Curtin, 2009, p. 180). Once the hurdles of being elected are surmounted, and the institutional and structural factors affecting women's political presence have been negotiated, women's self-efficacy and the impact of their political agency are likely to increase.

### **Impediments to women's efficacy and agency.**

Women are inhibited through gender-based divisions of labour (Harstock, 1983; Hirschmarm, 1998; Lovenduski, 2005; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Smith, 1987). Goetz (2003) reported that women's human and physical capital resource is undervalued, and gender-based divisions of labour have placed constraints on women's political participation, this accounting for women's tendency to focus their energies at a local level where their lives are more connected to local services.

Inhibitors to women's influence, efficacy and agency exist, and can be systemic and institutional (Cool, 2010; Goetz, 2003, 2009) in the following ways: socially and psychologically (sexism and social segregation) (Friesen, 2009); financially (lack of economic power) (Edwards, 2009); practically (candidate selection processes, access to resources, knowledge of the system and the rules, meeting arrangements) (Lovenduski,

2005; Sapiro, 1983; Siebert, 2009); and historically and socially naturalised through gender divisions (McLeay, 2009).

The persistent under-representation of women, and their unequal treatment once in office, have resulted in political women reporting impediments to their efficacy and agency. Waring (1985) wrote:

My colleagues attempt to dull my effectiveness by burying me under my work, submerging me in speeches, committees, letters, letters, letters. To be seen to have credibility as an advocate for women, one strategy I must have is to know more than my colleagues on a wide variety of other issues. (p. 13)

Reporting on the practical barriers women have faced in local government, Lovenduski (2005) quoted a Scottish councillor who said “they have meetings at 3 o’clock... how am I to pick the kids up from school?” (p. 56).

The inherent maleness of local government, and the masculinist cultural, political and economic structures that influence women's political participation, can impair political women’s efficacy and agency.

In summary, political effectiveness is complex, political, gendered and mediated by structure and culture. Assessments of political effectiveness are judged according to masculinist political models and systems. Women’s political effectiveness has largely been assessed according to their success within the system, and how they could negotiate their ‘otherness’ to fit in. The prevailing systems appear to limit different ways to be effective; this can be suggested from the limited institutionalisation of women's different voice into the political cultures. There is however an absence of research about whether there are the different ways and means to be politically effective to be sure of this assumption. The results from this inquiry may generate new understandings about whether there is a different way to understand what being effective means. The literature pertaining to efficacy, agency and influence signalled the significance of prior experiences and perceptions about the ‘self’. However, there are further opportunities to explore efficacy, agency and influence within the context of women’s gendered experiences and consciousness, as an aid to understanding the concept of effectiveness. Political effectiveness is clearly a complex interplay of the social, the cultural, the institutional and the structural, the past and the present, and further research is required to understand what this means to political women.

## **Political Women's Accounts of Effectiveness**

There are an increasing number of biographies and autobiographies about political women. These have begun to provide insights about their political lives. Dame Cath Tizard's memoir (2010) provided a reflection of her time as Auckland's mayor. Former US Governor for Vermont, Madeline Kunin (1994), provided an extensive account of her experiences in the state, national and international political arena. Extrapolating some accounts from the texts has begun to suggest that women's political effectiveness is gendered, conscious and complex.

Kunin wrote of her search for the "genuine political person," "the need for 'practice'" (p. 4), and how repetition gave her "grace" (p. 63). Kunin wrote proudly of "woman-centred administration." She recounted the experiences of past women, "who had to find courage to raise voices in reaction to men," but now it was "we women who spoke first" (p. 16). Kunin articulated pride when signing her first executive order "with my woman's hand and my woman's name" (p. 16). Describing the importance of being a role model, Kunin described how she found herself in a tug of war, "being pulled in one direction by my male role model and in the other by my female experience." She continued, "This is what being a role model means; giving clues to those who watch you enabling them to extract what they need for themselves" (p. 22). Kunin wrote of the importance of her networks, her female friendships and alliances and commented that by writing her own speeches she could organise her thoughts and maintain control of the message (p. 70). Kunin described her "split screen life" (p. 78), the time when work, politics and a family were all part of the juggling act.

Kunin claimed that her political agenda differed from that of male politicians, because "she had fewer commitments to the existing power structure and more in common with those who lived outside it" (p. 366). Kunin expressed an identity grounded in her gendered experience. She wrote:

My gender made me different from the start, and while the difference faded, it never went away. The precise effect was difficult to measure because boundaries blurred. It was impossible to draw a line between my womanhood and other inherited characteristics. Being a woman was part of my being, but it was difficult to say what part. (p. 353)

Tizard's reflections of herself were of being "Mrs Average Auckland: sensible, practical, cheerful" (2010, p. 149). During her time as mayor she recalled many trials that offended her "feminist principles" (p. 155): the overt sexism at official functions, the

complaints that drew reference to her ‘fancy hair do’s’ (p. 168), and the inappropriate behaviour she endured from some men with whom she had mayoral interactions. The accounts from Kunin and Tizard highlighted the importance of their historicity, the value they placed on their relationships, and their consciousness about how their gendered lives influenced their political performance.

### **The Effectiveness of Women in Local Government: Comparative Assessment**

Drage’s comparative study of political leaders in 13 Asia and Pacific countries asserted, “Women have always been an integral part of their communities and they take a very active role in village life, community organisations, towns and cities” (2000b, p. 16). Drage continued to write that women's participation in local government is often a “first step into a political decision-making arena in which real differences can be made” (p. 16). The objective of Drage’s research was to highlight the impact of women’s involvement in local government and the impact that more women might have.

Drage (2000b) found that the women made a difference through their leadership. They consciously undertook their role differently from men, and they brought a different style to their local government. In Drage’s study, participants thought that more women in local government would “accelerate the pace of change, promote collaborative styles of leadership and decision-making, broaden perspectives and move communities forward” (p. 46). Whilst this may be different from what it means to be effective, Drage’s participants self-reported areas where they made a difference:

- Factoring their knowledge of social issues, well-being and welfare of their communities into decision-making processes;
- Promoting policies and activities which strengthen communities;
- Emphasising the importance and the practice of good community communications;
- Offering a different approach to community governance: inclusive, collaborative, consultative and team based;
- Having a different agenda, and setting different priorities (from men);
- Utilising the skills they used in the home, such as mothering, mediation, goal focus, practicality and multi-tasking;
- Being dedicated and responsible, displaying spirit and leading by example;
- Stimulating and encouraging participation from other women (p. 46); and
- Being change focussed (p. 48).



Drage found that women's policy interests were more people oriented, and grounded at a community level. Some respondents suggested women's people focus (as opposed to infrastructure or structural focus), and more active engagement in their communities (in planning, communication and decision-making) meant "women actually contribute more at all levels of politics" compared to men (p. 47). Drage stated that the approach of women "ensures a more democratic and transparent form of governance" where women drew on their own experiences as the means of understanding the issues and effecting the change required (p. 47). Women drawing on their prior experiences has a strong resonance to the feminist hermeneutic approach (introduced fully in chapter 4) adopted for this inquiry. The results from Drage's research highlighted how the integration of women's personal and political selves was a basis for their perceived sense of effectiveness. Drage's research identified a different political presence amongst the women local government representatives from their male counterparts, strongly suggesting (and confirming with much of the leadership literature) that women's political effectiveness is likely to be effected differently from men's.

Goetz (2009) reported on a series of shifts that represented an advancement of women's rights, gender equality, and their representation in local government in democratising and reforming countries. She highlighted the positive shifts in women's engagement in the institutional arena of civil society mobilisation, engagement in political competition, women's impact on local government decision-making, and gender-sensitive governance reform. Goetz stated, "Women's civil society mobilisation has been one of the greatest strengths of feminist and other types of women's political activism over the past century" (p. 3). Reflecting on the scale of women's participation across the globe, Goetz declared that the million women holding seats, at any given point in Indian village councils, was starting to have a positive effect on resource allocation decisions that were benefiting poor women (p. 4). Reflecting on other high profile representation successes, Goetz wrote:

While encouraging, it can distract us from recognising that the rate of increase in women's political success remains low. At present rates, it will take a century for there to be parity in elected representative assemblies in the world. (p. 4)

The findings from the comparative research clearly signal that women's substantive representation, the critical acts from the critical actors, whilst important, significant and effective, will continue to be limited in their total effects until there are more women

politically present across all tiers of political representation, local government and its associated bureaucracies.

## **The Effectiveness of Women Mayors in New Zealand Local Government**

There is a lack of research about what effectiveness might mean for political women in New Zealand local government. However, Tremaine (2000) and Evans' (2003) research provided useful insight into what being effective might mean for New Zealand women mayors.

Evans, in her thesis, highlighted factors that the researched mayors defined as important to their role. The mayors spoke of the trading of issues to get decisions and matters resolved (p. 76); a good relationship with the chief executive (p. 78); the importance of being a spokesperson (p. 86); media profile (p. 88); needing to be more knowledgeable than the other councillors (p. 94); being a community leader (p. 101); and the ability to deliver results (p. 108). Tremaine's (2000) research suggested that a successful mayor "requires a productive relationship with both councillors and council staff, as well as maintaining the trust and approval of citizens" (p. 247) The behavioural and relational component of the mayors' practice was, in both studies, a persistent theme that contributed to their success in the job.

## **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I presented information to demonstrate the contested nature of effectiveness by reviewing existing theories of effectiveness, the notions of leadership effectiveness and the determinants and enablers of political effectiveness. From the literature reviewed, it is evident that effectiveness is broad and complex. The literature highlights the absence of a singular definition of effectiveness, and emphasises that effectiveness is a dense concept that is contested, multi-faceted, highly politicised, variously interpreted, and situated within specific contexts and times. It was evident that theories of effectiveness are gendered. Experiences and perceptions of effectiveness can be influenced by masculinist assumptions about what effective leadership looks like. Whilst much of the effectiveness theory literature is focussed on organisational outcomes and goals, the literature pertaining to women's leadership and political effectiveness reveals effectiveness as a behavioural construct that is influenced by women's social roles and past experiences. The literature also reveals that effectiveness, displayed via an individual's influence, efficacy, and agency is political and contingent

on systemic and institutional factors, which, for women are affected by masculinist traditions, perceptions, and interpretations about what being effective looks like.

Clearly, assessments and perceptions of effectiveness remain contested. To return to Grondin (2002), “Understanding, as an application, is always a challenge” (p. 46), understanding is only ever tentative. In order to understand meaning, clarity about what is to be understood is required. From a hermeneutic perspective, meanings that may be ascribed to effectiveness and being effective, remain open to new interpretations derived from new and other experiences, and new and other pre-understandings. An exploration of women councillors’ interpretations of being effective within New Zealand local government, derived from an understanding of lived experiences, offers a potential to derive new, albeit tentative, understanding about what effectiveness might mean.

Chapter 4 sets out the theoretical and methodological framework for the inquiry.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the strategies that guided this inquiry, specifically the theory of knowledge embedded in the adopted perspective, and the assumptions about how reality is constructed. The following methodological positions were adopted for the inquiry:

- Epistemology: *Constructivism* - the view that an individual's reality is constructed through their interaction with the world, and that meanings are derived from that interaction.
- Theoretical perspective: *Feminist standpoint theory* – the perspective that women's experiences are grounded in a gendered reality, and that understanding is always an interpretation of the experiences.
- Methodology: *Feminist hermeneutics* – the view that individuals make sense of the world through an understanding and interpretation of a presence derived through language, prior experience and social location.

The chapter considers each of the positions in turn.

### Constructivism

Meaning is created through our engagements in the world. Within a constructivist paradigm, knowledge and experience are positioned as realist, as actually occurring, and relativist because of the sense that each individual makes of their experience. A constructivist position states “That all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, ... is contingent on human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their worlds, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social [and historical] context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

Thomas A Schwandt (2000) wrote, “we invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience... we do not construct our interpretations in isolation, but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, languages and so forth” (as cited in Gubrium, 2006, p. 234). Individuals are “social actor[s]” wrote Gubrium (p. 232), and the social reality experienced “is not a fact in its own right, but something that is produced and communicated” (p. 234). Social reality is a process of knowledge construction and experiential referencing, based on the mutual interface between individual experience and the broader social reality.

Feminist theorists have asserted that women view and experience the world differently

from men. Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner. (1987) wrote, “The fact of difference has become inescapable” (p. 125), and quoted Millman and Kanter (1975) who wrote that an “exploration of women’s distinctive experience is an essential step to restoring the multitude of both female and male realities and interests” (p. 106). A constructivist epistemology is an important approach for this inquiry. Reconstructing knowledge involves seeking out the submerged consciousness of every-day life, illuminating its being by “clearing” what has been concealed (Heidegger, 1953/1996). An understanding of the construction and meaning of women's experience may be gleaned from a hermeneutic interpretation of the context in which it exists.

## **Feminist Theoretical Perspective**

A feminist theoretical perspective underpins this research. The position adopted for the inquiry assumes that the world is essentially patriarchal, the culture masculinist and women's lived experiences are consciously, and subconsciously constructed and interpreted from this context. Feminist research is a “critical perspective on social and political life that draws attention to the ways in which social, political and economic norms, and practices and structures, create injustices that are experienced differently or uniquely by certain groups of women” (Ackerly & True, 2010, p. 1).

There is no single feminist epistemology or “unitary discourse” (Briskin, 1989, p. 88), but the synergy in feminist research approaches is that it seeks to know the world through a gendered lens. Women’s inherited view of themselves is situated within a patriarchal hegemony that constrains them. This makes it challenging to determine whether women know in a different way from men, or have different ways of knowing, based on their experience. Dorothy Smith wrote in 1975:

Our means of knowing and speaking of ourselves and our world are written for us by men who occupy a special place in it... In learning to speak our experience and situation, we insist upon the right to begin where we are, to stand as subjects of our sentences, and to hear one another as the authoritative speakers of our experience. (as cited in Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1987, p. 103)

Riger (1992) reflecting on the work of Smith (1984), wrote that women are alienated by having to frame their experience in relation to men’s conceptual framework (p. 733). Anderson et al. (1987) stated, “when women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden identities: new experiences and new perspectives that challenge the “truths” of official accounts” (p. 104).

Feminist research remains important. “Feminism as a mode of analysis leads us to respect experiences and differences, to respect people enough to believe they are in the best possible position to make their own revolution” (Hekman, 1997, p. 343). Jaggar (2004) wrote that women suffer from exploitation and oppression because of the political economy. Anderson et al. (1987) and Harstock (1983) have each written about how women’s perspectives are distorted by the male-dominated structure of their lives and, as a result, women simultaneously conform to and oppose the conditions that construct their lives. The hegemony and material relations of the ruling class remains, and feminist political practice is needed to address women's on-going political concerns. Sawyer, writing in 2014, stated that “Feminist political science has changed greatly over the past 40 years, becoming more specialised, professionalised and internationalised,” and that it continues to be “useful to women's movements” (p. 144). Research from the standpoint of women can support an understanding of women's gendered experience, and provides a means of understanding the nature of women’s being in the world.

The reasons for discounting other feminist theories are set out below.

### ***Postmodern feminism.***

Postmodern feminism is the ultimate acceptor of diversity. There is a rejection of the essential nature of women in favour of multiple truths, multiple roles and the multiple realities of women (Olson, 1996, p. 19). Postmodern feminism offers an opportunity to articulate the complex matrix of domination that relates to the specific and individualised experiences of women. Whilst postmodernism could have been a useful frame of reference for the inquiry, it limited the ability to use gender as the primary basis for understanding the councillors’ experiences of effectiveness in local government, and to identify shared experiences that may have existed because of gendered experiences.

### ***Liberal feminism.***

Liberal feminism recognises equal opportunity as the primary focus of women's struggle. There is little emphasis on the structure of human relations, instead favouring approaches that level the playing field for women's societal participation as a basis for gender equality. Liberal feminism is individualistic in its approach, and did not offer enough opportunity to consider the relational elements of the councillors’ experiences or the impact that structural and institutional arrangements may have had on the councillors’ perceptions of effectiveness.

### ***Radical feminism.***

Radical feminism has focussed on deeply entrenched male/female division. It has provided an opportunity to understand how male-dominated societies have forced women into oppressive gender roles. Radical feminist proposals for change are embedded in separation from the male-dominated system. There is little credence given to the interdependent nature of men and women. Men and women councillors operate in a single political system. Thus, the theory did not offer enough opportunity to consider how women councillors could operate equitably alongside male councillors.

### ***Mana Wahine Māori.***

Mana Wahine Māori is an important localised New Zealand feminism. Mana Wahine Māori is defined as referring to the “authenticity, grace, and strength of Maori women as part of an indigenous community, as tangata whenua who seek to determine themselves,” and some Māori women have turned to it “to inspire political action” wrote Hayward (1993, p. 30). Whilst, the research inquiry predominantly acknowledges the Western feminist movement, Mana Wahine Māori is recognised as a body of thought that may have guided the perspectives of the Maori councillors who participated in the study.

Mana Wahine Māori is located within a distinct cultural paradigm. The constructed reality of Māori women is located through strong family and tribal kinship and genealogy, a strong relationship to the land, and to the past (whakapapa) to give meaning to the present (Binney, 2004). Historicity and interdependence are significant. “In Māori philosophy,” wrote Louisa Wall (2001):

Mana Wahine, Mana Tane and tamariki / moko form parts of the whole. [In Māori history], Mana Wahine were recognised as equal to Mana Tane not by virtue of whakapapa alone, but through their ability to ‘earn respect and loyalty by the demonstration of leadership... for the betterment of people’ (Sinclair, 1998). (p. xii)

Mana Wahine Māori emphasises Māori women's position alongside Māori men. Larner (1995) wrote, “Māori women work with all Māori people including men, a principle that sets Māori feminism apart from some other expressions of feminism” (p. 182).

### **Feminist Standpoint Theory**

The research is grounded in a feminist standpoint position; however, the journey to feminist standpoint originated from my affiliation with socialist feminism. Socialist

feminism offers a critical way of locating women's experiences in the context of capitalism (Ehrenreich, 2005). Socialist feminists agree that there is something "timeless and universal about women's oppression" (Ehrenreich, 2005, p. 73) but emphasise the different forms it takes and insist on the recognition of differences amongst women's experiences (Briskin, 1989; Ehrenreich, 2005). The socialist feminist frame would have been useful for this research because it could bring awareness to the different experiences of women councillors within New Zealand's social, political, and economic framework.

Women's individual realities, and an acceptance that women's interpretations of their realities and social world contain and reflect important truths (Geiger, 2004), coalesce with a socialist feminist intentionality to account for women's different experiences. Whilst the study embraces a "feminism of difference" (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004, p. 19), attention to each individual's experiences and perceptions was not in itself sufficient. Standpoint theorist Hirschmarm (1998) wrote, "it is not enough for feminists to theorise difference, or even marginality, for many differences are marginalised, rather we must understand how what is marginal is central to patriarchal power" (p. 86). For this reason, feminist standpoint theory was adopted.

Standpoint feminism "begins in the actualities of women's experience, and reflects the view that women occupy a social location that affords them privileged access to social phenomena" (Longino, 1993, p. 201). The goal of standpoint theory is to consider women's experiences critically in order to support learning about women's responses to oppression, as well as understanding the nature of the oppression itself (Hirschmarm, 1998, p. 75).

Dorothy Smith is credited with founding feminist standpoint theory as she looked to develop "sociology" for women. The approach sought to look at the social world from the perspectives of women in their everyday worlds, and the ways in which women socially constructed their worlds. Standpoint feminism is founded in Marxist ideology. Harstock (1983) argued that a feminist standpoint could be built from Marx's understanding of experience and has been used to challenge patriarchal thinking and theory. Standpoint feminism makes the case that because women's lives and roles in almost all societies are significantly different from men's, women hold a different type of knowledge. Through this different experience and subordination, women can see and understand the world in ways that are different from and challenging to the existing



male-biased conventional wisdom (Belenky et al., 1997; Collins, 2004; Gilligan, 1977, 1982; Harding, 2004a, 2004b; Harstock, 1983; Hekman, 1997; Hirschmarm, 1998; Hundleby, 1998; Jaggar, 2004; Longino, 1993; Smith, 1987, 1999). Standpoint theory seeks to reveal the social, as it is experienced by women, in ways that have not already been defined within the ruling relations, and aims to highlight the consciousness of what being a woman means in the context of the ruling apparatus. A standpoint approach aims to “explicitly and forthrightly” incorporate “women's ways of knowing” that have been excluded (Hundleby, 1998, p. 27).

### **Feminist standpoint theory as a basis for inquiry.**

Jaggar (2004) wrote about the importance of research from the standpoint of women; research that has the potential to “reconstruct reality” and provide for a transformation of society that cannot possibly be dreamt of “by a masculinist philosophy” (p. 65) alone. Harding (2004a) wrote that standpoint theory is a way to demonstrate “oppositional consciousness,” and that standpoint theory is inquiry which is “outside the realm of the true” (p. 2) or outside the ruling institutions and paradigms. A standpoint position seeks to look “beneath or behind the dominant sexist and androcentric ideologies... that shape the actualities of women's lives” (p. 6). The distinctive social experiences of women generate insights that are incompatible with men’s interpretations of reality. These insights provide clues to how reality might be interpreted from the standpoint of women (Jaggar, 2004). Under a “situated” paradigm of knowledge,” Jaggar wrote:

The daily experience of oppressed groups provides them with an immediate awareness of their own suffering but they do not perceive immediately the underlying causes of this suffering nor even necessarily perceive its oppression. Their understanding is obscured by both the prevailing ideology and the very structure of their lives. (p. 61)

Standpoint research can help to understand the ideological forces that support the maintenance of institutions and cultures of operation, by exploring the standpoint of the marginalised group. Viewing the world from the perspective of women as the ‘other’ provides an opportunity to examine and understand how disadvantage, suppression, or exclusion may be transformed into a different mode of knowing. Doing that can benefit the other. Hekman (1997) quoted Harstock who wrote, “Those of us who have been constituted as the other must insist on a world in which we are at the centre and not at the periphery” (p. 351).

Jaggar (2004) wrote that a standpoint of women reveals more of the universe than does the standpoint of men. Conceptualising a world experienced and interpreted by women “will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men’s lives and the whole social order” (Harding, 2004b, p. 128). This inquiry seeks to broaden understanding about one aspect of political women's worlds.

Feminist standpoint theory was the chosen theory for this inquiry because it is important for women councillors to represent their own experiences in their own words, and because of the political potential that feminist standpoint research offers to an understanding about women's presence in local government. The representation of women councillors’ voices is important to local democracy, and can provide new understandings about the constraints that women councillors face as representatives, and the opportunities that may arise from a recognition and respect for women's different voice. Research from the standpoint of women can enable us to look beyond the horizon.

### ***A different voice.***

Carol Gilligan’s (1982), *In a Different Voice* has been an important reference for this inquiry. Describing the identity formation of females, Gilligan stated that female identity is grounded in the context of on-going relationships, and the fusing of attachment, which takes place in girls’ formative years through their relationship with their mothers. The relational aspect of women’s identities guides women's place in the world, and provides an explanation for their different voice.

Women's responsibility for relationships, and their sensitivity to the voice of others, makes women's social orientation more personal than positional. Gilligan suggested that male identity is characterised by separation, individualism and autonomy - traits often ascribed to men - which are seen as marks of maturity in adulthood (resonating with the findings from the leadership research reviewed in Chapter 3). Gilligan (1982) wrote of the “unstable, morally problematic and unequal” basis of hierarchical relationships, instead favouring a “realisation that the self and the other are interdependent and that life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships” (p. 62). Gilligan defined women's capacity for mutual understanding, their attachments, and their ethic of care as markers of maturity (Gilligan, 1977, 1982, 2011), although Harding (2004a) reflected about how women's relational focus and their ethic of care had often been characterised as a “moral weakness” (p. 16).

The significance of women's attachments, as they may relate to the articulated experiences of effectiveness, is discussed in the findings and discussions chapters.

### ***Women's ways of knowing.***

Belenkey, Flinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1997) *Women's Ways of Knowing* has also been used as key reference for this research. Adopting a framework similar to Gilligan (1982), the research identified five key stages for women's development of their understanding of themselves and their realities.

1. Silence. In this stage, women experience disconnection from themselves. They strive for survival, and submit to external authority, which perpetuates the maintenance of gender inequality.
2. Received knowledge. In this stage, women believe that authoritative knowledge and truth resides with others. Women's perceptions of themselves are visioned through the expectations of others.
3. Subjective knowledge. Women in this stage become their own authorities, with knowledge emanating from them. Women's knowledge is intuitive and reflective but their lack of acknowledgement that knowledge is constructed within a broader framework can result in disconnection.
4. Procedural knowledge. This stage is characterised by two phases: (1) separate knowing, which is characterised by the rational discovery of knowledge, and a detachment of personal beliefs, and (2) connected knowing, whereby the experiences of others, combined with empathetic understanding, are used to support knowledge development.
5. Constructed knowledge. In this stage, knowledge becomes integrated. Women value their knowledge and experience alongside the knowledge and experience of others. An ethic of care and interdependence is developed.

The relevance of the states of knowing to the councillors' perceptions of their effectiveness, the women's growth and the evolution of the women's understanding is presented in the findings and discussions chapters.

### **Situated knowledge.**

Knowledge is based on experiences, and different experiences enable different perceptions of our environments and ourselves. All knowledge is situated. The meaning that is ascribed to events and experiences depends on the ways of interpreting the world,

which are framed by the discourses available to individuals and groups (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1953/1996; Leonardo, 2003). Since women are not a homogenous group, the practices, ethics, values and principles that guide individual lives require claims to “only have meaning in some particular cultural context through which the meaning of the claim is learned and relatively understood” (Harding, 2004a, p. 11).

### **Standpoint pluralism.**

Feminist standpoint theory defines knowledge as situated, perspectival and particular, rather than universal, which leads to the existence of multiple standpoints, multiple realities and multiple truths (Hekman, 1997; Hirschmarm, 1998). With the potential for a multiplicity of standpoints, Longino (1993) made the case for “standpoint pluralism” achieved through “polyphonic text that can represent layers of experience in complex social interactions” (p. 206). Smith (1987) wrote of the “potentially endless detailing of particulars” (p. 6).

Women may share a standpoint because of their gendered experiences, but “ultimately every woman is unique” (Hekman, 1997, p. 359), because women occupy more than one experiential and identity location, and personal and political identities shift and change over time and according to context. “Each standpoint [which gives rise to an identity]”, wrote Hundleby (1998), “characterises oppression differently [consciously and subconsciously] because the understanding arises out of a different experience of oppression” (p. 35). The historicity and temporal location of each woman’s being is therefore central to understanding their interpretations and perceptions about their lives.

Hirschmarm (1998) highlighted the challenge of standpoint theories attending to and embracing difference, whilst being able to hold onto the concept of woman, and retain the aspects of commonality (p. 79). Accommodating a plurality of standpoints recognises difference, specificity, and history. It recognises that processes of developing experiences may be similar (Hirschmarm, 1998; Lennon, 1995), enables reflexivity through awareness of personal and others standpoints (Lennon, 1995), and recognises the “contingencies [of oppression] that can be changed” (Hundleby, 1998, p. 32). In this way, standpoint pluralism acknowledges hermeneutic interpretation of individual experiences.

### **Women's relation to the world.**

Smith (1987) wrote, “Society has organised for women a different relation to the world”

(p. 68), and that “women's lives have been outside or subordinate to the ruling apparatus” (p. 109). Women dominate occupation of the world of social relations, which, because of historically socialised divisions of labour, facilitate men’s occupation of the ruling relations and the ruling apparatus (Harstock, 1983; Smith, 1987). “Women's traditional work is more entrenched in nature... men’s traditional work is concerned with the generalities of culture and only with people at a distance”, wrote Hundleby (1998, p. 29). Harstock (1983) stated, “men and women grow up with different personalities affected by different boundary experiences, differently constructed and experienced inner and outer worlds, and preoccupations with different relational issues” (p. 295). The result is that women conceive the world differently (Jaggar, 2004).

According to Smith (1999), the ruling apparatus and relations, which are the domains of men, “regulates, organises, governs and otherwise controls our societies... It is pervasive and pervasively interconnected. It is a mode of organising society” (p. 49). Buker (1990) wrote:

Women often experience life as personal connections to other persons and to the fundamental processes of life – preparing food, writing books, maintaining shelter, caring for clothing, rearing the young and doing social analysis. These are, of course, the processes on which every society depends even though they may go unnoticed. (p. 30)

In this way, the experience of the woman councillor cannot be separated from history and tradition.

### **Exclusion of women's voices.**

Smith (1987) wrote, “The biases beginning from the experience of men enter in all kinds of ways into our thinking” (p. 21). Whether conscious of it or not, women's experience in the world and their interpretation of that experience have been influenced by male constructions of life. Smith wrote:

Men have authority, in the world of thought, as members of a social category and not as individuals. Authority is a form of power that is a distinctive capacity to get things done in words... When we speak of authority, we are speaking of what makes what one person says count. Men are invested with authority as individuals, not because they have individual special competencies or expertise, but because men appear as representative of the power and authority of the institutional structures that govern society. Their authority as individuals in actual situations of action is generated by social organisation. They do not

appear as themselves alone. They are those whose words count, both for each other and for those who are not members of this category. (p. 30)

A consequence is the female voice is not afforded with authority in making “ideological forms” (p. 31) of thought, and the influence of women's voices may not be heard in male-dominated environments.

Smith (1987) and Harding (2004a) have written about the exclusion of women's voices from public arenas. Smith commented that where women have spoken, their voice has either been ignored or appropriated by men. Smith reflected on Strodbeck and Mann's study of jury deliberations. The jury reports highlighted the men's domination of conversation, which resulted in women becoming members of the audience. Smith described it as a “game in which there are more presences than players” (p. 32). Harding (2004a) questioned whether women as a group could “produce knowledge that have their questions answered about nature and social relations” (p. 4) because of the limited attention given to their voice.

### ***The outsider within.***

Hundelby (1998) wrote “marginalised people are never wholly outsiders, but outsiders within, having both to negotiate their own environment - worlds, bound by class, gender, race, sexuality, geography, religion and so forth, and to negotiate the environments of those in the dominant position” (p. 28). A standpoint from the perspective of a marginalised people has the potential to see political relationships more clearly and to reveal conditions that are hard to recognise from a central political position. Collins (2004) articulated the power of the outsider within by reference to bell hooks (*Life in Kentucky*), who said, “Living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out... we understood both” (p. 104). Women in local politics occupy the position of being an outsider within, which makes listening to their interpretations of their experiences particularly important for an improved understanding of local government.

Adopting a feminist standpoint, as described in this chapter, can move a social inquiry into “political hermeneutics” (Baker, 1990, p. 25). Hermeneutics needs a political focus to fulfil its commitment for the construction of a just political community, wrote Baker. “Without politics, hermeneutics loses its purpose which is to address practical social problems” (p. 25).

In summary, a feminist standpoint position recognises the complex and unique position of each woman. As a theoretical basis for this inquiry, it begins and ends in the reality of women's experiences and prior understandings. It recognises that women's experience and position in the world is political. It recognises that women are in a privileged position to reveal important truths about their experiences within a masculinist political world, and without listening to those voices there is little opportunity for the polity to change for the betterment of all. Feminist standpoint does not seek to compartmentalise the experience of women, and reduce them to an archetype, it embraces pluralism and diversity and the historical and temporal location of each women's experience. In this way, feminist standpoint is a hermeneutic approach grounded in interpretation and understanding, thus selected as the theoretical position for this inquiry.

The next section introduces the concept of phenomenology and the feminist hermeneutic approach adopted for the inquiry.

### **Hermeneutic Methodology**

Hermeneutics is the practice of interpretation. The philosophy is borne out of the study of scripture and, later, law. The fundamental features of hermeneutics are to make sense of the world through an understanding of a presence in the world as derived through speech, language, prior experience and social location, as in “fusing horizons through the hermeneutic circle, where understanding is circular” (Maggs-Rapport, 2001, p. 378). Hermeneutic interpretation is important because meaning is important, particularly when the meaning is hard to understand. Hermeneutic interpretation is therefore wholly congruent with feminist research.

Baker (1990) described three phases of a hermeneutic inquiry:

- 1) A pre-understanding of the social and historical context, and the research question generated from the understanding;
- 2) Developing explanations that speak to the research question; and
- 3) Forming new understanding that provides an answer to the question, and possible solutions.

The principles have been followed for this inquiry. Throughout chapters 2 to 4, key considerations that arose from the existing literature have been highlighted. In chapters 6 to 9, conceptual connections between the existing literature and the women's empirical data have been made to provide a basis for the interpretations and understandings that

have been developed. Chapter 10 synthesises the new understandings, as a basis to recognise potential future opportunities.

There is a close association between hermeneutics and phenomenology. Whilst phenomenology is concerned with the description of lived experience, hermeneutics is concerned with providing an interpretation of that experience. Edmund Husserl [1859-1939] is considered the founder of phenomenology. However, it is important to acknowledge the much longer tradition of hermeneutics. Friedrich Schleiermacher [1768-1834] has been recognised as the father of modern hermeneutics.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is grounded in a philosophy of language, as the means to construe meaning about experience. William Dilthey [1833-1911] is identified as an important modern hermeneutist, who identified the significance of interpretation, and framed it as an art, not a science (Forster, n. d.).

The next section introduces Husserl's phenomenological reductionism as a basis for understanding hermeneutic methodology, and then highlights the key hermeneutic notions developed by Martin Heidegger [1889-1976] and Hans-Georg Gadamer [1900–2002]. Lastly, the section introduces the critical hermeneutic approach of Jürgen Habermas, as an entry point to understand the feminist hermeneutic frame, and then the hermeneutic interpretivist approach adopted for this inquiry, which is influenced by thinking from Paul Ricoeur.

The hermeneutic philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer were developed amidst a critical political period. With the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* (2014), the debate about his association with Hitler and anti-Semitism has renewed (Inwood, 2014; Oltermann, 2014). Whilst the depth of his associations with Nazism, and the level of influence the association had on his philosophy, is contested amongst Heideggerians, there is agreement that he was sympathetic to National Socialism. Gadamer was also to accommodate himself to National Socialism, and briefly Communism during the 1930s and 1940s, although his biographer Grondin (2003) declared him as neither a Nazi nor Communist. Habermas was equally influenced by Nazi Germany, growing up as a member of the Hitler Youth, and in a family sympathetic to the national socialist teachings. As a philosopher, Habermas more vociferously challenged National Socialism than either Heidegger or Gadamer had. Whilst there is a strong debate about what the philosophers' encounters with Nazism and in some cases Communism mean



for their work, the reflection I wish to highlight in this thesis is the importance of locating philosophical thinking within the political context, the personal historicity and pre-existing consciousness that frames each person's interpretive lens.

### **Phenomenological reductionism.**

For Husserl, the aim of phenomenology was to describe lived experience, and how the world was constituted and experienced, through a descriptive, detached analysis of consciousness in which objects are constituted. Husserl introduced the idea of the lived experience and saw "experience as the ultimate ground and meaning of knowledge" (Koch, 1995, p. 828). For Husserl, facts were subjective accomplishments imbued with meaning and shaped through intentional human action. "Bracketing," the setting aside of knowledge and suspending judgment about phenomena, was necessary in order that the phenomena could be described without the interference of the researcher's preconceived assumptions (Koch, 1995).

Husserlian phenomenological reductionism, with its focus on understanding the world as phenomenon through the expressions described by participants, (Dowling, 2007) does not acknowledge pre-understandings, influences of power, structure, authority or gender being interpreted beyond that which is described by participants. Husserlian phenomenology was, therefore, not considered congruent with the feminist standpoint adopted for this inquiry.

### **Ontological hermeneutics.**

Martin Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics (Heidegger, 1953/1996) attempted to understand the relationship between the person and the world, and proposed that people were not separate from the world, or spectators describing what they observed, but "beings in amongst and inseparable from a world of being" (Magee, 1987, p. 258). Heidegger argued that being in the world could only be understood in relation to all other things in the world. Dasein was the term Heidegger assigned to connote being in the world. Historicity was fundamental to Heidegger's understanding of being in the world, and understanding cannot be gleaned without an appreciation of past experience. According to Heidegger, life is situated within activities and relationships that are meaningful, and being in the world means understanding is derived through lived experience. Being in the world is situated, time specific and temporal. Heidegger wrote that the understanding of 'being' is understood in every-day experiences, and is subject to transformation and new meaning over time, as people adapt to life through new

interpretations of experience. Heidegger believed it was possible to derive a commonality of understanding, based on an interpretation of experience from different cultural or social perspectives. The possibility of a shared understanding of experience resonates with a feminist standpoint position, by providing an opportunity to recognise the significance of gendered historicity.

Heidegger reflected that humans are always in the process of creating meanings from situations in which they are involved. Understanding the nature of being takes place through interpretation and by uncovering the nature of the phenomenon as it relates to the broader context. The process by which Heidegger (1953/1996) sought to reach this understanding was within the 'hermeneutic circle', the circle of interpretation. The hermeneutic circle is the dialectic movement between the whole text and its component parts (Koch, 1996). There is a relation of parts to the whole, in which the parts receive meaning from the whole and the whole receives sense from the parts so that the recursive movement from whole to parts to whole becomes the hermeneutic circle.

### **Philosophical hermeneutics.**

Hans-Georg Gadamer is recognised as a central figure in contemporary hermeneutic philosophy. The philosophy of Gadamer, as described in the 1989 publication of *Truth and Method* has been used as the key hermeneutic theory for this inquiry. Gadamer extended the work of Heidegger with a greater focus on language as the mode for interpretation (Byrne, 1998). "Language," asserted Gadamer, "is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a world at all" (1989, p. 443). The process of dialogue supports self-understanding by allowing interpretations to be referenced alongside the experiences and interpretations of the other, thus improving the overall knowledge and awareness of Dasein (Freeman, 2007).

Gadamer (1989) suggested that an objective knowledge of reality was not possible as all persons are situated in a reality they have interpreted through language and experience. Like Heidegger, Gadamer suggested that it was not necessary or even possible to bracket prior knowledge, values, interests and understandings. He introduced the notion of prejudice to explain the pre-understandings researchers bring to their work. Pre-understandings are a product of cultural, political and social standpoints and positions. They evolve and change over time, and, through their acknowledgements, the interpretive frame of a research inquiry can be more easily explicated. Gadamer derived the concept of a "historically effected consciousness," the notion that all people are

embedded in and shaped by history. Gadamer's hermeneutic circle was the "fusion of horizons." The horizon is "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 302). The fusion takes place through an interpretation of multiple horizons, and through the clarification of the interpretive conditions, understanding takes place (Koch, 1996). Gadamer highlighted a circularity of interpretation, in which understanding was "realised in the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter," thus emphasising the ontological structure of understanding (Kinsella, 2006).

Within the discussions and findings chapters (6 to 9), there is a significant interplay between the hermeneutic philosophy, the feminist standpoints, the participants' voices and the researcher's pre-understandings as a means of contextualising the multiple horizons. The thesis is a partnership between the dialogues of the different actors, congruent with a philosophical hermeneutic approach.

### **Critical hermeneutics.**

Jürgen Habermas' critical hermeneutics adds a process of suspicion to hermeneutic interpretation. During the process of interpretation, a critical lens can uncover hegemonic meanings that may have distorted or hidden the aspects of lived experience. Embedded in a critical hermeneutic approach is the suspicion about how meaning is constructed. Leonardo (2003) wrote:

First, there is nothing common sensical about the obvious. Common sense is a long process of naturalising knowledge that is inherently historical and ideological... Ideological hegemony is established at the level of common sense in order to persuade people away from questioning certain social relations and the social order they produce. Second, human nature is a myth that lulls people into accepting as natural, that which is social. (p. 346)

Whilst the foundation of phenomenological and hermeneutic thought is male, its evolution with a critical lens has supported it to become more relevant, as a methodology congruent for feminist research. Critical hermeneutics, from a feminist perspective, recognises that much of what we have come to accept as truth has been constructed by the economically privileged, white, heterosexual male; those who occupy a position from outside the group may not be served by their perspectives. A critical approach to hermeneutic interpretation can expose the assumptions of women's being in the world.

## **Feminist hermeneutics**

A feminist hermeneutic inquiry has an emancipatory potential; it seeks to uncover power relations as they relate to gendered experiences. Women's subjective experience is valued, and each experience and interpretation of that experience is recognised as unique and contributes insights about women's lived experiences.

The focus of a feminist hermeneutic reflection is to examine what is told within stories, "with a view to understand the forces and conditions that shape particular experiences and delineate the boundaries of individual or collective agency, voice, identity and reflexivity" (Pitre et al., 2013, p. 119). Bowles (1984) reflected on the hermeneutic circle as a common position within feminism:

There is no such thing as a 'detached', 'neutral' or 'objective' place to stand when we know something. We are always speaking from a 'prejudiced' (in the sense of prejudgement) and 'interested' and 'evaluative' posture. This is the circle that we are intimately (personally, socially, historically) involved with what we claim to know. (p. 187)

Bowles continued, "feminist thought, precisely because it acknowledges and asserts in 'prejudices', must, from the hermeneutical perspective, be judged as one of the only theoretical postures which holds good claim to intellectual integrity and sophistication" (p. 187).

Warnke (1993) wrote of the opportunity for feminism to recognise the hermeneutic conversation as a means to "emphasise the interpretive dimensions of difference" (p. 81). Buker (1990) wrote, "Feminism can rescue hermeneutics from its open system and give it a political project with enough variety to accommodate multiple layers of interpretation, but with enough direction to assert itself as a force of social transformation" (p. 27).

Unlike postmodern feminist approaches, with their emphasis on reductionism, a hermeneutic conversation allows gender to be considered as a social construction understood in ontological terms. The dialectical intersection between a feminist standpoint and hermeneutic interpretation is a strong reason for combining the approaches. Warnke (1993) wrote:

In its interpretive guise, and in its recognition of the diversity of interpretive perspectives, a hermeneutic feminism not only confirms postmodern feminism's concern with difference but also argues for its

importance for all forms of critical social and political thought. A hermeneutic feminism recognizes the interpretive status of our understanding of our norms and social practices, and it therefore encourages the open conversation in which we can develop ourselves and our traditions through our differences. In order to acknowledge and learn from diversity, however, we need not deconstruct the category of woman as some postmodern feminism seems to do. Instead, we can recognize the social and historical dimensions of the category and begin to articulate the plurality of feminisms to which it gives rise. Nor need we conflate truth and power. A hermeneutic feminism does not equate all forms of understanding with repressive discursive regimes. Rather, it recognizes the partial and perspectival character of understanding and, hence, works to eliminate the constraints of repression and exclusion from the domain of interpretive debate. (p. 93)

Leonardo (2003) described the hermeneutic approach of Ricoeur in a way that highlighted its congruence with a feminist theoretic perspective. “Lived experiences,” he wrote, “may be private in the sense that the subject feels them in unique ways, but this is made public through meaning” (p. 340). Leonardo quoted Ricoeur who, in 1976, wrote, “My experiences cannot directly become your experience... Yet nevertheless something passes from me to you... This something is not the experience as experienced, as lived remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public” (p. 340). Leonardo continued, “Hermeneutics neither privatizes nor co-opts the Other’s experience.” It is however a “means of appropriating the world of the other” in concrete terms (p. 340). In this sense a feminist hermeneutic approach supports a fusion of horizons that may contribute to a different kind of social and political order.

In summary, the literature reviewed has shown the relevance of a feminist hermeneutic approach to the inquiry about women councillors’ effectiveness. The contested literature about effectiveness and the political and cultural context for women's political participation demonstrates that understanding what it means to be effective is a challenging endeavour, without engaging in a conversation with those people whose understanding it is we seek to understand. The aims of this inquiry are not simply to describe the lived experiences of the women councillors. Indeed, as a researcher my position is that it is not possible to be detached from the broader and deeper context that gives meaning and sense to individual experience. For this reason, the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer guide the focus of this inquiry; the position that an understanding of experience derives from the past, and the interdependence of the multiple contexts and actors, their prejudices and horizons. Congruent with a feminist inquiry, which seeks to understand women's experiences within a masculinist context

Habermas' critical hermeneutics provides an additional lens that can aid understanding of the hegemonic discourse that prevails in the political context, and what this means for the women's understandings of their experiences. The dialectical conversation between feminism and hermeneutics brings together the 'public' and the 'private' aspects of women's consciousness, and gives meaning and understanding to their experiences and the political context in which they are operating.

### **Hermeneutic interpretivism**

The ontological perspective of interpretivism is that reality is a social construct and is highly dependent on the context. Interpretation is at the heart of the hermeneutic approach. Within an interpretive paradigm, a greater understanding about how people interact with the world, and experience their environment, is sought. Hermeneutic interpretation supports an understanding of experiences through a focus on understanding and meaning within a linguistic, cultural and historical context (Kinsella, 2006). Hermeneutic interpretation acknowledges pluralism, honours uniqueness, and respects the temporal nature of texts and their interpretations. It is a fundamental basis by which individuals can make sense of their world. Hermeneutic interpretation is congruent with feminist standpoint theory, precisely because both value the situated understanding of an individual's interpretation of their experiences, and each approach recognise that, through a respect for the interpretation of others, an understanding of the phenomena improves.

Central to hermeneutics is the interpretive dialogue with past experience, perspective, culture and language. Language is the central means by which we communicate our experience and is interpretive in its own right. Language speaks to us, as we speak to it. Woven amongst the language, and its expressions of experience, is an individual's pre-understandings and prejudices, shaped by past experience and influencing the nature of future experiences. The textual meaning of experience emerges through a hermeneutic dialogue, which takes place amongst the multiple components that constitute experience.

### **Interpreting lived experiences.**

The realm of meaning is an activity, which acts to establish or recognise relationships and connections that constitute an experience. The meaning of acts within the context of a culture of accumulated meanings will shift and change over time (Grondin, 2002).

