

Mobilizing Critical Feminist Engagement with New Public Management

by

Sara Ashleigh Weeden  
B.A., University of Guelph, 2008

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the School of Public Administration

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University of Victoria

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis mobilizes a feminist critique to examine the ways in which New Public Management (NPM) represents a gendered discourse. Using Foucauldian discourse analysis, NPM is mapped as a discursive field in order to tease out its dominant and subordinate discourses. The tensions between the dominant discourses and between the dominant and subordinate discourses are examined. The discursive themes of NPM are then engaged using a feminist post-structuralist framework in order to develop a feminist critique. From this critique, it is argued that NPM discourses reinscribe dominant masculinity as well as challenge the Weberian model of bureaucracy by reconstructing a gendered division of labour that takes place entirely within the public sphere.

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## DEDICATION

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Let us treat the men and women well, treat them as if they were real – perhaps they are. ~ Emerson*

This thesis seeks to engage the discursive field of New Public Management (NPM) from a gendered perspective. Specifically, it attempts to answer the question of whether a feminist critique of NPM is possible at the institutional level, and if so, to highlight the specific elements that constitute such a critique. In the course of this thesis, I will demonstrate that yes, a feminist critique of NPM is possible at the theoretical, discursive level. To answer this question, I have crafted a new lens for critically examining NPM from a gendered perspective and provide some illustrative examples of how this lens can be applied to mobilize a critical feminist engagement with NPM.

Since language creates social meaning and shapes the lived experience of individuals working within a particular institution, I have approached NPM as a discursive field in order to analyze and critique its dominant and subaltern (subordinate) discourses. My analysis and critique of NPM as a discursive field is particularly geared toward investigating whether gender figures in NPM discourses and examining the implications of gendering in NPM for the constitution of the public manager. The findings of this thesis are intended to reveal sites of struggle for feminist politics that can be understood as systemic and indicative of the structural and practical features of any number of a broad range of public sector organizations that have integrated NPM management discourses into their functional reform. This critical feminist engagement with NPM discourses is accomplished through analyzing the discursive relationship

between gender politics and NPM as a discursive field. The goal is to set the stage for further critical feminist engagement with NPM that may lead to dialogue on the prospect of considering and incorporating a gendered perspective in public management theory and practice.

This introduction starts by framing the research question followed by the rationale for undertaking this project. The rationale for mobilizing critical feminist engagement with NPM is laid out in two parts: first, a systematic account of NPM is provided, which details the political background and economic and managerialist underpinnings of NPM as a management paradigm; second, previous feminist engagements with bureaucracy, bureaucrats, and elements of NPM are examined to indicate how this thesis addresses a gap in the existing literature. Finally, I explain the approach I have taken to this study before giving a brief account of what will follow in subsequent chapters.

### **Research Question**

I began this project out of curiosity about the role of gender in public sector management and leadership. I was particularly interested in theoretical work that considered how gender is presented and/or constructed at the institutional level through the language used in discussions of public management theory and practice. There is a significant body of empirically-oriented work dealing with the gendered experience of individuals working in public sector organizations, such as academic institutions and health care. A similarly large body of work exists regarding gender mainstreaming in public policy. However, gendered institutional analyses, those that account for the more resilient elements of social structures, including the rules, norms, and routines that have become authoritative guidelines for social behaviour, have only recently begun to receive

attention from critical researchers examining both public (i.e. government) and private (i.e. corporate) management paradigms. With regard to the not-for-profit sector, such research has not yet begun to appear. Camilla Stivers (2005, p. 365) noted the dearth of research that seriously considers how a feminist epistemology, of any kind, requires researchers to think differently and re-imagine central questions within the field of public administration. This sentiment is echoed in Hutchison and Mann (2004), who expressed concern over public administration's seeming inability, as a field, to create any defining body of feminist public management theory (p. 79). Similar to these authors, I perceived a specific lack of feminist engagement with public management paradigms, particularly New Public Management (NPM), that took into account the gendering of public management discourse. Like Stivers (2005), I wondered what it was about NPM that was so impenetrable to feminist inroads. The work of this thesis is the result of my attempt to locate footholds for a gendered engagement with NPM and to open space for critical feminist investigation of this salient issue in the field of public administration.

Using Foucault's concept of discourse and the discursive field, as interpreted and advanced from the feminist perspective by Chris Weedon (1987/1997), I analyze a range of seminal and supplementary material on NPM, using them to chart NPM as a discursive field. Subsequently, I use this discursive field to conduct a gender-based critique of NPM discourses. To engage the discursive field of NPM, I will mobilize a critical Foucauldian feminist framework to investigate the mechanisms through which NPM discourses serve to gender public management.

The research question driving this thesis is two-fold: *How does NPM gender?* And, if NPM genders, *Is a feminist critique of NPM possible?* To answer these questions

means to investigate whether footholds exist for a feminist engagement or critique of NPM and to examine what a feminist engagement might reveal in terms of how NPM discourses represent gendered processes. Within the broader landscape of public administration, the work of this thesis seeks to explore what a feminist engagement with NPM might add to the overall narrative of public management theory and practice.