A research inquiry focussed on the production of meaning can provide descriptions of the possible structures and forms of the various meaning systems for an individual or group. Accounts of lived experience do not simply articulate what is known; they are a means of articulating knowing that is derived from the interpretation of past experience and social contexts. The meaning created by individuals reflects the way in which they interpret and construct the context of their being. The meaning represents a narrative truth, not an absolute truth; they offer a “glittering fragment of a reality,” wrote Daya and Lau (2007, p. 2).

“As constructivist scholars we are not dealing with the objective realm of influence and outcome but rather with the subjective experiences and construction of such forces as they are manifested”, wrote Lieblich, Zilber, and Tuval-Mashiach (2008, p. 613). Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach and Lieblich (2008), in a separate work, explored the contexts that could give meaning to women’s experience. They reflected about how women's lives and identities were complex and multiple, and knowing “which context will be especially relevant and revealing cannot be pre-determined” (p. 1049). The act of contextualisation is dynamic.

People shift from one context to another, and situate stories and their identity according to the experience that is being told. Zilber et al. (2008) reflected on the construction of stories, and wrote how stories are constructed in relation to the “social sphere”, the “position within it” and according to the “cultural stock of stories and local social conventions available to them” (p. 1048). Zilber et al. identified the instability of contexts, stating them as in constant flux, being continually shaped and re-shaped with each experience. Interpretations of experience take places through an act of “contextualisation,” in which “specific markers” give form and placement to the experience (Zilber et al., 2008, p. 1049). Hermeneutic interpretation is therefore always situated and tentative.

### **A Feminist Hermeneutic Interpretive Framework**

Ricoeur (1991) distinguished between two forms of hermeneutic interpretation that could support the movement from text to meaning: hermeneutics of faith and hermeneutics of suspicion. Both were considered useful for this inquiry.

Josselson (2004) stated that hermeneutic of faith can be allied to the Husserlian notion of phenomenology, whereby the participants are the persons best suited to make sense

of their subjective experiences. The process is thus one of reporting the essence of the phenomenon. In contrast, the hermeneutics of suspicion suggests that stories told conceal a deeper meaning, and only through an interpretive effort to look beyond, behind and beneath the text is understanding of the phenomenon possible. Josselson (2004) acknowledged Ricoeur's reflection on their differences and equal validity, and suggested that a dialectic between the two is possible:

While the hermeneutics of restoration [faith] takes the thematics of consciousness – of intentionality, subjectivity and meaning-making – as its object of study, the hermeneutics of demystification [suspicion] dispossesses consciousness, viewed as a site of self-deception and illusion, as the center of human meaning-making and substitutes interpretation for the lost meanings... While the hermeneutics of demystification may be grounded in the archaeology of the person – the submerged and disguised wellsprings of action, the hermeneutics of restoration may be focussed on the teleology of life – the hopes, desires, intentions and beliefs that frame the sense of the future. Demystification thus may serve the analysis of the structuralization of the past while a hermeneutics of restoration captures the representation of the future. Both forms of interpretation tenuously meet in an effort to understand the ever-shifting present. (pp. 20-21)

### **Hermeneutics of faith.**

A hermeneutic of faith has resonance with gendered centred feminist research. Much feminist research is grounded in the representation and authority of women's voices, and a hermeneutic of faith advocates that researchers report what the participants say, that their sense of subjective experience and meaning-making reflects their interpreted reality (Josselson, 2004; Koch, 1999). The meaning derived from the text is taken at face value, and the participants experience is explored from their subjective understanding about their constructed nature of their lives. Ricoeur (1970), quoted by Josselson, wrote, "The imprint of this faith is a care of concern for the object and a wish to describe it and not reduce it" (p. 6). Josselson also reflected on a position articulated by Habermas, who stated that during an interview process "people clarify who they are or what they want to be" (p. 7). The essence of this approach is through a recursive approach to the whole, and the parts, to decode meanings with little distortion to the essence of the told story. Pitre et al. (2013) reflected that from a critical feminist perspective a hermeneutic of faith allow participants to highlight their successes and challenges, their choices made as a result of the intersection of past experience and present circumstances. From a research perspective, such stories may reveal individual beliefs about a participant's self-efficacy and agency.



An important component of a hermeneutic of faith is via the conduct of the research interview, and the representation of the participants' voices. Developing a framework that allows participants to reflect on their journey, and the social and historical context of their experience, will manifest in stories that allow research participants opportunities for meaning-making, and can support the researcher to honour the integrity of the authentic voice.

### **Hermeneutics of suspicion.**

The process of critical hermeneutic interpretation seeks to bring to consciousness and examine socially and politically constructed notions of power, authority, injustice and inequity. Critical hermeneutic interpretation can help to uncover the way in which the patriarchal tradition operates to create meaning for women local government councillors. A hermeneutic of suspicion is a critical interpretive approach, congruent with a feminist standpoint position, and is a frame of interpretation that can support an understanding of the historical and social foundations of the women's subjective experience. Josselson (2004) wrote, "The interpretive effort is to tear away the masks and illusions of consciousness, to move beyond the materiality of life to the underlying psychic or social processes that are its foundation" (p. 13). This inquiry does not support the notion that a hermeneutic of suspicion is focussed on uncovering false consciousness. Application of a hermeneutic of suspicion can reveal the insidious ways that structure, inequality and power become taken for granted assumptions about life (Riessman, 2008), the significance of gendered historicity, the contextualising features and conditions of the stories (Pitre et al., 2013) and that which may be concealed because it is foundational and not readily available to conscious experience (Josselson, 2004; Koch, 1999). A hermeneutic of suspicion supports a 'horizon of understanding' that is particularly suited to a study of women's experience, where women are still constituted as the other, and the embeddedness of a political patriarchal hegemony obscures women's interpretations of their experience.

The way in which the hermeneutic of suspicion has been used alongside the hermeneutic of faith is through the research inquiry's grounding in feminist standpoint position. The researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the text, from a feminist standpoint perspective, allowed the recollections of effectiveness to be framed as part of a broader social and political framework which may have gone beyond the participants' intentions or understanding.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the framework and guiding principles for the research, and provided a rationale for the methodological choices made. The chapter presents feminist standpoint theory and feminist hermeneutics as congruent methodological choices for the inquiry. Via the constructivist epistemological position adopted for the inquiry, the author has asserted that the meaning of being in the world is constructed from an individual's interrelationships, experience and knowledge of their world. The epistemological position is congruent with feminist standpoint theory, because women's constructed meanings of their reality are influenced by the gendered nature of experiences within the social, cultural, political and economic spheres of their lives. A means by which understanding of women's experiences can be gleaned is through a feminist hermeneutic interpretation of their texts, in which the participants' past experiences can be used as a basis for understanding the meanings they ascribe to their present realities.

Evidence of methodological congruence is a priority in thesis research. Methodological congruence is the fit between the component parts that make up the research, the research problem and question, the research question and method, and the method, data handling and analysis (Cove, Meadows, & Thurston, 2008). The next chapter outlines the research process, and presents the means by which methodological congruence has been achieved between the strategy for the inquiry and the choice of methods.

## Chapter 5: Research Process

This chapter outlines the research process used for the inquiry. A feminist hermeneutic method was used to explore the phenomenon of women councillors' experiences of effectiveness in New Zealand local government. Stories were gathered from 25 women councillors, and their narrative transcripts provided the main data source for the inquiry. Transcripts were interpreted hermeneutically to explore the councillors' meanings about what it means to be effective. The chapter is organised as follows:

1. The ethical considerations for the research are highlighted.
2. The process for sampling and the recruitment of participants is presented.
3. The interview approach for the inquiry is set out.
4. The development and evolution of the research questions are presented, accompanied by an evaluation of the pilot interview process.
5. An overview of the research interview process is presented.
6. The methods for analysing and interpreting the participant transcripts are shown.
7. The approach towards rigour and robustness is detailed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations have remained central to the research inquiry throughout the entire process. Considering the ethics of feminist research, Patai (1991) wrote:

Accepting the insight that the personal is political... the model of a distanced, controlled and ostensibly neutral interview has been replaced with that of sisterhood – an engaged and sympathetic interaction between two individuals united by the fact of gender oppression. (p. 143)

My individual pre-understanding was that gendered issues were central to the women councillors' experiences and perceptions of effectiveness. The standpoint was not disclosed to the research participants. My feminist standpoint is evident through my chosen methodology, the selection of literature and analysis of the data, but I was careful not to impose my ideological position on the participants during the research interview and subsequent interactions, as this may have influenced the stories the participants chose to tell.

### **Conflict of interest.**

Throughout the research, I held the position of a Policy Analyst at the New Plymouth

District Council. The employment was fully disclosed to participants prior to their agreement to participate in the research. Participants were advised that the research was not being conducted on behalf of, or in connection to, the New Plymouth District Council. No woman councillor from the New Plymouth District Council was invited to participate in the research.

### **Cultural sensitivity.**

Hale (1991) addressed the dominance of western feminist pedagogy in research, and commented that narrators may identify themselves as a feminist or woman in ways that are different from the researcher (p. 127). I assumed this to be the case, as I entered the fieldwork stage of the inquiry.

The Treaty of Waitangi was acknowledged as the founding document of New Zealand, and its principles were embedded within the research inquiry.

### **Partnership.**

Partnership was addressed by engaging in a process, which included, and was relevant to the women councillors, and was underpinned by mutual respect, informed consent and consultation<sup>6</sup>. Prior to each of the interviews, conversations were held, and time was taken, to talk and provide information about the research, including the aims of the study, protocols, expectations of the participants, and of the interview, and overall research processes. The purpose of the preparatory communications was for the participants to trust and feel comfortable with the role and integrity of the researcher in facilitating the process, and to feel safe to participate. Participant relationships were supported by clear communications and written information which clearly set out roles, expectations, processes and timeframes, as well as returning the crafted narratives to participants. Throughout the inquiry I maintained a dialogue with the participants, informing them about the progress of the thesis.

### **Protection.**

Protection was addressed through confidentiality, protecting against harm, the avoidance of coercion and deceit, and a respect for and awareness of the cultural differences that existed between narrator and researcher. The privacy of participants was protected by only collecting personal data that was required for communication with the

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<sup>6</sup> Following consultation with the Local Government New Zealand Maori Councillor committee in September 2011, the group have given their support and endorsement to the research approach.

participants. No demographic data that could be used to identify the participants was collected.

The issue of power was an important consideration for the researcher. The relative power of both councillor and researcher did serve as a balance to one another, although this was not assumed. The power of the participant was secured through their consent, their control over the information they chose to share, and their voluntary participation in the process. The feminist intentionality underpinning the research supported a respect for the different and unique experiences of each participant.

### ***Participation.***

Participation was addressed through the inclusive sampling criteria, minimising the barriers to participation, and the voluntary process where participants had a right to withdraw themselves and their information at any stage of the research. Good faith between the participant and the researcher was achieved by the full disclosure of the research aims, by the open and respectful dialogue, and by sharing each participant's data. All participants received an audio copy of their interview, and a copy of their narrative, as they related to the focus of the inquiry. This sifting process was congruent with the method described by van Manen (1997). When participants received their audio file and crafted narrative, they were given the opportunity to withdraw information, provide additional information, clarifications or corrections. It was important to maintain the centrality of the participant in the process. Research participants received a small gift as a token and recognition of their participation.

### **Consent.**

All participants freely gave their consent in writing. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw themselves and their data at any point during the research, and their right to control the information they chose to tell (King & Horrocks, 2010; Thorne, 2008). All participants signed the AUT consent form (Appendix A) which conforms to the Privacy Act 1993 and the Official Information Act 1982, and to all standards and expectations of AUTECH (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee).

### **Anonymity.**

The potential pool of women who were available for the research was relatively small, so anonymity was a key consideration. Women were not sampled according to identifiable demographics. All women entered the research as women councillors, and

were advised that the study would focus on their experiences as councillors. Data which may have identified the participants or their councils has either not been used or has only been used to provide general explanations. Pseudonyms were given to all participants and are used throughout the thesis.

### **Avoidance of harm.**

Harm was mitigated by transparent honest communications, assurances of anonymity and adherence to the right of the participants to be in control of their participation. It was clear during the pilot interviews that the use of a narrative interview opened up the participants to revealing personal data, beyond what the participant might have expected to share, so the research participants were made fully aware of this via the participant's information sheet (Appendix B) and the pre-interview conversations. The research did not intend to cause harm or discomfort to the participants but emotional displays did emerge from some participants as they shared their stories. Where this occurred, I allowed the participant to continue sharing their story, uninterrupted, and when there was an appropriate pause in the conversation, I acknowledged the feelings, and asked whether the participant would like to take a break. In all but one case, the councillors were happy to continue without a short break. Where the break was taken, new verbal consent was gained prior to the recommencement of the interview.

### **Speaking for others.**

The issue of voice was a particularly important consideration in this inquiry. Blaufuss (2007) explored the tension associated with the process of academic writing and the enactments of power in the process of narration. Blaufuss wrote of the power of the researcher in being able to select "one narrative" to present as an academic thesis, and how the construction of the single narrative, with a PhD thesis:

Narrows the ability to present multiple truths and narratives, various narratives that had been part of what felt like an extensive conversation, as told and lived in the field. While exercising power in constructing the narrative, this same power is yet again subject to the exertion of different power structures, as the narrative travels to become part of a (geo)political and ideological battle that exists regarding [the subject]. (p. 14)

Blaufuss also wrote of the effect of positionality, which would "determine the access to and participation in certain narratives but not others" (p. 18). The feminist hermeneutic approach adopted for this inquiry has led to choices being made regarding the selection

of some stories over others, because they served to represent the focus of the research inquiry better than others did. The choices made have also been influenced by the researcher's pre-understanding and philosophical standpoint.

Alcoff (2008) wrote of the strong, yet contested, position that speaking for others "is arrogant, vain, unethical and politically illegitimate" (p. 484). Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson, and Spence (2008) wrote of the hermeneutic responsibility to "listen in a manner that seeks to understand the meaning of what is said and to respond with thinking that provokes and engages" (p. 1396). In order to counter the risks associated with speaking for others, "thick descriptions, vignettes and illustrations" have been used to demonstrate how research conclusions have been made, and to ensure the participants' voices remained strong within the presentation of the data (Ackerly & True, 2010; Clarke, 1999; King & Horrocks, 2010; Riessman, 2008; Walker, 1996).

Ethical approval was received from AUTECH in March 2012 (Appendix C).

## **Sampling and Participant Recruitment**

Purposive sampling is the targeting of a sample. It is not intended to be representative; its purpose is to sample a specific cohort as it relates to a study inquiry. It is typically employed in narrative research (Ackerly & True, 2010), and has often been used in feminist-influenced hermeneutic research (Dunn, 2009; Noy, 2008; Weaver, 2001; Whitehead, 2004; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Purposive sampling was employed for this inquiry. The participant sample was limited to women who held the position of local government councillor, at the 2010 elections, within North Island councils.

The participants were restricted to the North Island for cost, time and the smaller numbers of women councillors within the South Island councils. Controlling the sample selection in relation to broader demographic characteristics was discounted, to avoid prejudicing the opportunity for any councillor to express an interest in participating.

Initially consideration was given to actively sampling Māori, Pacific Island and Asian women councillors, but the small numbers of women not identifying as New Zealand European (13%) in the last available candidate sample (Research and Evaluation Services, 2008, p. 17) meant there was a greater potential for the women to be identified. The same consideration was given to sampling by age. In 2007, only 12% of councillors identified themselves as under 45 years (Research and Evaluation Services, 2008, p. 15). Again, this was discounted to protect the councillors' identities.

At the 2010 election, only seven of the mayors elected were women, so a decision was taken to exclude mayors from the sample.

As the researcher was an employee of the New Plymouth District Council, at the time of the research, the women councillors from the authority were not invited to participate.

The total number of North Island councillors at the 2010 elections, excluding the seven women mayors and the four New Plymouth District Council councillors available to sample, was 163 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011).

**Table 5: Total available research sample based on the women councillors elected to North Island councils in the 2010 local body elections**

<b>Elected Council Position</b>	<b>Positions (N)</b>	<b>Total candidates (N)</b>	<b>Women candidates (N)</b>	<b>Women candidates (%)</b>	<b>Women elected (N)</b>	<b>Women elected (%)</b>
<b>Auckland councillor</b>	20	101	32	32%	7	35%
<b>City Councillor</b>	98	268	86	32%	35	35%
<b>District Councillor</b>	345	736	229	31%	104	32%
<b>Regional Councillor</b>	78	179	43	24%%	21	27%%
<b>Total</b>					(167)	163

(Department of Internal Affairs, 2011)

### **Recruitment of participants.**

King and Horrocks (2010) wrote that the use of a “gatekeeper” was good practice, when sampling research participants. They suggest that the person or organisation selected needs to have a good working knowledge of the sector and its people (p. 31). They wrote, “If the participants are coming through a known and trusted colleague, people are more likely to give proper consideration to the request to participate” (p. 32). Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) agreed to act in the role of gatekeeper. LGNZ is the main advocacy and support body for New Zealand local government and elected councillors, and is a trusted and credible organisation. LGNZ have also performed the gatekeeper role for other local government researchers.



Local Government New Zealand emailed a recruitment advertisement (Appendix D) and a recruitment information sheet (Appendix E) to the 163 councillors in April 2012. Expressions of interest to participate in the research were sent to the research supervisor.

**Research participants.**

King and Horrocks (2010) suggested 15 to 20 participants as the ideal number for qualitative research interviews, although Riessman (2008) suggested that it was possible to use a lesser or greater number. Thirty-three women councillors expressed an initial interest to participate and 25 women councillors eventually took part in the research.

The participating women councillors came from 20 different councils across all tiers of local government and throughout the North Island. The breakdown of participating councillors and council types is set out below:

**Table 6: Research participants**

Number of councillors by tier	Number of councillors by LGNZ council group classification	Number of councillors by LGNZ council zone area
3 - Regional Council	3 – Regional	5 - Zone 1 (Northland / Auckland)
5 – City / Metropolitan Council	5 – City / Metropolitan	7 - Zone 2 (Bay Of Plenty / Waikato / Gisborne)
17 - District Council	14 – Provincial	9 - Zone 3 (Taranaki / Hawkes Bay / Manawatu – Wanganui)
	3 – Rural	4 - Zone 4 (Wellington)

The next section describes the interviewing approach and processes.

**A Feminist Hermeneutic Approach to Interviewing**

The type of interviewing selected should be determined by the nature of the inquiry and the question under research (van Manen, 1997). Hermeneutic interviewing recognises the interpretative character of our locatedness in the world, and the particular social, historical and cultural context (Buker, 1990). Narrative interviewing recognises the three-dimensional narrative space -past, present and future - (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which is equally consistent with a hermeneutic inquiry.

A semi-structured narrative interview was selected as the most appropriate method to uncover themes that may relate to the phenomenon. A “situational interview” (Flick, 1998), also known as “episodic interview[s]” (King & Horrocks, 2010; Riessman, 1993)

was used as a focus for the women to provide storied accounts of their experiences and perceptions of effectiveness as local government councillors. The structure of the questions, and interviewing, allowed a “chronicle” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of stories to be gathered. Walker (2011) presented a similar hermeneutic approach where questions were organised under a list of topics that related to the research phenomenon. The approach adopted is compatible with the ontological and distinctive features of narrative interviewing within a hermeneutic framework in the following ways:

- The interviews focussed on the elicitation of storied accounts of lived experience; and
- The participants were provided with the flexibility to generate order and connect experiences in ways that were meaningful for them.

Women's experiences exist within the socio-historical and cultural context of their lives and are shaped by the discursive frameworks available to them. Providing a place for women to foreground particular descriptions and interpretation amongst the other possibilities makes feminist hermeneutic research a political endeavour in which women's experiences can be presented in their historical and cultural context (McKenzie, 2000).

A feminist hermeneutic approach to interviewing can provide a vital entry point for “examining the interaction between the individual and society in the construction of society” (Personal Narrative Group, 1989, p. 5). The power of the research process is providing opportunities for women to tell their stories “as fully, completely and honestly as they desire” (Anderson et al., 1987, p. 113), and where the women are acknowledged as the experts of their experiences. As a researcher, through open questioning and a progressive interview structure, I aimed to facilitate the conversations in a way that allowed the councillors to reflect on their perceptions and experiences of effectiveness, and share only those stories they chose to tell.

Hermeneutic interviewing requires balance and consciousness. Walker (2011) and Smythe et al. (2008) reflected on the need to balance structure (retaining focus on the topic of inquiry) with openness (allowing the participant to find their way through the phenomenon). Smythe et al. (2008) and Andrews (2007) respectfully reflected on hermeneutic interviewing and narrative interviewing, noting the complexity of the processes and arguing that attentive, engaged listening would allow the researcher to be

exposed to new possibilities and frameworks of meaning. The combination of narrative and hermeneutic interview principles was an effective method to draw upon for this inquiry.

The next section describes the evolution of the research questions and provides a reflection on the pilot interviews.

## **Interview Questions**

When constructing the interview questions, Patton's typology of qualitative questions was used as a reference guide. The typology is congruent with the feminist hermeneutic interviewing because of its focus on eliciting information about:

- a person's experience and behaviour,
- opinions and values; and
- The participant's feelings (as cited in King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 37).

The episodic interview approach allowed opportunities for the participants to focus on storied accounts of their experiences and perspectives of effectiveness. The interview framework (Appendix F) provided opportunity for the councillors to make sense of their experiences of being effective through recollections that looked to the past, the present and the future. The interview framework was used as a guide that supported navigation through three key interview stages:-

1. The participants general understandings about what effectiveness could mean and the past experiences which influenced that understanding (their historicity).
2. The stories of lived experience of effectiveness (the weaving of the social, political, personal and public pre-understandings and horizons).
3. The participants' reflections about the significance of their gendered lives and what this meant for their effectiveness (the gendered horizon).

The interview format was used as a guide. Whilst each participant answered all the questions, the form and structure of the interviews was flexible to respect and accommodate conversations that took place with each councillor.

## **Pilot Interviews**

Prior to the research interview, three pilot interviews were conducted, in March 2012. The pilot process was an important part of the research inquiry, and provided the

opportunity to cement the focus for the research and make decisions about the interview questions to ensure that they aligned to the core purpose of the research. The data that emerged from the pilot interviews has not been included in the study.

Each pilot participant was known to me and had held the position of local government councillor. The interviews ranged from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. The different interview lengths were a reflection of the changes I made to the questions in each interview, and the researcher's style of interviewing. In the first interview, I asked very few probing questions; in the second one, the participant suggested that I should have interrupted more to keep her on track. In the third interview, which had the most questions, the participant talked more broadly than the first two participants had done.

A number of general reflections emerged from the pilot interviews. The participants all entered local office after the 1989 local government reorganisation. Participants reflected that local government had changed, and suggested that gender was not an issue in the same way as it had been when they entered office. I wondered if their views were because of the length of their experience and the depth of their knowledge; the benefit of hindsight and reflection; the personalities, or if they were situated within the context of a society that has ever-changing positions about gender. I reflected about whether there would be a difference of perception about the significance of gender among councillors of different ages and with varying levels of experience. Each of the participants held senior positions within their councils, and I wondered if seniority or positionality would influence the stories told. Each participant commented on their age and cited this, alongside their gender, as important. The women spoke of the work, the sacrifices, the loneliness, the compromises they made and the healing time they needed when they left office. Each woman felt that being a councillor was particularly tough for younger women.

The preliminary observations and reflections I made in the pilot interview phase about age, experience and seniority all emerged in the research interviews, even though they were not specifically asked about. I may have been actively or subconsciously seeking out the issues, but the stories corroborated their importance to the individual councillors. Following on from the pilot interviews, I considered recruiting participants according to time in office, age and positions held. I rejected this idea, in favour of allowing all councillors an equal opportunity to participate. A broad sample of councillors was part of entering into the unknown, and allowing new possibilities to

emerge.

### ***Evolution of interview questions.***

In the second interview, I asked (because the first participant spoke about the men in her political life) whether the councillor could describe the effectiveness of male councillors. She said, "I can only talk about myself," but suggested asking "if there was a difference between how the effectiveness of male and female councillors is perceived," which would leave the question open for the respondent to determine how they wished to answer it. In the third interview, I asked, "would your effectiveness be described differently if you were a male councillor?" The third participant reflected that age, political persuasion and gender influence how people are perceived. After reflecting on the various permeations of this question, I opted to ask about different perceptions of the effectiveness of male and female councillors.

After recalling stories of effectiveness, the second participant commented that it was easier for her to talk about the times when she was ineffective. I had not planned to ask about ineffectiveness, but did in the third interview. When reflecting on the inclusion of the ineffectiveness question for the research interviews, I opted to exclude this question. Whilst the inclusion of a question that related to ineffectiveness would support a hermeneutic interpretation of effectiveness, through the application of a hermeneutics of suspicion, it was difficult to identify where the question would fit, and how to proceed after this question. A focus on ineffectiveness could change the mood of the interview, and I felt it might be difficult to recover a positive interview afterwards. Heidegger (1953/1996) reflected that an understanding of being can be obtained when there is an awareness about the absence of a thing. He used the analogy of the lost pocketknife, stating that its loss is a basis for understanding its existence. Only when it has vanished can understanding be gained about its value. I treated the consideration of ineffectiveness in the same way. As a researcher, I was open to the participants exploring their experiences of ineffectiveness, and resolved to allow ineffectiveness to emerge from the women's reflections, as determined by them.

During the course of the first interview, I added a question about the enablers of effectiveness. This was further refined in the third interview. In this interview, following the added question, I asked whether anything hindered the councillor's ability to be effective. After the interview I considered the use of other words such as impede, hampered, undermined. While this question yielded some interesting information, as

with the question about ineffectiveness, I resolved to steer away from negative questions, and allow the participants to identify any impediments if they wished.

Whilst driving to the third interview I was thinking about turning points, and I included a question about whether there was a watershed moment that led to the councillor feeling effective. The question worked well with the pilot participant, and it was a question that carried through to the research interviews. However, the answers to the question were limited during the field work stage of the inquiry.

Following the questions, which asked the councillors to recall events where they were effective, and to recall their reflections of the meaning and feelings associated with the event, I asked, “Why did you tell this story?” The pilot participants said that it was a hard question to answer. It was difficult for people to know why the particular story emerged. The question was subsequently changed to “Why was this story important to you?”

During the reflection at the end of the interviews, one participant thought that the section of the interview that asked for stories of effectiveness felt repetitive (I had probed for three). In an attempt to reflect a journey, the questions were changed to “the first time,” “a significant time” and “a recent time” the councillor felt effective.

A particularly difficult question for the councillors to answer was how others would perceive their effectiveness. The councillors said that they found it hard to talk about how others would define their effectiveness, and said it was also difficult for the councillors to place themselves objectively in the minds of others. They also said that it was also not possible for there to be universal agreement about how they were perceived. I opted to remove this question, and keep the questions focussed on the councillors’ actual experiences and self-perceptions of their experiences.

The councillors were asked if they had specific responsibilities as women councillors. Each participant thought they did. The second participant suggested amending the question to say “additional responsibilities.” The addition of these words was an important representation of the difference the councillor perceived about the responsibilities between men and women councillors. I continued to reflect on this part of the interview, and decided to ask participants to recall a time when being a woman councillor was important. The questions were asked at the end of the interview, when the women felt most at ease.

The penultimate question in the pilot interviews was, “What would you tell the next generation of women councillors about how to be an effective councillor?” The first participant suggested changing this to, “How would you tell the next generation of women councillors to be an effective woman councillor?” The amended question was used for the second interview, and for the third interview it was further amended to, “How can the next generation of women councillors be effective in their role?” The question still felt slightly verbose, so following a discussion with the research supervisors the question was amended as follows: “What suggestions for effective practice would you give to the next generation of women councillors?”

## **Research Interviews**

All the participants were interviewed by the researcher. Twenty-one of the interviews took place face to face, with the researcher travelling to the councillors’ local authority area. Three interviews took place as telephone interviews, and one interview was conducted on Skype. Four interviews could not be conducted face to face because of two cancelled flights, the need to re-schedule an appointment at short notice and personal circumstances. The interviews were conducted between June and August 2012.

The interviews ranged in length. The shortest was 23 minutes and the longest interview was one hour and 40 minutes (both face-to-face interviews). Ten interviews ranged between one hour and 100 minutes; eight interviews ranged between 45 minutes and one hour; six interviews ranged between 30 minutes and 45 minutes, and one interview was conducted in less than 30 minutes.

## **Recording and Transcription of Interviews**

Each interview was audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. Retaining ownership of the texts throughout the process was an action that encourages “entry into the hermeneutic circle properly” (Clarke, 1999, p. 365). Each of the participants was sent an audio file of the interview conversation, and, following the transcription of the interviews, a crafted narrative. The narrative was crafted from the transcripts (Caelli, 2001), drawing on those aspects of the conversation that related to the research inquiry. Each councillor received a copy of their narrative in draft form, and offered the opportunity to provide amendments. Examples of two participant narratives is shown at Appendix G. This first stage of the analysis process supported van Manen’s (1997) position, which encourages researchers to know the texts well by reading, rereading and writing the story in the researcher’s own words as a means of beginning to explain and

understand what has been heard from the participants. Clarke (1999) also commented on the importance of the process, to increase knowledge of the participant texts and to aid the researcher's reflective processes.

### **Analysing Data from a Feminist Hermeneutic Perspective**

Understanding is an adventure and, like any adventure, is dangerous. Just because it is not satisfied with simply wanting to register what is there or said there, but goes back to our guiding interests and questions, one has to concede that the hermeneutic experience has a far less degree of certainty than that attained by the methods of the natural sciences. But when one realises that understanding is an adventure, this implies that it affords unique opportunities as well. It is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with our selves. (Gadamer, 1981, pp. 109-110)

Meanings of the councillors' experiences, and perceptions of being effective, were explicated through a feminist hermeneutic interpretive process, whereby understanding was located within the broader social, cultural and political contexts. Clarke (1999) wrote that the purpose of the hermeneutic interpretive stage is to understand what has been learnt from the story, and to present the interpretation through clusters of significant parts or stories.

Personal narratives are complex. Because of their complexity, many readings of narrative texts are possible, and the layers of interpretation are variable. Each analytical approach provides a different way of knowing a phenomenon, and each leads to different insights (Riessman, 2008, p. 12).

The primary function of the data analysis was the documentation of differences by attending to the particular, and not the generation of data that was generalisable or transferable to other settings. The interpretive process embraced subjectivity and adopted the position that there are "many socially negotiated meanings of reality... [and] multiple interpretations of the same reality are possible" (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2008, p. 45). However, analogical findings did emerge. These provided insight into the historical, social and culturally constructed nature of the women councillors' experiences.

Analysis is an iterative process of reading data, constructing an interpretation or argument, rereading data and reconstructing an interpretation or argument (Ackerly &



True, 2010). Hermeneutic analysis allows for understanding to emerge through the “circling discipline of reading, writing, talking, mulling, re-reading, re-writing and keeping new insights in play” (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1393).

Hermeneutically, the researcher’s pre-understandings are central to the interpretation of a text. Researchers view texts from their own standpoint (Blaufuss, 2007), as well as interpreting from the theoretical basis which underpins the research. It is therefore important to identify how texts are analysed, and the assumptions that guided the analysis. Stories can be represented in different ways, and the narrator conveys participants’ stories in a way that signifies how the researcher wishes the stories to be represented. Byrne (1998) quoted Maguire who said:

To be engaged in a conversation with a text is to bring one’s prejudices into play. On the basis of one’s prejudices, one is able to understand the content of what the text says. The reader is engaged from a definite point of view and is only able to understand the content of the text from this perspective. (p. 969)

The analysis of text from a feminist perspective can give rise to contradiction. Borland (2004) commented that we seek to empower women by valuing their perspectives, whilst we, as researchers, “hold an explicitly political vision of the structural conditions that lead to particular social behaviours, a vision that... many of us may not see as valid” (p. 523). Borland wrote, even though you are speaking with women, do not “assume a likeness of mind where there [may be], in fact [,] difference” (p. 530).

Anderson and Jack (1991) wrote, “The process of analysis should be subordinated to the process of listening” (p. 15) and Smythe et al. (2008) reflected that listening involves exposing oneself to new possibilities and frameworks of meaning. Hermeneutic interpretation can support the emergence of new insights. Hermeneutics analysis requires an attention to themes, terms, descriptions, idioms, cultures and relationships that build or illuminate theories, wrote Van Manen (1990). Smythe et al. (2008) and Andrews (2007) highlighted that there is never an endpoint from data, and the texts will continue to change their meanings over time. There is, however, a point at which the analysis stops.

The processes used to analyse the participants’ texts are presented in the next section.

## **Processes of Analysis**

Themes, as they are identified in hermeneutic interpretation, reflect “something we wish

to point the reader towards,” wrote Smythe et al. (2008, p. 1392). Themes reveal significant aspects of the phenomenon, as derived from the narratives. The process of hermeneutic interpretation requires the texts to be viewed, reflected upon, organised, synthesised and reorganised again until the meanings associated with the phenomenon emerge (Koch, 1999; van Manen, 1997). van Manen (1997) wrote, “A true reflection of lived experience is a thoughtful, reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance” (p. 32). The understanding and knowledge gained can be described as tacit knowledge, constructed through lived experience, and learnt in contexts.

Based on the Heideggerian interpretive tradition, D. Dunn (2009) described the seven-stage process Diekmann and Allen (1989) developed to hermeneutically interpret texts. The five stages that guided the processes used in this inquiry were:

1. Transcription of data, and reading of the whole text, to obtain an overall understanding of the texts.
2. Following a rereading of the text production of individual narratives for each participant, and the development of preliminary categories.
3. Further examination of transcripts, exploring for similarities and differences among the group of texts.
4. Identification of relational themes that reflect shared practice and common meanings.
5. Data examined for the emergence of constitutive patterns that link the themes and illuminate a shared meaning of the data.

The core principle of hermeneutic interpretation is that understanding is achieved by “a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 77). Within this inquiry the meaning of the experiences of effectiveness were reflected upon alongside the broader contexts and experiences shared by the participants. The texts were also reflected upon in relation to existing literature and theoretical understanding. Understanding, therefore, was emergent and of a circular nature.

### **A feminist hermeneutic analysis.**

A feminist analysis focuses on both the interpretation of the content and its juxtaposition in the larger socio-political context. It is an interpretative process, involving the analysis

of the text and the assumptions and standpoint of the researcher. Through the hermeneutics of faith and hermeneutics of suspicion, the researcher was drawn into a process of thinking, and revealing the underlying messages from the text, even where the participants may have been unaware of the aspects.

Pitre et al. (2013) described their double hermeneutic process whereby the hermeneutics of faith, contextualisation, critical analysis and feminist perspective (combined with a narrative analysis) intersected to provide understanding. Whilst the process of analysis was somewhat different in this inquiry, attention to the dialogic connection between feminist standpoint theory, and the hermeneutics of faith and suspicion (described in the previous chapter) were achieved through interpretive analysis. Both the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion are present in the thesis, with a recursive movement between “giving voice” and decoding meaning as the avenue for understanding what it means to be effective as a woman councillor.

### **Language as a medium for analysis.**

Hermeneutic understanding takes place through an interpretation of language and language is the medium by which the world and its historicity are understood (Kinsella, 2006). An exploration of women’s “language and the meanings women use to articulate their own experience leads to an awareness of the social forces and the ideas affecting them (Anderson et al., 1989, p. 115). From a hermeneutic perspective, “focussing on language reveals that telling one’s story and finding one’s own voice are fundamental political acts,” linguistic expressions are the way in which reality is created, interpreted and understood, an argument central to hermeneutic philosophy (Baker, 1990, p. 32).

Whilst an analysis of language was not undertaken in the way that a narrative interpretation might be, through the women's expressions there was an opportunity to find a common language amongst texts (Kinsella, 2006). Kinsella wrote about the opportunity to adopt a range of voices as a means of fostering a conversation between texts. The councillors’ linguistic expressions were taken as a hermeneutic assumption, as a means to understanding participants’ explanations and provide a basis for researcher interpretation. In this way, language was both situated and contextual.

### **Organisation of data.**

Through a process of hermeneutic thinking, a basis to organise and present the data emerged. Patterns of meaning were shown, through the recursive interpretive process.

The organising principle of thematic analysis was drawn upon, because “theme gives control and order to our research and writing” (van Manen, 1997, p. 79). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question. From a hermeneutic standpoint, thematic understanding is not governed by strict rules it is a “free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 79).

Van Manen (1997) reflected on the concept of theme. The basis of van Manen’s understanding about the meaning of themes in phenomenological inquiry has been applied to this inquiry in the following ways:

1. Themes provide a basis to make sense of something, to ask of its significance and its meaning.
2. Themes are an interpretive tool to aid reflection; they offer opportunities to consider different understandings and meanings.
3. Theme identification supports discovery and disclosure about the essence of a phenomenon or experience; and understanding about the ‘why’ as it relates to the experience and the meaning of the experience.
4. Theme is the organising means to ‘give shape’ to get to the meaning and understanding of the phenomenon.

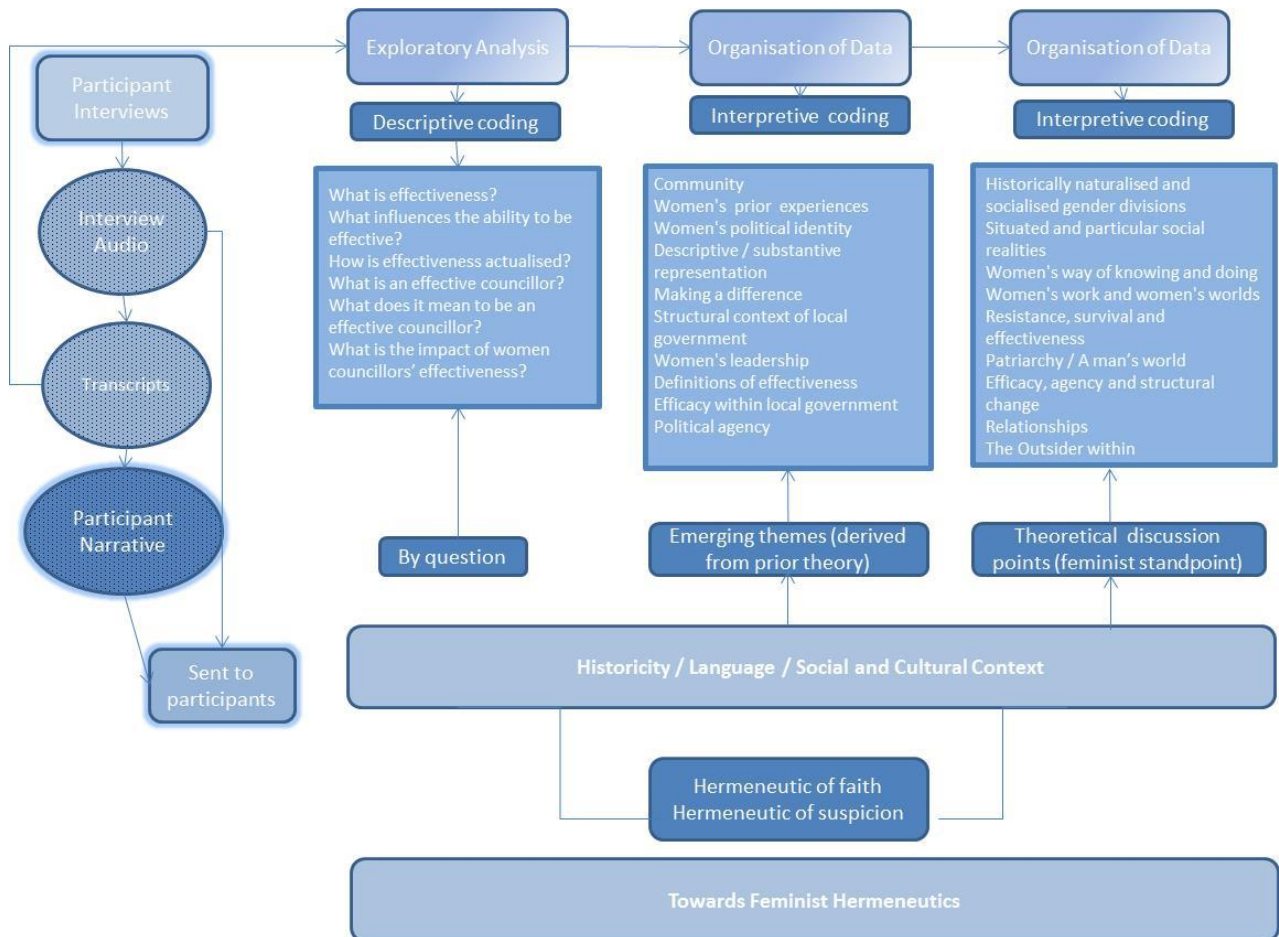
Thematic analysis was used as a reference point because it could enable a strong reference between the texts and prior theory, and provided a basis to “stay tuned” to the participant and the phenomenon under inquiry, and allow a structuring of the shared experience (Clarke, 1999; van Manen, 1997). The process of analysis was interpretive, and the organisation of data used in this inquiry was guided by the thematic frame set out by King and Horrocks, (2010, pp. 153-158).

- 1 Descriptive coding – reading and highlighting relevant material, defining descriptive codes, re-reading and refining of codes.
- 2 Interpretative coding – clustering of descriptive codes, interpreting meaning of clusters in relation to the research question, applying interpretive codes to the full data set.
- 3 Theme identification – deriving key themes from the data set as a whole by considering interpretive themes from a theoretical and pragmatic stance.

## Analytic roadmap.

Diagram 2 presents a visual description of the analysis process that shaped the organisation of the discussions and findings. Whilst the diagram represents a linear approach to the analysis and interpretation of the texts, in reality there was the recursive movement so often talked about in hermeneutic inquiries.

**Diagram 2: Visual representation of analysis techniques employed**



As an entry point of the data, the texts were first organised and tabulated according to the interview questions. This did not prove as useful as expected, at the outset of the research. The data was then re-organised according to the themes that emerged from the review of literature. A third layer of organisation was placed on the texts, derived from the major discussion areas from the feminist standpoint literature. The organisation of the data, in this way, allowed the texts to take some organisational form. The texts were cross-tabulated using the descriptive and interpretative organisation, which resulted in several hundreds of sheets of paper. It was difficult to work with the paper this way. The text excerpts were reconsidered, as they were categorised by both the emerging themes and theoretical discussion points, and then organised according to eight major theme

areas. Extracts that show how the data was organised and analysed are shown at Appendix H. These eight areas were effectiveness (and ineffectiveness), personal determinants of effectiveness, people and place, structural determinants of effectiveness, structural relationships, representational effectiveness, leadership and political persona. The data was eventually synthesised into four key areas: historically effected consciousness, relational context, structural and cultural context and women's representational effectiveness.

The next section will outline the approach taken to provide rigour and robustness to the inquiry.

## **Addressing Rigour and Robustness**

### **Reflexivity.**

Feminist research, supported by hermeneutic interpretation, is grounded in its attention to reflexivity. What is distinctive about a hermeneutic approach is the ontological grounding in interpretation that calls into play pre understandings and “historically effected consciousness” (McCaffrey, 2012, p. 218). As McCaffrey reflected, the researcher already has “an angle” coming into the inquiry.

My researcher reflexivity was grounded in my attention and on-going refinement to the research process, the on-going processes of analysis, and the examination of my positions and assumptions. Within this inquiry, I have occupied a “hybrid” position (Jootun et al., 2008, p. 44). I brought to the research inquiry my knowledge and experience of local government and elected councillors (identified in Chapter 1). I had an insight into the councillors’ world that they talked about. I can understand the language, processes and practices they described. As a woman in local government, I share a gendered experience. However, I have never held the position of councillor, and am detached from understanding that experience. Acknowledging my pre-understandings, I have been conscious of trying not to prejudice the integrity of the information shared by the participants. Rather, I have sought to be open to difference.

My role as researcher has been to understand the richness and complexity of the councillors’ experience of effectiveness, to “tell it how it is,” (Jootun et al., 2008, p. 44) and to fuse the horizons derived from an interpretation of the expressed context in which the councillors’ experiences took place, and my historically effected consciousness and research positions.

## **Validity.**

Research about lived experience requires different modes of analysis and different approaches to rigour. Leonardo (2003) wrote, “whereas natural scientists use verification to prove theories through empirical observation, validity is more productive for understanding human interactions because it is open to the examination of unobservable dimensions of human subjectivity” (p. 332). In both feminist and hermeneutic research that elicits stories, two levels of validity are important – the story told by the research participant, and the validity of the analysis (the story told by the researcher) (Clarke, 1999; Koch, 1996, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

At the most basic level “personal descriptions of life experiences, can serve to issue knowledge about neglected, but significant areas, of the human realm,” wrote Polkinghorne (2007, p. 472). This does not, in itself, constitute validity. Validity is the believability of the statement or proposition, and the weight of evidence given in support of the claim. Polkinghorne continued to state that there are degrees of validity, and the degree of confidence that is afforded to the researcher’s claims are “proportionate to the strength and power of the argument used by a researcher to solicit readers’ commitments to it” (p. 474).

Feminist researcher Lather (1991) wrote of the need to reconceptualise validity which is appropriate for research that is openly committed to a more just social order and stated that the only way to build emancipatory theory is through the “ceaseless confrontation of people’s experiences” (p. 66). Lather argued for triangulation that consciously utilises designs to support credibility of data, and called for “construct validity.” Construct validity must be addressed by recognising the theoretical roots of an inquiry. Specifically Lather (1986) called for “a systematized reflexivity” between “theoretical impositions” and lived experience as a means of demonstrating the potential to contribute to “change enhancing social theory” (p. 67). Polkinghorne (2007) and Lather (1991) both viewed validity as argumentative practices, whereby processes of persuasiveness are achieved through a progress of evidence, explanations and interpretations. Lather also called for “face validity” that could provide a “click of recognition” and a “yes, of course,” as opposed to a “yes, but” (1991, p. 67) reasoning. This has been achieved by recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions back through the data. Lather (1986, 1991) also proposed “catalytic validity” as the degree to which the research process reorients, focusses and energises participants to knowing their reality as a means of transforming so that the respondents gain self-

understanding, and ultimately self-determination, through their participation in the research, a process of conscientisation (although this was not a conscious objective of the research inquiry).

A hermeneutic approach acknowledges the interpretive, non-canonical nature of a text and our understanding of it, and has congruence with the approach to validity introduced above. Warnke (1993) wrote, "In taking seriously the interpretive insights of the other... we can begin to develop our own" ( p. 92). Hermeneutic interpretation embraces partiality and perspective, and as stated by Warnke (1993):

Different interpreters might come to the work with different concerns, interests and purposes, that interpreters in the future will have a different perspective on it than we do and will be able to relate it to different works and experiences that we can. (p. 91)

Riessman (1993) wrote, there is "no canonical approach in interpretive work, no recipes and formulas" (p. 69). Riessman reflected that interpretive truths are partial and incomplete, and ultimately about value, and that "validation in interpretive work is an on-going, difficult issue" (p. 69). The same assertion is true for feminist hermeneutic research. Still, a researcher and his/her audience need guidelines by which the validity of the research can be judged. Ricoeur (1981) stated that standards and methods exist to validate the hermeneutic interpretations. Walker (1996) defined five criteria to help determine the value of her interpretative work:

1. "Wide" through a consideration of the whole text.
2. "Deep" by pushing to the heart of the phenomenon under inquiry.
3. "Contextual" by relating the texts to the broader social, historical, political and cultural contexts.
4. "Connected" to past and current research on the topic, as a means of making new connections and insights.
5. "Authentic" to the intent of the author by using participant voices, allowing the women to speak for themselves (p. 236).

The criteria provided an important touchstone for my approach to validity, and supported the principles for analysis that were adopted in this inquiry.

Whilst descriptions of experience have been acknowledged as representing the best evidence, they do have their limitations. Polkinghorne's (2007) reflections about the



validity with narrative research resonate with the concerns that should be applied to applications of validity in hermeneutic research. He described disjunctures between the actual experience and storied descriptions that exist because of:

- the limits of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning;
- the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside of awareness, in the unconscious and preconscious aspects of meaning;
- the challenges associated with people revealing the entire complexities of the felt meaning, which provide a partial understanding of the experience; and
- the complexity of the interview process and the environment in which the interactions between participant and researcher take place.

Polkinghorne continued to state that the threats could not be eliminated, so confidence in the research findings and validation of researcher interpretations are needed. This can be achieved by documenting the trail of theoretical, philosophical, and methodological decisions to clarify the research process, justify analytic choices, and establish trustworthiness of the process (Koch, 2006; Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009).

### **Credibility and Coherence.**

Findings are deemed credible when they demonstrate “how things really are and really work” wrote Ryan-Nicholls & Will (2009, p. 76). Credibility rests on the coherence of the data, and the construction of the narratives which are shared with study participants is the most “authentic verification,” wrote Jones (2002, p. 464). This was also affirmed by Koch (2006) and Lather (1986, 1991). Some researchers advocate supplying the full transcript of the conversation, but the lack of coherence, utterances, pauses and hesitations may not be as useful to the participants as a smoother version of the conversation (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). As part of the pilot interviews, I supplied the full written transcript. The pilot participants communicated their limited support for the raw data. For the research participants, I provided an audio file of the interview, and returned a crafted narrative to each participant, which captured the essence of the participants’ stories as they related to the research inquiry. Credibility of findings was also achieved through the presentations of the participants’ voices, the hermeneutic interpretation of data, the pursuit and presentation of analogous findings, and the processes of reflexivity between the participant voice and existing theory.

## **Chapter Summary**

Within this chapter, I set out to describe the research processes employed in the inquiry. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the 25 women councillors. The research question, with its focus on the phenomenon of women councillors' effectiveness, lent itself to the selection of episodic narrative interviewing, whereby the research interview would focus on the women's lived experiences of effectiveness. By exploring the effectiveness of women councillors in local government, the interview questions provided a rich opportunity to locate the women's perceptions and experiences in an understanding of their past, their present experiences, and their reflections about what their knowledge might mean for the future.

To facilitate the achievement of the feminist standpoint goal within the bounds of a hermeneutic methodology, I drew upon the principles of interpretive analysis to understand the meaning of the data. Guiding the analysis process were the hermeneutic principles of 'faith' and 'suspicion.' The use of the analysis techniques honoured the women's interpretation of their experience, whilst allowing the researcher to look beyond what was said. This provided a basis to consider the meaning of effectiveness, and to explore the significance of the patriarchal and masculinist context, within which the women's political participation occurred.

The next chapters present the findings and discussions that emerged from the analysis of the texts. An introduction to the 25 participating women councillors is shown at Appendix I.

## Chapter 6: Historically Effected Consciousness

### Introduction

...Because we are historical beings who *live* in tradition, just as we live in a community, tradition is something that we constantly participate in. Thus, we constantly constitute and reconstitute our tradition, our culture, and our community as we engage in hermeneutic actions. Most important, this constant reconstitution always is simultaneously constructive *and* destructive. It is constructive in the sense that we constantly build new traditions and communities, constantly adding to our already existing traditions and communities through interpretation and understanding, thus including new concepts, interests, prejudices and, significantly, participants. (Feldman, 2000, pp. 60-61)

Through an appreciation of historicity and an acceptance of a historically effected consciousness, an understanding of the constructed nature of lived experience becomes possible (Gadamer, 1989). In trying to understand an experience, a hermeneutic interpretation of pre-understandings, prejudices and prior contexts takes place. Gadamer addressed prejudice as positive, because it aids understanding:

Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact the historicity of our experience entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are our biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us. (p. 9)

The central focus of this chapter is to explore and identify the significance of the councillors' past experiences, and personal pre-understandings, as a basis to understand their meanings of effectiveness.

### Past experience

As part of the research conversation, the councillors were asked to describe their facilitators for effectiveness. The broad life experiences expressed by the councillors demonstrated the temporal, important and unique nature of their 'prejudice.' The narratives also signified the relativity of experience and interpretation by demonstrating how standpoints "differ according to experience and necessarily accommodate difference, specificity and history" (Hirschmarm, 1998, p. 77).

## **The role of the family in meaning making.**

The family emerged as a significant place for the councillors' meaning-making.

Gadamer (1989) wrote, "long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live" ( p. 289).

### ***Mothers and significant women.***

Mothers and other significant women were important influences for some of the councillors. Brought up by her widowed mother, Deborah described her large family as "academically strong" and "strongly community minded." As a former councillor, and Labour Party activist, Deborah's mother, who she said "was seen as being quite exceptional," fostered her early interest in politics and helped to develop the "sense of social awareness" and duty that was visible through Deborah's recollections. Speaking about her mother as facilitator for her effectiveness, Deborah said:

I had my mother as my role model. She was such a strong woman and did so much on so many fronts, often family-oriented type fronts likes Parents Centre and Family Planning, and, as I say, she was on the council for six years. So I just do not see myself as doing nothing, I just think you have a responsibility to leave the world a better place.

She continued, "Having a mother, as I did, I just knew you did these things and there were never any barriers in my way to doing things."

Belinda spoke about her mother, a WREN during the Second World War, and her aunt, a former local government mayor. Belinda's narrative was woven with a strong respect for the achievements of these women, for democracy, and for the rights of people. Her text revealed how the characteristics of her working mirrored those of her mother and aunt. The importance of the woman role model emerged as a significant foundation for the women's later self-actualisations.

Jocelyn spoke about the strong working-class ideals of her Celtic mother, the value her mother placed on education and how both influenced the development of her social values:

My father was a relatively upper-middle-class person, and my mother was from a working-class Irish background. Subsequently that marriage broke up, so I was bought up very much by my mother. I guess I come from, therefore, a very solid Scottish educational background, but with political concerns, which probably reflected the

working class, the history of the working class, so I certainly was not privileged in terms of a background, financially, but I was very privileged because my mother in particular was keen that I should have a good education. Education to her was the most important thing, and I felt very obliged to have that education.

Jocelyn continued to describe how her female educators contributed to her sense of worth. Speaking about her school, she said, as girls, “we were encouraged to do the best we could within our society.” The influence of the female role models for Jocelyn’s political socialisation and subsequent acts of effectiveness was evident in her narrative.

In several other narratives, the women reflected on their all-female school environments. Wilson (1983) speculated that girl’s single-sex education was an important determinant in allowing girls to embrace leadership positions that might not have been available in co-educational schools.

The councillors’ recollections about the women in their lives demonstrated the significant role model effect that other women could have on identity formation. A similar observation was articulated by Gilligan (1982). The accounts also highlighted how the councillors’ ways of being effective mirrored the attributes and behaviours they related to, or admired, and how their sense of worth and belief was fostered by the capable women leaders in their lives.

### ***Family composition.***

The influence of the family structure on particular styles of effectiveness was evident from some councillors’ stories.

As the youngest child, in a house of brothers, Olivia reflected that it had equipped her with the skills to operate within a competitive local government environment. Her narrative highlighted the positional character of the sibling group, with its order of dominance and power. Reflecting on her role as a councillor, the narrative presented a person who had learned to work effectively in a group, and as someone who adopted a less obtrusive, more cooperative and engaging style. Olivia stated:

I am fairly quiet in chambers; I don’t often spiel into long monologues like some of the older councillors do, but I like to talk to the officers first, and have a good grasp of what is happening and then make suggestions.

Olivia’s position in the councillors group appeared similar to her position in her sibling group. Her text displayed a consciousness of the unspoken rules of the political system,

and the political pecking order, whereby influence and the 'right' to monologue was a reward of time and experience in office. Olivia's position within the family and the council provided a means to understand the nature of her effectiveness, which has been influenced through the establishment of relationships and performance, as opposed to a natural right to authority.

As the youngest child in her family, Rachel reflected how her position in the family hierarchy contributed to her style of effectiveness, and, in contrast to Olivia, she described how she muscled into the action. Rachel said:

I was the youngest of six kids in a poor family, and the next four up were brothers, so I was always trying to be better than them, always. It was, you know, that whole fairness thing. I needed to be as good as them so there was definitely an element of that - I was always trying to prove myself.

The stories from Olivia and Rachel, as they related to the influence of family structure, supported a view that women have a greater propensity for horizontal as opposed to vertical relationships, assertions also made by Gilligan (1982; 2011) and Belenky et al. (1997). The stories highlighted how familial position and experiences within the family structure could influence the nature of councillors' behaviours, and how self-awareness could emerge through an understanding of place within the family (Gadamer, 1989).

### ***Political childhoods.***

Political childhoods could be significant; an early exposure to politics was an important influence for several councillors.

Brought up in an environment of significant political turmoil, Bailey said, "you cannot help but be switched onto politics at a really young age." She said, "I have got a passion for social justice and come from a family to whom that is hugely important so that is probably part of it." Bailey described how the exposure drove her activism in later years, and her stories of being effective demonstrated a focus on justice and representing the unrepresented, a trait that appears to have developed from an interpretation of her early conscious political experiences.

Kura described the influence of her left-wing "whanau political background." Kura reflected on the political talk at the dinner table, "breakfast, lunch and tea," everything had to be striving for justice and the rights of working people," she said. Kura's stories reflected a life-long commitment for social and economic justice, through her

employment, commitment to her iwi and work in the community. Feminist hermeneutist Buker (1990) described the link between the personal and political within the context of the home, “the kitchen with all its heat, fury, sweat and sweetness offers an excellent setting for theorising, and the coffee ‘klatch’ is an ideal forum in which to develop social theory” (p. 33). The metaphor resonated with Kura’s expressions. It was evident from the narrative that the dining table provided a foundation for social thinking, and a place to foreground recognition of the collective responsibility for being in the world, understanding which Kura latterly translated into a life of doing.

Belenky et al. (1997) reflected on the family as a framework for meaning-making, and how family arrangements give rise to particular ways of knowing (and doing) for women. They wrote about the “politics of talk,” those processes that a family permitted and encouraged, or prohibited or minimised (p. 156). The talk that took place within the family emerged as an important foundation for the councillors’ acts later on. Wilson (1983) reflected that girls who experienced exposure to politics at a young age were more likely to enter politics themselves. Kirkpatrick wrote, “A sense of political efficacy comes easily to a child who has grown up amongst adults who speak and act as though they thought it possible to influence political events” (1974, p. 35).

### **Prior political experience.**

Prior political experience emerged as a significant feature of several of the women's pasts. Many of the women cited their prior political experience as supporting their knowledge, efficacy and confidence as councillors. Olivia spoke about her engagement on a council subcommittee, as a non-councillor representative. Olivia said, “the time I spent with the [committee] made me aware of the kinds of work a council does, so I went in with my eyes wide open.” “Some of my colleagues,” she continued, commented that, “this [being a councillor] is not what I thought it was going to be, whereas I knew what to expect.” At a practical level, Olivia stated that the role prepared her, “for reading reports and knowing the internal processes of council, and how decisions are made, and what advice comes up. So I knew how to engage with the management side of council as well.”

Iris described her prior political experience:

I got involved in the local National Party electoral organisation and became chair of the electorate for the party. And that led to me standing for parliament. I was the local candidate for the National

Party, so I jumped in at the wrong end, you might say. Most people come up through local government and move into national politics. For some reason, I decided to do it the other way around, but it is just the way that it happened. I was not successful; I did not become a Member of Parliament but it did help me. I'd always had a political interest anyway, so in the lead-up to the [X] local government elections, my husband (he's from a political background as well) said, 'Why don't you stand for council, you've done all this work getting your profile out there and so, perhaps you should have a go at council?' And that really appealed to me because I have always lived in the area, and most of my working life I have been working in local business. I'd been involved in a lot of community organisations and so I thought well that sounds like a good idea, so I stood for council. It was relatively easy to get elected because of my profile from the national election, so I became a councillor.

The narratives revealed how self-awareness about an interest in politics grew, and political insights were developed over time. The emerging self-awareness was facilitated by the early political exposure and reflections about the experiences. Early political exposure and engagement appeared to provide the building blocks that could facilitate a councillor's interests and subsequent acts of effectiveness. An interest in politics (Finkel, 1985; Wilson, 1983) and community, and a self-belief in the ability to effect change (Appelbaum et al., 2013a, 2013b), provided a basis for understanding the context of the councillors' political pursuits. It was evident that prior public service, experience, self-confidence and efficacy were important means to understanding the context for the councillors' meanings of effectiveness.

### **Training and education.**

Training and education emerged as an important aid for some councillors. The councillors' references to education and training demonstrated the important role that knowledge acquisition had for an individual's awareness about their effectiveness potential.

Anna described the importance of her training, and demonstrated how her training was influenced by her experiences as a rural wife and mother, and centred on her seeking to make improvements for the community. She stated that 'up-skilling' herself was important, and her narrative revealed how the increased knowledge resulted in increased confidence, and a belief of efficacy:

I started upskilling myself. I must have done more courses than anybody you know, I have done about 10 or 15 or something. I am actually a qualified sports medic now, I'm part way through my



degree in health science, with a major in rehabilitation, but I do have my certificate in rehab and health science. I am not sure if it is the type of person I am, but if I think I want to do it, I organise it and do it. When I had children I went and did the positive parenting course. When they fell over I went and did the first aid course. So I always think that education is something that should never ever stop, it should be compulsory when you leave school. For a proportion of your life thereafter, you should have to do some sort of education and up-skilling, for your whole life right until you are 80 or whatever you get to, because it is great fun and good for your brain. Coming into politics is a slow-growing process of knowledge and awareness. In the early 90s I was doing a lot of voluntary work and it got to the stage where I was out of the house more than I was in the house. My husband went 'whoa' and so I backed off a lot of things and I thought well this is really uninspiring and I am not busy and I am not doing what I know, what I want to be, and I thought maybe I could do some study around this. So I went off and did a community worker's course. Politics is a gradual thing, because you go and learn and you start thinking more.

Jocelyn explained that her formal political career started later in life. Undertaking a Master of Arts in Public Policy, she said it helped her to realise that she "belonged in governance rather than management." The pursuit of education appeared to facilitate self-understanding and could act as a catalyst for personal growth. Both Anna's and Jocelyn's accounts reflected education as an important foundation for self-awareness, which influenced what being effective meant to them.

Wendy described the impact that the Resource Management Act's Making Good Decisions training had on her view of effectiveness. She said:

Big chunks of that course would be good at the beginning of your political career, [for] asking the right questions, what don't we know? What should we learn before we go out there? The other points of view, whose voices aren't we hearing? How can we test the assumptions, the facts? What are the claims? Do they stack up? All of this. I don't think I had all of that clearly in my head when I started.

The women's education pursuits supported their latent knowledge and provided a focus for them to understand their personal capabilities. Hermeneutist Grondin wrote that "human existence is always concerned with and in search of orientation" and that such orientation "is acted out in some attuned sense in my abilities, my capacities that make up the entire realisation of my existence" (2002, p. 4). The pursuit of education appeared to facilitate the councillors' orientations. Grondin also described how knowledge is always tentative, as the search continues for "more convincing evidence and interpretations" (p. 12). With knowledge comes the ability to apply, and the stories

highlighted how the women's on-going pursuit of knowledge aided their personal effectiveness, benefited other councillors, and enhanced the organisation's effectiveness potential, because of the broader perspectives that were brought to the council table. In this context, being effective transcended the councillor, and had a distinctly communal benefit.

### **Iwi, hapū and mārae experience.**

Sensitivity to history is part of the hermeneutic consciousness, the sense of being shaped by history and within history (Gadamer, 1989). The Māori councillors identified the importance of their Māori identity to their effectiveness. The close affinity between their tribal connections (Awekotuku, 1991; Binney, 2004; George, 2012; Sullivan, 2003; Wall, 2001) and their acts of effectiveness were reflected through their stories.

Describing the facilitators for effectiveness, Marama said, "definitely the school of hard knocks that many of us go through on the mārae, or in the iwi or hapū. It sort of hones your skills." Marama spoke at length about "how the world of politics became very real" on the mārae. She said it had been a "whole life" thing for her.

When I look back on my life, I think I have been involved with this stuff since I was a teenager. Growing up with it, seeing it as a child, going to meetings with my mum, it is just transferring my experience in my Māori setting to being able to debate and ask what I think are the critical questions in a local government setting.

Reflecting on the significance of this past she said:

It taught me how to be tough. It taught me to realise that not every debate and discussion is a major battle; I have to pick the squirmishes that I want to be involved in, the ones I will add value to, as opposed to just trying to fight every fight and get totally tired. I am learning to accept that people will do what they are going to do, regardless of what evidence you decide to put in front of them, and to believe in the path that I choose to follow, because I am trying to do things, as I perceive to be the right way. Other people have their truth, and I have my truth and I like to think my truth is the one with the integrity. So that has really prepared me, I think.

The other Māori councillors also reflected on the significance of their Māori world as a condition for their understanding. Hine said, "it is a different kettle of fish, because you see and you are involved in some real issues that are out there for Māori."

Walking in two worlds afforded the Māori councillors with privileged insights, and

unique perspectives that were not available to non-Māori councillors. Eagly and Chin (2010) reflected on the “special qualities” that people from a minority group confer, because of their negotiation of minority and majority cultures. They described a particular competence that fosters flexibility and openness, an ability to shift between contexts and adopt multiple perspectives and to represent and problem solve in different ways (p. 220). The councillors’ accounts of aspects of their lives reflected a similar competence, achieved through their negotiation of multiple identities, many of which were as the ‘other’ within a majority culture. This finding demonstrated the importance of diverse experience and a broad representative base as a basis for democratic credibility and effectiveness.

### **Work outside the home.**

The prevalence of activity outside the home has demonstrated how the women's lives were grounded equally in social and economic spheres.

Many of the community activities the women engaged in were composed principally of women (Playcentre, Plunket, kindergarten committees, health organisations and social service groups, school committees and boards of trustees, rural women, arts and cultural groups, education charities and environmental groups). That said, several councillors also performed roles in community boards and committees that were dominated by men (Federated Farmers, ratepayer and resident associations). Women's community activity, as a basis for their political activity, has been extensively researched (as presented in Chapter 2), and, within this inquiry, emerged as something that supported personal and political growth, relationship formation and reputation. The narratives revealed how the councillors gained equally from working alongside women, as they did from working with men. Gilligan (1982) wrote about the weaving of women’s and men’s different moral development. She wrote, “for both sexes the existence of two contexts for moral decisions makes judgement by definition contextually relative and leads to a new understanding” (p. 166). Women's prior experiences foregrounded in community have been an important basis for understanding the nature of the councillors’ effectiveness.

Many of the councillors had also engaged in paid employment, prior to taking political office, and several had paid employment alongside their councillor responsibilities. Vivian reflected on a past where women looked after the home, and council was the ‘other’ interest for women who were fortunate to have the financial means and support of their husband to participate. The employment of the women in this study represented

a stark contrast to the findings of Kirkpatrick (1974), who found that most women politicians were recruited from a single profession, “the homemaker” (p. 32).

Mary suggested that her effectiveness as a councillor could be attributed to her experience as a businesswoman. Speaking about a motivation to stand for council, she said:

I did not like the policy, the whole procedure, so I needed to get on council to see if there was anything I could do. Being involved with business, to see them drag something out like that for three years, you would never dream of doing that in business. So I got onto council and thought I'd have to change a few things there because that process was so long and drawn out.

The contribution of Mary's business experience enabled her to feel that she could be effective. She said, “I think I bring my understanding of how businesses work... and having an understanding of New Zealand businesses” is important. Mary reflected on corporate governance and identified the synergy between council and corporate decision making bodies, stating:

A board member is quite similar to being a councillor in a lot of ways, you know. You need to actually have a little bit of understanding of the entity but you are not there to make decisions about the operational side of it. You are there to make decisions about strategy and governance at a higher level.

Mary's story demonstrated that effective behaviour was behaviour that was relevant to local economic and political contexts; the acts of effectiveness were those that were necessary at a particular time.

Carolyn observed that her communications experience and senior management experience aided her ability to work in a political setting:

What that has done for me is teach me the value of, not only good listening which I think is a crucial part of local government politics, but also the value of clear communication which is one of the main areas that I am trying to make a difference in. So I think that background has been useful. I think the business background that I have had, working at senior board level, has made local government quite frustrating because I am used to working in a faster place in business, in private enterprise.

Carolyn suggested that the commercial skills and communication acumen she brought to the council had been beneficial, as previously these skills were lacking in other

councillors. She also described how this background influenced her view of effectiveness:

I think effectiveness has a different meaning from what I would expect in a business sense. I have now come to accept that things move very slowly in a political sense. Sometimes you feel that you are not effective, if you are not achieving an outcome and making changes. Sometimes you feel that you are not doing that because of the slow pace of the political environment.

Carolyn's story demonstrated the contested nature about what being effective could mean, depending on how prior experiences and standpoints were interpreted and subsequently reflected around the council table.

Marama highlighted how her professional experience as a journalist benefited her councillor role. She said:

Knowing that, to be just and fair, there has to be investigation on both sides. Whether other sides choose to comment, or not, is up to them but they must be offered that opportunity. For me, being effective is actually being able to put aside my personal opinion, put aside my personal bias, and ask people who I know have opposing sides why they think the way they do; and that could be down to my training.

What the stories revealed was how individual skills and experience could influence the councillors' focus or ways of working. The stories also showed the equal value and validity of a range of experience. The inquisitive nature of the councillors, who trained as journalists, publicists, and communicators, appears to have aided their ability to engage on issues with an open mind. The councillors who entered office with business acumen demonstrated their challenge to pre-existing bureaucracy and how they sought to instil new business-focussed procedures and processes. The councillors who were formerly employed in public sector operations brought pre-existing knowledge, which supported their ability to participate more quickly. The information provided by the councillors signalled how diversity could positively affect inclusion, the nature, and quality of the debate within councils, thus increasing the potential for organisational effectiveness.

Participation, as governors, emerged as an important facilitator for some councillors. The women's governance experience was commonly in areas of health and education, areas where women were more likely to be represented (Human Rights Commission, 2010, 2012). Describing the influence of her role on a Board of Trustees, Rachel said

she learned that the decisions she made were inextricably tied to her “political persona” and that public sector governance is a full time job. “You are never off duty,” she said. As a former school trustee, Atarangi described the learning she had gained from a school closure process; her narrative highlighted the importance of inclusive processes, communication, accountability, and time and space to foster participation and understanding. Naomi explained how the transition to local elected office was more straightforward because of her prior governance experience. She commented, “before council, I was chair of the ratepayer committee and on the school board, so I was quite used to toddling along that line.” There was a weaving of the personal and the political.

The councillors’ reflections about their experiences outside the home highlighted the relevance of their learned and latent skills, the importance of pre-understandings and past experiences as a medium for understanding interpretations about the nature of effectiveness. The need for representative pluralism emerged from an interpretation of the broad and diverse experiences of the women. The women's experiences were not linear, they were complex and interwoven, and highlighted the need for interpretations of effectiveness to be sensitive to multiple dimensions from the public and private spheres of women's lives. Being effective was represented as a lived experience.

### **Gendered life experiences.**

Gendered life experiences have emerged as significant; the narratives reflected the complexity, diversity and richness of the women's lives. The women's gendered stories revealed a strong ethic of care running within their experiences.

Kura spoke about women's gentler instincts, because they are the “producers of life,” and “fight to protect” others. Marama spoke about her “instant empathy” with other women, which helped her to be effective. Expressions of womanhood have revealed a consciousness about the importance of gendered life experiences.

The influence of gendered experience was evident from Anna who said, “I bring a huge range of knowledge to the table.” She recalled her experiences living in a rural community with a young family:

Living out in the country, I knew I did not have access to health services, and my road was shit, three miles of gravel road. I used to drive up the road fearing for my life, and I really wanted that to be improved. I really wanted health services to be improved in the rural sector, so I got on a bit of a band wagon. There are so many things that

you do not have access to, that town people take for granted. And I know you are not going to build a swimming pool in the middle of the back blocks but there has to be some equity.

Gail spoke about her participation in the New Zealand women's movement, the nursing union, and a women's cooperative group. Reflecting on a period of economic hardship and sole parenthood, Gail stated that a key driver for her political participation was "watching the inequalities around communities." Gail's life experiences led her to reflect about how she could help address the inequalities she observed. She said, "it was there all the time I suppose, but it was just the feeling of how do you bridge the gaps, how do you help a person?"

Helen's early political experiences demonstrated a gendered influence to her activities. "When my children were quite young, I became involved with Plunket, just as lots of mums do. And I am quite passionate about that." She described how she became known as "someone who defends the issues and is keen to advocate for the issues." Latterly, Helen became president of Plunket and the chairperson of an early childhood education taskforce, before joining the local health board.

Helen described how she had the opportunity to participate in community and political life earlier than some other women had:

Our children went to boarding school. So from a relatively younger age, our kids were not at home and that meant I had the opportunity to be involved in more community things than I probably would have done, had I been a woman at home with her children or needing to see that the kids got to a, b or c after school. So the fact that the children went to boarding school did enable me to take a much fuller role in local politics at a younger age.

Sarah spoke about her opportunities to become involved in community life. Her children benefited from active grandparenting, which enabled her to become involved in the development of a community house, and the local Labour Party.

I was involved in community things. I have always been a doer, if you like, and I got involved. Having young children I had a pretty easy life, really, compared with a lot of people. I had two sets of grandparents [on hand] who could not wait to have grandkids, you know, whereas most other women did not. So I just probably took the children to school and probably did not realise how lucky I was. At that point, I did not have an understanding of other people's needs and I got involved in the community house. Then I certainly did gain a better understanding of people's needs.

The stories illustrated how a woman's potential for political engagement and efficacy could be influenced by the amount of time that could be given to the activity, and the motivations for action. Different experiences of motherhood could facilitate the women's political activities. Anna and Gail's activities were driven by their experiences as mothers; Sarah and Helen could participate because they were not constrained by historically naturalised child-rearing traditions.

Kathryn entered political life once her children had grown up, because of the difficulty juggling a small family with a career in politics. Writing in 1983, Wilson wrote that family roles did not prevent the women in her study pursuing political careers, but did note, "most of those with children waited until they had grown up" (p. 219).

Kathryn brought a different set of experiences from many of the other councillors who participated in the study. She described herself as a former "DPB<sup>7</sup> mum." Describing the significance of her life experience, Kathryn stated:

I cut my teeth on government departments, really. As I said, I was on the DPB for 11 years. I studied, worked part time, and it was difficult to find an exit... I became an advocate for people because I was a walking encyclopaedia on everything they needed to know, that I had learned first-hand.

Kathryn said she was determined to challenge the perception that as "a solo mother you've got no power and you've got no influence." Kathryn's first-hand appreciation of struggle aided her ability to be effective for the people whose interests were under-represented in her community. Standpoints that emerged out of struggle were significant. Former MP Mary Batchelor (as cited in Wilson, 1983) made the following observation, "People who have been exposed to the harsh realities of life are more understanding of human problems than those who have led a sheltered life away from the mainstream of society" (p. 221).

The stories emphasised the impact that childrearing could have on the councillors' participation. Women's continued role as primary caregiver was not a limiting factor for the women's overall effectiveness but in some cases it did slow their potential for effectiveness, because of their delayed entry into politics.

The recollections of the women revealed that gendered experiences were not always recognised as significant. Walker (1996) stated, "understanding of human behaviour is

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<sup>7</sup> The Domestic Purposes Benefit was a government benefit, up until July 2013, for sole parents.



subjective and dependent on the perspectives of the participants” (p. 235). Naomi stated:

I bring together my life’s experience that is quite broad, both in terms of local government and in terms of where I have lived, [and] the positions I have held in other communities. So, I bring quite a deep and broad knowledge of communities in New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, Australia. So what I bring to the table is quite different... and I don’t think it is a gender thing. It is a life experience thing, the differences and the attitudes you bring.

Hine signalled the importance of her diverse experience, gained from her community, mārae, and professional activities. She stated:

Having exposure to all of those various things means, when I sit down at the table and there is an issue in front of me, I am looking at it with all the different experiences and knowledge that I have. And when I make a decision, it is an informed one.

The women’s knowing emerged from political insights gained from their occupation, perceptions and interpretations of a gendered culture, where they were sometimes on the periphery of activity and influence. The gendered experiences were not recognised as significant for all of the councillors. Warkne (1993) wrote, “A hermeneutic feminism does not deconstruct gender in the way that postmodern feminism suggests, and it does not equate all forms of understanding with repressive regimes. Rather it understands the partial and perspectival character of understanding” (p. 97).

Gadamer (1989) reflected how a historically effected consciousness was much more than a historical inquiry. It is “a consciousness of the work itself, and hence itself as an effect” (p. 350). The acts of being, and the individual’s reflections of the meanings of those acts as they exist in relation to the other, constitute the horizon, which enables the individual to develop knowing and understanding about what those acts mean for the nature of their being in the world. The knowing gained from rich life experiences and the interpretations of those experiences, in relation to the parallel experiences and interpretations of others, afforded the women with epistemic insights about what it meant to be effective as women councillors.

## **Foundations for Effectiveness**

From the councillors’ interpretations of their past experiences, foundations for the basic orientations of being effective emerged. These foundations reflected how the councillors wanted to conceive themselves and be perceived by others. Standpoint feminist Hekman (1997) stated that the perspectival nature of knowledge and experience makes multiple

standpoints possible. Gadamer (1989) described how the sense of consciousness was not a “part of one’s natural equipment” (p. 16), and suggested that it was through the receptivity to ‘otherness’ that a sense of being could be better understood.

### **Personal standpoints.**

A multiplicity of standpoints and positions was evident among the councillors’ reflections. Each was grounded in the councillors’ particular realities and experiences.

Anna expressed the importance of “knowing who you are, as a person.” Rachel reflected that she was guided by her “political persona.” Jocelyn explained the importance of being an “integrated person” who was honest to herself and the community. Kura talked about “the values from a lifetime,” and her particular commitment towards Māori, women, families and young people; Trina and Laura spoke about the environmental values they brought to the table; Kathryn and Bailey highlighted their respective commitments to groups, which experienced disadvantage. The plethora of standpoints indicated that being effective would mean different things to each person, and that the ways of being effective are influenced by the pre-understandings the councillors brought to the table. The councillors’ standpoints did not necessarily equate to their being effective but the standpoints were an important reference for the things that mattered to them, and often provided a focus for the acts they performed as councillors.

### ***Equality.***

A distaste for racism or sexism was common across the majority of the narratives, with many of the councillors holding gender and racial equity as important. The councillors’ attention to these was expressed in ways that demonstrated the significance of past experience in influencing the councillors’ perceptions about what effectiveness meant. Through their personal experiences, inequality was perceived as a marker of ineffective behaviour. Marama said, “I am a Maori woman in local government in a mainstream institution working with mainstream policies and bureaucracy.” Reflecting on a decision of the council that was important to Māori she said:

I was pretty gutted to be honest. I would have been pleasantly surprised if it had gone through. So it was not unexpected, but I was still gutted at the same time, and a bit frustrated that despite everything that I had said that I felt had negated a lot of the stuff, people were still going to do what they were going to do. That is fine I would not really expect anything less from people whose life

experiences are totally at the other end of the spectrum to mine.

The reflection from Marama demonstrated how she represented her 'otherness,' and the challenge in articulating an oppositional standpoint, when the attention to otherness was rejected by those who did not want the fore-structure and prejudice of their understanding challenged.

### ***Age.***

Age was significant for two councillors. Bailey spoke about the opportunities of being a "middle-aged woman." She suggested that her life experience enabled her to connect to other councillors across the political spectrum. She commented that as a middle-aged woman, she had an opportunity to be friendlier, to speak about families, and break down barriers that enabled collegial relationships to be made, despite political differences. The narrative revealed how a middle-aged woman in politics could bring a depth of knowledge gained from their life experiences that could foster a self-confidence and understanding about how they can be effective in their roles. Consciousness of a lived experience aided Bailey to understand the particular nature of her personal effectiveness.

Olivia described how her age resulted in her bringing a different generational perspective to the table, which also brought challenges and opportunities for her representation. Recalling a particular event, she commented, "I think because, as a young person, I did not feel, I was taken seriously. I thought sometimes my views were just seen as a young person's views." Younger councillors may not be able to draw on the same breadth of life experiences as older councillors but they draw on different and new traditions, and experiences of youth that are culturally relevant and meaningful to the present. They also provide perspectives that are missing from the older demographic of councillors.

### ***Gender.***

The women's lives led to standpoints that emerged out of their gendered experiences. These standpoints influenced the perspectives they brought to the council table. Reflecting on her role as a committee chair, Laura credited her ability to operate on multiple levels to her domestic experiences and personal life. She said that women were "lateral thinkers" and men were "single directional thinkers." Reflecting on this, Laura said:

One of things about being a mother is that you operate on so many different levels at once that it becomes engrained in you. I think that gives you the ability to multitask much more easily. That's the one aspect of perhaps being a female Chair - my ability to be able to notice what is going on in the gallery - and forestall any interruptions I can see coming, to be watching the evidence at the same time, and to be hearing between the lines and still being able to get the questions out that you need to. You can operate on those different levels. I would not say that means that women are better Chairs than men, but I think it is one ability that we have, one aspect of the conditioning we have had throughout our lives, that we bring to the job.

The ability to attend to other voices, and to maintain awareness of the multiple dimensions of the broader context, was a feature of being effective that was, according to several councillors, particular to women councillors' ways of working. This is a skill they derived from their historically naturalised gender roles.

Throughout her narrative, Anna reflected about how her gendered life has influenced the approach she has taken to her councillor role. She said:

One of the things is having children. I think it affects how you look at the planet, what you want for your kids, what you want for yourself, your grandkids and your family and then your community. And as you get older, I think it grows on you.

She continued:

I am a woman in this time in history, which means my role has been more about health and social services, so I bring that intellect with me, maybe. If I am sitting on a Board, and we are talking about dog kennels, I bring my knowledge as a farmer's wife with me... As a woman I probably do bring in a different perspective but for me I do not really acknowledge it as a different perspective because I am not sure of the men's perspective.

She continued to say that whilst her intellect derived from sectors that support a female perspective, it did not mean that she could not talk about chip and seal and tar size or water schemes. The prevalence of Anna's gendered life remained strong in her identity but gendered considerations did not dominate the focus of her political activity.

Acts of nurturing and caring were an important component for some councillors' political personas. Gail talked about ensuring councillors were fed properly. Bailey and Rachel talked about ensuring councillors had time to spend with their families. Deborah and Mary talked about looking after constituents and submitters. The ways in which the women actualised gendered roles in the political environment reflected the women's

historically naturalised gender roles. The women expressed a capacity for caring as important to their ways of being effective, and of perceiving effectiveness.

Hine said, “I am a mother and a grandmother, [and] a fair percentage of the councillors around the table think that women's place is in the home, and do not take us seriously”. Hine’s comment highlighted the lack of respect that could be afforded to women's gendered standpoint, but was also suggestive of the on-going value of women’s domestic functions for men. The perspective from the male councillors may have highlighted a fear that women's political presence could compromise the ability of the women to attend to those domestic and nurturing functions that facilitated men’s political participation. Women's nurturing and caring capabilities was as politically important for male councillors as it was for the women themselves but for different reasons. Emerging from an interpretation of the narratives, there appeared to be a contrast between the women's selflessness and some male councillors’ selfishness. “Political man cannot see that public affairs include the so-called domestic matters of everyday life,” wrote Buker (1990, p. 31).

Gadamer wrote, “ history does not belong to us, but rather we to it” (1989, p. 288), and individuals live in tradition, they are part of tradition and tradition is part of them. The historical consciousness of a gendered life manifested itself as an articulated standpoint of the women as the ‘other’ voice within councils. The narratives revealed a profoundly different nature between men and women's perceived realities, because of their unique historically affected consciousness.

### **Values.**

The past experiences and prejudices of the councillors have highlighted their meanings of being effective as laden with value positions. Overall, the values they associated with being effective correlated to a consciousness for others, and are related to respect, inclusivity, credibility and integrity. Gadamer (1989) wrote of the relativity of values and their temporality over time. Values associated with women councillors’ meanings of effectiveness were absent from research at the time of thesis production. Thus the interpretation that follows represents a foundational assessment, upon which future analysis and research could be built.

### ***Respect***

Respect was woven throughout the stories, respecting the positions of others, working

cooperatively, and representing the diverse interests of communities. This theme has emerged as a critical feature of what effectiveness looked like for many of the councillors. Marama commented that an effective councillor, “appreciates somebody else’s point of view,” and effectiveness is “about fairness, truth, and justice.” Anna said, “it is not just a stand up and stamp your feet [thing], this is about diplomacy, doing things right, and there are ways to do things and ways to get things done”. Similarly, Wendy said, “It is being clear about what you want to achieve and how you might best achieve it, whilst maintaining your integrity, being principled and working constructively with people.”

### ***Integrity and credibility.***

Integrity and credibility were two indicators the women defined as underpinning their effectiveness. Rachel reflected on her personal integrity and credibility, in the face of pressure or challenge from others parties. Rachel expressed a consciousness about integrity as a foundation for effectiveness:

I always lie straight in bed at night, and I always sleep soundly because I do not tell lies and I am true to my heart. If I do not think something is right, then I will say if it is not right, and I will not do it. I will not go with the flow because I am being pressured.

Jocelyn recalled an occasion, when a stand she took at a political event was criticised. Jocelyn perceived that her position demonstrated the integrity she would bring to the role of councillor. She said:

I remember one of the first elections. I went to a particular community in my constituency where they had a public meeting, and they had a particular question they wanted everyone to answer. I answered in a way that they were not happy with at all. And I came home and said to my husband, ‘Well I am probably out,’ and my husband said at the time, ‘There would have been many who would respect your view, your integrity, because I know it would have been very easy to go along with what they all wanted’.

Jocelyn talked about the importance of forming “opinions based on evidence,” and making decisions accordingly. She continued describing what she had said at the meeting, “I said, ‘I hope to be on the Hearings Committee that will hear [the issue] and I am not willing to make an opinion before I hear all of the evidence’.”

Helen described effectiveness in a way that demonstrated the importance of a person’s conduct over the result that was achieved. She described the effective councillor as:

Someone who is respectful and courteous of the community from go to whoa; someone who works hard for their community... It is about being approachable and being prepared to put the time in and listen... It is really important to have the time to give to the community, to have the integrity to be prepared to advocate for their issues. But I am also not afraid to say I do not think that is going to be achievable... So being effective is having time, having integrity and being prepared to work hard for the community, because you need to put time into the issues, and getting outcomes is always the end result.

Helen's narrative presented an example of the contested nature about what could be perceived as effective. She said, "I am not afraid to say I do not think this is going to be achievable. I say this is simply not something the council will do because of cost or whatever. I am honest about that and I think people respect that."

Perceptions about what constitutes credible behaviour are subjective and subject to interpretation. Whilst Helen perceived that her standpoint would be positively received, it is also reasonable to posit that some receivers of the information would perceive her position as ineffective if it did not deliver what the community wanted. Such a position could be based on the outcome desired, perspectives about the role and responsibility of the elected councillor, and interpretations about the validity of the councillor's assessments. It is also likely that viewpoints would differ over time and according to context.

Virtues of integrity and credibility do not always neatly align with perceptions of effectiveness, because integrity, credibility and effectiveness are situated and perspectival concepts, which vary in meaning, interpretation and context. Despite the differing interpretations that are possible, honesty was important for Helen, and was a basis for her to be seen as trustworthy and credible. Belenky et al. (1997) wrote, "The capacity for speaking with and listening to others, whilst simultaneously speaking with and listening to the self, is an achievement that allows a conversation to open up between constructivists and the world" (p. 145).

Gadamer wrote that, through education and practice, individuals must develop "a demeanour that he is constantly concerned to preserve in the concrete situations of his life and prove through right behaviour" (p. 324). Integrity, credibility and respect thus emerged as foregrounded understanding about what it meant to be effective.

### **Knowledge, effort and time.**

The stories from each of the councillors reflected the effort and energy that was

expended by the women to first attain the position of councillor, and then to strive to be perceived as effective.

### ***Effort.***

Effort was important to the councillors, and the significance of the effort was the way in which it aided understanding, and facilitated the councillor in their role. Gadamer (1989) wrote, “that a thing does not present itself to the hermeneutic experience without an effort special to it” (p.481). An effort to understand characterised the approach of several councillors. Helen commented, “I take all of my work seriously.” Trina talked about “commitment” and the “hard yards” as essential underpinnings for effectiveness. Laura spoke about her belief in hard work. She credited her efficacy and feelings of effectiveness to preparation. Contemplating the extent of her effectiveness, during her early days as a councillor, she said, “I think from getting well prepared early in the piece, making sure I was well read and knowledgeable, and preparing.” She continued, effectiveness “continues to grow with your knowledge,” so if you want to be effective, “be prepared to put in the hard yards.”

Belinda strongly believed that a councillor should undertake their best efforts to be informed. However, she stressed a particular challenge that she faced because of her gender:

I am told so often that people do not like intelligent women. and they do not like it you know. I carry a lot of information around in my head about things and people do not like it. It does not go down well, they just want someone who will smile,... but to me the real value of a councillor is the judgement you bring to the table.

Laura similarly experienced resistance to her knowledge. She explained how she was told by her mayor, “men don’t like you always knowing more than they do.” Laura commented, “there is no good thinking this job can be easy,” and said:

Men have to learn to grow up. If they want to know as much as I do, they can do the work. I do not think women have to dumb down. And it comes, not necessarily, down to intellect; I think it comes down to preparation.

The efforts of the women demonstrated how they responded to masculinist domination of knowledge maintained through tradition, and their need to work harder to be perceived equally.

“Tradition”, or “what is handed down from the past, confronts us as a



task, as an effort of understanding we feel ourselves to make because we recognise our limitations, even though no one compels us to do so. It precludes complacency, passivity and self-satisfaction with what we securely possess; instead it requires active questioning and self-questioning.” (Gadamer, 1989, p. xv)

Through the women’s efforts to challenge those parts of tradition that had been imposed, they worked hard. Women ‘doing their homework’ aided their personal effectiveness, even though their political effectiveness was not always guaranteed, because resistance could be difficult to realise from a minority or subordinated position.

Research by Anzia and Berry (2011) reported female congressional representatives as outperforming men, once in office. They stated that women undervalued their qualifications and experience in relation to men, which meant it took more “talent and effort” for female candidates to be taken seriously. They continued, that women elected to office were therefore “likely to be more talented and hardworking than the men,” which meant they were poised to be more effective, once in office (p. 490).

The councillors’ narratives supported a proposition that effectiveness potential was commensurate to a councillor’s knowledge, skill and effort.

### ***Time.***

Whilst some councillors reflected how they tried to be effective from day one, others acknowledged how effectiveness grew over time. Deborah questioned the extent of her effectiveness in her first term, stating it as a period of learning. Kathryn, said, “my first year in council was pretty much eyes open and mouth shut”. She said it was also about trying to find her place in the team. Reflecting on those whom she considered effective councillors, Iris commented that it was those councillors “who take the time to get a good understanding of the business before they get out there and make too many political waves”.

With time, the councillors gained experience, knowledge and confidence. Time contributed to councillors’ growing feelings of efficacy. Deborah reflected how her potential for effectiveness was limited in her first term because of her lack of systemic knowledge. She suggested, “You are effective by sticking with it... Once you get over the learning curve, and you know what you are doing, you are going to bring strength and wisdom and institutional knowledge.”

Reflecting on her multiple terms in office, Rachel observed, “my present effectiveness

means I can make things happen.” Several narratives highlighted how ‘success’ (effecting change or making a difference) increased the individual feeling of self-efficacy. Curtin (2009) wrote, “it takes time for any politician, male or female, to build a political career to the point where they have the capacity to directly influence the government’s policy agenda” (p. 179). Crain (2000) stated, “Success usually depends more upon the effort we put into a task than upon any inherent ability” (p. 203).

## **Chapter Summary**

The task of hermeneutic philosophers is to ask what the moral and political vocabulary we already possess implies about the principles of justice and norms that are appropriate for us. The task is one neither of discovery, nor of invention, but of interpretation. (Warnke, 1993, p. 86)

This chapter set out to identify some of the features of the women's past experiences that the researcher interpreted as particularly significant to the councillors’ understanding about what being effective meant. Being effective was grounded in the women's consciousness of their personal identity, derived from their interpretation of their lives. Across the past experiences, there was an emerging sense of the collective intention of the women. Wall (2001) wrote about “the collective intention...[as] an essence of basic nature” (p. 115), as a trait of the women MPs in her study. Feelings and care were integrated into the women's work, and the women aspired to an effectiveness that was inclusive, respectful, credible, hardworking and honest.

Gadamer (1989) wrote that it “requires a special effort to acquire a historical horizon” (p. 316). The women's interpretations of their historical experiences, which they shared as relevant to the research inquiry, demonstrated the importance of foregrounding prejudices, experiences and interpretations of the past, as a basis to understand an interpretation of the present and how the interpretations of lived experience relate to others.

The next chapter explores the relational context for the women's understandings of being effective.

## **Chapter 7: Relational Context**

### **People and Place**

Connection to people and place were central to the councillors' recollections. The councillors' stories demonstrated their attention to a multiplicity of relationships and environments that allowed them to draw on broad opinions, expertise and knowledge from across the spectrum of associations in their lives.

There is a consensus amongst feminist theorists that women's lives are structured relationally. The consensus amongst hermeneutists is that storied spaces are given meaning through contextualisation, based on pre-understandings, past experience and interaction. Standpoint theorist Harstock (1983) wrote, "the qualities of people are important in women's work" (p. 299), and from a hermeneutic perspective, Pajnik (2006, p. 389) described how the individual is realised through their interactions with others. Relationships represented a cornerstone underpinning the councillors' meanings about what it meant to be effective.

### **Women Councillors' Ways of Relating**

The women's ways of connecting and affiliating was imbued with an ethic of care for others.

Atarangi, throughout the research conversation, highlighted the relational aspects of a councillor's work. Effectiveness, she said, "is very relational – effectiveness, for me, really starts with relational capabilities of the person." Atarangi continued:

What is becoming quite clear is how important the relational aspects of being an elected member are, how absolutely essential relating is. Not just in the ability to front up to a meeting to talk or to chair, which is important, but actually just to suspend your own belief or conclusions about something and truly be a decision maker about it. We all know that we don't turn off our opinions when we go into council, that we do bring our views. But at least we had better be jolly well prepared to hear the other story, you know, look at it from another person's point of view. So since being in office, since being in this role, it has just strengthened my view about what it means to be effective. I actually want to know what other people think.

Atarangi suggested that women councillors focus more on the relational aspects of the job, than perhaps male colleagues do:

Women bring a different kind of perspective to a decision-making process, I mean, it is more people oriented, and it is more inclusive, not focussed on being efficient and mechanical about stuff. I am conscious that, as a woman, I can bring that.

Reflecting on the gendered nature of her relationship qualities, Atarangi said:

I am a mother and bring those things that are peculiar to women in a decision-making process. So I think about this when it comes to other governance bodies that I am on. That really is one of things that we need to be moving towards - making sure there is a community voice informing governance decisions, and this is particularly the case with local government because we have had a history that is predominantly men.

Gilligan (1982) described how the social pattern of primary human relationships is more cooperative, which leads women to having a problem with individuation. Gilligan wrote about the importance of women's responsibilities for others to their conception of themselves, and their stronger regard for an ethic of care over an ethic for justice.

Bailey talked about women's contributions to local government, realised through particular ways of working cooperatively. She said:

I believe that women do local government well. We have some very good men in local government but good local government essentially reflects the way women work together. We sit and we talk issues through, and we will talk until we find a sensible way forward. That, I think, is effective in finding the best way forward. You know, working out what the problem is. What do we need to do? What is the best way forward? How do we achieve a win-win situation? And then, how do we make it happen? I think women's ability to talk that through collectively helps achieve those results and that, to me, is effective local government.

The emphasis on relational interdependence was a prominent feature within the councillors' reflections, with several councillors talking about how they filtered their thoughts alongside the position of others, and how their effectiveness was realised through the talking and the bringing together. There was a clear attention to other voices. The women's narratives represented their effectiveness as contingent on a respect for 'otherness'. Marama commented that male councillors tend not to acknowledge their relationships and interactions in the public forum. She said:

As women councillors, we tend to try to relate all of the decisions we make to community, to how this decision affects our families. What does this mean for the mother pushing the pram down the street? For many of the blokes, it is, 'How much is this going to cost? And how

long is it going to take? The women seem to be focussed on the social aspect and the blokes tend to focus on the mechanical aspect, if that is the right word, the infrastructure or financial aspects. And women will say 'people have talked to us and said this,' whereas sometimes the blokes just give their opinion. They might have talked to twice as many people as we have, but we tend to say that we have been talking to people.

In a similar vein, Belenky et al. (1997) quoted their research participant, Adela, who said, “you let the inside out and the outside in” (p. 135).

The reflections from the women suggested that male councillors were much more individuated in their approach. Whilst the women acknowledged that male councillors may seek or receive input from others, they were more likely to present themselves as autonomous, and their stated position as authoritative. The narratives of the women in this inquiry represented a strong sense of communion and a sense of horizon. Gadamer (1989) wrote about the concept of horizon as “it expresses the superior breadth of vision... To acquire a horizon means that one must learn to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger hole and in truer proportion” (p. 316).

Deborah spoke about “looking after mums and female submitters, [and] valuing the contribution of busy women.” She said, “I make a call, at the end of the day, to thank them.” She thought that a male councillor was unlikely to do this. Pat reflected that women councillors were more approachable than their male counterparts, which resulted in stronger and more frequent connections. She said that women councillors “listen to ratepayers nutting off more,” and people “know that you are more interested or sympathetic.” Pat suggested that whilst women have a greater propensity for listening, the “forceful” style from male councillors resulted in the men often being perceived as “better,” a position she dismissed. Helen claimed, “I do think that some people approach you, and raise issues with you, that they probably would not approach a man with.” Wilson (1983) found a similar view expressed by the women MPs in her study. Fran Wilde said, “it really is an advantage being a woman, as people talk to you about personal things, the way they wouldn’t do to a man.” Mary Batchelor was quoted as saying, “[people] trust you more, you know, and will talk about their problems and things” (p. 216).

The ability to hear others’ voices were central to what many of the women thought was effective. Kura said, “you can’t go wrong if you are helping somebody. At the end of the

day, if the community is effective, if it is being looked after, then the district is effective.” Deborah said, “There are many layers of a community, and many people who need support, and many people who are busy... It is about nurturing people and nurturing the next generation. I get satisfaction from being able to help.”

Women define themselves by their human relationships, and by their ability to care about what others think (Gilligan, 1982). Sarah suggested that for a councillor to be effective:

They actually have to believe in people, they actually have to believe that people are worthwhile and worth working with. I see it as an opportunity. You do actually have to understand where people are coming from. If there is one thing I struggle with, at the moment, it is getting an understanding of what future generations want, you know, what the next generation is thinking. And then you go out into the community, and it is all inspirational stuff. I need to be out there, as much as I need to be around the council table.

Understanding the community was reflected in the councillors’ stories that highlighted their representation as respectful, meaningful and relevant. The women’s attention to others was characteristic of how they perceived themselves to be effective representatives. Gilligan (1982) quoted Virginia Woolf, who wrote: “Women's moral weakness, manifest in apparent diffusion and confusion of judgement, is thus inseparable from women's moral strength, and overriding concern with relationships and responsibilities” (p. 17).

Pajnik (2006) reflected on Habermas’ communicative action theory, and wrote that it “implies taking collective responsibility for ‘being in the world’. Communicative action is based on a polyphony of voices, on narrative and experience” (p. 387). The theory is significant to the meanings and experiences of the councillors because, as Pajnik stated, “communicative action in the life-world is not just a matter of choice but a communicative, interactive disposition in the world, which is different from isolation in strategic action” (p. 388).

### **Personal relationships.**

Several councillors referenced their personal relationships as facilitators for their effectiveness. Relationships provided practical support, a source of guidance, knowledge, and corroboration for their thinking, and were often a critical requirement for the women to successfully combine a political career with familial and other

responsibilities. Rachel commented that the business of council takes councillors away from families. She suggested a councillor needs to have a sympathetic and supportive family network if they are to be able to conduct the job to their best of their ability.

Atarangi spoke about her partner, her children and her friends, and the roles that each had played in supporting her in political office. The affirmation that Atarangi received from her daughters was a particular source of strength and a boost to her confidence. Jocelyn and Anna spoke about the partnership with their husbands, specifically identifying their support as important. The encouragement given by their husbands was a boost to their political identity and feelings of efficacy.

Carolyn reflected on the support given by her husband:

He is helpful in making me refine things when I come home and kick my heels off and say ‘Why can’t I do this?’ or ‘How do I phrase this?’ He helps me make [my communications] less emotional and more business-like.

Carolyn’s deference to a male touchstone was needed because the masculinist language and detached nature of local government prevented a different voice from being heard. The above statement from Carolyn demonstrated awareness about the harm that could be caused by displaying behaviour that could be perceived as gendered, and how the use of a male touchstone that could facilitate efficacious performances were more likely to be received positively by male councillors. Gadamer (1989) wrote that the language in which a conversation “is conducted, bears its own truth within it – i.e. that it allows something to ‘emerge’ which henceforth exists” (p. 402). In this sense, the truth of men’s and women’s different voices begins to emerge.

Wilson (1983) observed the importance of a supportive husband for political women. “The crucial importance of the cooperative husband reveals the importance of the cultural perspectives of the contemporary environment in which women must operate” (p. 202). It would be just as reasonable to substitute the expression ‘cooperative husband’, for ‘cooperative wife’, as the importance of a cooperative female partner for a male politician is equally revealing about the cultural perspectives of the political environment. In both scenarios, the understanding that is reached is one of male predominance in the relationship.

## Connection to Community

Hermeneutically, all understanding is derived from relationship, a relationship between an interpreter and their text - their being - in the world (Gadamer, 1989). Interpreting the meaning of relationships, Gadamer wrote of the openness to the other, recognising the other voice. He wrote, “without openness, there is no genuine human bond” (p. 369).

Rachel said, “I want to make sure everyone is getting benefit from the council...I want to make sure there is access and no barriers.” Kathryn said, “I am very people centred and I want to represent the heart of the community, and not just the chequebooks... I am there for the community.”

The relational focus, that was characteristic of each councillor, varied according to the type of councillor. The district councillor affiliations were with those smaller geographical areas or with communities of interest. The city / metropolitan councillors displayed connections to the community at a macro level, often advocating at group or identity level. The regional councillors displayed strong ideological connections to community interests, as they related to the management of the environment. The statutory functions of the regional council are not perceived to touch the lives of people on a daily basis in the same way as the library, the road or the dog licence does, for example, and may account for the different connection to community.

Atarangi described her connection to the community. She said, “showing up to the group to have a chat,” or connecting to someone in the street, was just as effective as delivering a big infrastructure project. Atarangi described the significance of her connection to her Māori community. She talked about her “bias” towards any group that she had whakapapa<sup>8</sup> links to. Atarangi’s connections reflected the importance of a historically effected consciousness as a basis for understanding how personal identity provides context and meaning for representation. Atarangi reflected on a statement made by a fellow community member, which resonated with her. She said, “a lady told me my shoes are glued in [the community]... my toes are in the soil”. Atarangi described the unintended consequences of an ANZAC day participation. The endorsements and affirmations that Atarangi received, allowed people in the community to feel more connected to her, and for her to feel more connected to them. The reciprocity gained through the relationships was evident. She said, “it made me feel

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<sup>8</sup> Whakapapa means genealogy or cultural identity (Ryan, P.M. (2002) *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori*, Auckland: Reed.). Whakapapa provides the basis of relationship between individuals, whanau (families), hapu (local tribal entities), iwi (regional tribal bodies), and the whenua (land).



connected... I extended my network of people, people I had not known in all of the years I had lived in the community.”

Hine reflected a similar consciousness. She said:

I am in love. I just think it is the centre of the universe. I think [the area] is the centre of the universe, and it deserves to be well. I think the people, the land and the opportunities are just there, it is very starry-eyed stuff. It means a lot to me.

Attachment to place is a hallmark of Māori identity formation (Larner, 1995; Ralston, 1993; Wall, 2001). The frequency with which the Māori councillors spoke about their connection to the land highlighted the significance of the genealogical connection. The non-Māori councillors also expressed similar feelings of connection to their communities, and the environment in which they lived, thus highlighting the significance of connection for the women in general.

Anna defined her community connectedness in relation to an understanding of her needs. “Knowing what our needs are,” she said, “is a reason we can represent.” She described her feeling of wellness from her relationships with the community. Anna described how she felt effective when her contributions made people feel like they mattered. She said, “I love being connected and involved with groups in the community.” Anna spoke about an individual’s power to generate change on behalf of a community:

One of the things I like about any process is that one person can really make a change. I think that is lost to a lot of people. They really don’t understand the power of their own voice, and how they can actually make mountains move sometimes. So I know that I can make a change. I know I just have to get off my arse, get out there and do it, ring somebody, talk to somebody, organise something, do something, and then it happens.

Anna’s story’s displayed a consciousness of her potential to exert power as a councillor through connection. Affinity with the community emerged as a reason and purpose for being effective.

Councillors’ relationships with the community grow over time. “Building a relationship with the community can take many years,” said Vivian. Helen spoke about the bond she built with Māori women in her community. The story signified the importance of sharing history and experiences, and the effect this could have on perceptions of

effectiveness. She told the story of when, as a young mother, she joined a group of Māori women in the kiwifruit packhouse. She said:

It was really interesting. About 20 years later, when I put my hand in the ring for [council] in the beginning, they remembered me. The women who had been in the picking gang at the same time... remembered that I was part of the gang and I had sat down under the hedge and ate my lunch [with them]...It was remembered, so I must be OK.

Buker (1990) referenced Ho'oipo De Cambra's political journey. De Cambra explained how politics began with her friends in the kitchen, how friends sat together drinking coffee, sharing problems and talking about their lives. Similarly, with Helen, the story highlights how a relational foundation facilitated and enabled her later political participation.

Belinda described the positive feelings that arose from her relationships with ratepayers and community members. For her, the relationships in the community were particularly important because of the strained relationships she had within her council. She said:

I love it when a ratepayer rings and says something has happened... Those little things... [like] when someone rings up and says that pot hole is fixed, or that rubbish is picked up, ...it means more than anything, it's just wonderful.

The councillors' connections to the community, and the achievement of results on their behalf, demonstrated how the effectiveness they realised could be felt at a community level and were an important outcome for the councillors' personal assessments of their efficacy, and their sense of effectiveness. The relational basis of being effective gave meaning and context to the women in their councillor role.

### **Community as an Aid to Personal Effectiveness**

The relationships articulated by the women were reciprocal, thus highlighting the significance of a cooperative basis to being effective.

Pat described how she stood for local government at the request of, and with encouragement from, the community:

Various people said, 'Why don't you stand for council? You've got lots of background that would be useful and you understand how it works'. So I mulled over that and decided because I had always been interested in the political process and when you are a sort of head of something, you get involved in politics whether you want to or not.

And I thought it might be interesting being on the other side for a change, so I stood and with a lot of help from people, I got in.

Anna had a similar experience:

My political career started when a deputation came to see me and said 'we would like to nominate you for mayor'. I said, 'that is pushing it a bit, you know. You know I have not even been on council, I am not sure of the process'. Then, being seen by people in the community, hence the deputation. So I decided I would stand for local government as a councillor and polled third highest, so I was rapt about that. But I get nervous when I think I am relying on people to tick the box for me.

The women's prior roles and experiences in their community have led to them being perceived as credible candidate material. The community's interpretations of the women were based on the experience of history and observing the women candidates' interactions. The understandings that emerged took place through communicative dialogues between the councillors and their communities, which led to a fusion of horizons whereby the women were actively encouraged and supported to become councillors. The women thought they could be effective because they had support from their community.

Speaking about boundary reorganisation, Gail spoke about the community support for a fellow councillor:

We [the council] are outside of the plus or minus, and every one of her constituents submitted that it must stay the same because they do not want to lose her. Now that comes from the farming community, and the village community and Māori... and so if you talk about effective, she is an amazingly effective councillor.

Gadamer (1989) wrote about the reciprocal relationships that exist between interpreter and text, and between two people in conversation, and how that corresponds to the reciprocity involved in reaching an understanding. He wrote, "the common subject matter is what binds the two partners" (p. 405). The councillors' stories of their relationships are examples of the hermeneutic conversation, whereby an act of understanding has been achieved. This understanding provides a foundation for a strong relationship between councillor and community. The councillors' stories highlighted the importance of credible meaningful relationships. The reciprocity of the relationship between councillor and community demonstrated the value of investing in people, and in relationships, and their importance for the councillors' meanings of effectiveness.

## **Political Friendships and Relationships**

Political relationships are a necessity of political office, and a councillor's effectiveness emerged as being contingent on political relationships. The councillors' narratives revealed how a councillor's political relationships could facilitate self-efficacy, increase the potential for effectiveness and influence the perceived nature of that effectiveness. Gilligan (2011) wrote about women's desire for relationships, and women's capacity for mutual understandings, which are horizontal in structure and "inherently democratic" (p. 67). The conclusion arising from the narratives is that women's political relationships are in concert with others, and are important enablers and determinants for their perceived and actual effectiveness. The relationships were not easily demarcated along personal and political lines.

## **The Importance of Political Relationships**

Political relationships were a practical necessity for general support, corroboration of proposals and voting in the council chamber. Political relationships helped the councillor navigate the local government system and their advocacy of community interests. Political relationships promoted the councillors' competencies and aspirations, facilitated their self-efficacy, and increased the prospect for them to effect change.

Anna highlighted the functionality of her relationships with councillors, her story demonstrating how she drew on the knowledge of others, and how she formed alliances across the spectrum of the council. She said:

After a while, with councillors, you get to know who's got the knowledge you can tap into, that's worthy of tapping into. I might ring up a councillor to talk and say, 'Do you want a cup of coffee?' or talk to them about what is going on, or just sort of sound out [what I am thinking]. I quite like bouncing information off people; that can keep my confidence. When you are talking with people, you either get the nod, or the, 'I was not really thinking that', you know.

Anna also spoke about the smaller number of more significant relationships she had, where a deeper level of trust and respect existed. These have enabled her to be more open in her dialogue and thought, through a more personal type of relationship. Anna's relationships were represented as nurturing, and revealed her ability to connect across a broad spectrum. The relationships she described also demonstrated the significance of combining reason with emotion.

The value of political alliances was evident to Helen, early in her career, when she

formed a coalition with a group of community business people. She described how, as a group of new councillors, they voted together, declaring:

I am not saying it welded us together but it was quite indicative that this was a group of people who came onto council that had a bit more of a commercial bent than there had been previously, and we were happy to make a decision that might not have been deemed to be flavour of the month.

Helen's reflection indicated the formation of political friendship that emerged from a common purpose, a hermeneutic conversation whereby shared understanding was realised. The early alliance with the predominantly male councillors around a shared vision was likely to have provided an important foundation for Helen to be perceived as effective and credible. The scenario described by Helen was a commercial and business issue, and her alliance with an issue, which had resonance with the interests of the male councillors, supported her efficacy and agency. Pajnik (2006) described how Habermas' discourse assumes a reciprocity and equality of perspective in the public domain. However, the women's text highlighted how this was not always the case. Had Helen allied with a minority group who was focussed on a social wellbeing interest (as opposed to an economic one), it is reasonable to interpret that she and her alliance could have been seen as less credible, because of the marginal support for social wellbeing by male councillors. Across several narratives, economic considerations were presented as male issues, and social concerns were seen as being female. Because of women's lesser descriptive presence, alliances built around issues, contrary to the position of the dominant group, could have made effective action difficult to realise. The story told by Helen highlighted the significance of forming the 'right' political alliances around the 'right' issues, and how the determinations about what 'right' was, were controlled by the ruling group.

Pat, to some degree, was a little more cynical about the veracity of political relationships, a perspective more congruent with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Pat said, "in order to be effective you need a staged programme, in order to get councillors" on board. She described it as a "softening up process," and continued:

You have to pick your allies; you work out who is on your side and who is not. I am not a great one for lobbying, but sometimes you do need to talk and find out where people are at.

Olivia described how she looked to those politicians she revered:

I try to look to politicians that I think do a good job, and try to emulate them. They are often the people that you feel you have a personal connection with because you feel you can talk to them, and that your views will be listened to and acted on, or they will help you to arrive at a new conclusion if what you are proposing is not workable.

The stories from the councillors have resonance with Freeman's (2007) insights, (drawn from Heidegger):

Being does not reside in the individual but in the space where one performs one's being in relation to others. The focus of the interpretive act is on the act of differing, the way separate horizons interact, negotiate their performative space and are reconfigured. (p. 942)

The stories showed the relative ease with which the women formed political relationships, and their ability to forge political alliances that were both strategic and meaningful.

### **Relationships with mayors and council leaders.**

Political leadership is crucial "because the chain of accountability passes down a hierarchy from the political heads through the ranks of the organisation to the front line where services are provided to the public" (Elcock & Fenwick, 2012, p. 87). The councillors' relationship with their leaders was particularly important for the women's feelings and perceptions about their effectiveness. Support from the political leadership strengthened the councillor's potential efficacy, as the relationship often resulted in the councillor holding political positions, which enabled them to exert influence and leverage change.

The dominance of male mayors in New Zealand (in 2011) led the councillors in this study to provide narratives of their relationships with male mayors. There is an absence of information about women councillors' relationships with female mayors (because of the low numbers of female mayors, and the absence of research in this area). Reflecting on the support of her first mayor, Iris stated, "he showed me a pathway as a councillor." Iris described how the support gave her confidence to grow, and helped her to gain a feeling that the council could make a difference that she could be part of. She said, "as he did with most people, actually, he mentored me. He pushed me." Iris recalled saying to the mayor:

I like to breathe through my nose and get an understanding of what I'd got into. And he said, 'we do not have time for that around here, we

have a lot to be done, and we just need to get on with it'. So, that was a bit of a wakeup call.

The statement indicated a preference of wanting to establish alliances and ground herself, highlighting this as a pre-requisite for effective political action.

Anna suggested the support of a mayor “can show that you are on the right track, and this can help you feel like you can get the job done.” Similarly, Mary, reflecting on her mayor, said, “he allowed us to take responsibility,” and “he shared roles.” Vivian expressed how a former mayor had facilitated her effectiveness:

He placed people quite strategically. He used to do deals. He would say ‘if you support me on this’, but we worked as a team. He respected everyone’s individuality. So when he went to a meeting there would be no caucusing, he would not know the outcome... He knew standing orders back to front. He had the backing of a very committed CEO. He respected you for your ability, and he would do things like drop you a note and say ‘that went particularly well’. He would thank you for what you did.

Laura observed her first chairman as supportive and encouraging; “he was a person who always looked to the outcome,” she said:

He did a lot of work behind the scenes. He’d bring councillors in. He would talk to them about the agenda, and he would always ring about two days before the meeting. So you learnt to do your preparation... When he rang, I wanted to be able to discuss the issues with him, and I found that quite good. Other councillors resented it because they felt he was checking up on them to see if they had done their preparation. But to me, it was laying the groundwork for being able to have a good debate at the meeting.

The positive relationships between mayor and councillor are shown to be grounded in respect, the councillor perceiving her leader as credible and effective. The women also felt effective in their role working with this leadership. The mayors who were highlighted as ‘good’ ones were those who displayed cooperative and respectful leadership. The styles of leadership held resonance with the women.

Mary highlighted how she connected with styles of leadership that she supported, and drew on her relationship experiences with two women mayors. Speaking about a mayor from a neighbouring authority, she said, “I thought she had a really nice way about her... she always tried to make sure everyone had an opportunity to be heard”. To demonstrate a contrast to Mary’s preferred way of forming relationships, she reflected on a woman mayor who behaved contrary to Mary’s expectations. She stated, “she is a

bully, it is not attractive... Women with egos leave me quite cold. Men have them and I just about expect it from men, but not from women.” By reflecting on behaviours she perceived as less effective, Mary identified what effectiveness meant to her.

Mary’s reflections also highlighted how societal perceptions about expected and accepted behaviours of women could influence other women's views about their performances, particularly when a woman acted in a way that was contrary to how wider society thinks women should perform. Anderson and Sheeler (2005) quoted Kathleen Hall Jamieson who wrote, “the same cues are evaluated differently in men and women. Assertiveness is valued in men, but not in women” (p. 11). The assertive traits displayed by the mayors in Iris’s, Anna’s and Laura’s stories were viewed positively. The female mayor described by Mary employed behaviours contrary to what was expected of a woman. Her style of leadership was more akin to practices accepted of men, yet she was perceived as less effective. This highlighted the challenge and double standard that still exists for some political women whose ways of working do not conform to conventional models about female leadership. Reliance on stereotypes can result in women being perceived as less effective than a man who displayed similar behaviours. Such perceptions could affect women's views about their own effectiveness. Perceptions from others can reinforce a stereotype about what effectiveness means and what women's effectiveness is.

This research project cannot draw any conclusions about whether the women’s experiences with their male leaders would have been different from relationships that they may have had with female leaders. However, Tremaine (2000) wrote that there is some evidence that communities have a preference for women mayors, possibly ‘because of the impressive record of some high-profile mayors... in promoting an inclusive cooperative climate within the council chamber (p. 247), and because according to Jill White, they have “people at the forefront of their minds” (as cited in Tremaine, 2007, p. 111).

### **Sisterhood.**

The councillors’ relationships were not always with other political women. Woven throughout several of the stories were the significant relationships with mothers, female educators, women role models, friends, fellow committee members, staff and other community colleagues. Whilst some of the councillors’ narratives did not explicitly reference relationships with women as significant to their effectiveness, each woman



recalled significant moments when gendered alliances were important. The women's articulated experiences of their political relationships with other women can be attributed to the importance of recognising a shared gendered history.

Talking about the people who had facilitated her effectiveness, Bailey spoke of women who were extraordinary, gifted, clever and capable. Reflecting on a former policy manager, she described working with her as a “master class in local government.” Bailey stated, “that kind of partnership between good senior women staff members and good women politicians, that kind of puts me in a good space.” Marama said, “I use women as my touchstone to talk about the issues.” The lack of women councillors present in the councils made the alliances with critical female knowledge brokers, who were often not councillors, an important aid to their being effective.

Vivian talked about the “the powerhouse,” of the women's division of the National Party:

[There] was that very articulate cross section of women who set the rules and you learned together... they banded behind you, [and] they were prepared to give you the time if they felt you had any ability to articulate what they wanted. They would stand up, and they were role models.

Vivian reflected on a period when women's voices were largely absent in parliament, which made the division all the more important if there was to be any substantive representation of women's interests. The alliances were formed for political reasons but the support from these women meant something to Vivian and influenced her subsequent acts towards other political women. She said:

When I was given the chair of planning, I decided, just as people had mentored me, I would make sure that the steps I took were right for any woman who came after me.

Vivian's experiences were located in her benefiting from role models, and, in turn, her offering learning and skills to other women. The stories from Bailey and Vivian demonstrate how the advancement of women's political interests could be achieved through relationships with other women, and how alliances with other women had an important practical function for women's political advancement. Through the relationship foundations, and ameliorating the impediments facing political women, the women's gendered alliances demonstrated their importance in supporting future generations of women to participate effectively.

Kathryn reflected a woman's way of working, and a collective spirit amongst the women councillors. She said:

The difference between us women is quite huge. [It's] different personalities coming together, and I have often said it; we would not have wars in this world if the world was run by women. We look for compromise; we look to fix things before they get bad.

The women's alliances countered individualism and offered benefits for male councillors as much as for women. Speaking about the connection amongst the female councillors in her authority, Kathryn suggested that the learning had been greater for the male councillors. Devere and Smith (2010) wrote that women's "friendship has had an important and even practical role in the resistance of power and the fight for justice" (p. 342).

Sisterhood can be compromised in a political forum. Iris reflected on an occasion when she acted in a way that she perceived as politically effective but compromised her friendship with a fellow councillor. Iris recalled:

We were nominating councillors to be represented on a working party or a committee. And I had a friend, a female friend, and she was [a nominee]. We were having this vote; this particular woman had been nominated with one of the male councillors, and I did not believe that she had the right skills to do the job, so I supported the male. And I remember the female councillor leaning across the table and hissing at me saying, 'I thought you were my friend, why did not you support me?' When we broke for afternoon tea and she had another go at me about it, I said to her 'I thought you knew me better than that, I thought you knew I would vote for the person I thought was best for the job, whether they were male or female, and I am sorry if you have not recognised that.' I went home that night and cried my eyes out actually, and it is the only time I have ever done that as a councillor.

As a defining moment in Iris's political career, the event demonstrated, as she stated, that she had the ability to make tough decisions. However, the consciousness of the hurt that her decision caused, and the realisation that she had lost a friend, supported the theory that women's "perception of self is so much more tenaciously embedded in relationships with others" (Gilligan, 1977, p. 482). The story highlighted the emotional costs of women's occupation in a political world organised by and predominantly occupied by men. Within such a model, individuation and autonomy are dominant, and when emotional attachment and rational politics clashed, the effect could be negative for the women's perceptions of themselves and their effectiveness. Arendt (1998)

referenced respect as a key to understanding political friendships. She wrote:

Respect... is a kind of "friendship" without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance, which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities, which we may admire, or of achievements that we may highly esteem. (p. 263)

The level of emotional concern evident from Iris's story extended beyond the concept of political friendship described by Arendt, and highlighted the tension that could exist when personal attachment and political responsibility intersect.

Reflecting on her story, Iris personally felt ineffective, and was perceived as ineffective by her friend, despite trying to act in a way that she thought was fair and politically effective. It is likely that the fellow councillor also felt ineffective, because she had failed to secure the committee position. The tension that existed between the women aspiring for substantive representation, and detached rational decision-making, was apparent. This feeling would have been less likely to be felt by a male councillor who was part of a political majority or ruling group, and whose gender was not a political issue. The conflict between care and justice was evident in the narrative, as was the conflict between personal attachment and political detachment. The story demonstrated how the personal and the political do not always correspond, and, equally, how a separation may not be easily achieved for women, where the political is still very much in the domain of the personal.

Childs' (2013) reflections on the importance of women's political connections highlighted how women's friendships provided a means by which women councillors could negotiate their otherness, through the formation of gendered alliances that arise from inhabiting a gendered environment. The paucity of women's political representation limits the pool of other political women who are available for alliance formation. This makes those female alliances, that do exist, particularly important. Reflecting on women MPs parliamentary relationships, Childs wrote, "their friendships can be interpreted as a response to their gendered marginalisation within various gendered institutions" (p. 146). Writing autobiographically, Kunin (1994) described how she had "continually rediscovered the power ... received from women" (p. 25), and she defined gender as a far more cohesive force than age or party politics (p. 107). She wrote how "the presence of women in key places at critical times made me feel less alone, alien and bizarre in male political terrain" (p. 10). Kunin stated that she soon

learned that her female cohort needed her as much as she needed them. In each of the councillors' narratives, their female relationships reflected how "friendship can be seen to be both a component of politics and a concern for the political" (Devere & Smith, 2010, p. 344). The women's accounts of their friendships evidenced the interconnectedness between women's personal and public lives, and represented the entirety of women's relationships as fundamental to their personal and political effectiveness.

### **Relationships with council staff.**

Councillors' political relationships extend beyond other politicians. A councillor's relationships with council employees could be crucial for them to be able to facilitate good governance. Several councillors spoke about the importance of their relationships with council staff, and identified council staff as critical actors for the pursuit of effectiveness.

Anna spoke about the connectedness with staff, which was particularly important in a small council. She said, "most of them live in your community anyway, so they know what goes on, they know the needs." Anna's organisational relationships appeared to have fostered her capacity to be efficacious.

Atarangi described a culture of close collaboration with staff. She partially attributed her effectiveness to her connection with staff. Atarangi was conscious of not crossing the line into operations but felt comfortable sitting down with staff and saying, "How can we do this?" "If this happened, how could we do that?" "Where can we find the resources?" Atarangi's prior experience as a local authority employee was manifest in the empathy her narrative displayed towards council staff and her understanding about their role in her effectiveness. Atarangi displayed a consciousness that the extent of one's efficacy, and the ability to be effective, relied on a cooperative approach. As an example of the significance of this relationship, Atarangi said when she had a question she would advise staff in advance, enabling them to conduct their research prior to council meetings. She said:

[It] means we are working more effectively together and we can actually move forward instead of catching staff on the hop. I mean, what good does that do...? It makes them look silly, and you look even more stupid for asking a question you know they cannot answer.

Mary spoke about the process of relationship-building with staff. Mary's second term

was characterised by a greater understanding of council processes and increased knowledge and confidence, which was recognised by the staff, and enabled her to increase her potential for effectiveness. Mary remarked:

If there was something that they [staff] need to get through council, to make sure the council was actually supporting it, they would come to me and say, ‘This is going to be coming up at the next meeting. Would you like to come in and I will take you through it?’

Several women represented that a good relationship with their Chief Executive as being an important relationship for councillors. The knowledge the Chief Executive imparted was seen as less partisan, and focussed on enabling the councillor to learn about the dynamics and culture of the local government environment. The Chief Executive performed the roles of conduit, advocate, informer, facilitator, enabler and communicator, each role important for the councillor’s actualisation of effectiveness. Marama described the importance of a Chief Executive for a new councillor. She observed:

I really value the relationships we have in our council. We have full access to any staff member, at any time, to help us discuss our issues. Our CEO will direct us to specific staff members to deal with our issues directly. I think for me our CEO is one of the first ports of call, and he’s been really helpful in helping me to understand the dynamic, to understand the background behind some of the issues we have been discussing.

The nature of the councillor / staff relationships was strongly characterised by reciprocity, highlighting the extent to which efficacy and effectiveness was contingent on respect and cooperation among and between councillors and staff. The reciprocity of the relationships was visible within the narratives and emphasised the significance of the “connective tissue that ties person to person” (Devere & Smith, 2010, p. 352) and how this promulgated a councillor’s effectiveness.

### **Realising Results through Political Relationships**

The women’s feelings, perceptions and actualisation of effectiveness were facilitated by their political relationships. A common theme amongst the women’s accounts of their political relationships was that of power sharing and working in partnership. The women recognised the synergy that emerged through partnership, collaboration, and processes of collective action and alliance-building. There was an articulated understanding that each person’s contribution collectively increases the effectiveness

potential of the councillor, and the council on behalf of the community. A story from Sarah demonstrated how the improvements in her community were achieved by supporting the political leadership, and working collectively across the organisation to achieve the vision of the council and community. Rachel talked about political relationships as the only means to achieve a significant social policy change. She remarked, “you know, the way to do it is by consensus.” Arendt (1969) symbolised a way of exerting power that resonated with the women’s expressed ways of working, in the following statement: “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert” (cited by Karlberg, 2005, p. 6).

Several councillors identified occasions that demonstrated their “ability to transcend individual interests, not by negating those interests but through interacting with, listening to and responding to others” (Pajnik, 2006, p. 392). Reflecting on an attempt to overturn a decision made by the council, Olivia described how she talked to colleagues, enabled them to understand the implications of their decision, and eventually gained sufficient support to overturn the decision. She demonstrated the potential of political relationships and active communication to aide understanding that could realise personal, political and community outcomes.

Anna described working alongside the mayor, to attend to a matter that was being neglected by councillors and other parts of the organisation. Anna said that this particular issue had been “getting under the mayor’s skin.” Anna’s intervention supported a swift resolution. She reflected:

It was the old boys’ network that was holding it up. Relationships were going really slowly because people did not like to say, or they did not want to hurt someone’s feelings. But it was costing the ratepayer, it was costing the community.

Anna felt able to deal with the magnitude of the issue, and her intervention represented a tipping point. Feminist standpoint theorists have written about women's ability to manage change and growth (Harstock, 1983; Hekman, 1997; Jaggar, 2004). The stories from Olivia and Anna highlighted the preparedness of the councillors to advocate and to seek resolutions through political cooperation. The ways in which the women managed challenging relationships was significant to the achievement of outcomes.

Bailey reflected on a difficult issue that appeared to challenge the authority of existing political structures, and override the rights of the community. Bailey said she

approached the issue by:

Looking them in the eye and saying, ‘this is really hard stuff, and I know that you are not going to like it, and I know it sounds like we are trying to remove community rights’, and just kind of calling out all of the stuff that I knew was sitting in people’s hearts and minds.

When talking about how she felt, Bailey said:

The nicest thing for me was when one of the board Chairs, who had been the most suspicious and the most untrusting, came up to me and said, ‘I just need to tell you I actually do trust what you are doing, I don’t really like it, and I need to talk to you a lot, but I trust you’. That meant the world to me.

Reflecting on the importance of this collaborative, inclusive decision-making style, Bailey said:

It stems from a fundamental belief, for me, that you need to be just and fair in the way that you do things And, secondly, you should not force the community into places they do not want to go when they do not understand what is going on.

Feminist hermeneutist Pajnik (2006) reflected on communicative action, which highlights the importance of inclusion, and a system of democracy that encourages debate, cooperation and “a willingness to take responsibility” (p. 392). The stories highlighted the integrity that women councillors’ relational and inclusive focus could bring to change processes, and how power and authority, when exercised with people, as opposed to over people, had an increased potential for an effective outcome. Bailey asserted, “I think we can make stronger decisions that are more politically robust if we take time to talk them through with people.” Pajnik reflected that such communications facilitate “an ability to discover truth” (p. 393).

The women’s reflections demonstrated their willingness to share power and re-define power. The nature of women's relational pasts may account for this position. Miller (1982) quoted by Karlberg (2005) wrote:

Women have exerted enormous powers in their traditional role of fostering growth in others, and they have found that empowering others is a valuable and gratifying activity. Empowering other people, however, does not fit accepted conceptualizations and definitions of power. (p. 7 )

Karlberg continued to reference Miller who advocated a:

broad redefinition of power based on the ‘capacity to produce change’, which includes activities such as ‘nurturing’ and ‘empowering others’. ‘To be powerful in ways that simultaneously enhance, rather than diminish, the power of others’, she concludes, ‘is a radical turn – a very different motivation than the concept of power upon which this world has operated. (p. 8)

The councillors’ stories demonstrated how the women’s propensity for connection positively influenced their ways of being effective. By asserting the relational nature of their past experiences, the councillors were able to demonstrate the positive consequences of aligning their emotional and rational selves for effective behaviours and outcomes.

## **Chapter Summary**

The first section of the chapter presented data to highlight the interdependence of the councillors to their people and their place. The community attachments provided sustenance for many of the women councillors, and demonstrated the propensity for the women to define themselves relationally. The connective tissue that tied the councillors to their community was manifested through their acts of effectiveness. The emphasis on connection over separation, and collaboration over conflict, appeared to have allowed the women to develop and share power without imposition, thus rendering them effective representatives for their communities.

In the second section of the chapter, I reflected on the councillors’ political relationships. Mallory (2012) suggested that the notion of political friendships was a neglected concept in respect of an assessment of democracy, and wrote, “friendship in modernity is often considered to be a private and personal bond between intimates and decidedly not a public or political relation” (p. 22). The assertion from Mallory that friendship was private, and absent from politics, was incongruent with the councillors’ stories, which presented their political relationships as both personal and political. Mallory stated that, “representations of friendship often emphasize idealized qualities of the bond such as trust, equality, openness and genuine respect for the friend as a unique person” (p. 25). The councillors’ accounts of their political relationships reflected similar attributes. As represented by their stories, the cooperation and interdependence of the women to others across the spectrum of association in their lives was an important component of what it meant to be effective.

The next chapter considers the councillors’ interpretations of being effective from the



perspective of the local government structure and culture.

## Chapter 8: Structure and Culture

A councillor's effectiveness is contingent on a range of facilitators and enablers.

Chapter 6 considered the historical determinants of effectiveness. Chapter 7 considered the relational basis to the women councillors' effectiveness.

This chapter considers the political determinants of a councillor's effectiveness in relation to local government structure and culture. It explores the impact a local government structure, fundamentally differing from women's past experiences and preferred ways of working, had for the councillors' perceptions and actualisations of effectiveness.

Councils are creatures of statute; they can only do what parliament allows. Whilst their legal authority limits councils, there is discretion about how councils deliver their activities and functions. The presentations that take place within local government are akin to a play. Gadamer wrote how the play "bears within itself a meaning to be understood" (p. 114). "A play," Gadamer wrote:

has the structure of a game, which is that of a closed world... The players play their roles, as in any game, and thus the play is represented, but the play itself is the whole, comprising players and spectators. In fact it is experienced properly by, and presents itself (as it is meant), to one who is not acting in the play but watching it... For the players this means that they do not simply fulfil their roles as in any game – rather, they play their roles, they represent them for the audience. (p. 114)

"The stage is a political institution" wrote Gadamer (1989, p. 147). For the context of this inquiry, the political institution is the stage. Local government, with its script, actors, directors and audience, is performative. The script is written; the actors learn their roles. Sometimes they improvise or deviate from the script; the directors provide focus and direction; the audience receives the performance, all whilst each player negotiates and interprets their place within the whole. A context and framework is provided for local government to operate but that does not provide certainty about the performances that will take place.

### **Ease of Operating with the System**

Overall, the councillors' stories revealed their respect for the system, and their comfort operating within it. The ease with which a councillor participated within the

bureaucracy was significant because it represented an “absence of strain” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 109). Gadamer reflected how structure could absorb a player into itself, “and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence” (p. 109). The stories signalled the significance of how time in office was an aide for the councillors’ ease of operating within the system. Familiarity, facility and the absence of strain emerged as important precursors for perceptions and feelings of being effective.

The end of the first term emerged as a watershed moment for several councillors. Anna said:

At the end of my first term, I had some experience; things are consolidated; you know what is expected of you and there is more of an opportunity to get things done. It would have been a waste of time to stand for one term and lose all of that knowledge. It takes time for someone to gain the knowledge.

Deborah commented that, as a new councillor, she did not know what was expected of her. She spoke of her fear when the phone rang, or when she was required to speak to the media. She felt that she did not have enough information to confidently speak on behalf of the council. Deborah’s lack of experience and confidence resulted in a more cautious approach. She explained that her first term was a critical period of learning, and described coming into the second term as a watershed moment. She said:

I thought I was doing a good job so when I had to think about standing again, I thought yes... In your first term, you are a bit of an amateur. In your second term, things are consolidated and you do actually know how to go about getting things done, and you do know what is expected of you.

Mary said, “There was actually so much to come to grips with, and understand.”

It was probably at the end of three years that I realised that the processes were so long and quite different to what I was used to. That you actually have to allow time to let things sort of ferment, develop. You consult and then bring it back and make the decision. The decision-making was quite a long way down the line, so after all those stages, it was actually important that there was continuity.

From these stories emerged an understanding about the role of time as contributing to growing consciousness and confidence about working within the system. Gadamer (1989) referenced Nietzsche’s interpretation of time, “all experiences last a long time in profound people” (p. 61). Time can support the assimilation of experiences into

meaningful interpretations that remove the strain of effort and which allowed new or different understandings to emerge, which influence an individual's political performances and decisions about how best to act efficaciously, thus affecting the nature of the individuals' political performances.

### **Respect for process.**

Councillors who operated according to the rules and processes presented strong feelings of their potential for political effectiveness.

Jocelyn described process as an enabler. She said, "allowing proper communication, [and] following proper processes, to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and has the opportunity to express themselves clearly" can foster effectiveness. Jocelyn used processes to her advantage, stating:

I have a reputation, I know, of being very process-orientated which is used as a denigrating expression, 'you are too process-orientated'. But actually, I think it is a very good strength to understand what the processes are, especially in the RMA<sup>9</sup> and the LGA<sup>10</sup> and the other legislation we work with. We are bound to follow what the law says, and to follow proper processes, which may not be perfect but they are better than ad hoc rules.

Naomi talked about the requirement for councillors to understand the parameters of local government, "Effectiveness means a good understanding of the parameters in which you can play as a councillor. It is a good understanding of the restrictions on you, and where you cannot play, a good understanding of the law."

Naomi identified her first mayor as facilitating her understanding of the parameters of councils. She said:

He was very strong on delegations and who had the right to do what. So I was always bought up with those rather firm parameters and I have valued that ever since. For example, if I delegate a job to you, to go and do something, and if I don't like what you decide, then my role is to remove the delegation, not to change what you decided in that instance. And it is just little things like that that.

The reflection by Naomi acknowledged the need for all councillors (not just women) to appreciate the constraints of the system, and the ways in which a councillor could

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<sup>9</sup> Resource Management Act 1991. The Act promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources such as land, air and water.

<sup>10</sup> Local Government Act 2002. The Act relates to the purpose and operation of New Zealand local government.

legally and realistically actualise her effectiveness for political and community outcomes. The councillors who gave attention to the notion that effectiveness was, in part, contingent on their cooperation with the system, demonstrated a strong sense of self-efficacy because of their responsiveness to the system. In contrast, the councillors whose stories exhibited less respect for the system and its rules showed that effectiveness could be harder to realise. Assessments of effectiveness, from a system perspective, highlight how experiences associated with process either conform, or not, to individual expectations (Gadamer, 1989), thus demonstrating the importance of a councillor's system association as a basis for understanding the meaning of an individual's effectiveness.

Vivian reflected how the system rules could provide protection for councillors.

Reflecting on a particular situation, Vivian said:

To start, with I definitely took the steps slowly, and I went to the county clerk and said, 'can you give me some advice. I have never been on a council before and I don't want to do it wrong'. And he said, 'well, I will tell you, this is my advice after 35 years. Respect the process and then expect the process to respect you'. I know it sounds old-fashioned but if you think about it, it makes sense. So I have always used the process as a protection. If I follow the process, and I can clearly show the steps in the process. If you abuse the process, the way [the mayor] did, that is when it all comes falling down. If you think you are more important than the process, and think you can do what you like when you like, you have nothing to support you. So when he ran the [x] process, I walked out and the judge took that into consideration, because he [the mayor] was not following any process. He had predetermined the outcome, and natural justice did not prevail. He had decided to cut it to suit himself without following any process.

As Vivian continued to reflect on the local government system, her narrative highlighted how processes could provide certainty but the application of process was contingent on the actor, not the rule. Reflecting on the uncertainty of performance Vivian said:

It is a bit like the difference with the Anglican Church. You could go to an Anglican church and you could know, in a funeral, what was going to happen. You go to funerals now and you think you have seen everything, and suddenly things come from left field that you don't expect. Whereas the ordered way that I could sit through one of [X's] meetings there were no surprises. I have had six years of [Y] and have had all the surprises in the world. If I look through the three mayors I have served under, one was very structured and informed, then you had [Z] and you had no idea what was happening. The surprise that happens now is that [Y] occasionally turns up to see if he can screw anything.

Whilst the processes were cited as providing protection, fairness, certainty and clarity, with politics as a stage, each performance will be different, depending on time, circumstances and the actors involved. So whilst the processes of local government are undoubtedly important, their performative application (or misapplication) is what gives them meaning. The extent of effectiveness was judged according to the councillors' resonance with the particular experience.

The councillors' narratives demonstrated an awareness of, and compliance with, their legal and system obligations and highlighted how the tools of the system could facilitate their efficacy. The narratives also demonstrated how the women councillors were required to focus on the rules, because the statutory basis of local government required them to. Gilligan's (1982) description of girls' and boys' moral development described how boys had a greater propensity to focus on the rules of the game, and girls on the players of the game. The women in this inquiry largely displayed a conformity with the rules. Conformity was evident as an enabler of the councillors' effectiveness, and is perhaps an indication of the connection between the self and the "moral commonalities" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 221) to which being belongs. The narratives displayed the women's necessary (sub)conscious compliance with the system rules, in conjunction with a relational focus, as a basis for their being effective.

### **Effectiveness within the System**

The councillors' feelings of effectiveness within the particular culture of their organisation were dependent on the way each woman interpreted the experiences of participation. Iris said:

You put a huge amount of energy into determining a draft direction and getting a consultation document. You put a huge amount of effort into consulting with the community. They [the community] come in, you listen to their submissions, and, it's always satisfying to be able to hear those submissions. Then, if necessary, you amend council's direction to take the community views into account and then get it all signed off so you can actually get on and do something, rather than planning for it and talking about it.

Reflecting on another occasion where she felt effective, Iris said:

I was effective in amending the amendment, talking to others, and assessing their views, because to be effective as a councillor, you do have to have the support of others. If you don't, you are not effective at all. So in this particular instance, it was about talking to others and saying, 'I think there might be a different way of doing this', and

getting their support for it. That one felt really good because there was huge sense of relief for the community. A difficult part of it was that we had to go against the recommendations of council officers. They had put their heart and soul into the job over a number of years. A huge amount of work, nearly \$1m spent on research, none of which had been thrown away, but I did need to be really careful in amongst it that I'd recognise what officers had done and pay tribute to that, and say, 'I don't think any of this is wasting the work that you have done, we just think there is a different way of looking at it'. So you just need to be really careful, as a councillor, that in getting an effective decision for one group of people, you are not actually doing something that is going to be upsetting for another group of people. Particularly in this case, council officers had done a lot of work, carrying out, at the time, council's direction. But that just comes back to - as I said earlier - fairness and honesty in the way in which you deal with people.

Whilst high-level rules and processes govern local government, the story from Iris reflected the importance of keeping people at the forefront of the councillor's focus. The narrative highlighted the intentionality of a councillor's acts of effectiveness, and how her actions were imbued with meaning and care. Reflecting on the concept of care, Pajnik (2006) stated that the "concept of care arises from internal impulses, a desire for action and taking responsibility for action in the process of discourse formation" ( p. 391).

The less-formal council processes emerged as being complimentary to the women's preferred ways of working. Carolyn said, "at a committee level, you are effective because you are making a decision." However, she continued to say that council meetings can be the environment where councillors are least effective, because the debate and the decisions have already "essentially been made." Carolyn spoke about the benefits of working in a less formal un-minuted environment, commenting that it provided councillors and staff with opportunities to develop options and "thrash out ideas." Carolyn's narrative demonstrated the distinction between the feelings of effectiveness, perceptions of effectiveness and realities of effectiveness. The council chamber, governed by strict processes, was the visible culmination of effort. Yet for several women, it did not reflect the dialogue and the processes that had preceded the formal decision. The informal aspects of local government provided a place for collaboration. Mary described the workshop environment as an important place to work with staff and to find out "how people feel." The women's efforts behind the scenes appeared to contribute to women's feelings of effectiveness, although what was visible (via the formal public meetings) influenced how their effectiveness was perceived.

The councillors expressed feelings of effectiveness demonstrated their need to work in a system that fosters broad engagement and free communication. Whether the councillors were working in the formal or less formal processes, working collaboratively in environments, where cooperation and communication was emphasised, was more akin to the women's preferred ways of working.

### **Connection and belonging.**

The women's political presence was not automatically accepted, and some of the councillors described how they operated at the fringe of the councillor group. Once a councillor was included in the mainstream or dominant culture of the organisation, her sense of self-efficacy, and the potential for effectiveness, increased. Some of the women reported how the male councillors formed their relationship with them once they were accepted as members of the 'group,' which inferred an exclusivity to the political club. Gadamer (1989) wrote:

The meaning of "belonging" – i.e. the element of tradition in our historical-hermeneutical activity – is fulfilled in the commonality of fundamental enabling prejudices. Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter. (p. 306)

The women's stories displayed an inclusiveness to their relationship formation because of the breadth of their associations and connections. Rachel spoke about the different ways in which women and men built their political relationships:

Men do it through their clubs and their golf and every other bloody thing, whereas women tend to do our education, go into a relationship, have kids and then sneak back in. We don't have those formalised kinds of ways of handing on the mantle.

Mary said:

The men have a much stronger sense of belonging to the group, you know, like their rugby, or their social club or cosmopolitan club. Whereas women tend to belong to a number of entities, and sometimes you actually feel a little bit isolated because you are not part of 'that' group. And I have accosted them verbally, just saying, 'Look, don't close us out; let us in', and Hey, you are making it like a private club. Don't do that'.

An individual's sense of belonging may be defined and limited by "particular moral spheres," the conditions of the historical experience and moral context, wrote Gadamer (1989, p. 219). But a sense of communion can be achieved through openness to the



other, and the fusion of the broad horizons taking place. Habermas' discourse assumed freedom, equality and reciprocity of perspectives in the public sphere (as cited in Pajnik, 2006). The women's narratives reflected how the male councillors' 'moral sphere' impeded their effective political participation.

Trina described how belonging and inclusion impacted her being effective:

In the first triennium, my two fellow ward councillors, who were born and bred in the district, did not include me in anything. Whenever there were two councillors to go to something, it was always them. Then one of them stood down, for health reasons. A former borough mayor stood up and so there were three of us still from our community as councillors. In this [second] triennium, all of a sudden I am part of the team of three so that has made quite a difference. I actually have a lot more respect for my two fellow ward councillors because they now acknowledge my participation, my contribution, and they include me.

Speaking about the reasons for her inclusion, Trina said:

Because I was a returning councillor, because I had done the hard yards, because there are now five women on our council, you can't keep on ignoring the women forever. I think, in a lot of local body politics, the men would still rather there were no women on council.

Trina questioned whether a male councillor would have been required to prove their worth and capability in the same way that she had. Reflecting on the impact of being included, she said:

I don't know that it changed a lot. It meant that I was able to participate in more of the local community things, but a lot of that is just being there and listening. It makes me laugh occasionally. I just go with the flow, I don't hold any grudges for the fact that the treatment has changed, you know. Basically, where we have common goals, we work together so I put aside what has happened in the past and move on.

Jocelyn spoke of her first term disappointment in not receiving a committee appointment, despite her having the skills and interest in the particular area. She was appointed to the committee 18 months later. It is difficult to postulate whether the slower acceptance by her political colleagues was because of gender alone but its identification signalled that gender was perceived to be a determining issue. Feminist theorists have reflected on the right for all persons to be included in a discourse. Rules at a structural level may imply opportunity for all to participate. For the participants, the rules did not guarantee participation and inclusion.

Just as gender could undermine feelings of belonging, it could also aid belonging. Rachel spoke about how her gender enabled her to more easily connect with other councillors. Gail suggested that she was the “mother” within her council. Iris spoke about how it was always important to be a woman, and Kura described being afforded a *kuia*<sup>11</sup> status by her colleagues. The narratives from the women signalled how their inclusion was premised on their gendered performances. The historically normalised position of women as mother, nurturer, and matriarch in some cases, facilitated their belonging within the dominant masculinist culture of local government.

The women’s personal effectiveness was more easily realised at a political level when they were part of the group; the roles they performed were accepted by the dominant group, and they considered themselves part of the culture. A councillor’s political effectiveness was impeded when they existed on the fringes of the dominant culture. This analysis highlights the gendered nature of actualising effectiveness. In order for the women to realise their political effectiveness, inclusion within the dominant male group was necessary. For those women who did not consider themselves part of the mainstream political group, that is, they did not conform to the ‘tradition’ of the culture, effectiveness was realised more easily within the community, and outside of the formal council structures.

### **Acts of resistance.**

Several women described occasions when they were effective by challenging systemic practices and norms that prejudiced them or the community. The stories of resistance, told by a small number of the councillors, served as examples of how acts of resistance could be effective demonstrations of political leadership.

During her first term, Carolyn challenged a committee’s terms of reference. The challenge was not well received by the majority of her committee colleagues.

Recounting the event, she said:

I had one of the older rural councillors patting me on the shoulder and saying ‘never mind, girlie, it is just a formality’. I was quite strong about that and I said ‘no, we need to have proper processes in place’... and we actually had an enormous battle. I had a number of councillors being very patronising to me, saying it was not important, and trying to shut me up. I just stuck to it, stuck to it, stuck to it.

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<sup>11</sup> Female elder, recognised amongst Māori as having leadership, wisdom, and the capacity to teach and guide current and future generations.

Thinking about what made her particularly effective Carolyn said:

I did not give up. I researched the information and I double checked that I was right. Because when you are being questioned by a councillor, who might have had 30 years of experience, you have to be right... To know you are right helps you to be effective.

The event recounted by Carolyn revealed a difficulty with challenging established practices and established relationships. There was no tacit acceptance of the information that was presented, because Carolyn was considered an outsider, and the perspective she presented challenged the status quo, ineffective practices and the larger hegemony that was being protected.

As an experienced councillor, Jocelyn launched a challenge against a particular practice of a council committee. She said, "I do not think people saw it as clearly as I did, that what we were doing was potentially risking a criticism of us being biased." Jocelyn described how she excused herself from the process:

In some ways, it was not a big deal. But, actually, the effect was they did not do it again. I suspect, on thinking it through, they could see where I was coming from, but it did actually take a bit of guts to say this is the wrong thing to do it and I am not going to be part of it.

Grondin (2002) wrote, "I can only unfold my understanding in terms that I can hope to follow and hope to communicate" (p. 10). The acts of resistance served to demonstrate the temporality of interpretation and understanding, and how the women sought to re-define the moral and political discourses operating within their organisations, in terms that were meaningful and relevant to them. The women's challenges to prevailing systemic practices represented how being effective will change over time, when new actors enter the discourse with new perspectives and new information based on their different historical experiences and insights. From a feminist hermeneutic perspective, this analysis demonstrated the need to understand, in a different way, what it may mean to be effective, beginning with a woman councillor's experience.

## **Ineffectiveness**

Effectiveness was consciously experienced, temporal, situated, particular and complex. When reflecting on their interpretations of effectiveness, the councillors also referenced accounts of ineffectiveness. These have provided further insights to what effectiveness might mean. Although accounts of ineffectiveness were not sought from the participants, they emerged from their stories, and have provided a valuable contribution

towards understanding the meaning of the women councillors' effectiveness.

Ineffectiveness was a representation of the women's understandings foregrounded in their dialectical meanings and interpretations of effectiveness, derived from a "web of historical effects" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 311).

### **Effectiveness understood through ineffectiveness.**

Through observations of ineffectiveness, Jocelyn reflected what she had learned about effectiveness. She said:

I am more acutely aware of the ways of doing things that are effective and ineffective, and I certainly try to steer away from what I see as ineffective. A very obvious one is the aggression that people sometimes use, in an attempt to get their own way, and in fact it is very clear that it actually puts up barriers... Being ineffective highlights what effectiveness is.

The excerpt from Jocelyn signified how meaning was derived from a consciousness of being affected by past experience (Gadamer, 1989). Through observing behaviours, which were contrary to what the councillor perceived as effective, there was an awareness of being able to define effectiveness with greater clarity.

### **Misuse of power and authority, and its consequences for effectiveness.**

A councillor could be rendered politically ineffective if her ability to participate meaningfully was inhibited. Two councillors described how they had been undermined, "bullied" by male mayors and excluded. Describing the conduct of her mayor, Vivian said, "he tried to make me ineffective, and if I was being effective he would try and destroy that." Following a particular committee decision, Vivian recalled:

He said, 'I don't like the decision', and I said, 'I am very sorry, but...'  
He said, 'I am going to overturn it,' and I said, 'with respect, you cannot actually do that'...He said, 'well I am going to.' I said, 'I resign' and he said, 'good'.

The mayor's ability to overturn the decision (outside of formal legal processes) demonstrated his ability to influence the other councillors, and render those who opposed his authority as powerless. Vivian's story provided testimony about how effectiveness could be limited when the environment was oppressive. Vivian perceived her committee decision as effective. However, the decision was contrary to what the mayor wanted, so he deemed it ineffective. By choosing to resign, in order to maintain her integrity and credibility, Vivian displayed an "oppositional consciousness"

(Hundleby, 1998, p. 40). Standpoint theorist Hekman (1997) wrote that political resistance is necessary to “oppose” the dominant script (p. 357). However, the story revealed the significant effect that power and authority could have for the ability to be effective, and how one person’s effectiveness could be at the expense of another person’s. The story highlighted the contested nature about what being effective might mean, particularly when the meaning related to an outcome, and the outcome received is not perceived positively by one of the actors involved.

Belinda talked about her experience - the relentless persecution and her reluctance to “dumb herself down” or “fall into line.” She said:

I think it started from when I was first elected. The mayor did not like me right from day one. He accused me of being a liar in the first week, and was giving me a hard time, and that has pretty much continued, which makes it very hard for me to be effective... It’s horrid. It is a very ruthless world and there is no protection for councillors who are marginalised like me.

Belinda revealed that she had stood as a mayoral candidate in opposition to the incumbent mayor. It is reasonable to propose that Belinda’s electoral challenge was perceived as a threat, and the mayor’s assertion of power and domination was a consequence of the electoral battle, his attempt to display authority and render her powerless. Belinda spoke about her limited efficacy within the council, and how she countered this through her activity in the community. Belinda declared:

The people in the community often say they do not agree with what I vote for, but they know I am true to myself and stick to my guns, and I am the one they come to if they have got tricky problems. The council often does not know who has given them the advice about how to handle things but I know how they operate, so I can give them advice about how to be effective. Sometimes I say, ‘do not mention my name’, and other times I say, ‘use my name’ ... and I think it is actually empowering them to do the fighting. And then they ring me back and say, ‘hey we sorted that one out’.

The male councillors in the two stories displayed none of the characteristics for effective behaviour highlighted by the women councillors – respect, honesty, credibility, trust, integrity, an ethic of care and cooperation.

The reflections from the councillors demonstrated that seeking to be effective could be a manipulated process, particularly when the playing field was uneven and the power distribution unequal. The stories revealed how effectiveness could be impaired for those

with outsider status. The stories showed how the effectiveness of one councillor could be limited or compromised in favour of the effectiveness of another. Whilst the councillors did not express the bullying tactics as connected to gender, the individualised and hierarchical behaviour of the male mayors represented their behaviour in contrast to the women's preferred styles of working. Both councillors sought to resist their oppression, and survive politically, but their narratives also reflected the challenges associated with being able to exert efficacy or agency because of the conscious and deliberate exclusion they experienced.

The concept of power was central to the expressions of ineffectiveness. Gadamer (1989) wrote that power was more than an expression, because of its potentiality, the cause and effect of what has been experienced. He wrote, “interiority is the mode of experiencing power, because power, of its nature, is related to itself alone” (p. 210). From this experiencing of power emerged new and different perceptions about being in the world.

### **Feeling ineffective.**

Several councillors reflected feelings of self-doubt, which affected their perceptions about their efficacy. Whilst the councillors' stories highlighted self-doubt and fear as weaknesses, the acknowledged feelings highlighted the role that a critical consciousness could play in supporting an individual to understand their political identity and locate their particular effectiveness.

Rachel described the feeling of fear and isolation that she had experienced as a councillor. Reflecting about two different occasions, Rachel spoke about the lack of support she received from the council system and her fellow councillors. On one of the occasions, Rachel described how she personally defended an action she performed as a councillor on behalf of the community. The defence resulted in significant financial loss, and psychological and emotional harm. On another occasion, she was personally threatened, and singularly represented the council and community, without institutional support. Both issues were significant moral issues (one particularly sensitive to women, and the other to Māori) where Rachel's advocacy and representation sought to protect and respect the interests of those who would be affected by the proposal. The scenarios she described demonstrated how political representation, when not supported by the broader political administration, could result in compromised efficacy, personal feelings of ineffectiveness, doubt and political isolation.

Bailey talked about the simultaneous feelings of doubt and self-belief about her personal effectiveness. She said:

I think most women would say it ebbs and flows. You know when we have the times we think, 'gosh, somebody else should be doing this job', I am just not up to it'. Then you have days when you go home and think, 'that was damn good.'

Deborah described feelings of ineffectiveness borne out of a much longer-term pattern of system breakdown. She described how it was difficult to be effective or enthused when the council had problems. She said, "I have not been as effective as I would like." She described council decisions that were based on inferior information and a lack of scrutiny, which resulted in outcomes that were not effective for the community. Deborah described how she felt let down by colleagues, and how she felt ineffective because she had failed to address issues as they arose. Reflecting on the emotional significance of the situation, she said:

This is going to affect the rest of my life in this small community because it is a small community. And that is all right. It is not going to drive me out of the community but I am a public person, and my own privacy is compromised. Even if I am entertaining or being invited to do things for other people, it is all going to be a bit coloured from now on... [When I leave office] I would want people to remember me with some respect. I do not think it is likely now. And that is not of my making. Well, I was on the periphery obviously, but there were so many other factors.

Gadamer (1989) wrote, "our finite historical being is marked by the fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us – and not just what is clearly grounded – always has power over our attitudes and behaviours" (p. 292). The past clearly informs the interpretation and engagement with the present.

### **Systemic failures and poor performances.**

Several councillors recounted occasions where they perceived they had failed, and which they characterised as ineffective. Understanding such interpretations requires an understanding of the systemic and cultural framework as it related to each circumstance. Whilst the women's feelings were real and valid, the circumstances in which they were operating affected their ability to be effective, and an examination of the features of the situation and the broader contextual factors may lead to different interpretations. Effectiveness was represented as both particular and perspectival.

Wendy recalled an occasion in which she suggested she was less effective than she might have been. She said:

I think I could have been more effective earlier, if I had realised the extent to which some councillors had aligned with landowners. I had not been aware of that initially. I could have been awake sooner, and I wish I had been, because things seemed to get quite a long way down the track and it was a bit disconcerting to see it on [TV] as a black-and-white issue supporting the landowners.

In order to overcome her perceived ineffectiveness, Wendy described her unobtrusive approach, “quietly researching.” She said:

I did not do some of what you might think are the obvious things like lobbying or making sure I had the numbers, because I don’t like being lent on myself, but I was thoroughly prepared and took the issue seriously so that I could not be challenged on the information I was presenting. Staff did the work, and we had legal advice, so it was perhaps a sense of commitment to the issue that came across.

Reflecting on what the eventual resolution meant, she continued:

I think justice was done. If it had not been, it would still rankle and I would probably still be working on it. So I think we got to where we needed to; the argument was strong, the position I took right, because otherwise, why are we here? So why was it important? The issue, but also some of the tactics of those who wanted to accommodate the landowners were not particularly honourable. Afterwards, a staff member said to me, ‘can I speak just as a rate-payer and say thank you.’ I appreciated that because they had been in the thick of it, attacked in public. I think is totally inappropriate for a councillor to attack a staff member in the press.

“Power that is more than its expression is freedom” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 211). Wendy was required to perform a quiet resistance to the ruling councillor group who manipulated their authority and the system. The acts that Wendy performed, and the reason for the acts, demonstrated her power as freedom, because of the purpose of her expression and the way in which the acts were an assertion against the dominant tendencies of the ruling group. “It is the experience of limitation, pressure, and resistance, through which the individual becomes aware of [their] own power,” wrote Gadamer (p. 230).

The narrative revealed the limited efficacy of an individual amongst a much larger system of failure. Within such systemic constraints, efficacy can be negatively affected because of the performances by others, or when a councillor does not have broad



political support that could facilitate a confidence to act. The feelings of disconnection that emerged were not attributed to gender, but because the councillor was operating on the periphery of a dominant discourse. The dominant discourse was contrary to the perspective of the councillor, and limited her access to knowledge, her effective participation, and ultimately her influence.

Harstock (1983) wrote that individuals might change their activities in ways that move them outside the outlook embodied in institutions but such moves can only be significant when they occur at a society level. Gadamer (1989) wrote, “the real force of morals is based on tradition” (p. 292). A councillor’s actions are influenced and enabled by the historical contingencies and traditions of the culture in which they operate. Assessment about the effectiveness of the actions will be interpreted differently, depending on the ‘moral’ perspectives of the actors involved, and the extent to which the actions reinforce or challenge the embodied culture.

### **Ineffectiveness – an inevitable political outcome.**

Self-understanding is broadened by all experience (Gadamer, 1989). The stories of ineffectiveness, as told by the councillors, revealed occasions when they perceived themselves as ineffective. However, interpretation of those experiences also highlighted reflexivity in the councillors’ understanding of the situations, and their consciousness of the broader context in which the performances took place.

Iris provided an example about how, despite best efforts, outcomes could sometimes be difficult to realise. She said:

One of the things about local government is that if you do a lot of work, you have a lot of consultation meetings, and for whatever reason you do not get a decision. That is always incredibly frustrating and dissatisfying. Everyone goes away from the meeting feeling dissatisfied. The community is upset. We councillors go away from meetings like that sometimes feeling quite upset as well. There is no outcome, and I guess that comes back to effectiveness.

Iris’s story highlighted effectiveness, not as an abstract concept, but as something that was tangible, visible and demonstrable. Effectiveness was represented as something experienced or felt, in order to be perceived, and given meaning. The story also demonstrated the challenge of achieving an effective political or community outcome, despite acts of personal effectiveness. Notwithstanding people’s efforts, the rigour of the process and the commitment for an outcome, political effectiveness does not always

eventuate because of the complexity of variables that are often relied upon to make it happen.

Naomi was reasonably ambivalent about those occasions when outcomes were less than anticipated, accepting it as a natural part of democratic processes. Recalling her contribution towards the securing of a new asset for the district, she mused:

I did not manage to achieve but I got very close. We needed a larger library. I was Chair of that committee at the time and because of the population we needed 4000 square metres of library, which was great. We got it right to the edge. Unfortunately, another [male] councillor who did support libraries, was numerate, and a lot of other councillors weren't numerate. He suddenly twigged that this was 2.5 acres [laugh] of library so it got cut back. I've been frustrated by that, ever since.

Naomi continued:

I do not think I could have done anything different quite frankly. It was just that, I wish he had not piped up and done the maths in his head, because nobody else had realised what we were pushing through. It happens - you don't win them all.

The story highlights that degrees of effectiveness are possible. What may sometimes be perceived as ineffective, is perhaps not ineffective at all. It is simply part of the political negotiating process. Reflecting on the politicians who participated in her study, Wilson (1983) said, "the fear of losing held no terror for women in this study" (p. 217).

Kirkpatrick (1974) wrote:

The ability to lose is a key characteristic of politicians... The capacity to lose, without being psychologically destroyed or crippled, requires, above all, a high opinion of the self, which is basically not vulnerable to the response of voters. (p. 103)

The story from Naomi resonated with the observations from Wilson and Kirkpatrick. In order to operate successfully within a political environment, councillors are required to accept that their personal and political effectiveness may be at the expense of another's but the outcome realised may be an acceptable and effective outcome for the community. The councillor who alerted the council to Naomi's strategy was arguably more effective for the community because he secured the library at a smaller scale and lesser cost. Taken at face value, a community may have judged the development of the library as an effective outcome. However if they were to later learn that the same outcome could have been realised at a lower cost or lesser footprint, they could be inclined to perceive the original outcome as less effective. Effectiveness in local

government is a politically negotiated concept, which is subject to judgement, and can only be assessed in relation to what is known at the given time.

## **Perceptions of Effectiveness**

A perception about what effectiveness is, and might be, is a judgement contingent on what is understood, wanted, delivered and received. Perceptions are based on experience, and experience informs perceptions. Gadamer (1989), drawing on Aristotle, wrote, “perceptions unite to form the unity of experience when many individual experiences are retained.” He continued, “if experience shows us that a particular remedy has a particular effect, this means that something common has been noticed” (p. 359). Thus, the perceptions about effectiveness are derived from a cumulative interpretation of participating in and observing the effect of different experiences. This complexity makes effectiveness a difficult construct to objectively measure or assess.

Pat stated:

[Effectiveness] means carrying out your plans in the best possible way. You have to take into account whether it is needed, and you have to take costs into account. It is no good having pipe dreams that are never going to work and you have to have the right people. So it is like getting all your ducks in a row and doing things in the best possible way, and hopefully that will be recognised by your constituents. You do get it wrong though. Even if you think you have been effective, i.e. you got the system running or the building done or whatever it is, and it might be on time and all those things, if the public do not see it that way, it is not really effective.

Olivia highlighted how her perception of effectiveness had changed since being in political office, and observed the different practices of colleagues:

So someone I thought was very effective was someone who turned up to a lot of events and a lot of people liked [that person]. But, actually, in reality, he did not get things done. He would nod and smile, but it never turned into results. I am now much more aware of following through on promises.

Olivia stated why her view of the councillor changed:

It was hearing other colleagues, actually, so councillors that were with those others and learning what they said about these people, officer attitude and that sort of thing. And now, as a councillor, asking [others] to do things and them not delivering well. You can smile and wave but if you are not getting things done...

Olivia reflected on the particular male councillor’s style of relating. She referred to his

'nod' and the 'smile', inferring the person could be lacking in thoughtful or meaningful intentionality. In contrast, the narratives from the women councillors represented their interactions as substantive and meaningful. The assessment about what effectiveness looked like represented a partial picture of effectiveness, based on the personal experience of interacting with the councillor, and the interpretation of information received from others. The story did highlight how various perceptions unite to form a unity of experience (Gadamer, 1989). That is not, however, to say that one experience represents a universality about how effectiveness should be perceived. The councillor to whom Olivia referred may have perceived himself as effective because of his presence, which may have allowed him to focus on building relationships and communications. The councillor's visible presence may have increased the external perception that he was effective. The observer only knows what he or she observes, and thus makes judgements according to his or her pre-understandings and interpretations. Olivia represented herself as a councillor who was effective. In her narrative, she reported herself as someone who made things happen, and followed through on promises. Her articulated way of working was in stark contrast to the other councillor, thus making it more challenging for her to identify the other councillor's way of working as effective.

Vivian expressed her views about the degree of effectiveness displayed by some of her colleagues. She said:

The lack of turning up for things..., you know we have workshops on the ten-year plan. We had massive district plan consultation that cost a fortune to run and three people turned up. So, you talk about effectiveness. I said [at the council workshop] 'I am really disappointed at the huge amount of work that has been done by our officers and if I was in their position I would be very hurt that the only interest they could raise was this'. Now my expectation is, if you stand for council, you are making the effort all of the time. I frequently turn up and there are very few other people who have turned up. I just find that sad. Now, with [X] and [Y] not turning up... [Y] will not attend a committee meeting or a workshop, and people say, 'you should do something'. I say, 'it is the people of [the district's] problem, not mine'. I say, 'it is not the mayor's problem'. If you were sitting in a room next to me and you turned up every day and I [just] came for half an hour on Friday afternoon, what would you think? It's sad, really.

Vivian questioned the extent to which councillors who did not meet the obligations of office could be considered effective. Whilst Vivian's observation highlighted concerns about councillors' professionalism and commitment, they may have eventually become

effective but their efforts were not visible or perceived as such by everyone. Individual behaviours, which are contrary to our own standards, create a perception of ineffectiveness even when this may not be the case. Whilst it was not clear that the extent of political participation naturally correlated to being effective, evidence does suggest the greater the engagement, the greater potential for efficacy (Zulkosky, 2009).

Gadamer (1989) wrote:

Doesn't it follow that everything depends on the way we grow into the pre-schematization of our future orientation to the world... This is the process that is nowadays called "socialisation": growth of the social. Of necessity it is likewise growth into conventions, into a social life regulated by conventions. (p. 570)

Gadamer continued, "our formation of convictions and opinions is also a way of introducing us into a set of preformed articulations of meaning" (p. 570). The councillors' stories demonstrated the extent to which assessments of effectiveness are subjective, based on socialisation, conventions, personal standards and expectations. Such perceptions about effectiveness were particular, partial and situated; there was no universality to the interpretations about what effectiveness meant.

### **Gendered perceptions.**

The culture within local government has impacted on the way in which the women have been perceived by colleagues, and how the women have responded through their presentations of themselves. The narratives displayed consciousness of past experience. Gadamer (1989) referred to such experiences as dialectical, that is, through one's experience one's knowledge is changed, which in turn affects performance. From a gendered perspective, the experience could be (not always) negative. Reflecting on the negativity of experience, Gadamer wrote, "thus the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning. It is not simply that we see through a deception and hence make a correction, but we acquire a comprehensive knowledge" (p. 362).

Where a councillor expressed that she thought she did not conform to what she perceived the community, or a council expected, personal reservation could manifest. This sometimes resulted in feelings of lesser efficacy and effectiveness. The gendered perceptions equally resulted in some councillors working harder to overcome the barriers and inhibitors to achieve the effectiveness that other male councillors may have realised more easily. The way in which each councillor was aware of, and responded to,

the perception from others varied across the narratives, thus representing different levels of consciousness and different responses.

Belinda talked about local government election campaigns where women councillors were expected to wear makeup and were judged according to their appearance. Kathryn spoke about the “whole fashion thing,” and Carolyn said that she dressed “in a very business-like manner,” in order to portray a professional image. Olivia talked about how mindful she was of her appearance. She said:

I always wear a suit... I think I need to portray the seriousness and the business and commercial side of council. I am trying to fit in to what the perception of a councillor is supposed to look like, [so] I am probably not expressing myself fully.

The story from Olivia indicated that an understanding of the councillor as ‘something’ as a construct could not be considered an objective construct as it was laden with judgement, and derived from tradition, which influenced the ways in which the councillors sought to represent themselves.

Anna spoke about how the perceptions from others had influenced her actions. About the effect of the perceptions, she commented:

The perception of how I am visualised as effective, compared to a man, now that concerns me. I do not worry about it but that is part of my explaining to everybody what we do on council, why I have to get the word out there, why I have to have all this knowledge. Because I have to have people know that I am being effective for them, and I know that most of the men on council do not do that because they are men and they sit there, all right.

Gail expressed doubt about her own capability and efficacy that was connected to how she has felt as a woman because of the behaviours and perceptions from some male councillors. Whilst she was quick to assure that she has never felt demeaned by being a woman, Gail suggested that a woman with a different appearance or a perspective might have been treated more favourably than she sometimes had been. She reflected on her life during the research interview; she had often wondered how she had got to where she had.

The hermeneutic self-reflection displayed by the women demonstrated their consciousness of the past’s normative significance (Gadamer, 1989), and what that meant for their being effective.

Bailey said:

I think it is harder to be perceived by the public as effective because I think truly effective councillors - men and women - do the work that they do behind closed doors. I think we can be perceived as effective internally, by staff, and also by our fellow councillors. But I think, particularly for women, it is harder for them to see the light of day out there in the public arena because our effectiveness is the talking, the planning, the bringing together. Often effectiveness is measured by the council meetings [where] the fruits of our effectiveness are seen but they are kind of shared amongst the whole meeting really.

I get a little bit grumpy now and then because I think I am in the back room doing the heavy lifting and then the show ponies are out the front. At the least, it is a good meeting that happens and the results [are] achieved. But I know the work that has been undertaken and needed to get to that stage, and there is no kind of linkage between who has done what. I have to grapple with a bit of ego every now and again and say the end result was right, it is what I worked towards. It would be lovely every now and again to get acknowledged, but that does not often happen.

The perceptions experienced, and the responses to those perceptions, were the product of historical conditioning. Whilst there is no justification for negative prejudices, as Gadamer (1989) wrote, even travellers who return with new experiences never wholly forget their history. For the perceptions about women councillors to change, new historical patterns and conditioning must be experienced.

## **Chapter Summary**

Within this chapter, I have examined the structural and cultural determinants that have influenced the councillors' interpretations of their effectiveness. The local government structure and culture was a dominant influence in the councillors' ability to act efficaciously. The narratives revealed that an affinity and conformity to the systemic rules and dominant culture enhanced a councillor's political effectiveness. The narratives also revealed how the dominant discourse could be incongruent with the women councillors' standpoints and preferred ways of working. The examination of culture and structure revealed the hermeneutic significance of tradition, as belonging, and the importance of a bond to the subject matter as a foundation for effectiveness. The effectiveness and ineffectiveness articulated by the women was experienced and felt, observed and perceived. Effectiveness was particular, contextual and temporal. Effectiveness was an negotiated construct, represented as complex and political.

The next chapter considers the women's representational effectiveness.

## Chapter 9: Women's Representational Effectiveness

The performance brings out everything that is in the play, its allusions, its echoes. No one knows beforehand what will hit home and what will have no impact. Every performance is an event, but not one in any way separate from the work – the work itself is what 'takes place' (ereignet: also, comes into its own) in the event (Ereignis) of performance. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 148)

The following chapter considers the councillors as representatives paying specific attention to how the gendered nature of the representation has resulted in the women councillors performing their representative roles in ways that were different from male councillors.

### A Different Way of Working

The interpretations given by the women councillors demonstrated their working in ways that were different from men because of the influence of their gendered past experiences. There was no suggestion that all women councillors represent or lead in the same way, but it was evident that a gendered consciousness influenced the women's preferred ways of working. The inquiry did not gather stories of effectiveness from male councillors, and the perceptions about a different way of working were derived from the women's stories and reflections about how their way of working was different from their male colleagues, and the researcher's consideration of existing literature that has suggested that women have a different political voice. Further inquiry with male councillors would add to the understandings derived from the women in this study, and provide new knowledge about the extent of a different way of working amongst the different groups of councillors. It was however evident from the women's recollections that the councillors perceived that their different voice and behaviour was changing the dominant masculinist culture that prevailed within their council environments.

Vivian talked about how the presence of women councillors tempered the behaviour of men in council. Trina commented that the increasing number of women councillors had begun to change the culture in her organisation. She said:

The days of sitting around after meetings - drinking beer and spirits - are long gone but that is a scenario many men enjoyed. In a way, it is how many of the men formed their links and support networks. Women do not do that. We finish a meeting and then we go home and do the washing.



Naomi stated that whilst there was no difference in the effectiveness potential between men and women, there was a difference in the way in which it was effected. It comes down to the “nurturing role,” she said. “We are better at interpreting the nonverbal and filtering information.” Men, she said, “have different skills” and “sometimes men do not hear.” Naomi highlighted how listening and hearing enabled an effective councillor to attend to the views of the community more acutely than a councillor who did not perform with such abilities.

Trina spoke about men’s preference for lobbying, and their tendency to be more parochial than women councillors were. Women, she proposed, are more likely to “take a view from a higher level” and are able to “put on another hat and see that something that might be best for a particular part of the district may not be best for every ratepayer.” The ability to let the outside in, and the inside out (Belenky et al., 1997), and the displays of consciousness of being collectively responsible for being in the world (Pajnik 2006), highlighted the women's disposition for communicative interaction as a foundation for their being effective.

Atarangi and Jocelyn highlighted a belief that women were thoughtful, flexible and adaptive. Atarangi highlighted her practice of “dumping” something that is not working. She said being able to acknowledge that something was not working is both “good” and “effective.” Jocelyn stated how she “reserve[d] the right to change her mind,” a statement that symbolised responsiveness as a component of effectiveness.

Bailey challenged the conventional thinking about effectiveness that she defined as “blokeish,” preferring a more inclusive way of working. She said:

You know that a good leader leads from the front and they push something through and they get things done. I fundamentally do not agree with that, and that has given me the strength to go back and say ‘that is not effective’, because you end up with a disenfranchised community, and bad feeling all around.

Gail said that all councillors should work in the realm of “wellbeing” but suggested women were more likely to dwell in this mode than men are. According to Belinda, women councillors bring different perspectives to the role, they are more concerned about the risk of “loss” and think about their decisions in the context of the impact on others.

Marama described how women councillors operated differently from men, in terms of

their connection to the people. She said:

As women councillors, we try to relate all of the decisions we make, or the significant decisions that directly affect the community, to how this decision affects our families. Whereas for many of the blokes, it is [about] how much is this going to cost, and how long it is going to take. Women seem to be focussed on the social aspect, and the blokes tend to be focussed on the mechanical aspect... the infrastructure... the financial aspect.

Vivian spoke about women's engagement at the grass roots level, and community groups' appreciation of having a woman involved, stating, "people feel that a councillor is interested." Within Vivian's council she heard some of the male councillors state that they could not become "involved in community" because when it came to decision-making, and matters involving finances, there was a greater potential for bias; a position Vivian dismissed as "ridiculous." The statement from the male councillors suggested less interest in working alongside the community. These statements also highlighted a lack of recognition for the place that prejudice can play, as a basis for their pre-understandings, and highlighted a propensity for autonomy and authority, as opposed to inclusion and collaboration.

The stories from the women councillors revealed ways of working that were relational, and imbued with care and justice. There was a strong awareness, from the stories, that the women have acted on behalf of their communities, that they have been part of the community, and have felt a responsibility to represent and make decisions on behalf of their communities. Hermeneutist Grondin (2002) wrote, "we draw on interpretations that we relate to" (p. 11). The reflections from the councillors highlighted the different experiences and interpretations on which the male and female councillors drew.

### **Inclusive representation.**

A principle of inclusiveness characterised the councillors' narratives, with their stories presenting representation that was broad, collaborative, and cooperative. Pajnik (2006) wrote, "inclusion is a criterion of political legitimacy that implies the ability to transcend individual interests not by negating those interests but through interacting with, listening to, and responding to others" (p. 392).

Trina reflected that the diversity of a council's elected representatives was an indicator of its inclusivity:

What will happen with any group of representatives is, if you have more representatives, you tend to get greater representation. And so with 12 councillors and a mayor, we have Māori representation without a separate Māori seat, we have women represented without having separate seats for women; we have younger people represented without having separate seats for younger people. I have always found that if you reduce the number of councillors, I doubt we would get a Māori, a woman and a younger person. So I just think that a better representation occurs when you have numerically more representatives.

Representative diversity is important for recognising the differences within and among different groups. The under-representation of women signalled that women are a different group, otherwise they would be elected in equal numbers to men. Their lack of presence highlighted that a persistent problem exists. The presence of women allows women to “define the terms that structure their world”, wrote standpoint feminist Hekman (1997, p. 350), and there is evidence that inclusive representation improves feelings of self-efficacy amongst the represented group, and improves the quality of deliberation and decision-making in political groups (Alexander, 2012; Bicquelet et al., 2012).

Sarah reflected how women's descriptive presence is fundamental to effectiveness for the community. She said:

Effective local government would be where you try and build inclusiveness and understanding of what the issues of the local community are, and what local government's role is in society. You are trying to build an understanding. It is better now but there is still an embedded cultural impediment. A good example was right up until the Matrimonial Property Act in the late 70s where even if you had a property, that was jointly owned by a man and a woman, the man's name, the male spouse was automatically put on the local government roll but the female's wasn't. So, you actually had to fill in a form to go on the local government roll. Now it is very different. You will still have many people saying, 'oh no I cannot vote. I do not own my own house'. That, I think, is quite an overwhelming thing. So my thing would be the effectiveness of local government and what it means for people. What I can really relate to, going back to the early days, was we did not have what we now call a pushchair ramp. It was ignored really, so, that proportion of the community that was involved in pushing pushchairs and prams was not important. So going back to the word 'effectiveness', I want to contribute to the development of local government that is inclusive. We always put down a rugby field, provided a rugby park. We did not automatically provide a community house and so I think effectiveness is contributing to this inclusiveness.

Whilst women's descriptive representation remains fundamental for women to actualise

their effectiveness, representation that included the community was important. Carolyn said:

If people don't feel as though they are part of the solution, if people don't feel that they are engaged, involved and that they are being listened to, they get cross, and they will generally object to things, far more than if they were involved at the beginning.

Reflecting on a particular event, Carolyn talked about "having people involved and feeling that they are part of the internal decision making process." She described a council hearing process, when councillors had failed to make eye contact with submitters, look up from their papers, or acknowledge the presentations from the community. The lack of respect afforded to the submitters' led to a tense meeting.

My proposition is that people should have the ability to have a say and to at least have that input listened to. We had an instance, one morning, where the ratepayers were so cross at the way it was being chaired, and the way the councillors were acting. They would be sitting there reading, not making eye contact, not looking up, and in fact the ratepayers got so cross they were threatening to say it was a mishearing.

Carolyn described the conversation she had with the chair during a break:

I said, 'You could have at least said thank you. They have given up a day's work to come here. Some of them have driven for two hours to tell us something that they are really passionate about, and you are not even saying thank you'. And he said, 'they are very grumpy' and I said 'just trying thanking them'. After morning tea, he would say to people, 'You are welcome, come up, talk to us' and then at the end of the presentation, 'Thank you very much'. At lunchtime, he said to me, 'gosh they were really nice. We had a better lot after morning tea,' and I said, 'No you just stopped being a grumpy old bastard,' and he said, 'Oh, I did not realise'.

The story demonstrated that whilst the community were included in the process, the nature of the inclusion was negative, and they felt disempowered and disenfranchised. Thus the situation could be construed as ineffective for the recipients. Carolyn's story presented her fellow (male) councillors as focussed on the mechanics of the process. Carolyn, in contrast, displayed sensitivity to the feelings of the submitters, with closer attention being paid to the quality of the relationship. The different responses amongst the councillors reinforced the view that perceptions of effectiveness will differ. But the story did indicate that the principle of reciprocity that should emerge from inclusive political communications is a basis of effectiveness.

The “ontology of relations” (Jaggar, 2004, p. 58) was a constant marker for the women's effectiveness. Marama said, “Look after the people around you, and build those bridges, because they will be there for life.” Inclusive processes manifested themselves, through the narratives, as important in their own right, and appeared to suit the women’s preferred styles of representation. Inclusive processes did not guarantee effective outcomes, but were a preferred way of working and fostered an increased perception of feeling effective.

Gadamer (1989) wrote how the moral power of the individual becomes an historical power. The moral sphere becomes lasting and powerful in the movement of history, and “the individual, in the contingency of his particular drives and purpose, is not an element in history, but only insofar as he raises himself to the sphere of moral commonality and participates in it” (p. 218). An example of moral commonality is the equal and inalienable rights of all people (Universal Declaration on Human Rights). Within the context of this inquiry, the nature of the women's representation sought to protect and represent all voices, yet their lived experience was not one where a commonality to represent all voices existed equally. The dominance of a male presence in local government has meant a dominant male voice and a moral commonality based on male interpretations. The women’s greater attention to inclusive representation is likely to have emerged from their conscious and/or subconscious awareness that their voices as women had been neglected, suppressed or excluded from the moral commonality.

## **Representing the Community**

Councillors conceive the world differently, not only because of past experience but also because they have access to knowledge, information and relationships that are not ordinarily available to the wider community. Women councillors conceive the world differently according to the gendered basis of their lives. The councillors’ recollections demonstrate how women's lesser interest in control and their greater focus on care, connection and empowerment, afforded a particular potential for being effective that might not be available with an individuated and autonomous focus.

Marama stated, as a representative:

I feel I can be a voice of the people, and that I am not just there for the sake of being there. It might sound a bit arrogant but I feel I can, and am doing, a reasonable job of representing the interests of my

community.

The women councillors fostered the interconnection of their voices alongside the perspectives of others, as an aid to their representational effectiveness. Marama described the process from listening to acting:

It is about being able to amalgamate all their thoughts, and sift them and understand some of the influences that they have as to why they are saying what they are saying, and making what I believe is an effective decision. You know, I hear them and I might agree with them but I also know that in the process of natural justice, it is also about understanding. Well, even if you do not understand it, at least hearing and trying to appreciate somebody else's point of view.

Gadamer (1989) reflected on the notion of sympathetic understanding, stating that sympathetic understanding is achieved through unity with others in striving for commonality. The narratives demonstrated how the women's attention to other voices indicated "a specific bond of belonging, as if [s]he too were affected" (p. 333).

### **Advocacy.**

Gadamer (1989) wrote, "to be situated within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible" (p. 369). Women's location within a political tradition that marginalised their voices provided the women councillors with opportunities to translate their historically affected exclusion to advocating for voices that were missing from the council table. Consciousness was an important demonstration of the councillor's representative effectiveness. Atarangi talked about taking the time to understand what the community valued, "Thinking about what is important... what is important for this community... just knowing them, what they are about, what they might be about, knowing who they are." Kura stated, "there are certain things within a community that are precious to a community, and that is where effectiveness will come in. You have got to fight for those things."

Sarah described how her advocacy encouraged the council to take a "broader perspective" about the needs of all people in the community." Sarah proclaimed that local government:

Was so male dominated, and it was really how the males saw it. They did not necessarily think they were excluding people, but the rugby pitch was a hell of a lot more important than the community house. And I would say, 'we are not saying we don't need a rugby field. Of course we do. Our kids want to play on it. But we are just asking that

there might be a broader consideration of the community.’

Women’s advocacy and representation activity is largely concentrated in the social and cultural spheres of council community activity, with greater attention given to advocating for women, children, Māori, youth and families. The women's representation in these areas has been a necessity because the male councillors underrepresented the interests. Marama described how she broadened the debate beyond “rugby, fishing, [and] farming.” She said, “I need to ensure that the blokes do not forget there are other perspectives.” Deborah asserted, “this is a farming community; there is not much sympathy for the arts.” Hine described her passion for Enviro Schools, an investment her “bros do not think is important.”

Mary demonstrated the importance of her voice, and her ability to speak on behalf of women, “This is a section of the community who do not come with a strong voice.” She reflected about a particular process:

It was really important, being able to speak on behalf of the elderly women, the young girls and the young mothers and provide them with a voice. [Women] don’t hold the purse strings, [and] they don’t financially have that lobbying power and they are not used to standing up and speaking to the same extent... You know, they tend to get overlooked.

The women's advocacy (not always focussed on gendered interests) could be characterised by a sense of belonging, an openness to one another. Gadamer (1989) defined the openness to the other as a parallel to the hermeneutic experience. He wrote, “I must allow tradition’s claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in the otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me” (p. 369). It was evident that the women's hermeneutic experiences supported their resonance to other voices in their community. This level of connection and understanding provided a meaning for their being effective.

### **Responsiveness.**

Responsiveness was a means by which a councillor was perceived to be credible and effective. A councillor’s responsiveness was characterised by their attention to the other. Gilligan (1982) wrote, “when women construct the adult domain, the world of relationships emerges and becomes the focus of attention and concern” (p. 167). Olivia said, “it is important that when people come to us, we don’t just pass it off, we actually go back to them.”

Carolyn said since being in office, she realised that “people want to know more, and not the dreary stuff, they want to know how this affects them.” Carolyn said that she has spent a lot of time listening and asking questions. Representing a broad geographic area, she has been aware of the challenge of being able to connect to her community:

It is very hard to get groups together. You can't naturally pull them all together. I have tried to work out how you get information to as large a group of people as possible, and, more importantly, in a way that suits their needs. People in my ward do not respond particularly well to printed, posted communications so I have developed two things: email groups for different areas... and getting groups together. I say, 'I will come around on Sunday afternoon, if you want to get half a dozen people together'. Some of my ward is so far away they give me muffins to take home. I think they appreciate the effort, and I think that makes you effective because they can see the colour of your eyes, and they know that they can email or ring and they know the council is interested in them. I think that is hugely important.

The significance of responsiveness, as it relates to effectiveness, is what is revealed about choice. Gadamer (1989) reflected how individuals think about the ‘ends’, just as much as the corresponding ‘means’, and through performance, individuals choose to act in certain ways, thus subordinating an alternate position.

Rachel described an occasion where she perceived she and her fellow councillors were effective because of their responsiveness. She said:

I chaired the community board, and a local business wanted to give us \$750,000 to open a peace park on the site of a prisoner of war camp. The council welcomed it and then we had a riot on our hands, from the oldies, with regard to their harbouring feelings of malcontent about the Japanese from the war. So there was another vote. There were talkbacks and I remember famously the veterans associations locking horns with council in a room and then telling us stories about Japanese barbarity and I was in tears. Because I realised that you can't forgive if you lose a loved one in horrific circumstances. They can't forgive, and forgiveness is not going to happen until another generation, and all of those guys have passed on. There was definitely a divide. We did a poll and the oldies wanted it completely tossed and the young folk thought, yes, this was a good idea... I thought it was a great idea, but I recognised that sometimes the time has to be right for great ideas to get community buy-in, and this was not the right time.

Gadamer (1989) described “the inner fusion of understanding and interpretation” (p. 318), and its relation to choices. He wrote, “Anyone who finds himself in a situation of genuine choice needs a standard of excellence to guide reflection in coming to a decision” (p. 594). He also continued to reflect how each choice could inform future



standards and precedents for future decisions. The choice made by Rachel highlighted that the standard of being effective meant acting in a way that causes the least harm. An ethic of care and an ethic of justice operated, in that case, as mutually supporting processes, and provided a barometer for understanding what being effective meant. It also provided “content to one’s identity with oneself” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 594). From a feminist standpoint, the story highlighted that whilst men and women could bring different consciousness to the council table, each could operate simultaneously and effectively when the standard for choosing was well grounded. Gilligan (2011) wrote, “as long as human qualities are divided into masculine and feminine, we will be alienated from one another and from ourselves” (p. 178).

### **Representation in Council**

A councillor’s representation, and presence in the council chamber, was an important aspect of their work, clearly influencing how others perceived their effectiveness, and how they perceived their own effectiveness. Anna said:

The reason we can represent is often that our needs are not dissimilar. We want great infrastructure that supports great commercial activity that supports great jobs. We are working for ourselves... we are the ratepayer, we are the grass roots people, we are the people who take the grandkids to the park, and use the facilities... What I do as a councillor affects me as it does everybody else.

The women's articulation of their representative responsibility resonates with the traits of constructed knowing (Belenky et al., 1997) whereby women are simultaneously “a daughter, mother, lover, nurturer, thinker, artist, advocate.” They have acquired an understanding that “all knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known” (p. 137). Across all of the councillors’ narratives the women’s ability to locate themselves across the spectrum of their identities was reflected in the complex nature of their representation.

The nature of the women's representative role in the council was broad and complex. It related to participation in council processes, acts of reflection and deliberation, patience and persistence, decision-making and accountability.

### **Participation.**

Participation, as an indicator of effectiveness, was evident from Kura who described how she had chosen not to accept a position of chair, because she thought it would limit

her effectiveness. “I am the vice chair”, she said:

I don't like being a chair because I can't have my say, because I am too busy trying to move something. Second, you know. I will put the motion, you are too busy controlling. I hate being a chairperson. To me, my effectiveness is sitting out there. And I think if you are going to be the chairperson, you are just a bossy controller. And they say, 'you can have a say' and I say, 'yes but I need to think about what I am saying. I need to understand the debate'.

The view about the importance of participating in processes signals that an effective contribution is not always contingent on holding power, through an authority. This perspective supports the view that women can operate effectively without excessive control (Harstock, 1983) and in cooperation with existing social and power relations (Smith, 1999), in ways that are meaningful to them as women.

### **Reflection and deliberation.**

Reflection and deliberation emerged as a trait of the councillors' effectiveness. Atarangi emphasised the importance of being “willing to change, reconsider,” and to realise “there is another way.” Atarangi talked about the importance of reflection; making the time to “sit and think”, and her realisation that the most useful people around the council table were those who had reflected on what they wanted to say before they said it, as opposed to those who spoke the most.

Laura highlighted the importance of deliberation in her role as Hearings Commissioner. She said:

I'll often change my mind several times during a deliberation with myself, because it is a case of going through and thinking. Does this have more weight than that? Will that be a better outcome than that? You are juggling these bits of information, and you are going back and you are writing it up. You go back again and think, hang on, there is a bit in there that I think could influence this outcome. You are juggling information right to the end.

The concept of accountability demonstrated the need of the effective councillor to relate and reassess their understandings in relation to the understanding of others. Feminist hermeneutist Warkne (1993) wrote:

We possess only our understanding of our traditions, our practices and our aspirations as a community, and once we recognise the interpretive status of this understanding, we must also recognise the need to reassess it in the face of the differing understandings of others.

(p. 93)

### **Persistence and patience.**

Connected to reflection was the need to have perseverance and patience. Many of the councillors commented that this had been learnt over time, as they gained more experience and knowledge about the systems and structure of local government. Descriptions like “tenacity”, “eternal vigilance”, “persistent”, “resistant”, “sticking with it” and “doggedness” were used by the women to describe this awareness. Therefore, even when a councillor felt personally effective, it took time to affect an outcome politically or at a community level. Marama said:

Realise that what you might not win in round one comes up again in round six, and by then you have talked more, learnt more and done more. You have a better opinion and a stronger argument.

“Time as a form of consciousness” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 62) provides a basis for a course of events to be understood as more than an individual episode that may be won or lost. It places all performances within a much broader context of place and history.

### **Decision making.**

The councillors’ decision-making was action oriented and result targeted, and the rigour and quality of a councillor’s decisions affected the degree to which they perceived themselves to be politically efficacious (although the assessment of the impact and effect of the decisions was measurable in and by the community). Iris said:

I’ve always had the very firm view that people elect us to represent them. They elect us to make decisions and, whatever the issue, we do actually have to be prepared to vote on things. To me, it’s actually totally unacceptable to abstain from voting because that’s the responsibility that we have been given, and that itself is about effectiveness.

Marama said, “There is a different level of pressure when you are making a decision.” She spoke about how difficult it was to vote on an issue when there were 100 people from the community wanting her to vote another way. She said, “It can be intimidating in the council chamber” and “I can understand why people back down.” The statement from Marama highlighted a resonance with contingency theory, and the need to be reflective and responsive to the circumstances of the situation.

“Every game has its own proper spirit,” wrote Gadamer (1989, p. 111), and it is reasonable to assert that part of the spirit of being an effective councillor is through the

processes of decision-making. In this regard, the performance is separated from the participation in the game, the latter being part of the duty of the role. The performative aspects of decision-making are influenced by the past and continue to shape history. The extent of the impact only becomes known through later observations and understandings of the effects of a decision.

### **Accountability.**

Accountability was identified as a key feature of the councillors' representative responsibilities.

Anna commented, "As councillors, we are collectively responsible. If eight or nine councillors make a bad decision, we are all accountable." Anna's statement signalled how perceptions of personal effectiveness may be less significant at a representative level, when the principles of collective responsibility are more important. Recalling an event that highlighted the significance of accountability to what councillors considered effective, Anna commented that she made her decision for the benefit of the community, so was disappointed when the council bowed to minority public pressure, and overturned the original decision. Anna described why she maintained her original stance. She said, "I have got to face all those people. I have to be able to look them in the eye and be able to say I made the right decision the first time."

A councillor is required to be accountable for all decisions made by the council, including those which may not be supported by the other councillors or the community. Hine recounted an event which she described as "the first and biggest issue that I have taken some hits." She said, "I guess every politician goes through an issue where they actually have to fess up, and learn and actually take the crap that is given to you." Reflecting on what the event meant, Hine described how she thought that the council had made a bad decision, and that she had personally let people down, thus requiring her to stand up and take ownership for the decision of the council.

Pat talked about a water management issue in her district which resulted in the council making a decision that the "public has largely opposed". She said:

That is really uncomfortable, especially when I am the community board member... and, although I am their councillor, I still voted for it, so I am not very popular down there at the moment, and [I] have got to live with that.

Accountability represented a fusion of moral knowledge, moral consciousness, and self-deliberation about the means and ends of a performance. For Gadamer (1989), actors must concern themselves with “right behaviour” and retain responsibility for their performances (p. 332). Accepting the principle of accountability as a basis for understanding the meaning of effectiveness was important because it demonstrated that through practice, custom and prior learning, councillors understood, in broad terms, the right thing to do in a given situation.

### **The Responsibilities of the Woman Councillor**

During the research interviews, the women were asked to identify the particular responsibilities they had as a woman councillor. The purpose of this question was to explore the extent to which any gendered responsibilities impacted on their effectiveness, both perceived and actual. Whilst many councillors stated that they did not have specific responsibilities because of their gender, some of the women’s narratives articulated a duty to represent women’s gendered interests.

Kura reflected a burden of responsibility by stating:

I have no idea why this particular council had that gender bias. We were just missing; women were not there. And, for me, it was the responsibility. Heavens above. I have to be speaking for half of the population, and it is not just about broken bridges, dust roads and culverts. There are other things, and other values, that women can give in our society, in our environment, in our communities.

Kura’s statement demonstrated the importance of the ‘other’ voice as a protection for democracy. Kura reflected that her council was dominated by “thirteen men who all have the same direction,” men she described as the “pail, male and frail,” on account on their ethnicity, gender and age. “That does not represent me,” she said. A consequence of the narrow representation was that it led to a constricted focus. She said:

The concentration seems to be on business, as opposed to the value of people. We [women] may look at the safety or the welfare or the health or the recreational things, not just business, not just the economy, you know, but what is good.

Marama said:

As women [it is important] that we maintain our voices, [and] we represent the women of the district: the mothers, and the wives of the district. It is not all about pipes, it is what else are we going to do for the people and the families who want to live here?

Dale said her responsibility as a woman representative was “to make sure the blokes don’t forget that there are other perspectives.” Dale expressed how women councillors have unique responsibilities, “because women always have a slightly different view to men.” She also stated that, as a woman councillor, women look to her to represent them. She described how she fulfilled her representative obligations to women by ensuring that “women are treated fairly, and there are opportunities for women, and we do not automatically assume that things are going to happen without a woman’s voice.” Harstock (1983) wrote about creating a politics that lets others into the centre. Whilst a centre implies that some will remain on the periphery, Hekman (1997) asserted that “politics will look different when occupied by women” (p. 350).

Hine stated that her role was to represent “those areas where a lot of fellow councillors are not really that interested.” Speaking about women submitters, Hine commented on the seriousness with which she heard the concerns of women. She contended, “in more cases than not, we are speaking the same language.” Wängnerud (2009) wrote that despite fewer women representatives, “women politicians are expected to be better equipped to represent the interests of female voters because they, at least to some extent, share the same experiences” (p. 61).

Because society has conscientised a relational role for women, the narratives indicated that the community recognised the women councillors as having an increased focus on people and relationships. Helen commented that the community perceives women as more accessible, “because they trust you, and they can talk about their issues.” Helen continued, “It is not about a lack of trust in a man, but [women] might not feel they could raise those issues [with a man].” The relational component of representation emerged as important for those who were being represented.

Some councillors did not perceive a difference in responsibilities between men and women councillors but did acknowledge that a gendered perspective was important. Sarah said she was mindful of bringing a woman's perspective and a woman’s voice to the council table, but did not think that her role as a councillor was to influence the substantive representation of women’s interests. Mary commented:

My responsibility as a councillor is actually to make good decisions; the woman part of me is not at that decision-making part, it is at the discussion part. It is like the two sides: there is the decision-making - making a good decision - and the discussion stage, where the woman part of it comes into force, where you can put balance to the

discussion.

Even amongst the narratives that questioned whether women had specific responsibilities, some reflected that perceptions about women still resulted in their being given, or choosing, particular committee and portfolio responsibilities perceived as women's interests. Bailey commented, "there is still a view that women do the soft stuff and men do the hard stuff." Herzog (1999), in her study of women in local politics in Israel, wrote:

Acceptance of the dichotomous masculine/feminine world looms once more when the councilwomen tend to agree that women are more conscious of public services than men, hence their conception of their special role in politics, yet also to believe that certain areas in politics are best left to men. Consider the question: Do women have a special role to play in politics? It is unique to women. Never has a man been asked if he has a special role to play in politics because of his gender. In contrast, the conception that sees women as coming from outside the political system assumes the relevant questions for them relates to the role to which they are best suited. (p. 96)

It was not conclusive whether the councillors had particular responsibilities because they were women, but their acts of effectiveness highlighted the gendered considerations they brought to their councillor role. It was clear that even when the councillors did not view themselves as having particular responsibilities as women councillors, a consciousness of their marginalised position was evident through their ways of representing, because of the ways in which the traditions of local government continued to ascribe particular interests to women councillors.

### **The Challenges of being a Woman Representative**

Anyone can enter a discourse; each person has a right to speak and be heard... [However,] rules which at a declarative level imply the opportunity for all to participate still do not guarantee the active participation and inclusion of all the different actors. (Pajnik, 2006, p. 391)

The historically normalised pattern of men as local government councillors has resulted in local government practices that primarily reflect the experiences and interests of its largest group of participants. The incongruence between the men's historical, social and cultural contexts and discourses, and the women's lesser power and authority in the political world, was evident from the councillors' stories.

Marama highlighted the challenge of representing effectively when the ruling group was

deficient in some knowledge, and yet did not respect the perspectives of others (in this case, women's) who may have held the knowledge the ruling group lacked. Marama's reflection highlighted the challenge women faced because of their different knowledge and different ways of knowing and the lack of respect that could be afforded to women's ways of knowing. The story told by Marama highlighted that whilst rules of institutional communication include the voices of all councillors, the voice must be listened to.

Pajnik (2006) wrote:

Listening in communicative action implies interdependence, in which the speaker and the listener are different-but-equal. It is a practice of citizenship, which is based on the attention to the perceptions of others and at the same time on the redirection of attention from the subject to the world. (p. 391)

The communicative act requires the construction of meaningful relations, and attention and consideration of all voices that exist in relationships.

Atarangi described the purpose of local government as “distinctly male,” which challenged the ability of women representatives to make decisions that represent “a public good,” for all. Belinda said that council was “an old boy's network,” and women were “treated like the inferior councillor.” Kathryn observed, “We have a lot of older men here who are condescending and think they know best.” Dale described the “patronising attitude” of men who hold the view that areas such as finance were “male domain[s]”, and assumed that women have little knowledge in these areas. Gilligan (2011) stated that, “democracy's future hinges on resistance to patriarchy” (p. 85). Hermeneutically, this means the creation of new traditions, based on respect and equality.

Reflecting on what it meant to be a woman in local government, Hine described the challenge of operating alongside the “cliquey male group.” She described how she found the sexism and prejudice from male councillors “gut wrenching,” and said, “there are a lot of people who believe that women do not belong around the table, and that when we make decisions, they are probably emotional decisions.” Hine said that within her council, there is still a “fair percentage” of men who “do not take women seriously” thinking women “are best in the home.” She talked of the power, the loneliness and the importance of being a woman councillor:

As women we have a lot to offer because we wear several hats and we do it with ease. We bring to the table a perspective that a male would



not necessarily have. It is that acknowledgement of the differences between communities; I think we do it better than the men do.

Many of the women experienced negative treatment by male councillors because of their different voice. Gail talked about being shouted down because she focussed on the social aspects of her community:

The guys stand up. [X] will stand up and he will say, 'of course, we've heard councillor A about this before. She does not realise everything she wants for her people is just money, money, money. I am telling her that's not the way to go. This is the way to go'. And another man will get up and say, 'it's just a lot of rubbish', and they expect, when they stand up, to say something really intelligent and business-like and that is it for them.

"To understand what a person says," wrote Gadamer, is "to come to an understanding about the subject matter" (1989, p. 401). But, where that understanding is disrupted, a consciousness emerges about the conditions for understanding. Gadamer reflected on the need to retain the validity of each person's understanding as a basis for common understanding. Within the story told by Gail, recognising the people focus, alongside the mechanical (financial) focus, presented itself as a basis to counter the impasse that emerged from the different interlocations.

Carolyn commented that male councillors had certain views about how councillors should behave which could influence women's performance. She said:

The view of older men is 'do not cry, dear', and so you need to avoid any emotion. It is difficult to take on a role for which you have had no preparation, so you are trying to dance and feel your way through.

Carolyn talked of the importance for women representatives to build a "strong reputation" to deliver "subtle little changes that may not have been thought of in a male-dominated council." The challenge for women councillors' effectiveness was not only being a councillor, but being a woman within council.

It was clear that some women councillors continued to face persistent challenges because of the gendered perceptions of their male counterparts. Bailey stated, "Sometimes effectiveness means just surviving," and "sometimes you have to know when to walk away." According to Linda Gordon, feminist hermeneutic approach calls for "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (as cited in Buker, 1990, p. 31). Recognition of the interdependence of women's personal and political lives would facilitate women to better actualise their political

effectiveness without women becoming trapped in the ideological framework that permeates the dominant masculinist political culture.

## **Gendered Effectiveness**

The notion of gendered effectiveness has been derived from the women's assessments about what effectiveness meant to them, as inherited from their gendered experiences. The idea of gendered effectiveness does not suggest that either men or women are more or less effective than each other, it simply asserts different ways of being effective.

Naomi stated that there was no difference in the effectiveness between men and women but highlighted how women's effective behaviours may be gendered. She commented:

The only time being a woman is more effective than being a man is [when] you can drop into a naïve woman role... You ask that almost silly question and you get the answer they never dreamt they would tell you otherwise. And then you just (laugh) come back and use it.

Naomi's recollection demonstrates how it is possible to utilise a patriarchal discourse, and use it as a weapon against the discourse. Naomi vociferously defended the equal effectiveness of women councillors:

Women are not supposed to appreciate how sewerage systems work. We do. Women are not supposed to appreciate how roading systems work. We do. Women also better understand the need for what is called social and cultural wellbeing.

Naomi's two statements highlight the complexity of women's effectiveness. In the second statement, she represented women's broader knowledge base as equal to that of male councillors. In the first statement, she recognised that women's knowledge may not be afforded equal regard and consideration, which necessitated particular skills, and ways of working, in order to be perceived as efficacious.

Iris stated that effectiveness was not gendered, and the requisites for effectiveness were "doing your homework, your research, being honest to yourself and others and doing a good job." She stated:

Everyone is equal once they get their feet under the table,... you are all there to advocate for the district as a whole... I am really pragmatic and so I just think we are all put on this world - on this Earth - to do something. We are all given different strengths and skills and abilities and it is up to us to use those skills and abilities to be the best we are able. It would not worry me if all those people in that room were male or female. I think we'd all just get on with it. I do not have a strong

view about women being able to do a job better... You either do your job, and you do it well, or you don't. There is no difference between men and women, it is just simply that you either are constructive and just get on and do the job, and put the hard yards in, or you are not.

Kura described the difference between a man's world and a woman's world, which led to effectiveness being actualised in a gendered way. She said:

The men would have a better understanding of the district because they work it. They come off the land, like I said, they work it... But the women have more of a community feel. They have more of the requirements to make a happy community. The men have more of the requirements to the economy, to run a business, to be business-like. Women are more caring,... we are more sensitive to the things of the community. Whereas the men are more of the dollar, and business is more important to them, and it is more comfortable for them to debate.

Kura spoke of her effort to save a heritage asset in the district because of its significance to the identity of the local community. She spoke about how the men were less concerned about the history and cultural values and more concerned about how much it was going to cost. Kura examined the project from an appreciative context, in terms of its overall value proposition to the community, whereas the male councillors viewed the project from a cost proposition to the ratepayer. Kura's story was an example about how effectiveness could be equally but differently perceived and realised because of different gendered positions.

Gendered effectiveness was evident as a style of behaviour within other narratives. Hine and Deborah spoke about a feminine style. Hine said, "I bring a softer side and it can be good to use femininity as a weapon." Deborah spoke about a gentler, more diffident style, which enabled her to establish community connections and relationships. Pat stated that women's empathetic and sympathetic approach was somewhat of a cliché, but nevertheless is a truism about the way in which women councillors preferred to work. The women's stories symbolised the gendered nature of local government, and different ways of working among male and female councillors. A gendered way of working was a tool by which the councillor could increase his/her potential to be effective when operating on uneven and unequal terms.

Gail reflected that the most effective woman in her council behaved more like a man. This statement demonstrated the challenge that could exist for women who operate in situations that were defined by masculine terms, and where behaviours construed as masculine or feminine, in style, were judged accordingly. Eagly and Karau (2002)

concluded that male leaders were observed more favourably because of stereotype bias. Gail's claim about the effectiveness of the woman who behaved like a man represented an enduring perception that political effectiveness continued to be judged by male terms. Effectiveness, if construed from a male perspective, has consequences for women's efficacy and the perception of women's effectiveness, particularly when women define their effectiveness differently from the dominant discourse.

It was evident that some of the councillors supplanted their more feminine characteristics for more masculine traits, in order to be perceived as effective. However, an equal number of councillors consciously used styles and behaviours defined as feminine. The contrasting behaviours exposed the contradiction that the women councillors faced. To be perceived as effective, the women felt the need to behave in more masculine terms (strong, authoritative, autonomous) but to be effective, they were more successful in behaviours that represented a different way of working (relational, collaborative, connected). Gender was not, however, the only feature that influenced ways of working. Whilst many of the women's stories reflected perceptions of effectiveness as constructed on gendered terms, there was also a sense that perceptions of effectiveness were influenced by other socioeconomic and personal characteristics. Each woman was composed of multiple identities, and the influence of the various features of their personas and selfhoods began to highlight the need to explore the significance of intersectionality from the perspective of age, ethnicity and other factors, to explore the impact this may have had on the councillors' actualisation of effective behaviour.

Pat's narrative presented women councillors' effectiveness in a way that combined individuation and connection. Pat spoke about the need for women to have "backbone," a strong intellect, the ability to work in a challenging environment, an attention to the big picture and not getting "too distracted by the little things." However, she also commented on women's empathetic and collaborative style. Pat's story reflected a dual identity for some political women, whereby masculine and feminine traits were combined. Tuval-Mashiach (2006) stated that increasing workplace status, and environments that were more heterogeneous, lessen the significance of gender stereotypes. Eagly and Karau (2002) posited that the shift towards androgynous styles of leaders could mean that "female leaders should experience decreased prejudice and increased acknowledgement of their effectiveness" (p. 591).

In considering narrative forms and identity construction between professional men and women, Tuval-Mashiach (2006) stated “if gender is the more critical factor, some gender narratives will be more similar than narratives of individuals of the same status” (p. 263). Tuval-Mashiach concluded that the narrative forms displayed by the ‘high status’ professional women conformed less to traditional gender role identity because the women’s exposure to “more heterogenous environments” and ways of life meant they diverged away from “pure gender roles and stereotypes” (p. 266).

Overall, the councillors’ narratives support a conclusion that the women’s ways of working, and perceptions of effectiveness, were influenced by the gendered interpretations of their experiences. The underpinnings of the women’s ways of being effective were distinct from the male councillors’ ways of effectiveness. The extent to which the women’s effectiveness displayed itself as gendered was contingent on particular circumstances and each councillor’s preferred style. However, the councillors’ overwhelming care for people and place, and the integration of women’s rational, emotional, subjective and objective knowledge, highlighted the women’s connection to their worlds, which are manifested in particular gendered ways of being effective.

### **Changing Perceptions through Political Presence**

The women who participated in the study influenced the system by their presence but their minority presence, and their different ways of working, meant that their effectiveness was not always perceived as such.

Dale stated, “We need to presume that women are effective, and that they themselves become more aware of it.” She asserted that the presence of women is important. Women bring “a slightly different view,” she said, “You have to deal with the men who are going on and on, and there are some men who are patronising, and say, ‘she is woman; what does she really know’... We have to remind them sometimes.”

There are different skills that women bring to the table. Iris said:

Because I am a woman, I can step back, listen to people and say ‘hang on there is a different way of doing this. There is a more inclusive way of going forward’. And I think this is possible because I am a woman.

“Effectiveness is the way you affect people by your action,” said Gail, “It is about who you are as a person, the way you walk, you talk, your passion.” She continued, “I remember someone asking me what right I had to be on council if I was not a business

woman. I said the biggest industry in the region was social services, and I was the president of it.” Gail reflected that this occasion made her profoundly aware of what her woman’s life would bring to the council.

The presence of women has awakened councils and councillors to the opportunities of women’s political representation, and has allowed women to begin to influence political and community outcomes. Trina commented, “Most male councillors are middle-aged upwards, middle class pakeha. We [women] have our influence in there somewhere, be it softening policy or providing a more realistic view.”

Deborah said that people were accustomed to local government being the bastion of men, but that perception was changing:

Men tend to have ruled the roost. That is how it is but it is gradually changing, and it is far more democratic. When I grew up, women were [hardly] there. There was a single lone female here or there, but apart from that, it was just a male world.

It is wrong to assume that what has been historically experienced results in static experiences. Experience and tradition change with each participation in the life world. Kathryn described how the presence of women was having a positive effect on male councillors, thus informing new history and new traditions. She said:

A lot of male councillors are white middle class, and it is that [kind of] thinking that goes with it, or they are successful business people. They are used to just calling the shots. Whereas I have found that women, on the whole, listen to everything first. They might still go back to their start point but at least their ears are open a bit more. Because we have a 50:50 split, we are teaching the guys that they have to change their style. And I think collectively that is what we are doing with them. We don’t let them get away with the old boy networks.

Kura reflected on the influence derived from her presence. She said:

Today we are talking about investing in our kids for the future. You know what their rights are and what is best for the community. You need to stand up, and if you are standing up for other people, you cannot be wrong. That is what I have tried to do and sometimes I have been successful.

The impact and effectiveness of women's political presence has confirmed the importance of women's descriptive presence. Alexander (2012) wrote, “positive strategies aimed at accelerating women’s descriptive representation are potentially effective tools for eroding cultural barriers to women’s political empowerment,

particularly concerning women's beliefs" (p. 460) in their ability to govern. More than this though is the different nature of women's political participation and the meanings derived from their experiences and contexts, which they bring to their representative role that can support the effectiveness of a polity. The reasons behind, and for women's political participation, are particularly important.

## **Chapter Summary**

The representative functions of the councillor are the cornerstone of their elected role. The nature of the women councillors' representative style was inclusive, democratic and characterised by a "communicative interactive disposition in the world" (Pajnik, 2006, p. 388). The gendered nature of the women's representation was visible, although experienced, and felt differently amongst the councillors in the inquiry. The masculinist nature of local government meant that their effectiveness was not always easily realised. The women's representational voices were not always integrated, nor treated equally, and their minority presence is what made their different voice stand out. Gilligan (2011) wrote, "Looking forward then, we can expect a struggle. As long as the voice sounds different, the tensions between patriarchy and democracy continue" (p. 43).

Change takes place, wrote Gadamer (1989) when:

play as such becomes a play. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He – and not the player – is the person for and in whom the play is played... Basically the difference between the player and the spectator is here superseded (p. 114).

The women's articulations of their experiences revealed the ways in which they sought to place the spectator (the community) at the heart of their representation. In contrast, the play, as represented by the male councillors, was "as sealed off" (p. 114), because of the institutionalisation of tradition whereby they had controlled the play, and where the spectator received, as opposed to participated, in the acts. Gadamer called for a "transformation into structure", where "something is suddenly and as a whole something else, that this other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nil" (p. 115). The presence and recognition of women councillors, as effective, makes such a transformation possible.

## **Chapter 10: Conclusions and Future Research**

“Feminist theory seeks scientific truth in order to create a just society by developing theory which begins with women's experiences,” wrote Buker (1990, p. 38). By using hermeneutics, an epistemological strategy can be developed that has politics at its centre. This feminist hermeneutic study gathered stories of effectiveness from 25 women councillors from local councils in the North Island, New Zealand. The inquiry sought to understand what effectiveness meant to the women. The general literature available on the subject of effectiveness within local government, and a record of the experiences of women councillors in New Zealand local government was limited. The inquiry sought to answer three questions that were absent from the existing discourse:

1. What does effectiveness mean to women councillors?
2. What influences women councillors' ability to be effective?
3. What does women councillors' effectiveness look like?

The feminist hermeneutic approach provided a methodological and theoretical framework to understand what connected the women councillors to their political world, and to understand a fragment of their lived experiences. The aim of this chapter is to synthesise the conclusions arising from the inquiry and is organised as follows:

1. Reflections on the research process.
2. Significant findings.
3. Limitations of the study.
4. Significance of the study.
5. Recommendations for future research.
6. Conclusions.

### **Reflections on the Research Process**

It's hard to look back to the limits of my understanding a year, five years ago – how did I look without seeing, hear without listening. It can be difficult to be generous to our earlier selves. (Rich, 2001, p. 75)

I have drawn upon hermeneutics, feminism and narrative standpoints throughout this inquiry. Within each of these philosophies, there are strong articulations about how our research interests emerge from our own narratives. It is fair to say mine did. And whilst I did not impose my prejudices on the research participants, and neither they on me, by placing myself in the shoes of another I have gained an awareness of the otherness



(Gadamer, 1989) of both the councillors and myself. Hermeneutics emphasises self-awareness and places the inquirer alongside the phenomenon under inquiry (Baker, 1990). Through recognition of the interdependence between me, the researcher, and the women participants, a fusion of horizons has emerged from the councillors' stories and my emergent consciousness.

There is a way of being phenomenological that 'comes'. Rather than a grasping of pre-defined steps it is a letting go and trusting that the thinking and that new understandings will come and will lead. In that thinking space the researcher is captivated and 'lost'... They delight in the sense of being 'caught up' in the thinking that leads them forward. (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1394)

## **Significant findings**

The next section will synthesise the research findings to answer the inquiry's three research questions.

### **What effectiveness meant to the women councillors.**

The councillors within this study interpreted effectiveness in different ways. The defining feature of their expressions was the multi-faceted interpretations about what effectiveness meant; it was difficult to organise the meanings into neat boxes. The councillors' interpretations of effectiveness could be understood through their political presence, personal behaviours and their political acts, and was realised by both individual and collective influence. From the narratives, it was evident that efficacious behaviour was not necessarily the same as being politically effective, particularly if an outcome was not realised, or others did not perceive the behaviour as effective. Equally, the lack of an outcome, or behaviours that did not conform to external perceptions about what effectiveness should look like, were not necessarily an indicator of ineffectiveness, as something else may have been achieved as part of the process or act. Effectiveness was a mediated and negotiated concept.

### ***The meaning of effectiveness is complex.***

There is no simple definition about what effectiveness means. Effectiveness was represented as a complex tapestry, contingent on the sum of multiple components to give it meaning. It was temporal, situated, and contextual. Effectiveness was something that was perceived, observed and realised. Effectiveness was grounded in the performance of the act and the meaning given to that performance. When talking about effectiveness, the councillors described the meaning of being effective. Being effective

was a lived experience. It was something that was felt, understood and interpreted. Being effective was grounded in meaning and strong personal standpoints - integrity, care, credibility, honesty, trust, equality and respect.

Being effective as a councillor was a complex interface between the personal and the political. Effectiveness was understood by the councillor as a construct that related to themselves (personal effectiveness), the council group they belonged to (political effectiveness) and the receivers of the acts (community effectiveness).

Personal effectiveness was closely aligned to a councillor's self-efficacy and represented through individualised meanings about what being effective meant to them. The councillors' interpretations of their personal effectiveness was influenced by their historically effected consciousness. The meanings the councillors gave to being effective were derived from their experiences of their gendered lives. Political effectiveness was dependent on the councillors' operation within the culture and structure of their organisation. In this sense the historically effected consciousness of the broader group of councillors influenced and shaped the nature of this experience. The different historically effected consciousness of women councillors compared with male councillors, resulted in the women reflecting, in their opinions, different understandings and interpretations about what it meant to be effective.

### ***A sense of belonging.***

Feeling and being politically effective was contingent on a councillor's belonging to and cooperating with the political and structural environment, and the degree to which the system enabled her different voice. The majority of the women were a minority amongst the body of councillors. Each of the councillors described the challenges of negotiating their otherness within a system that was dominated by men, and the masculinist assumptions and operating parameters. In this way, the women's reflections about their experiences exposed the inconsistencies in local government traditions, ideals and political practices. Some traditions were unjust because of the lack of attention given by the dominant group, and their unwillingness to take seriously the interpretive insights of the others' lived experiences (Warnke, 1993), and different ways of knowing and doing.

### ***Progression of understanding about what being effective meant.***

The councillors' stories demonstrate that effectiveness was not static, it was an evolving and dynamic construct, realised and given meaning in different ways and at different

times. The councillors' political presence allowed their voices to be heard. Their presence provided a vehicle to build knowledge, understanding and influence. Once present, being effective meant acting in ways that the councillors deemed efficacious - collaboratively, cooperatively and inclusively – behaviours that role-modelled their conceptions of being effective in local government. The councillors described how they learnt to be politically effective. This meant understanding and negotiating the environment in which they worked - knowing what was relevant, realistic, possible and practical. As the outsiders within (Collins, 2004), the women councillors had epistemic privilege that enabled richer insights and interpretations about their minority culture presence within the majority culture in which they worked. Effectiveness was an intersectional construct, which was complex. Effectiveness could be realised through the councillors' growing recognition of themselves, the interdependence of actors and systemic components, and an appreciation of its complexity and temporality.

#### ***Effectiveness as a judgement.***

Effectiveness is both presentation and judgement. Understanding the meaning of being effective in local government takes place within a scripted world composed of actors and audience. The way in which the script is interpreted, and the acts are played out, depends on the interpretation of the (lead and supporting) actors. The perceptions about the performances are interpreted by the audience (Gadamer, 1989). An understanding of effectiveness is subjective, and depends on the perspectives of participants. The interpretations are situated and creative, and represent a view from somewhere (Kinsella, 2006), a view from the socio-political cultural context within which the experience takes place. There is nothing canonical about the interpretations of effectiveness.

#### ***Effectiveness is about meaning making.***

Hermeneutics embraces ambiguity through meaning making. It positions understanding alongside explanation (Kinsella, 2006). For the women in the inquiry, effectiveness made sense because of the meaning of their performances. Effectiveness meant acting in ways that they perceived made a positive difference. The act of being effective was grounded in their being part of the community. Through their explanations, it has been possible to begin to understand the nature of the women councillors' political performances. Ambiguity is therefore inevitable as effectiveness will be variously experienced, understood and perceived. It is clear that degrees of effectiveness are

possible; the interpretations about whether something is effective are countless.

### **What influenced the councillors' ability to be effective.**

The nature of effectiveness is affected by the negotiation of tradition embedded in the ways of knowing and understanding that exist at a personal level, politically, culturally and structurally. The nature of being effective does not exist independently of tradition; rather, it is enabled and mediated by tradition. The nature of a councillor's effectiveness was contingent on the knowledge, skills and qualities they brought to the role, derived from their past experiences and the historically effected consciousness, whereby tradition is interpreted (Gadamer, 1989). Effectiveness was dependent on the extent to which the women's agency and efficacy was enabled within the structural and cultural parameters in which they operated. The councillors' interpretations of their prior experiences influenced the ways in which they acted and behaved, and the structure and culture of their councils affected the difference their acts made and how the acts were perceived and received. It was impossible to locate the meaning of effectiveness outside of any historical context (Misgeld, 1979).

### ***Being in the world.***

The women represented simultaneous and multiple identities constructed from their gendered lives. The representations highlighted the significance of the interdependence between their personal and political lives, and their sensitivity to being shaped by their history (Gadamer, 1989). The women's past experiences largely mirrored the political interests they brought to their councillor role, and their particular ways of being effective. Past experiences highlight the importance of conscientisation as a basis to understand the individual and particular nature of being effective. The ways in which the councillors actualised their acts of effectiveness demonstrated how they drew on their latent skills and knowledge derived from their lived experiences.

The women's stories presented diverse, rich worlds, performed in public and private spaces. The narratives revealed a broad range of experience derived from the home, the community, iwi, employment and via training and education. The diversity of the women's experiences provided a different, broad knowledge and skill base for each councillor. The breadth of their experiences revealed how the vastness of the women's knowledge, and their positions within society, was particularly relevant and meaningful for their roles as councillors and local government. They could let the inside out, and the outside in (Belenky et al., 1997). The women's exposure and presence in the world

have resulted in life experiences and knowledge, which aided their self-efficacy and ways of being effective. The unique life experiences from each councillor have added insight and perspective to the council table, and improved the potential for the organisations' effectiveness. The women's different voices have been important and have made a difference, when heard.

### ***Connection to people and place.***

The women's grounding in their community enhanced their representational effectiveness. On a personal level, the councillors belonged to their community and identified with its interests. The councillors' knowledge of the community, and the knowledge derived from the community, facilitated their advocacy and representational activities. The 'conversations' with communities have fostered shared understanding, the formation of agreement and the fusion of a horizon which have enabled the women to represent meaningfully. The women's stories highlighted the importance of the connective tissue for the meaning the stories gave to their effectiveness. This finding was also found by Drage (2000b) in her study of women councillors in Asia Pacific Countries. The relational focus of the councillors was a preferred way of working, one that they have perceived as most effective. The prominence of this issue within the thesis supports existing feminist theory, that women define themselves relationally (Belenky et al., 1997; Gilligan, 1982, 2011; Jaggar, 2004), and hermeneutic theory, about the importance of being as it relates to the 'other' (Gadamer, 1989; Pajnik, 2006; Warnke, 1993).

### ***Minority presence.***

The women councillors encountered specific challenges because of the masculinist culture of local government and the narrow perspectives of the dominant white male group. The narrow representative base often resulted in a narrow range of (male) interests being represented, and a failure, or reticence, to consider the gendered (and cultural) concerns that were relevant and important to the women and other minority groups. The masculinist focus of the councils resulted in greater attention being afforded to efficiency over effectiveness, to mechanics over people. At a behavioural level, some of the women experienced sexism, patronising attitudes and exclusion from male colleagues. There was little sympathy from male councillors for women's gendered effectiveness. The isolation experienced by the councillors slowed their acceptance and inclusion into the dominant councillor group and affected their potential to be

recognised as effective. Compliance with the prevailing hegemony was required by the dominant group, as a basis for being accepted. It was evident from the stories that the women's navigation of the masculinist culture either hindered and/or aided their connection and belonging. The women were compelled to navigate a masculinist culture, and overcome processes and systems that denied their interests and preferred ways of working, in order for them to be accepted and perceived as credible and effective. The women who successfully negotiated the dominant culture, without undermining the prevailing authority and power structures reported an increased sense of belonging and political effectiveness than those women whose standpoints countered and challenged the masculinist domination.

### **What the women councillors' effectiveness looked like**

Women, like men, are a diverse group, rather than a unitary political category... their approach to a political issue and – by extension – their rhetorical strategies are likely to vary according to their personal style. (Bicquelet et al., 2012, p. 118)

Each councillor's story reflected their personal effectiveness as a unique, particular, partial contribution to the political effectiveness of the whole group. The plurality of experience, the multiplicity of standpoints and the attention to difference and diversity demonstrated by the councillors' highlighted local government effectiveness as requiring wide knowledge, broad skills and a collective effort. There were degrees of effectiveness and different ways to be effective.

### ***Orientations of effectiveness.***

The women's effectiveness could be characterised by particular ways of working, manifest in participation that has embodied their different voice and different perspective. Women's historically naturalised roles of caring for others facilitated a particular way of being effective that was relational and cooperative, and different from male councillors' ways of working. The women's effectiveness was characterised by their care for people and place, their attention to quality and their understanding of the complexities associated with nurturing a community. Recognising and responding to complexity was possible because of the women's multiple identities, roles and personas. The women's ways of being effective were reflective, open and adaptable. There was little urgency with the women's effectiveness. There was an appreciation that effectiveness was substantive and not the same as efficiency, and that meaningful, credible processes and relationships take time. The women's effectiveness was complex.

There was no single way of being effective or recognising effectiveness. Feminism and hermeneutics are sensitive to multiple dimensions, and restricting an understanding of women's effectiveness into a typology would deny the validity and representation of each woman's experience. However, the councillors' narratives have revealed particular orientations that, to some degree, identify the political personas of the effective woman councillor.

- *People orientation* (engaging, inclusive, caring, relational, accessible, connected, approachable, empathetic, equitable).
- *Value orientation* (principled, honest, trustworthy, credible, with integrity).
- *Ethical orientation* (committed (to community and the organisation), responsive, prepared, diligent, accountable).
- *Character orientation* (resilient, strong, determined, tenacious, confident, reflective, with self-belief, patient, persistent, adaptable, realistic).
- *Skill orientation* (broad knowledge, diverse experience, intellect, articulate, competent).
- *Role orientation* (leader, activist, advocate, representative, collaborator, facilitator).
- *Outcome orientation* (well-being focussed, community focussed, result focussed).

### ***Gendered representation.***

The actualisation of the councillors' effectiveness was visible through their representation activities. A preference for inclusive practices was a feature of the councillors' effectiveness, their stories presenting representation that was characterised by broad engagement and collaborative and cooperative processes. The significance of the councillors' focus on inclusivity has demonstrated an ethic of care and justice, and a preference for interdependence over individuation.

There was a mixed response from the women about whether they had particular responsibilities as women councillors. Many of the women thought that they did have a particular responsibility because there were fewer women councillors, and their presence required them to ensure that the woman's voice was not lost in council processes. The representation of gendered interests was not, however, a trait of the women's effectiveness. Each councillor acknowledged their responsibility to represent the whole district, and several councillors said that representing women and other marginalised voices was an additional and necessary responsibility. The representation of gendered interests emerged through the women's different voices and perspectives

via their advocacy, activism and debate. There were strong assertions of the need to make sure that women's voice were not lost or forgotten.

Activism was an extension of the councillors' advocacy role and represented a powerful intersection between the councillors' community representation and their political efficacy. Advocacy and activism emerged as an act of resistance against a ruling discourse.

Responsiveness was characteristic of the effective woman councillor. The councillors' responsiveness was evident by their attention to other voices, and was a means by which they could be deemed credible. The women's particular attention to the representation of marginalised voices supported the notion that the councillors' ways of being effective were identified by an ethic of care.

Acts of decision-making were the visible culmination of the councillors' representative role. The councillors' approaches to decision-making were underpinned by their responsiveness, accountability, reflection, deliberation and cooperation. There was no evidence in the narratives of the councillors exerting power over their colleagues or constituents. The defining feature of their representative focus and decision-making acts was sharing power with others.

### ***Connected knowing.***

There were strong presentations of the traits of connected knowing. The 'connected knower' displays a capacity "not of invading another mind but of opening up to receive another's experience into their own minds" (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 122). The councillors did not present their knowledge as canonical, instead assessing their understanding as it related to others (Warnke, 1993). The integration of the councillors' personal persona (self) to the political persona (councillor), manifested differently for each councillor, and supported their particular ways of understanding and representing their communities.

The collaborative emphasis from the councillors' reflections demonstrated the women's attachment to their world, as opposed to their occupation within it. Gilligan (2011) wrote, "Collaborative groups are more effective" (p. 62). The focus on cooperation and collaboration was manifest throughout each councillor's narrative, and collaboration has been identified as an important political characteristic in other research (Alexander, 2012; Biquelet et al., 2012; Evans, 2003; Irwin, 2008; Pearson & Dancey, 2011; Wall,



2001). Whilst the women's political effectiveness was not automatically contingent on teamwork, it was apparent, through their stories, that they perceived collaboration as a more effective behaviour, and that such acts were more likely to yield positive results.

Reflecting on the importance of political relationships to democracy, Mallory (2012) quoted Alexis de Tocqueville who, in 1835, wrote about the danger of political despotism through a lack of friendship, and despotism which may take the form of the "administrative machinery... and the indifference on the multitude" (p. 33). Mallory wrote that a successful democracy was one where:

People's horizons do not shrink to a small circle of friends and family but expand to include a concern for others in society. A successful democracy involves bonds that are neither so strong that all are pulled along by the majority, nor so weak that all affection for one's co-citizens disintegrates. (p. 35)

### ***Attachment.***

The councillors' feelings for their work served to exemplify the important role of emotional association for the councillors' efficacy. The narratives demonstrated a resistance against separating the rational from the emotional, the public from the private, and the importance of integrating feelings and care into their work. The integration of the rational and emotional, the subjective and the objective (Belenky et al., 1997; Gilligan, 2011) was an indicator of the way in which women's political voice manifested itself, and was an important signal for understanding the nature of the women's effectiveness.

Writing about emotion and knowledge, Jaggar (2008) stated:

Emotions are ways in which we actively engage and construct the world. They have mental and physical aspects, each of which conditions the other. In some respects, they are chosen; in others, they are involuntary, they presuppose language and social order. They can be attributed to the 'whole persons' engagement in the on-going activity of social life. (p. 382)

The feelings articulated were influenced by the councillors' past experiences and their historical consciousness and interpretations of the traditions in which they were operating (Gadamer, 1989). Degrees of emotional attachment were evident. Often the councillors' stories did not evoke one feeling; their stories reflected feelings that were multi-faceted. The feelings associated with effectiveness were as complex as the meanings the women ascribed to being effective. The women perceived that displays of

emotional attachment were not always well received, and often a councillor was required to compromise her connections. The dominant local government culture was presented as detached and rational; the women identified that detachment.

The norms and values that predominate in a council tend to serve the interests of the dominant representative group. Domination can result in the development of an emotional constitution that “helps our society with its own perpetuation,” wrote Jaggar (2008) and those who display “unacceptable, or ‘outlaw emotions’ are often subordinated individuals” (p. 386). The presence of outlaw emotions, emotional connection that the male councillors perceived as not useful, could undermine how women's performances were perceived and received. Women's emotional displays were a deviation from the normalised political script.

Emotion, which gave meaning to the women's effectiveness, was socially constructed with an intentional structure. The emotional responses were active engagements that demonstrated the ways in which the women were present in their world. This finding corroborated Gilligan (2011), Jaggar (2008), Devere and Curtin (2009) and Belenky et al. (1997), each of whom reflected on the appropriateness of connection and interdependence for women's work.

### ***An ethic of care.***

An ethic of care characterised the women's effectiveness. This finding concurred with the work of several authors (Bicquelet, Weale & Bara, 2012; Gilligan, 1982; 2011; Mackay, 1998, Ryan & Natalie, 2001). Gilligan (1982) described the consciousness that characterises women's lives as “the quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships” (p. 8). Mackay's (1998) research about the different voice of Scottish politicians reflected on research that has highlighted women's different moral sensibilities and their ethic of care. She wrote of its contested nature amongst feminist writers:

Feminists have been divided as to whether the 'ethic of care' has inevitably essentialist underpinnings which lead to 'dangerous polities', celebratory of women's traditional self-sacrifice, and making women somehow responsible for care in the public sphere as well as care in the private or domestic sphere; or whether it can be used to challenge and transform values and practices in the public and political sphere. (p. 260)

Mackay concluded that an ethic of care had “strategic potential”:

Firstly, it exposes the virtual absence of care as a political value and the lack of regard for issues of care in political decision-making. Secondly, and closely related to the first point, it challenges politics that 'do harm'. Thirdly, it envalues the skills that arise and are honed, through the practice of care, and suggests that these are skills needed in the public sphere. Finally, it presents a powerful vision of a different sort of politics. (p. 261)

It was evident from the women's narratives that the political and cultural systems of local government undervalued the concept of care as a basis of political representation. Mackay wrote about the need for "powerful groups" to recognise how the "practice of caring" could transform politics (p. 267). Care and cooperation were significant concerns for the women councillors, yet some literature has afforded more attention to 'individuation' as a desirable attribute of maturity. Gilligan (1982) wrote that "individuation," more closely ascribed to men, is associated with the "capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision making and responsible action" (p. 17), and is deemed to be of higher value. The concept of individuation is an influential theory that appears to influence masculinist assumptions about what it might mean to be effective. Gilligan (2011) wrote, "The establishment of hierarchy relies on disassociation to sever connections that stand in its way." In contrast, she stated, "mutual understanding," associated as a female trait, "is horizontal in structure, inherently democratic" (p. 67).

Politics, guided by the principles of individuation, do not easily coalesce with an ethic of care and may undermine women's preferred ways of working. The councillors in this inquiry presented an interdependent representational style that was imbued with care, evident through their different voice, priorities and particular ways of representing. There is a clear sense that being effective was not a solitary or selfish endeavour, and care was a force that gave meaning to the councillors acts. The women's ethic of care has contributed new knowledge, new perspectives and a new hermeneutic understanding about what it means to be effective in local government.

### **Significance of the Findings in Relation to Existing Literature about Women's Political Presence**

Chapters 2 and 3 presented a context to understand women councillors' presence and participation. Chapters 6 to 9 interpreted the councillors' stories of effectiveness. The results from this inquiry have highlighted some interesting reflections that relate to the existing literature.

The councillors stories reinforced the assertion that elected politics remains as a

predominantly male culture (McGregor & Clover, 2011), and importantly that the women's political presence was providing a different way of working that challenged the inherently male nature of politics (Alexander, 2012). It was evident from the women's voices that the historically naturalised conditions of society have resulted in the women having a different relation to the world, and a different way of conceiving the world (Jaggar, 2004; Smith, 1984). The women councillors within this study strongly demonstrated a distinctive political culture, which manifested in them operating in ways that they defined differently from men.

The majority of women in the study were political representatives in local authority's where the 'tipping point' or 'critical mass' (Kanter, 1977; Lovenduski & Norris, 2003, Sawer, 2014) had been achieved. The concept of the tipping point assumes that when there are sufficient female representation the polity will begin to change and more effectively represent women and other minority interests. The stories relayed by the women did not reflect, to any great extent (although in one of two cases they did) that the numbers of representatives was influencing the policy direction of the councils, in ways that benefited women and other underrepresented interests. This finding highlights the significance and power of the prevailing masculinist, transactional, mechanistic, efficiency focus of local government, and how 30% of women representatives was not a strong enough voting block to change the policy emphasis to one where the social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of people and place was given as critical attention in decision making as economics and efficiency.

The women who participated in the study articulated how they substantively represented the gendered interests of women, because representation of the interests was not demonstrated by the male councillor group. The women's stories concurred with other researchers that highlighted the significance of 'critical acts' and 'critical actors' (Chaney, 2012; Curtin, 2008, 2009; Hind, 2009, Pearson & Dancy, 2011, Sawer, 2012; Wängnerud, 2009; Young, 2000). In the context of this inquiry, the importance of the councillors as critical actors who performed critical acts was evident. The 'critical' performances were manifest at a political and community level. The acts demonstrated the skill, efficacy, agency, influence and responsiveness of the councillors to represent all voices in their communities. The women's different voices, combined with their ways of effectiveness derived from their successful awareness of their horizons enabled representation that was meaningful and responsive, amidst the structural, institutional and broader cultural challenges they had to overcome.

The presentation of councillors stories that related to ineffectiveness and their perceptions of limited effectiveness highlighted the sexism and bias that continues in local government, results also found in leadership and political research (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Broussine & Fox, 2002; Kaufman & Grace, 2011; Lyness & Heilman, 2006). It was evident from the councillors' narratives that they were required to work harder, work smarter, and sometimes compromise their woman's identity (also found by Sinclair, 2011, 1999) in order to be perceived as effective. The results from this inquiry make clear that the dominant masculinist notions of leadership and effectiveness are outdated, and bear little resonance to the women's different, effective voices.

The women's councillors effectiveness was not wholly contingent on the structural determinants of their effectiveness, because their effectiveness operated at different levels (personal, political and community), in different ways, at different times. However, structural considerations were important in this inquiry, as they have been in other literature about women's political presence (Bochel & Bochel, 2004; Goetz, 2003; Norris & Lovenduski; 1995; Waylen, 2008). The nature of women's political presence and thus their effectiveness required conscious awareness of the masculinist environment in which they were working, a strong sense of individual efficacy and adaptive creative responses to affirm their different political presence. The women's presentation of their political selves was one where they could combine their ethics (namely an attention to others) with achievement (outcomes, success, making a difference). The women councillors weaving of their personal and political selves, their consciousness of 'otherness' and their ability to look outward and within, enabled their successful negotiation of their political and social contexts, and the institutional and cultural constraints, and aided their effective leadership and representation. The gendered construction of women's lives was an important means to understand the basis and nature of women councillors' effectiveness.

### **A New Paradigm to Understand Effectiveness**

The concept of effectiveness has been absent from existing local government research. This is particularly interesting in light of the prevalent use of the term in the New Zealand legislative context. Existing research about women politicians has largely concentrated on conceptions of leadership and making a difference. The results from this inquiry about effectiveness add a new dimension and new understandings to existing discourse.

The councillors' narratives demonstrated how existing theories of effectiveness did not reflect the holism of the councillors' perceptions and meanings about what effectiveness meant. Existing theoretical paradigms that facilitate understanding about effectiveness limit the horizon by which the women's effectiveness could be understood. Even effectiveness theorists, Yukl (2012), Worth (2002) and Hogan et al. (1994) reflected on the difficulty of defining the characteristics of effectiveness. Hermeneutics dismisses the idea that theory could adequately interpret the nature of lived experience.

This inquiry revealed how the councillors who participated in this study aspired to achieve on behalf of their communities. The council organisation and the councillors' acts of effectiveness were the vehicles that enabled this. The attainment of outcomes and results required the councillors to comply and operate according to the rules and parameters permitted of the system, even though the modes of operation were not always conducive to the councillors' preferred ways of working. There was a conscious appreciation that the attainment of goals and outcomes relied on the availability of resources (financial and non-financial), an enabling system environment and a councillor's compliance with the system. Feelings of ineffectiveness emerged when a councillor contested the system, and the acts of resistance challenged the prevailing orthodoxy and practices. Maintenance of the system was represented as important for the dominant group who wished to maintain power and authority. The women councillors, as members of the minority group, challenged the system but did not seek to undermine it. Gadamer (1989) reflected that, even with the most significant acts of change and transformation, large components of a dominant system remain intact. The women sought to open and transform the system, and make it meaningful for those voices that were largely unheard and unrepresented. The system theory of effectiveness had a degree of resonance to the councillors' acts, in that the councillors did not seek to overturn the system. Hermeneutically, systems theory may be understood as a theory of tradition, whereby elements of the old are preserved and combined with elements of the new to form new traditions and context.

The councillors' stories reflected a preferred way of working that was relational and governed by a number of values, but the individual stories showed that the councillors engaged differently according to the features of the particular situation, their prejudices and pre-understandings. Contingency in local government is a necessary process to balance competing interests and demands, complexity and resource scarcity. That said, the degree of contingency will be moderated by the parameters of the system, and the

efficiency focus of local government may inhibit the performances, according to pressures on the system at a given time. Contingency, in the context of the councillors' narratives, can be reframed as responsiveness. The councillors' contingency demonstrated that effective leadership was not static. Rather, it was agile and responsive. The women evaluated and adapted their performances, as needed for each circumstance, because that is what being effective requires.

Social role theory of effectiveness assumes that people will act in accordance with socially and culturally defined expectations. Women's historically naturalised social roles in the home and community have embedded women in nature over culture (Harstock, 1983). The gendered nature of the women's lives manifest in a relational, caring way of working. Working in this way, women represent a different voice in local government. To some extent, the women's caring focus perpetuated the view that women were second-class councillors, because emotional attachment is not valued as a political characteristic. The attention to others was, however, a marker of the women's maturity (Gilligan, 2011) and demonstrated the pluralism that is involved with a hermeneutic interpretation of being in the world. Some councillors displayed masculine behaviours and were criticised for displaying authoritarian traits, even though these attributes were considered the traits of effective leaders. The women's performances were subject to prejudice because of the enduring stereotypes about the presence of women in politics, and not necessarily how they performed. In this regard, there is a danger in addressing social role theory as a basis for understanding the women's meanings of effectiveness, because it denies the complexity, uniqueness, particularity and self-interpretation of each woman's lived experiences.

The feminist hermeneutic lens of this inquiry, grounded in exploring the actualities of women's experiences, has opened the way to revealing effectiveness as a complex, dynamic and integrated concept. The inquiry has shown that the women councillors acted in ways that reflected their lives. Their performances were representations of themselves, in all of the various forms of their identities, and vicissitudes of their experiences. Such representations of effectiveness could not be profiled according to existing theoretical understanding, about the meaning of effectiveness.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Hermeneutic research is a limitation, because there is always something left to say, or always-different interpretations of the data. The textual meaning is boundless and fluid.

Feldman (2000) reflected “every textual interpretation denies or suppresses some alternative meanings, some alternate interpretations – some Other” (p. 58). Smythe et al. (2008) wrote, “the thinking will never be done in the sense that it is complete. It will always be situated and soaked in taken-for-granted assumptions. One could never peel back all of the layers or possibilities or understand in a complete way all at once” (p. 1393). Whilst the infinite possibilities of a hermeneutic inquiry may be construed as a limitation for those who seek generalisable and transferable findings, the strength in the approach, for this inquiry, was the attention it gave to the voices of 25 women councillors at a particular time in New Zealand local government history. As stated by Walker (1996), hermeneutics honours the uniqueness of research participants, their time and place in their personal history.

The following research limitations are however acknowledged:

- 1 The inquiry participants were limited in number and distribution across New Zealand councils. The participants were self-selecting, via the purposive sampling method. It is likely that the hermeneutic interpretation of experience would be different with a different group of councillors.
- 2 Four of the interviews were not conducted face to face, and there was a considerable variation in the length of the interviews. Both of these factors may have influenced the information shared. However, when I reflect on the text provided by these women, and the way in which the data has been used in the thesis study, I do not believe that the shorter interviews, or those conducted via telephone and Skype, resulted in data that was less useful or credible.
- 3 The interview questions were not followed strictly for all of the interviews, which would make replication of the inquiry challenging. The flexibility in approach was congruent with the feminist hermeneutic approach adopted, and reflected the councillors preferred ways of constructing and sharing their stories.
- 4 The large number of research participants and the range of interview questions resulted in significant volumes of data not being used in the thesis. The data selected for the thesis was determined by the researcher, based on my pre-understandings. It is possible that another researcher would have selected different texts and interpreted the data in different ways, which may have yielded different research conclusions.
- 5 The feminist standpoint position of the researcher was not disclosed to the participants, because of not wanting to prejudice the stories shared, based on the



participants' assumptions about what they thought the researcher might wish to hear. My feminist voice emerges strongly throughout the thesis. It is reasonable that the participants may not wholly resonate with the feminist position of the researcher.

- 6 There was no verification of the participants' data, via interpretative groups, or analysis of written council / media reports to corroborate their stories. Each participant's data was accepted at face value. Verification of participants' data is not congruent with a feminist hermeneutic research because it would undermine the validity and representation of the participants' voices.
- 7 The organisation of the data, by the core themes identified, limited the range of data used from each text. The organisation of the data in a different way could have resulted in different excerpts being used from the texts, and different interpretations of the data. Representation of the councillors' experience may have been moderated by the generation of themes used to organise the data.

## **Significance of the Study**

Hermeneutics as a research approach grants a hearing to those living in important, complicated relationships and offers possibilities of reinvention. Likewise it is open to the voices of other strands of thought, other cultures and ways of viewing the world, and seeks to do them justice in understanding and, ending where it begins, in practice (McCaffrey, 2012, p. 226).

The purpose of the study was to explore New Zealand women councillors' perceptions about what it meant to be effective in local government. This study makes the following contributions to existing discourse:

### ***Adding to the existing literature about what effectiveness and being effective means.***

The study has shown effectiveness as complex and multi-faceted, something that extends beyond the current theories of effectiveness. The study has begun to show that effectiveness is the 'what' or the experience, and being effective is the 'how' or the performance. It is possible for each to operate separately, yet simultaneously, or to operate as mutually dependent constructs. The study has demonstrated that effectiveness is a complex construct that is situated, temporal and subject to interpretation.

Effectiveness is a dynamic and subjective concept.

### ***Developing new knowledge about what being effective has meant to political women.***

The results of the inquiry have highlighted that political women's experiences of

effectiveness are felt, observed, perceived and actioned. Being effective, to political women, means acting in ways that integrate care and feeling with reason and rationality. It combines their 'self' with the 'other'. Effectiveness for political women has manifested through their interpreted lived experiences derived from their gendered personal and political lives. The women's experiences reveal that degrees of effectiveness and different ways of effectiveness are possible. Effectiveness has been shown to operate variously at a personal level, a political level and within the community.

***Providing new knowledge about the nature of women councillors' effectiveness.***

Women's effectiveness has been shown to be characterised by a complex intersectionality. Women brought to the council table their whole life experience along with their multiple identities and personas; they highlighted the degree to which their political lives were embedded in nature, culture and a gendered history. The coalescence of the features of the women's lives has resulted in the particular ways of being effective. These features are identified throughout the thesis.

***Developing new understanding about how women's personal effectiveness can be actualised in political environments.***

Perceptions of effectiveness are political, and require structural and cultural commitment. The women's narratives revealed that effectiveness was contingent on a sense of belonging, and acceptance by the political group. Effectiveness has been shown as a negotiated construct, contingent on a complex navigation of the masculinist culture, women's gendered experiences and the application of skill, knowledge and effort that did just enough without upsetting the dominant power structure. While the women had a greater potential to actualise their effective behaviours, if their standpoints were aligned to the dominant culture, the women began to show how their presence and their different voice was beginning to change the traditions and culture within their councils, because of the skill, knowledge and commitment they brought to their roles. It was clear, from the narratives, that the ruling groups within the councils preferred the women to adapt their behaviours to the prevailing hegemony, if they wanted to make a difference. However, the women's stories showed that being effective can be done in a different way.

The inquiry has revealed the potential for embracing different ways of effectiveness, for a more effective local government that is responsive, respectful and inclusive. The

women's voices made an important contribution at the council table, and contributed to representation that recognised the diverse needs of all of the community. The women's presence and their political voices have been important for local democracy.

***Advancing knowledge about the significance of women councillors' ways of working for the processes and operations of local government.***

Local government's focus on efficiency over effectiveness did not resonate with the councillors' perceptions about effectiveness. The councillors' standpoints indicated their preference to act in ways that gave greater attention to people over process and quality over quantity. It is evident that the perspectives about what effectiveness means, as shared by the councillors, was incongruent with the New Zealand Government's focus about the purpose of local government in New Zealand. The results of this inquiry have begun to demonstrate a possible dichotomy about the role and purpose of local government among different actors. This has significant implications for the representation of women's substantive interests at a local level.

***Applying feminist hermeneutic methodology to local government research.***

At the time of thesis production, there was no feminist hermeneutic research about women in local government. The inquiry has added to the existing hermeneutic and feminist discourses by presenting an interpretation about the unique and perspectival character of women's presence in local government. The methodological approach has successfully combined the hermeneutics of suspicion with the hermeneutics of faith as interpretive methods. These methods allowed the research to demonstrate how the repressive nature of local government could impair women's political participation, while also offering political women the opportunity to reinterpret the traditions of local government and apply new meaning and understanding that could foster different ways of being effective. The hermeneutic interpretation of the women's stories has begun to provide an understanding about what a political system would look and feel like if women's ways of knowing and doing were embraced, and their voices were represented more positively.

***Providing a foundation of knowledge about what New Zealand women councillors do in local government.***

The challenge in researching the effectiveness of women councillors is that New Zealand's female political representatives, in any reasonable number, are still in their infancy. The existing literature has highlighted those women who were the first of their

kind as mayors, councillors, MPs, cabinet ministers, governors general, and prime ministers. Whilst the achievements of the ‘first women’ have been documented, their effectiveness has been largely measured in relation to their attainment of political office. The results from this inquiry lay a foundation of knowledge about what New Zealand women councillors actually do, that they perceive as effective, in political office.

## **Future Research**

As a result of the inquiry, some new understanding has been gained about the meaning the women councillors gave to their effectiveness experiences. The findings from the research have also created future research opportunities that may further enhance knowledge about political women, and what it means to be effective as a politician.

1. There are opportunities to engage in further study with defined groups of women representatives.
  - First-term councillors and multi-term councillors could aid understanding about how effectiveness develops over time. This study began to reveal a difference amongst councillors who had served for different terms. Further research could consider in more detail the impact of time, experience and belonging for a councillor’s efficacy and effectiveness.
  - The research could be replicated with women mayors as a means of understanding whether their ways of effectiveness are different from the main body of councillors.
  - Māori researchers could build on the results from this inquiry to explore Māori women councillors’ effectiveness within white masculinist political environments.
  - The study could be broadened to include women councillors from South Island local authorities as a means of identifying the nature of the effectiveness of councillors across New Zealand.
  
2. There is an opportunity to analyse the existing data in a different way, and explore differences amongst the councillors from the different tiers (regional, city, unitary district) of council. This analysis would aid understanding about whether effectiveness is differently realised across the different council types. This research could be significant for understanding whether there is a difference in representational styles across councils with different responsibilities and with

different geographical bases.

3. An interesting area of research would be an exploration of the meaning of effectiveness amongst councillors who were elected differently within their communities. Some of the councillors in this inquiry were elected as 'ward' councillors; others were elected as 'at large' representatives. The inquiry could explore whether the allegiances to the community are different amongst councillors elected to represent a defined community, as opposed to those elected to represent the electorate as a whole. This topic of inquiry also lends itself to a similar exploration amongst women MPs whom were elected from either the party list or as constituency representatives.
4. The question about women's descriptive presence, the role of critical actors and the critical mass remains pertinent. Women's descriptive presence remains the subject of research; however, a paucity of knowledge remains, and it was clear from this thesis that women's substantive representation remains critical. There is an opportunity to explore the effectiveness of women in local government and central government in relation to their descriptive presence. Pearson and Dancey (2011) addressed the role of women in the United States as critical actors with their inquiry about congresswomen's speech elevation. The research concluded that speech participation among women was high despite the smaller number of representatives, highlighting the importance of the critical actor. There is an opportunity to conduct an inquiry about political women's effectiveness vis-à-vis their descriptive presence, and to consider what extent, if any, women's perceptions about their effectiveness are influenced by the number of other political women present in their organisations.
5. There is an absence of research about femocrats in New Zealand local government, Research about local government femocrats could build on the research about national and state level femocrats highlighted in this thesis, undertaken by Chappell, 2002, Curtin and Teghtsoonian (2010), Lovenduski (2005) Murray (2008), Sawyer (2007, 2012) and Weldon (2002). There is potential for the research to explore the nature of women councillors' engagements with femocrats, and what the combined presence of women local government femocrats and councillors might mean for the representation of gendered and other minority interests at a community level. This would be a particularly interesting area of research in light of the New Zealand local

government reforms, the lesser political basis of local government, and the waning women's movements across the country.

6. This inquiry did not seek to compare the women's perceptions of effectiveness with that of their male counterparts. A useful area of study would be to explore what effectiveness means from the perspective of the male councillor, using a feminist hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutic philosophy explores the existing moral and political vocabulary to understand what this means about the principles of justice and norms that may exist (Warnke, 1993). Such a study could offer opportunities to increase knowledge about male councillors' interpretations and understanding of effectiveness, and to consider what effectiveness that combined the sensibilities of male and female councillors could mean for local government (and other working environments).
7. Women councillors' effectiveness is an important concept for local government globally. There is an opportunity to conduct comparative research about what it means. This research could generate new knowledge about the nature of experiences of effectiveness in different political systems, and whether effectiveness is perceived differently according to different political and structural environments. There is potential to undertake the research within the same countries researched by Drage (2000b) (Asia Pacific nations) and Irwin (2008) (England, Sweden, India, The Philippines and Australia) as part of their comparative research about women in local government.
8. Effectiveness is an important political concept, and there is an opportunity to explore the meaning of effectiveness amongst other political women: MPs and community board members. Exploring effectiveness from these different representative bases, when combined with the results from this inquiry may reveal some important understanding about the different nature of effectiveness, in different political forums.
9. There is an opportunity to explore the concept of care in more detail. Care remains a neglected political concept, and further research could consider the relational and attachment components of effectiveness more fully. There is an opportunity to look at the concept of care, sampling both men and women at local and national political

levels, as a means of understanding the influence of men and women's different socially defined roles in regard to the nature of their political caring, what this means for their political representation, and how the concept of caring is actualised in political office.

10. At a practical level, there is considerable scope to undertake research about the support programmes that are available for women councillors, including equity programmes, mentoring and local government women's associations. There is potential to conduct comparative research from Australia, England and Canada where women specific programmes for councillors have existed for several years. The research could consider the impact and success of the programmes, what the programmes mean in relation to an understanding of political women's effectiveness, and their transferability to political women in the New Zealand environment.
11. There is a need to continue developing research about the impact of New Zealand local government reforms on women's participation in local government. This thesis has demonstrated the incongruence between the efficiency focus, a discourse that is focussed on economic and mechanistic modes of thinking, against an effectiveness focus, which is more attuned to quality, care, interdependence and representation. If the New Zealand trend towards local government amalgamations continues fewer elected members will be elected to represent greater numbers of constituents. It is important to consider what, if any, consequences this has for women's descriptive presence, and the substantive representation of gendered interests. This research could build on the preliminary conclusions already asserted by Drage and Tremaine (2011) about the effect of local government reforms on women's political participation.
12. Further explorations of the concept of effectiveness are possible, particularly as it may relate to leadership research and existing research about politicians making a difference. This inquiry did not consider, in great depth, the notions of leadership and making difference, as they related to effectiveness. The connections between the concepts were minimally reflected upon. Further research about the three concepts, could aid an understanding about their relationships and interdependent or independent natures. There is a breadth of existing literature that could be drawn on

to support such an inquiry.

13. An opportunity exists to consider the concept of ineffectiveness more fully. An understanding of ineffectiveness was not actively sought from this inquiry but it emerged and began to reveal some important new information about how effectiveness can be impacted upon by the performances of many actors, and how inequitable distributions of power and authority can influence effectiveness. This inquiry also began to touch on the cultural and political environment that can mediate effectiveness. A better understanding about what ineffectiveness means within a political environment, offers an opportunity to better understand effectiveness.
14. Whilst research exists about the nature of political friendships and the importance of sisterhood, the significance of relationships as a basis for effectiveness is worthy of further research. The women began to reveal a different way of relating from their male colleagues. This suggests that the way in which the relationships were formed, and with whom, could influence their potential for effectiveness. The inquiry has highlighted the women's relationships with male colleagues because there were more of them present. It would be interesting to explore the nature of relationships with female mayors, in particular, and consider if this changes the nature of a councillors and council's effectiveness.
15. The foundational results from this inquiry could support further research about the intersectional nature of political persona and what that means for an understanding of effectiveness. The councillors in this inquiry represented themselves according to their gender, ethnicity, age, and a broad range of socio-economic and cultural circumstances. Tuval-Mashiach (2006) suggested that if gender was a critical feature for identity formation, then gender narratives will be similar. As the women in this inquiry have shown, whilst the women's gendered lives provided the common element to each of their experiences, their lived experiences emerged from a much broader range of determinants, and their narratives were correspondingly different. This lends itself to further research about the other elements of political women's lives that influence their experiences.



## **Conclusion**

The women councillors in this study presented their effectiveness as conscious, agile, connected, responsive and caring. It represented who they were as individuals. The councillors' effectiveness was manifest by strong orientations fostered by their lived experiences; orientations made possible by their gendered lives. Political women are important, and committed women councillors are needed to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of local government to their communities.

Pajnik (2006) wrote, "discourse is never pure" (p.388), and the discourse about effectiveness is no different. Effectiveness is complex and contested. Effectiveness is subject to social, economic, political and cultural influences. Effectiveness is a lived experience grounded in behaviours, pre-understandings, values and standpoints, and is manifest at personal, political and community levels. Effectiveness is more than the realisation of a goal. It is about striving for further effectiveness, acting efficaciously and being enabled to be effective, feeling effective and being perceived as effective. Effectiveness is lived, understood, felt, realised and given meaning through an interpretation of historical consciousness.

Effectiveness is a challenging construct to understand. Effectiveness is not passive; it is lively and dynamic. It is variable and continuous. It is grounded in prejudice. Interpretations about its meaning are tentative and subject to change as new futures and new perspectives emerge. Effectiveness will differ over time, and vary from person to person, according to each unique situation. Being effective is being aware of the interpretive character of our own understanding, and unfolding that understanding, as we assess it in relation to the understanding of others. To understand the meaning of being effective requires a consciousness of being in the world, and of being influenced by the world. Effectiveness is a lived experience.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A- Consent Form



*Project title: Women councillors' stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government.*

*Project Supervisor: Dr Marilyn Waring*

*Researcher: Louise Tester*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23 April 2012.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes   
No

Participants signature:.....

Participants Name:.....

Participants contact details:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date:.....

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 March  
2012, AUTEK Reference number 12/32.***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix B - Participant Information Sheet

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

Monday 23 April 2012

### Project Title

Women councillors' stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government.

### An Invitation

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project undertaken by student Louise Tester. The research is an inquiry about women councillor's perceptions and experiences of effectiveness in New Zealand local government. The research seeks to engage women councillors from North Island Local Authorities in a conversation about what effectiveness means, and to seek stories of the experiences of effectiveness as a local government councillor.

The research data will be gathered via a face-to-face conversation between you and the researcher.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any stage. If you chose to withdraw, all information supplied by you to the researcher will be destroyed and not used in the research thesis.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to undertake an inquiry as part of a PhD about women councillors' effectiveness in local government. This research will result in the production of a thesis. It is anticipated that associated research papers, and written presentations will also be produced to share the results emanating from this research.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are invited to participate in this research, as a councillor within a North Island Local Authority. You are one of twenty women councillors being invited to participate from the 169 women councillor's in the North Island Councils of New Zealand. Your contact details have been obtained from your councils' website.

Excluded from this invitation are male councillors, women councillors from South Island Councils, Mayors, and Community Board representatives.

### **What relationship does the researcher have to local government?**

The researcher is a part time Policy Analyst at the New Plymouth District Council. The research is not conducted on behalf of, or in any way connected to the New Plymouth District Council. Local Government New Zealand is supporting the recruitment of the research participants, and will not be contacting any woman councillor from the New Plymouth District Council. The anonymity and privacy of all participants will be protected, and all information supplied by you will be kept confidential.

### **What will happen in this research?**

A research interview will take place between you and the researcher. The researcher will travel to your district and meet with you at a mutually convenient time and location. The research conversation will take no longer than two hours. The interview will be audio taped, and notes may be taken during the conversation.

Following the research interview, the researcher will send you an audio copy of the interview. At this stage, you will have the opportunity to provide further information, or clarify anything that was said during the interview. The researcher will type up the conversation, and will prepare a concise narrative of the conversation, which will be sent to you at a later date.

Following the research interview, the researcher may wish to speak with you again by telephone or email for the purposes of clarification or seeking a better understanding of what was said during the face-to-face conversation.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

The research will inquire about your effectiveness and is not in any way intended to cause emotional discomfort or harm. However, when we enter a process of recollecting events and telling our stories, unexpected emotions and feelings, and forgotten memories may be stirred up.

You are in control of your participation in the research and should feel comfortable engaging in the process. You control the information you chose to tell, and the information you consent to be used in the research outputs. You are free to withdraw your participation from the research process at any stage.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Before the research interview begins, you will be reminded about the purpose of the research. You will be advised that you remain in control of your participation and the information you wish to share, and of your right to withdraw your participation at any stage.

If, during the conversation, you begin to feel any discomfort, you are welcome to request a break from the interview. If the researcher recognises that you are feeling less than comfortable, a break will be offered. After a break has been taken you will be asked if you wish to continue the conversation. If however you do not wish to continue, this is perfectly acceptable and will be wholly accepted by the researcher.

### **What are the benefits?**

The benefit of this research to you is having the opportunity to share your stories of effectiveness as a local government councillor. By sharing your stories, and providing information to support a research inquiry, the completion and publication of the research will enable the results to be shared with the wider research community that is interested in women who hold governance and other elected positions, the broader community of women councillors, and local government in general. It is hoped that the sharing of the stories of effectiveness, may support an increased awareness of the role of women local government councillors in NZ.

The benefits of this research to the researcher is having the opportunity to undertake a scholarly inquiry in an area that is of personal interest, and having the opportunity to generate new information and to share this knowledge for the benefit of women in local government, and the Councils and communities they serve. It would also be personally rewarding to gain a PhD as a result of the inquiry.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy will be protected throughout the research. No demographic information that could be used to identify you will be requested, and all personal information provided by you, for the purposes of communication will be kept securely and separately from the research interview data.

Due to the small numbers of women councillors available as potential participants (169), there is a small possibility that you may be identified. The following provisions will protect your anonymity:

- 1) Neither your name nor your Council's will be used in any research documentation.
- 2) You will be given a pseudonym in the research writings.
- 3) Where you tell a story that includes names, people and / or places that could readily identify you, the story will not be used or will only be used in the context of providing general explanations.
- 4) You can request that particular stories or specific information be omitted from the research.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The cost of participating in this research is two hours of your time. The researcher will travel to a venue within your district to meet with you, so financial costs to you are not anticipated. However, where there is a cost directly associated with your participation in the research interview, these costs will be reimbursed.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

It would be desirable if you could advise the researcher of your willingness to participate by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

If you would like further information and guidance to inform your consideration to participate please contact the research supervisor Professor Marilyn Waring at [mwaring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:mwaring@aut.ac.nz) or on 09 921 9999 ext. 9661.

Your participation in the research is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research at any stage by notifying the researcher.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you would like to participate, please email your confirmation along with the attached consent form to the researcher Louise Tester at [rwg5941@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rwg5941@aut.ac.nz) or send it to c/o Professor Marilyn Waring, AC312, AUT North Shore Campus, 90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, North Shore City 0627, Auckland.

The researcher will confirm receipt of the consent form, and arrange the research interview.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will receive feedback. You will receive your interview audio file and a copy of the narrative. You will also be offered a copy of the final transcript that will be submitted to the University.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Marilyn Waring, at [mwaring@aut.nz](mailto:mwaring@aut.nz) or on 09 921 9999 ext. 9661.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, [rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6902.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*****Researcher Contact Details:***

Louise Tester, c/o Professor Marilyn Waring, AC312, AUT North Shore Campus, 90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, North Shore City 0627, Auckland, at [rwg5941@aut.nz](mailto:rwg5941@aut.nz) or on 021 1651549.

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Professor Marilyn Waring, at [mwaring@aut.nz](mailto:mwaring@aut.nz) or on 09 921 9999 ext. 9661.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 March 2012, AUTEK Reference number 12/32.

## Appendix C - Ethics Approval



# MEMORANDUM

## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Marilyn Waring  
From: **Dr Rosemary Godbold** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 21 March 2012  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 12/32 **Women councillor's stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government.**

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Dear Marilyn

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 13 February 2012 and I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 16 April 2012.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 20 March 2015.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 20 March 2015;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 20 March 2015 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all written and verbal correspondence with us. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact me by email at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 6902. Alternatively, you may contact your AUTEC Faculty Representative (a list with contact details may be found in the Ethics Knowledge Base at <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>).

On behalf of AUTEK and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rosemary Godbold  
**Executive Secretary**  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Louise Tester [rwg5941@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rwg5941@aut.ac.nz)



## **Appendix D – Recruitment Communication**

Dear Councillor

Local Government New Zealand is contacting you on behalf of Auckland University of Technology (AUT) PhD Student Louise Tester, who is inviting you to participate in a research inquiry about women councillors' effectiveness in local government.

Attached to this communication is the research invitation. The invitation sets out how you can obtain further information about the research and whom you should contact to indicate your interest in participating.

LGNZ are very happy to support the student and AUT with the recruitment for this research. As an organisation, we are always pleased to see research about New Zealand local government. The research is a new area of investigation about local government and women councillors, and has the potential to produce some interesting findings about what it means to be an effective woman councillor in Aotearoa in 2012.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the opportunity to participate.

Yours faithfully

Kate Macnaught

Policy Manager

## Appendix E – Recruitment Information sheet



### **Women Councillors: An Invitation to Participate in a PhD Research Project.**

Invitation: Women Councillors from the North Island Local Authorities are invited to participate in a PhD research project. The researcher is seeking to engage women councillors in a conversation about what effectiveness means to them, and to gather stories about how women councillors are effective in their political role.

The researcher is asking the following question, “What are women councillors’ stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government?”

Who: 15-20 current women councillors (excluding women mayors) from North Island local authorities are invited to participate. The aim is to talk with a wide range of women councillors who would be happy to share stories about their political experiences. Where more than 15-20 people express an interest to participate the sample will be refined according to TLA type, to ensure a spread of councillors from the different types of local authority.

When: The research interviews will take place between June and October 2012.

Commitment: The face to face research interview will take no longer than 2 hours. The researcher will travel to the councillor’s district and meet at a location and time that is mutually convenient.

Anonymity and confidentiality: The research materials will not use any data or information that could identify you or your council. The researcher’s interest is in the stories of effectiveness as experienced by you the councillor, as opposed to being a study of you as an individual.

On-going information: Following the conversation the researcher will provide you with a copy of your interview. You will also be offered a copy of the draft thesis that will be submitted to the University.

The researcher: The research is being conducted by student Louise Tester from the Institute of Public Policy at the Auckland University of Technology, as part of a PhD.

Further information: Information on this research project, including an information sheet can be obtained from research supervisor, Professor Marilyn Waring, at [mwaring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:mwaring@aut.ac.nz) or on 09

921 9999 ext. 9661.

Participating in the research: It would be desirable if you could advise of your interest to participate in this research to Louise Tester by: 18<sup>th</sup> May2012 at [rwg5941@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rwg5941@aut.ac.nz) or c/o Professor Marilyn Waring, AC312, AUT North Shore Campus, 90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, North Shore City 0627, Auckland, 09 921 9999 ext. 9661.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21 March 2012, AUTEK Reference number 12/32.**

## Appendix F- Interview Questions



# Interview Questions

## Research Title

Women councillors' stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government.

## Research Question

What are women councillors' stories of effectiveness in New Zealand local government?

## Interview Questions

### Scene Setting

Can you provide an overview of your political career?

### Perceptions of effectiveness

1. What does the term effectiveness mean to you?
2. Can you tell me *about a woman in politics whom you perceive as effective*?
  - a. What makes this person effective?

### Influences

3. Thinking back to a time before politics, what has influenced your ability to be effective?
4. *Who in your political life has facilitated your ability to be an effective councillor?*
  - a. *How have they influenced you?*

### Recollections of effectiveness

5. Can you tell me about the first time you recall being an effective councillor?
  - a. Thinking about this event, what made you effective?
  - b. What did this mean to you?
  - c. How did it feel?
  - d. *Why is this story important to you?*
6. Can you tell me about an important time when you believe you have been an

effective councillor?

- a. Thinking about this event, what made you effective?
- b. What did it mean to you?
- c. How did it feel?
- d. *Why is this story important to you?*

7. Can you tell me about a recent time when you believe you have been an effective councillor?

- a. Thinking about this event, what made you effective?
- b. What did it mean to you?
- c. How did it feel?
- d. *Why is this story important to you?*

8. Was there a watershed moment when you began to feel effective in your role as a councillor?

- a. What was the moment?
- b. What did it mean to you?
- c. How did it feel?
- d. *Why is this story important to you?*

9. Thinking about these different experiences of effectiveness how has your view of your effectiveness changed over your time in political office?

- a. What has led to this change of view?

#### The impact of effectiveness

10. Where do you feel most effective in your role as a councillor?

- a. Why do you think this?
- b. How does it make you feel?
- c. What does your present effectiveness as a councillor mean to you?

11. *Can you tell me about a time when being a woman councillor has been particularly important?*

- a. *Thinking about this event, why was it particularly important to be a woman?*
- b. What did it mean to you?
- c. How did it feel?
- d. *Why is this story important to you?*

#### Responsibilities

12. Are there any particular responsibilities you feel you have as a women councillor?

- a. *What are the responsibilities?*
- b. *What do these responsibilities mean to you in your role?*

13. Is there a difference between how the effectiveness of male and female councillors is perceived?

- a. *How is it perceived differently?*
- b. *Why is it perceived differently?*
- c. *What does the differing perception of effectiveness mean to you as a councillor?*

The difference women make

*14. What suggestions for effective practice do you have for the next generation of women councillors?*

15. When you leave local government how would you like to be remembered?

## Appendix G – Examples of Crafted Narratives

### Narrative of Carolyn (ID20)

Carolyn had a background in private sector business and was serving as a first term councillor. Carolyn's business background means she came to local government with a different understanding about what effectiveness might mean. She said:

I have now come to accept that things move very slowly in a political sense, meaning that sometimes you feel that you are not effective if you are not achieving an outcome and making changes. Sometimes you feel you are not doing that because of the slowness or the slow pace of the political environment. So effectiveness is...making a difference, and making a difference that is useful.

Carolyn perceived the women politicians in central government to be particularly effective. She cites Judith Collins, Angela Merkel, Julia Gillard and Helen Clarke, all of whom she describes as “strong women,” and not “wishy washy.” Specifically talking about Judith Collins, Carolyn described her as:

No nonsense, confident in herself and able to cope with the vagaries of politics, you know the political minefield you have to walk in as a politician, and I think as a woman you are walking through a political minefield with high heels on.

Carolyn's pre-council career taught her the value of good listening, the value of communication generally and the need for clear communications in order to effect change, skills she describes as crucial for local government.

Carolyn said that she was used to “working in a faster pace” at a senior board level in business, and the speed of the political process is something that Carolyn finds quite frustrating, although she understands that is how the system works.

Carolyn drew on business colleagues for their business acumen and the wisdom of a small group of experienced councillors to support her in her role. Speaking about the councillors, she commented:

He is quite wise and he is of a very similar thought process to myself... We want to do things right, we want to be robust, we want to be transparent and we are very much ‘this is the right thing to do’, that is probably our mantra.

Carolyn's business colleagues are her sounding blocks helping her to refine things, and clarify her thinking and understanding of the issues. The relationship with these colleagues helped her to crystallise her communications, and make it "more business-like." She said, "I have learned it is no good saying this is wrong, I have learned you have to be very prescriptive and take emotion out of it."

Carolyn recalled first being effective early on in her political career. She said, "We were presented with an issue and I said that, on the grounds of robustness and transparency that I had a problem with the way it was presented." Despite having the support of a fellow councillor, Carolyn was patronised and underwent an "enormous battle" to make changes. Carolyn found the resistance very frustrating and said, "I did quite a bit of research and confirmed it throughout the process to make some headway towards the ultimate outcome, but it has taken a long time, but I think that was a very effective moment for me."

Carolyn attributed her effectiveness to not giving up, and undertaking considerable research on the topic in order to present a strong rationale to fellow councillors. Reflecting on the importance of this particular event Carolyn said, "Initially I thought I was on a personal mission to single handedly make them understand, but then I understood why I was actually doing it, it was because as a council we need to be correct [with our processes]."

The event provided some key learning's for Carolyn about how she could be effective within her council. "I have got wiser," Carolyn said, and "now I tend to take an opportunity if I happen to be sitting and having coffee...I might just gently raise a topic." Carolyn continued to state:

Women are quite patient in my experience at sowing the seeds and the plate spinning, and then walking away from them and then coming back and subtly giving them another spin, and I think that leads to effectiveness. What I have found is running head on to them just does not work.

Carolyn believed that she was an effective councillor for the ratepayers in her ward. The ward is predominately rural, which can make liaisons difficult. Carolyn uses technology to communicate regularly with broad groups of people within the community, and supplements that with her visits to groups in the far reaches of her ward. Taking the time to meet with the community is appreciated by the community, she said, "I think that



makes you effective because, you know, they see the colour of your eyes and I think that is hugely important.” Carolyn continued to talk about her community:

My community and I suspect it is like most communities, my community feels that the council is an anonymous organisation to whom you pay rates...My proposition is that people should have the ability to have a say and at least have that input listened to.

Speaking about some of the community engagement practices of the council Carolyn said sometimes people, “need a jolt to realise that we are not there for ourselves we are actually there for people.” The value and importance of maintaining strong and effective relationships with the community is important for the “partnership” that needs to exist between council and the people it represents, and also in terms of the brand image of the organisation itself.

Carolyn was very attuned to the language of her council, and said that she had turned her attention to considering the language and degree and effectiveness of the engagement between councillor and community members, in relation to how the council uses the information it elicited from surveys:

If people don't feel they are engaged, involved and that they are actually being listened to, then they get angry and disillusioned, and they will generally object to things, far more than if they were involved at the beginning... By improving our consultation, and the way we consult and having people feel that they are part of the decision making process, together the council and the ratepayer benefit from improved and more efficient services.

During this first term in office, Carolyn's view about how to be effective changed. Initially, she said:

I thought that simply because something was right would be a natural home run and it isn't. My view of effectiveness that I need to demonstrate within the council and externally is that people, ratepayers, want to know more and they don't want to know the dreary stuff, they want to know what does this mean and how does this affect me?...So it has probably distilled my message considerably.

This appreciation of people's needs has been derived from feedback from ratepayers, and also “trying to read between the lines, trying to look at body language and facial expressions, picking up those non-verbal cues.”

One of the places Carolyn felt effective was during workshops and pre committee phases. This is a place she thought that she could be more effective, “because you have

a chance to bring in more information from the ratepayers,” she said. During the workshop stage, Carolyn said, “you are taking ratepayers voices and you are putting their options up... [And] you are really thrashing out the situation.” She described how the effectiveness continues at the committee level, when you have the opportunity to vote on the issue. Thinking about her present effectiveness, Carolyn reflected:

It makes me feel like I am doing my job. I think I went into it thinking I would make a huge difference and I realise I can make a small difference and the small differences are very satisfying because they are differences that touch people.

As a woman councillor, Carolyn believes that you have to try harder, “if I were a bloke it would be much easier, and that is frustrating.” Carolyn suggested that women councillors “tend to be more collaborative,” and with several women now on her council “have tempered the men’s behaviour.” Within her community, there was a difference about how the effectiveness of male and female councillors is perceived. Carolyn is often assumed to be the secretary, so had to be “very forthright and very pushy.” The attitudes were not new to Carolyn, but they did make her particularly determined to do the job well. Carolyn said that she tried to ensure that she was well researched, and that her “arguments are very cogent and based on fact.” A subtle change to Carolyn’s practice was that she will now wait for an issue to be raised by another councillor, and then “come in beside it.” She commented that with such an approach, you “are not seen as raising [the issue], you are seen as adding to it. Just a subtle difference, but I think it adds to your effectiveness.”

The next generation of women councillors are far more likely to be effective than the current generation, suggested Carolyn. To secure their effectiveness, Carolyn said, women councillors need to “set out to have a reputation for sound thinking based on good, sound, and robust practices and then bring in other subtle changes that may not have been thought about in a male dominated council.”

October 2012.

## Narrative of Hine (ID2)

Hine was a first time councillor and was previously employed with local government for over twenty years. As part of her employments, Hine has had the opportunity to drive economic and social change in her community. The experience provided a strong foundation for Hine and grew her interest to seek the position of an elected councillor.

Alongside her councillor role, Hine worked for a Māori organisation. She said, “That is different...A world in itself because you see, and you hear and you are involved in some real social and economic issues out there for Māori...so being exposed to that and taking all that knowledge...”

Hine’s knowledge of her community, of local government and of central government enables a strong understanding about the overall landscape of her community. “When I sit at the [council] table and there is an issue in front of me, it is with all the different experiences and knowledge that I have.”

Thinking about what effectiveness meant, Hine said it is being relevant, fit for purpose, working in an efficient manner, being inclusive, and being able to deliver the outcome that is required.

Hine talked about two political women whom she defines as effective. Talking about an ex-Mayor, she commented, “She was very grass roots...very inclusive of her community, she was community based, but she also had a really good understanding of what was happening at a national level and how that might impact on [our district].”

Paula Bennett MP was someone whom Hine held in high regard:

I think she is truthful...and when she makes a mistake she owns up to it, and I think one of the great things about her is that she has come from a normal life to one where she has to be a leader, high profile, having to make some really tough decisions, so I actually hold her in high regard.

Hine’s vast local government experience has influenced her ability to be an effective councillor today. Working through the processes of local government, she said:

You get to know a lot of people, a lot of different stakeholders, you hear what their aspirations are, so a really good sense of how people are feeling, and also being a staff member understanding that you have more chance to influence what happens in politics at a local government level.

Working within and alongside her community is where Hine felt most satisfaction.

Within her community she said that she aimed to support people to be informed about local processes, and facilitating to help them to understand that they too can be effective and have influence in, and for their community.

Hine was quick to draw on the strength and skills of her fellow councillors. I do look for guidance because I do not know everything.” Talking about two colleagues whom she holds in regard, Hine reflected:

[X] is very politically mature, so I look and see how he reacts, and I take a lead from that... [Y] is the complete opposite [and] extremely clued up in the whole area of economic prosperity and growth. He is a businessman; he fills the gap in terms of my lack of knowledge around the financial.

The colleagues support and enable Hine to build her knowledge, which enabled her to feel effective around the council table.

The first act of effectiveness that Hine could recall was before she was sworn in as a councillor, an act, which enabled Hine to enter her council as a strong and confident woman. Hine asked her council to acknowledge the place of Māori in the community, by holding a pōwhiri as part of the declaration ceremony. Whilst there was an initial resistance Hine was able to demonstrate to the fellow councillors, the importance and benefit the pōwhiri would bring to both them and the Māori members of the community. Recalling this event, she said, “It was a huge win for me personally.” Hine attributed the effectiveness of her actions to the following:

I did not get emotional about it, and I was very objective. For me it was about a key stakeholder group, recognition of the treaty...letting them know that...they are not a treaty partner, but in fact they are an agent of the crown and there is a lot of powers that have been delegated from the crown.

Hine continued it was “all the knowledge that I had with me and understanding the importance and the message that it sends out. I was just, I suppose, being quite matter of fact about it and not backing down actually.”

The initial act of effectiveness was very important to Hine because she passionately believes in the potential of her community, and suggests that the potential can only be realised by all sections of the community working collectively. As a new councillor, Hine attained a high level of satisfaction from the act, and described it as “incredibly

confidence building” and as a significant win given the history of the council / Māori relationship in the area.

Hine was an advocate for her community, and is acutely aware that for many people in her community local government is not an important consideration. With this understanding, she endeavours to find the common ground where council and community can coalesce. Hine talked about how she would provide information to enable people to be able to participate in conversations with the council, and how she worked hard to improve the community’s knowledge of the workings of local government in order to build greater understanding and respect for the work of the council. Hine described how she had played a key role in bringing the factions within the community together in an attempt to foster a cohesive approach to securing the social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing of the community.

Walking in the worlds of iwi and council, Hine felt that she was in a privileged position, being able to share her knowledge and her learnings with both communities. Hine performed very different roles within her respective organisations, and was effective in being able to play the two roles as per the institutional and cultural requirements of each organisation. “I am comfortable to be a decision maker, but I am also comfortable to be the kaimahi or the handmaiden to the iwi chair.” Hine was the bridge, the conduit between two worlds, and often played the dual roles of mediator and translator.

To be effective Hine recognised that the worlds of Māori and council could exist in very different paradigms. This required Hine to be patient in order to be effective and represent both groups, “It is trying to find the common ground in the middle,” she said. The relationships that Hine has built in council and community were critical to her effectiveness, “I have no worries about using those relationships in Te Ao Māori and my relations with Council and try and pull them together.” Hine said that she was very comfortable in her two roles, and found it incredibly humbling to participate in both. To ensure that Hine fulfils the roles of kaimahi and councillor effectively, she was careful not to be arrogant in her approach, and cited the importance of looking at things holistically, having a strong respect and regard for tikanga, and gently “massaging both sides” in order for outcomes to be realised. Collaboration of cultures was a recurring theme of Hine’s desire to progress and actualise the potential of her community, “I think [this area] is the centre of the universe and it deserves, it deserves to be well, I think the people and the land and the opportunities are just there, it is very starry-eyed stuff, it

means a lot to me.”

Hine approached her position of councillor with an element tenacity and bravery, carefully balancing the sometimes conflicting and often contradictory positions of her two organisations in an effort to realise gains and betterment for Māori and for the community as a whole. The tenacity with which Hine undertook her councillor role, her commitment to shared outcomes for her community, her knowledge, and love for the processes and parameters of council and iwi, coupled with a good understanding of the local issues enable her to make decisions from a position of strength and confidence.

During a recent economic development issue addressed by the Council Hine attributed her effectiveness to “being brave enough to really voice a personal opinion... listening to the community and articulating what they say... [And] doing all of the homework.” The issue required Hine to question her personal beliefs, and to form a position and “own it and be prepared to fight for it.” Recounting the event Hine stated “That period was a growing period for me, a period of learning and feeling satisfied at the outcome and learning what to do and what not to do [and] how to react. So it was a good learning period.” Hine had to work hard to lobby and win the other councillors around, and spoke of “all the backroom stuff,” and how she managed to “turn things around... [And] know that I had a small part on how they changed their perceptions.”

Hine had occasion to question her effectiveness. Recounting a specific event that she described as a watershed moment she said, “I had a sense of unease about it, but because I did not know a lot about it, I suppose I just let the conversation flow and made the decision... not really I suppose delving into the implications of it.” Quickly recognising that the Council had made the wrong decision on the matter at hand, she sought to become involved in the process to redress the community backlash that ensued. Hine became involved in the process that would eventually reverse the original decision by listening to the community and the submitters, and by proposing a resolution that would see a proactive solution to the problem initially presented by the council officers. Hine was happy to acknowledge that the council made “the most terrible mistake,” and played a key role in apologising to the community and righting the wrong. Reflecting on her own role in the matter, she said, “It was the first and biggest issue that I have taken some hits and I am thinking these people voted, actually voted for me, so I was feeling a sense of letting them down.”

When Hine became a councillor, she thought that she knew everything about local government because of her years of experience on the staff side. However after a time she acknowledged that she did not know everything and being in a governance role was quite different. She said,

In governance I am there to make a decision based on the information that is actually provided to me, so where I think there is a gap in the information or I want to know I need to ask them [officers] about it, and I need not second guess, ask the questions so I fully understand.

Hine articulated her satisfaction, working in and representing the community. She said that she was particularly passionate about the young people, economic development, and environmental education, and commented:

When I am engaging with people and getting a sense of what they think, understanding where they come from, taking on board the issues...that is really important because it means you are actually out there with the community as opposed to sitting in the council chamber you know debating, discussing all the stuff. I do not think you can be really effective if you are not out there engaging, and getting a real sense of where your community is coming from.

Hine described herself as a “people person, someone who had a “softer side,” and who enjoyed getting to know what other people did for the community. She talked about her excitement witnessing the efforts and hard work of people who were committed to building a healthy community. Hine felt that part of her being effective as a councillor was advocating for people and assisting them to realise their aspirations for the community.

Hine was however not wholly satisfied with her present level of effectiveness, and believed she could do better:

I would like to do better. I would like to be more effective. I would like to achieve a whole heap more things, but the reality is you are working within parameters and there is the time...because you know sometimes when I get home from a council meeting, it’s just like I am really tired, I am just tired, but that’s OK.

Being a woman councillor was very important to Hine:

Every time I turn up to a council meeting I am conscious that I am [a] woman, and so I have this sense of responsibility, I feel an absolute sense of responsibility to bring a more feminine, more softer side...I think it is really important that our voice as women is really heard.

Thinking about what it means to be a woman councillor and the particular responsibilities she felt she had, Hine reflected:

I think it is really important because as women we have a lot to offer, because we wear several hats, and we do it with ease, and we bring to the table a perception that a male would not necessarily have and I think that we acknowledge the differences between communities.

Hine described how it could feel lonely and powerful as a woman on council. She said the sexism and the innuendos could be “gut wrenching.” Women were still in the minority on Hine’s council, and the councillor demographic was white male councillors considerably older than Hine was. The male councillors operated as a clique, and because of their historical and current dominance on council, they were perceived to be more effective. In the beginning, Hine said, “It was just a constant battle to even get them to listen to me or to even take me seriously. That does not happen now, but they are so used to doing things the way that they always have. “

Reflecting about how the next generation of councillors could be effective, Hine said that they needed to be knowledgeable about local government legislation, understand the difference between governance and management, and they needed to develop relationships with a wide group of stakeholders. Hine said “some of the other lessons I have learned through my own journey [is], be really confident in your ability, and get people on the outside who you can actually talk to.” She continued, “You want to be able hit the ground running and actually make your mark right at the start as a serious player.”

When Hine leaves local government, she wants to be remembered as someone who made a difference, who represented her community well, and made decisions that were not to the disadvantage of the majority of the community. Hine hopes that people will remember her as honest councillor, a person of integrity, and someone who brought some benefit to the community.

October 2012.



# Appendix H - Organisation of Data

## Participant interview notes

**Background**

- 1980s + 1990s
- used to stop friend
- pol friends, wife
- no ambition to lead
- only women would think of committees
- degree, works for law
- not body rep
- cabinet funding
- school

**Meaning**

- high respect
- being only women
- only male (speaking for the group)
- earned the respect of committee
- very proud of district
- community
- towards people to be at table
- not essential things

**Attributes**

- dialogue on things that was wrong or important
- responsibility to speak as a woman
- male + community
- educate people (voting + participating)
- acceptance of difference
- recognition of contribution of all
- understand 2 worlds
- to feel represent
- diff to me for my opinion
- sense of achievement but need to have a contrary view
- share good things about male
- listen
- rationalise
- change in a new way
- felt you least well male values

**Context**

- women have a better understanding of com
- (man understand com)
- women are doctors
- women fight to keep equality
- argue women's participation is tip
- vice chair of policy + imp

**Facilitators**

- man + had hard working, valued as sacrificed for kids
- philosophy to help others

**Next Gen**

- not to follow
- put a stamp in the ground

**Change in view**

- lots of time re-educating others
- learnt slowly
- realising male
- stop blaming m for everything

**Acts of Effectiveness**

- can give
- cannot support it because it was imp to me
- election to hearings committee (said a male would be biased)
- male words tried to mobilise people to vote
- tried to change view of committee

**Most Effective**

- sitting at table as man 1st time

**Effectiveness**

- collective wisdom + contribution of all
- improvement for self
- just on wellbeing of community
- cultural respect
- historical contributions
- rep. the suffering + the missing
- can be ignorance for some - don't understand
- certain things that we previous for a com. - that is what is delivered

**U/W/O**

**U/W/O**

**U/W/O**

**Background**

- different lifespan (political)
- pol interest
- com college in w
- wife politics

**Context**

- U.C. - little impact influence of cult for

**Waterford**

- 1st year informed + read, glad got comp data

**Identity**

- will be remembered as the district librarian
- art gallery appreciate the hard work

**Effectiveness**

- carrying out your plans in the best possible way
- being realistic about what is possible
- helping com see actions are effective
- recognising when the right time is

**Effective women**

- m.w. - overcoming pol odds
- huge intellect
- unreliability big
- made or diff when the power was
- H.C. - strong leader
- made tough dec.
- U.C. - barely stays out of personal pol, local focused
- grounds up it admission
- mentored me

**Attributes of Eff**

- put your allies
- talk to people
- 6/4 + change that matters
- know your wife

**Change in view**

- more realistic
- can't change system, only little bits
- see the good in the small things as well as big

**Pat**

**Facilitators**

- encouraged & encouraged me to take up opps
- showed me how to make the - Sunday school

**Most Effect**

- community (formality of process)
- chair grants com.
- achieving a 3 party outcome
- for solution + process

**Acts of Effectiveness**

- appropriate + develop
- resolving to commit
- talking about imp of issue
- library re-dev
- art gallery - LTP
- commitment to fund
- gathering up other
- making up committees
- copying calls
- keeping on track on message (personal interest)

**Influences**

- running a library syst (political, capital work)
- com college (pol)
- staying in family (juggling)
- community board (water model's spoken but made dec for water com)

**Woman**

- listen
- sympathetic, understand peoples needs
- gender ref on issue when stars
- political
- know value of the big + small issues
- more approachable
- media reporting (man com)
- more coverage
- perception men do the work

**Next Gen**

- know how councils work
- talk to U.C.
- approachable com
- read
- know what effectiveness
- have an ally to help you

**Male Committee**

- knowledge
- respect
- for people interested
- Enw. practice
- (look for opps)
- promote benefits
- imp council has a least holistic approach to com

## Analysis by question / descriptive coding

Research Q - What is an effective councillor?					
(key to themes - 1 – historically naturalised and socialised gender divisions, 2 – situated and particular social realities, 3 – women's ways of knowing and doing, 4 – women's worlds and women's work, 5 – resistance, survival and effectiveness, 6 – patriarchy / a man's world, 7 – efficacy, effectiveness and structural change, 8 – relationships, 9 – the outsider within)					
ID / Name	Page	Text Excerpt	What is this is saying?	Theoretic Theme	Emerging Topic
ID3 / Anna	3	Doing your homework  Being in touch with what your community needs Being centred yourself	Being an effective councillor requires effort and energy and connection	7 2	Knowledge leading to power Relationships and Community Activism Identity
ID3 / Anna	4	Know what is going on in the community and what the community want It is not just about being knowledgeable, it is how you effect that knowledge – it is about diplomacy and knowing the ways in which to do things Bringing in information, and knowing how to pass it on, and knowing how to get the job finished Playing politics – shouting a councillor a coffee, asking for a discussion	In order to be able to participate you need to know the rules of the game, and you need to operate within the rules. Anna has not suggested that the rules are unfair, not right etc. there is an acceptance of the parameters of operation. She does her best to work within the system. There is no obvious awareness that the male dominated construct of the system is an issue for Anna. Anna uses her personality and approachable style to form relationships with councillors.	2 7	Community Activism  Substantive Representation  Efficacy

Q – What is an effective councillor?					
ID / Name	Page	Text Excerpt	What is this is saying?	Theoretic Theme	Emerging Topic
ID4 / Deborah	6	Support an idea, giving people advice and information on funding processes	Giving people your insider knowledge to help them effect a change or action for themselves	8 7	Relationships Community activism
ID4 / Deborah	6	X and I both worked really hard on that committee (activity park). That is how I see myself being effective, low key, behind the scenes. I did not stand for council to get thing done, I stood for council to be an advocate for the community	Using your voice to help others find their voice	8 3	Relationships Making a difference
ID4 / Deborah	6	I want to represent those [diverse] interests [rural, poorer] as best I could. I did not come to council to do this, change this or make sure this thing is implemented that is not my thing. Rather than a confrontation, I would rather shut up. I am not a political animal	Advocacy – but the role of a councillor is to debate, to discuss, to make decisions that make things happen	8 3 7	Representation Women's way of working Identity
ID4 / Deborah	6	I help with the set up, set up processes, encourage people and facilitate, it is not the project stuff or turning things out of aggressively shouting for publicity	Does not like to be in the limelight. Has a view that to get things done in public it is loud and aggressive. Does not sit easily with people with power. Happy working with lower level community who want support from inside the system.	7 3	Women's way of working Identity
ID4 / Deborah	16	Would have been a waste to stand for one term, after 3 years of learning things are consolidated and you know what it expected of you	Experience	7	Knowledge and authority Power
ID4 / Deborah	17	I believe in listening before sticking my neck out, I am not going to deliver a sea change. I am a quiet worker	Need people to balance the loud people and those who seek change. The quiet ones may act as a balance a more stabilising force. Do not want too much of one type of person. Council is a team that is made up of different people in different positions	3 7	Women's way of working Efficacy relationships

## *Analysis by feminist standpoint / interpretive coding*

Theoretic Theme	Theoretical Position / Statement / Perspective	Seeking to answer the following Research questions	Topics emerging from transcripts	Aspect of Analysis	Notes / Questions
(1) Historically naturalised and socialised gender divisions	<p>Harstock's feminist standpoint is located in the social construction of experience particularly the culturally constructed social relations of household production and reproduction in late capital (Hartsock) (Hirschmarm, 1998, p. 75)</p> <p>Feminist standpoint analysis starts from the sexual division of labour - it is a real material concrete activity. The approach does not require nature to be severed from culture, biology from society and can expose the ways women participate in and oppose their won subordination (Harstock, 1983, p. 304)</p> <p>"Society has organised for women a different relation to the world" (Smith, 1987, p. 68)</p>	<p>What influences the ability to be effective?</p>	<p>Community activism and women's experiences</p> <p>Self-efficacy</p> <p>Women's political identity</p>	<p>Historical context of the person</p> <p>Contextual features of the story (values, social rules, meanings, assumptions, heritage, socio cultural context) that give rise to meaning</p>	<p>Can reveal knowledge about the privilege of being a male councillor, as told through the stories of a woman, which can make knowledge more complete.</p> <p>Does this mean that women's modes of operation will necessarily be different? Is the opportunity for local government to respect the effectiveness of women as grounded in the biological difference</p> <p>How does the "ruling" group (male councillors) play out the patriarchy which affects women's councillors effectiveness</p>

(2) Situated and particular social realities	<p>Standpoints are not natural or spontaneous, they emerge out of experience and struggle (Hirschmarm, 1998, p. 75). Standpoints are "conscious", and self-consciously political (Hundleby, 1998, p. 35)</p> <p>Each group may realise its own substantively distinctive standpoint in response to the different forms of oppression (Hirschmarm, 1998, p. 76). Knowledge is situated and perspectival, so multiple standpoints are possible (Hekman, 1997, p. 342)</p> <p>standpoints differs according to experience and necessarily accommodates difference, specificity, and history. There is a pluralisation of standpoints (Hirschmarm, p. 77). Standpoint pluralism (Longino, 1993, p. 206)</p> <p>What women have in common is the organisation of social relations that have accomplished exclusion (Smith, 1987, p. 78)</p>	<p>What is effectiveness?</p> <p>What is an effective councillor?</p> <p>What does it mean to be an effective councillor?</p>	<p>Self-efficacy</p> <p>Structure and context of LG</p> <p>Women's political identity</p>	<p>Bringing awareness to the conditions that may be taken for granted</p> <p>Actors and relationships</p> <p>Context, background and structural conditions and rules</p> <p>Reality as constructed through interaction (dialogic performative analysis)</p> <p>How the outcome (denouement) of effectiveness has come about</p>	<p>Or people (councillors), or group within a group (Maori, women from national politics, community activists)</p> <p>Oppression may not be known, realised, or relevant in eyes of person.</p> <p>Can account for difference and common experiences within the same operating conditions / political framework.</p> <p>What does the standpoint tell us about power and effectiveness?</p> <p>How many and what type of standpoints do women occupy within LG</p>
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# Hermeneutic Interpretation

*Effectiveness*

*What does it mean to be effective?*  
*Seu de you de?*

*Making a difference - practically*

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42	Q43	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50	Q51	Q52	Q53	Q54	Q55	Q56	Q57	Q58	Q59	Q60	Q61	Q62	Q63	Q64	Q65	Q66	Q67	Q68	Q69	Q70	Q71	Q72	Q73	Q74	Q75	Q76	Q77	Q78	Q79	Q80	Q81	Q82	Q83	Q84	Q85	Q86	Q87	Q88	Q89	Q90	Q91	Q92	Q93	Q94	Q95	Q96	Q97	Q98	Q99	Q100
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42	Q43	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50	Q51	Q52	Q53	Q54	Q55	Q56	Q57	Q58	Q59	Q60	Q61	Q62	Q63	Q64	Q65	Q66	Q67	Q68	Q69	Q70	Q71	Q72	Q73	Q74	Q75	Q76	Q77	Q78	Q79	Q80	Q81	Q82	Q83	Q84	Q85	Q86	Q87	Q88	Q89	Q90	Q91	Q92	Q93	Q94	Q95	Q96	Q97	Q98	Q99	Q100



## **Appendix I - Participating Women Councillors**

### ***Anna***

Anna was a first term district councillor in a rural authority. Anna had a strong presence in community groups and activities prior to and since becoming a councillor. She described herself as “just a skilled worker.” Anna’s political activity was influenced by her past experiences in the health and social services field, and her experiences raising a family in a small rural community. Relationships and communication were central themes in Anna’s stories. The relationships she described were important in supporting her platform of knowledge, facilitating her connection to the community, and fostering her preferred way of working - in partnership. Anna said, “Effectiveness is something you want to aim for all of the time,” and in part “this is achieved by being approachable.” The legacy Anna wished to leave was “somebody who did the job...with the community on behalf of the community.”

### ***Atarangi***

Atarangi was a first term district councillor in a provincial authority. Prior to becoming a councillor Atarangi had been employed in a local authority, and held various governance positions in the community and business sector. Atarangi stated that effectiveness starts with the relational capabilities of the person. Throughout her stories, the significance of her familial, tribal, social, and professional relationships remained central to her preferred way of working and perceptions about what being effective meant to her. Atarangi described herself as biased to those issues and people with which she has connections. In parallel with her relational focus, Atarangi talked about the importance of inclusion, and listening, and the need for broad knowledge, understanding and reflection as aids to her effectiveness.

### ***Bailey***

Bailey came to local government in the 1990’s as an activist and a protestor. She has held positions on community boards, and was previously deputy mayor in a metropolitan authority. Bailey described her political acumen and her emotional intelligence as facilitating her effectiveness. She said that her passion for social justice existed throughout her family, and she could not help but be “switched on [to politics] at a young age.” Having trust in her instincts was an important facilitator for Bailey. She described the need for effective councillors to trust themselves, and be prepared to take the difficult decisions knowing that the right outcome will be achieved, by following

processes that were honest and respectful. Consensus building was a trait of Bailey's effectiveness, and her stories exemplified how she aimed to build understanding, educate people and facilitate cooperation. Bailey said in order to be effective, a councillor should know that the "role needs to be grounded in community; it does not need to be grounded in politics."

### ***Belinda***

Belinda had been a district councillor in a provincial authority for several terms. Belinda said "I thought I would never be so stupid to stand for local government" but a former media career, a vast body of legal knowledge, a mother and father who fought for their country, a female relative who held the position of Mayor, and a burning commitment towards justice and democracy for the community highlighted that local government may have been a natural if not conscious choice for Belinda. Belinda was driven to stand for council to address a roading issue in the district. Belinda's approach to effectiveness was grounded in a protection for the community, a protection against the monopoly of local government, and ensuring that "a democratic input into all decision making" existed. Belinda commonly played the role of an advocate for the community, often in conflict with the practices and culture of her authority. Belinda's stories highlighted a councillor who was not afraid of conflict, challenge, resistance, or dissent, and she suggested that her knowledge and skills facilitated her ability to work through the complex issues that affect local government. Belinda felt a sense of pride in being able to defend democracy and stand up against the system. Reflecting on how she would like to be remembered, Belinda said, "someone who was true to myself, you know, that listened to people, but when it came to the crunch did what they felt was right for the community."

### ***Carolyn***

Carolyn was a first term district councillor in a provincial authority, who came to local government from a background in business. Effectiveness to Carolyn meant "making a difference and making a difference that was useful." Carolyn's career taught her the value of good listening, and the need for clear communications, skills she described as crucial for local government. Carolyn was used to "working in a faster pace" at a senior board level in business, and the speed of the political process was something that Carolyn found quite frustrating, although she understood that this was how the system worked. Carolyn said her community felt that the council was an anonymous

organisation to whom you pay rates, and her proposition was that people should have the ability to have a say and at least have that input listened to. Carolyn said that the worth of the effective woman councillor is built on a reputation for sound thinking based on solid knowledge and good, robust practices. With such grounding she said you could then “bring in other subtle changes that may not have been thought about in a male dominated council.”

### ***Dale***

Dale was a first term district councillor and community board member in a rural authority. Dale entered political office after many years of activity in community affairs including kindergarten committees and school boards. Effectiveness for Dale “is actually being able to do the job you feel you should be doing. It’s being able to see that what you say actually does make a difference.” Dale said she was raised with an attitude of “girls can do anything.” Raised in large family of girls, educated in an all-female environment, and having women relatives who achieved high profile political positions enabled Dale to have a strong belief in her capabilities. Dale described how she felt most effective participating in the informal and less formal processes of council. Not being constrained by the rules of debate provided improved opportunities to keep contributing to the conversation, she said. Communicating, collectively formulating ideas and thrashing things out was a hallmark of Dale’s effectiveness.

### ***Deborah***

Deborah was a district councillor of several terms in a rural authority. Deborah described herself as a feminist and as someone who had always had an interest in politics. An interest she attributed to her politically active parents. For Deborah effectiveness meant “making a difference...being a good advocate for your community, being a voice for their concerns, doing what you can to alleviate things in the community...and around the council chamber ...be[ing] as effective as possible and as useful as possible.” Deborah described herself as having a quiet effectiveness working hard for her community, assisting them to be able to access council services and support. Deborah talked about the energy of her community, and the women in her community, and said that her role was to support community action and activity. Deborah believed that hard work and a solid underpinning of information was a critical facet of what it meant to be effective.



### ***Gail***

Gail held the office of a district councillor for several terms in a provincial local authority. Gail described a strong feminist and Māori influence as an aid to her political life. Raised by politically active parents who represented both the left and the right of politics, parents who worked hard to achieve success in life, and who were closely connected to their community Gail said that she was exposed to a rich variety of social, economic and political influences as a child. She fondly recounted the strength of her Māori / Pakeha community growing up, and the sense of belonging that she had to her people and place. Gail said I always had “a huge feeling for my community and for the people and was always fighting about something.” A career in nursing and social services, and advocacy work on issues affecting women and children were Gail’s professional influences prior to taking local political office. Gail said that being effective was “the way you affect people, it is the way that you walk and talk, and the passion that you have.” The motivation for Gail’s effectiveness was the community. She said “I don’t shout or anything, but I just keep on and on and on, and saying, it’s the people who we are responsible for.” Reflecting about how to be effective she said, “You have to know your community very well.”

### ***Helen***

Helen entered community and political activity at a relatively young age. She said that she married and had children young, and soon became involved with Plunket at a local and national level. Helen held the role of a ward based district councillor for many terms in a provincial authority. Helen stated that effectiveness was about advocating for the community and seeking outcomes on their behalf. In seeking to be effective Helen said that a councillor needed to be prepared to work hard to ensure that the “right outcome” was achieved. Helen was motivated to secure equal access to services for all people. As a councillor Helen described herself as self-confident, pragmatic and persistent, and said, “I am quite persistent if I think I am on the right track, and if I am wrong I am happy to be told I am wrong, but I think I do my homework and you are less likely to be told you are wrong if you have done your homework and got your facts.” She said, “We are all put on this earth to do something, and we are all given different strengths and skills and abilities and it is up to us to use the skills and abilities to the best that we are able.”

### ***Hine***

Hine was a first term councillor who was involved in local government as an employee prior to holding political office. In conjunction with her political role, Hine was also employed in a Māori organisation. Thinking about what effectiveness meant for Hine, she said that it was being relevant, fit for purpose, working in an efficient manner, being inclusive, and being able to deliver the outcome that was required. Working within and alongside her community is where Hine achieved most satisfaction. She described herself as a “people person” with a “softer side,” who was excited working alongside people who strove to build stronger healthier communities. She said that she aimed to support people with political processes, and to help them understand how they could be effective and have influence in and for their community. Hine felt privileged to work in the world of iwi and local government, but was acutely aware of the different paradigms that existed between men and women, and Māori and Pakeha.

### ***Iris***

Iris was a district councillor of several terms in a provincial authority. Iris was involved in her local political party in the early 1990’s and made a decision to enter local politics on the back of the profile she had developed from her party political work, her position as a local businesswoman and member of various community organisations. Iris described her early adulthood as not easy, raising, for a period a family on her own, whilst studying part time and working. Looking back on this time, she recalled, “All of that has certainly made me a more effective politician. have had quite a range of life experiences and you know difficulties with children growing up and all that sort of thing, and so I think that has certainly helped me be more effective because I think I have a greater understanding of a wider section of our community.” She said that effectiveness was “making things happen.” Describing her style of effectiveness Iris said, “You work hard to do your best, and make sure you listen to what people are saying...and you still have to have the self-confidence to be able to assess all of what you have heard and then make up your own mind and take a stand on issues.” She said “true effectiveness is actually about strong leadership, with community engagement.” Talking about how she would like to be remembered, Iris said, as “someone who made a difference even in a small way, and as someone who had a strong belief in [the district] because that is what it is all about. It is a belief in this place and its people...that’s why I am here.”

## ***Jocelyn***

Growing up in the 1960's, Jocelyn described herself as having always been politically aware, but not a political activist. Jocelyn was raised in a class-based family with influences from the upper middle class and the Celtic working class. Jocelyn described herself as having political leanings that were to the left of the political spectrum, but as a person who was "very conservative." The realisation that political governance was the place for Jocelyn did not take place until mid-life and mid-way through a Master of Public Policy degree, and following her husband's local body political career. Jocelyn had been a regional councillor for several terms. Jocelyn asserted that effectiveness was something that varies from person to person, and something that was within each person. For Jocelyn personal effectiveness meant being an "integrated person" being "honest to yourself" and striving to leave your community in "no worse state with you being there." At political level, Jocelyn said effectiveness was about "ensuring that democracy in New Zealand is respected," protecting the right of people to be heard, listening to people and allowing discussion, and discharging your responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the community, some of which may be unpopular. Jocelyn described herself as a councillor who respected the sanctity of democratic processes, and whose effectiveness was derived from her integrity, and her knowledge. A belief in her personal effectiveness was a reason Jocelyn continued to be a councillor. Jocelyn stated that she was a councillor who dealt with the issue that is in front of her "fairly, openly, and transparently," and free from a particular political stance.

## ***Kathryn***

A first term district councillor Kathryn said that she was someone who represented the heart of the community, and not just their chequebook. Kathryn said that she took an unconventional route into local politics, describing herself as a "council knocker" prior to seeking political office. Kathryn described herself as a single mother and a former beneficiary who embarked on a programme of study, worked part time, and through "sheer bloody mindedness" facilitated a change in her life. Kathryn's prior experiences allowed her to acquire significant knowledge about social systems and processes, which she said she had put to use as an advocate for individuals and community groups. Effectiveness, Kathryn said was being able to "actually demonstrate you have had some kind of influence and having it recognised and heard. Ultimately the goal for anything is to actually influence the decision." Kathryn's womanhood was central to her style of effectiveness. Remaining true to yourself and your womanhood was important to

Kathryn. She said, “Women's lives are full, mine is, so on a daily basis it is actually just letting people see that you are out there actually trying to make things better.”

### ***Kura***

Kura was a district councillor of several terms. She described her whanau upbringing as very political, with her parents working hard for the rights of working people. Kura's parents were a great source of strength and influence in her life. She described them as hard working self-sacrificing people who had responsibilities for the young and the old in the whanau. The influence of her parents Kura said resulted in her embracing “the gifts of the Pakeha” whilst keeping “the Māori values’ in her heart, she said. “As I progressed through life,” said Kura, “I was always on boards whether it was as a Plunket mother or swimming club, I was always pretty vocal, very vocal.” Kura was approached by people in the town and asked to stand for council. She said that she had no political ambitions, “all I knew was if I saw something wrong I would talk about it, dialogue about it to whoever would listen.” Kura described effectiveness as being about improvement and benefit, and the measure of a council's effectiveness was ‘its collective wisdom.” Kura described herself as having responsibility for the representation of women, Māori, and the community, something she described as a privilege. Kura talked about local government's important role in the community, and said that the skills from Pakeha and Māori were required to deliver benefit for the community. Kura was proud of the woman's voice and the Māori voice that she brought to her council, perspectives that she believed benefited her district.

### ***Laura***

Laura was a multi-term regional councillor who had risen from being an “ordinary councillor” to holding many chairing and leadership roles within the council. Laura entered politics after leaving a professional career. She said, “I was not quite finished with work, and the opportunity came to stand for council...and I never regretted it.” For Laura effectiveness meant “doing your job well and getting results.” Laura attributed effectiveness to “continual hard work” and the “family work ethic.” Describing the work of council Laura stated, “There is no good thinking the job is going to be easy, it can be, you can walk into the debating chamber with the agenda unopened if you like and mouth off, but that does not make you effective. So if you want to be effective you need to be prepared to put the work in.” Laura's first chairman recognised her strength and capabilities, but equally suggested that she may wish to temper these in the

company of some of the male councillors, something she was unprepared to do. Laura's keenest interest was working to secure and balance outcomes for the community. The opportunity to work "hand in hand with people" to develop high-level strategies that balanced environmental and economic interests was a challenge Laura enjoyed. Laura did not recognise herself as an advocate for either the environment or a particular interest group, she stated that her job, was "to represent everybody," "hear the issues," "make sure everyone's got their information" and work towards a "community balance" for all the people she represented.

### ***Marama***

First term district councillor Marama described herself as "a Māori woman in local government in a mainstream institution working with mainstream policies and bureaucracy." Marama said that she has had a "lifelong awareness of politics." She described how it was important for her to stand up for what she believed in. Marama's experience on the mārae provided her with the skills to effectively engage in local government. She said being a councillor "is just transferring my experience in my Māori setting to being able to debate and ask what I think are the critical questions in the local government setting." Marama commented on her desire to understand the positions and opinions of others. Part of the process of being effective was being able to "amalgamate...sift... [And] understand why people say what they say," she said. "For me effectiveness is about fairness, truth, and justice," she said. She described the privilege of being involved in the community, giving back to community groups, helping them to work through issues and supporting them to understand their value to the district. "I really like connecting people with connections, or connecting people with people. That is what I tend to do." "Being a councillor is pretty great," said Marama. Marama characterised her approachability as key to her being effective. Pondering the future for women councillors, Marama said they need to do their homework, to not be afraid to ask, talk to as many people as possible to gain as many view points as possible, "seek the truth, all versions of the truth" and "make sure you leave with yours and other integrity intact."

### ***Naomi***

Naomi's political career spanned several councils. Currently serving as a district councillor, Naomi commented that she was first driven to stand for political office, "out of frustration." She said, "I am a curious person...easily frustrated by inefficiencies,"

and someone who cannot easily “resile from a problem.” Effectiveness for Naomi meant having “a good understanding of the parameters in which you can play as a councillor... understanding of the law and two very good ears for listening to your community and translating that into the direction the community many wish to go.” Naomi displayed a no nonsense approach to council business, and an adaptable approach to being effective. She said that as a councillor you need to be able to see what needs doing, and risk being unpopular to make it happen. Naomi did not reflect too much on the meaning of her actions, “once it is done it is done...you don’t really sit and think about it, you look for the next challenge.” “You don’t win them all,” she said. Reflecting on what made her effective, Naomi said, “I bring my life experience... I bring a broad and deep understanding of communities in New Zealand.” Naomi talked about the importance of networking and listening. She said being a councillor is “about contributing,” and council is one of the ways a person may contribute to their community. Naomi suggested that without experience a councillor’s ability to contribute effectively would be limited. “You need to be yourself,” Naomi said, “because at the end of the day if you are true to yourself, it does not matter what anyone else thinks... [And] there is a difference between being self-satisfied and satisfied with what you have contributed.”

### ***Olivia***

A first term councillor in a metropolitan authority, Olivia had been involved with a council subcommittee prior to pursuing political office. Olivia said that she was firmly grounded in the community. She described herself as just like everyone else, using the same services, and paying the same rates. “I am someone who is of the people, from the people, for the people,” she said. To Olivia, effectiveness meant, “having an input into the policy that comes through the council,” Being effective meant that decisions made by the council “represent fairly what the community wants or needs.” Olivia described herself as having a competitive spirit, who looked to others who she thought did a good job, to try to emulate them. She said, “They are the people that you feel a personal connection with often, because you feel you can talk to them and that your views will be listened to and acted on.” Olivia described herself as a quiet councillor who felt most effective working with staff behind the scenes. Olivia displayed a consciousness of needing to work harder than her older male colleagues in order to be perceived as equally effective. Olivia’s advice for the next generation of women councillors was “not to be afraid to disagree with those with more experience or perceived status,” and she

said “address all issues...with an open mind, but not an empty head.”

### ***Pat***

Following a career in local government as a senior manager Pat was encouraged to stand as a ward based district councillor. She said that she always had an interest in politics, being involved in groups, which had a political dimension. As a left of centre politician, Pat’s main areas of interest were the social, the arts, and environment. Pat’s local government career influenced her ability to be effective as a councillor. Working on major reorganisation programmes she said, “You have the ability to look at something, see it at the beginning, middle and end and work through a process.”

Effectiveness to Pat meant, “Carrying out your plans in the best possible way.” Pat described the challenge of being a councillor who was advocating for the “fluffy stuff.” During her first term, Pat reflected that she did not achieve much. She listened, read, and slowly got the confidence to make statements, and to actively support people. Reflecting on her actions as a councillor, Pat said, “sometimes being effective is not so much lobbying or putting a lot of energy in, so much as kind of recognising when the time is right for something, and working with a group to see that it will happen.” She described the need for councils to be effective for individuals as well as the community as a whole. She said it “means we have got a heart,” and that the council cares.

### ***Rachel***

Rachel became a councillor in the 1990’s, and served in several councils, the latest being a metropolitan authority. Raised in a large family, as the youngest of several children, Rachel said that she fought to be better than her older siblings. She said, like many women, she cut her teeth on the local school board. As a school trustee Rachel learned that community governance is a 24/7 job. She said, “I was never off duty,” something that had not changed. She spoke about the challenge balancing her political and personal lives. Reflecting on what effectiveness meant to her, Rachel said, “If am effective, I can take action on behalf of others and get things done. I can get things sorted, I can advocate and I can be seen to be moving things along in a fair and hopefully productive positive manner.” Reflecting on her effectiveness, Rachel said, that her effectiveness could be measured by her integrity, stickability and pursuit of justice. As a councillor, Rachel described her commitment to represent and advocate for the community who need another voice to speak on their behalf. “I am happiest,” said Rachel with “real people, normal people who do not really know about the council...I

can help to educate them, I can talk to them and I can try and interest them...I feel really empowered and effective in that role.” When Rachel was asked how she would like to be remembered in office, she laughed and said “she was not afraid, she did not back down and she did not take any prisoners.”

### ***Sarah***

Metropolitan councillor Sarah was first elected to office in the 1990’s and held positions in several local authorities. Sarah’s sense of social responsibility and community contribution accounted for her ongoing commitment to public office. Sarah described herself as lucky to have the support of her family; support which enabled her to become active in her community when her children were young. At an early stage, Sarah said that she got “respect and a reputation” for her actions and achievements. Effectiveness to Sarah meant inclusiveness, building an understanding about the issues of the local community, and ensuring resources were spent as effectively as possible. Sarah recounted her early days in local government, which was characterised by sexism and toned to “pork barrel politics.” Sarah defined herself as a councillor who worked as part of the collective. She said, “there are things you could be credited for, but you are still reluctant to see it as yours...you are one vote so you have to bring the council with you to achieve.” Reflecting on what made her effective Sarah said, “You have to encourage people, and you have got to listen. You have got to have respect, good analysis [and] demand really good information.” Sarah described herself as “ruthless” regarding the need for quality information to support good decision making. Thinking about when it had been important to be a woman councillor, Sarah said, “It is always important, it is just as important as is peoples philosophy” and their political standpoint, and that her roles was to ensure that all people are treated fairly and equitably, including women and children. To maintain effectiveness Sarah commented that councillors, “actually have to believe in people, they have to believe that people are worthwhile and worth working with...You have to know where people are coming from.”

### ***Trina***

Prior to becoming a councillor Trina spent three terms on her local community board. Trina was a second term district councillor. Trina distinguished between the effectiveness of a community board member and a councillor. She said, “Effectiveness with my community board was engaging with my community and really persuading the council to support what the community was wanting...Being effective as a councillor



really is taking a district wide perspective which is wider than representing a particular community.” Trina felt most comfortable and most effective with environmental issues although she said that sometimes she had felt like the “only green spot. “ Trina quickly established her environmental credentials in the council, and was acknowledged by colleagues in having considerable expertise in the area. Talking about how it felt to be effective Trina said, “You never win, it can always be revisited or changed, you have never actually won, all you have done is a step in the right direction. So, you know things change. Things might get a little better; they might get a little bit worse. It is a forever journey...Making a difference is actually making a journey, not a victory.” Reflecting on her motivation Trina said, “I care, when I leave I want the place to be a better place than it was when I arrived here.”

### ***Vivian***

Having been involved in national party politics for many years, Vivian stood for a county council in the 1980's, and was successfully elected as the first woman councillor to the local authority. Vivian said, “I think it is 26 years altogether that I have been in local government and I have held various positions. “Prior to becoming a councillor Vivian was a teacher and she said that she “bloodied herself in Plunket and kindergarten, and wonders if her “community mindedness” was an “inherited gene.” Effectiveness meant, “That you must be aware of when you become ineffective.” She said, “You know you are effective as long as people are actually listening and occasionally you can persuade them to a particular point of view. “ Specifically in a local authority, effectiveness was also about adhering to processes. She said, “Council is made up of processes and responsibilities to act...it is not a place for freedom that you just think you can do as you like. “ Thinking about her effectiveness Vivian said, “I have always used the process as a protection...if you think you are more important than the process and think you can do what you like when you like, you have nothing to support you.” It was important to Vivian to be a woman councillor, “sometimes women temper things where others would not, particularly in the community area” she commented. Vivian said people “appreciate having a woman councillor involved in the organisation,” and “people feel that a councillor is interested in what they are doing.” Vivian suggested that the reason community groups continue to ask for her involvement was because she was approachable, knowledgeable and had strong relationships. Credibility was a trait of Vivian's effectiveness. She said, “decisions you make as an effective councillor are the ones that you stand by, because you believe in them. You see

you should be seen as a councillor trying to strengthen the harmony within the community.” “Effectiveness is about commitment to the place you live in, caring about people, treating the people who come to council with courtesy and civility.”

### **Wendy**

Following a career in local government, Wendy stood for a metropolitan authority in 2004. Looking back Wendy said, “I had been involved in the community in various ways over the years, so in hindsight I was more politically inclined than I recognised. She said I have been involved in family planning, the women’s electoral lobby, Playcentre, the great proving ground for rapid promotion and board of trustees, and the polytech.” Wendy suggested that effectiveness meant “being clear about what you want to achieve and how you might best achieve it while maintaining your integrity, being principled and working constructively with people. I do not think achieving something at all costs is how I would like to operate.” Part of being effective on a council was coming to terms “with the realisation that we are all different, and we should be” she said. “We are a disparate lot, but somehow we have to work sufficiently well together to make good progress and good changes.” Wendy felt most effective in her role as chair, facilitating and enabling. She said, “You give up some of the advocacy and upfront speaking out and putting your point strongly in the interests of facilitating consensus, it’s a bit of a trade. I was probably more of a consensus builder, which suited my approach. So I might come in sometimes at the end of a discussion and summarise and state my views, but I was not imposing it.” In order to be effective Wendy said that councillors need to look beyond the “formal legal responsibilities, [and] much more around the dynamics about how to garnish, gather, support and how to be effective, and what that means... and learning from one another, and from elsewhere.”