### **Rationale: The Case for Feminist Engagement with New Public Management**

#### ***New Public Management: A Systematic Account***

Barzelay (2001) proposed that NPM is a trend that was first collected into a more or less cogent paradigm in Christopher Hood's *A Public Management for All Seasons?* (1991) and Aucoin's *Administrative Reform in Public Management: Paradigms, Principles, Paradoxes and Pendulums* (1990). Through the work of Hood (1991) and Aucoin (1990), NPM has come to represent the reform of fully mature public service sectors in mostly Western, industrialized countries in response to the perceived desire for more accountable, transparent, and efficient public service sectors. Though I have used some aspects of the work of American writers Osborne and Gaebler (*Reinventing Government*, 1993), for the purposes of this thesis, I have relied primarily on literature that accounts for the implementation and impact of NPM reforms in the Commonwealth countries of Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Canada, to support my analysis and critique of NPM discourses.

Typically articulated using signifiers such as “progress,” “efficiency,” and/or “leadership,” NPM-style reforms have consisted of two sets of seemingly opposite ideas: economics-based theories and managerialist systems (Whitcombe, 2008, p. 8; see also Hood, 1991; Aucoin, 1990; and Kantola & Dahl, 2005, p. 62). In *A Public Management*

*for All Seasons?*, Hood identified seven overlapping precepts that appear in most discussions of NPM: (1) hands-on professional management; (2) explicit standards and measures of performance; (3) greater emphasis on output controls; (4) shifts to disaggregation of units; (5) shifts to greater competition; (6) stress on private-sector styles of management practice; and (7) stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use (1991, p. 15; for an expanded account of these features, see Appendix A, Table 1). Hood (1991) cautions, however, that not all of the seven elements are always equally present, or present at all, in each case of NPM-style reform (p. 4-5). Hood's (1991) seven elements can be further simplified to reveal NPM as a combination of three central principles: (1) empowered and entrepreneurial management is preferable to technical knowledge and administration; (2) quasi-market forces are better for resource management than administrative planning; and (3) both resource and personnel management is optimized by strong performance measurement and the application of audit systems (Andresani & Ferlie, 2006, p. 416).

Despite features that can be identified as pervasive across various incarnations of NPM in different jurisdictions, the claims and motivations of NPM are neither clearly coherent nor unified; NPM is not a cohesive theory unto itself. Rather, as a management paradigm, NPM is a "shorthand expression" used by academics and practitioners in reference to a distinct pattern of styles and themes that work in concert to form a complex ruling apparatus (Barzelay, 2001, p. xi). NPM functions at the institutional level by imposing normative structures associated with the regulation of activities and resources.

For the purposes of this thesis, there are several elements of NPM that must be considered: the political environment within which NPM rose to popularity; the primacy

of particular economic theories underlying the approach to NPM; the managerialist imperatives of NPM; and the portrayal of the public manager within NPM. The economic underpinnings and managerialist imperatives of NPM are what I use primarily in my gendered analysis and critique. In order to grasp the context of these economic and managerialist elements, however, it is important to place them in the context of NPM as a distinctive paradigm with a large and unmistakable footprint in the evolution of contemporary public management principles.

### *Political Background*

Hood (1991) linked the rise of NPM with four other “megatrends”: (1) a desire to slow down or reverse the growth of government, government spending, and staffing; (2) the shift toward privatization, quasi-privatization, and subsidiary service provision, and away from core government institutions; (3) the increased utilization of information technology in the production of public services; and (4) the development of a more global agenda regarding policy design, public management, and intergovernmental cooperation, in addition to traditional national approaches to public administration (p. 3). Following these trends, neoliberalist movements, notably NPM, began to gather momentum from the late 1970s and reached peak popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, with decline setting in during the early 2000s. Neoliberalism, in this context, represents a set of major social and economic policy changes that sought, in significant part, to transfer control over the economy from the public sector to the private sector (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007). NPM arose as a broad set of management practices, techniques, rules, and rhetoric that fall under a reformist movement that draws heavily on private sector management principles and is guided by the ascendancy of neoliberal ideas in the Western world

(notably the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as, to some extent, North America). In part, NPM reforms were the result of reactions to perceived weaknesses in traditional or Weberian bureaucratic public administration (O’Flynn, 2007, p. 354). Weber's concept of bureaucracy was based on six principles: (1) there are fixed and official jurisdictional areas which are ordered and regulated by rules; (2) bureaucratic organizations are organized through a strict hierarchical system of authority; (3) administration is based on written documents, known as “the files”; (4) management requires, as a precondition, thorough and expert training; (5) bureaucratic activity is a full-time occupation; and (6) management is accomplished through adherence to general rules which are more or less stable, exhaustive, and taught to and learned by those working within a bureaucratic organization (Mansfield, 1973, p. 477). More generally, Weberian bureaucracy can be understood as an administrative system based on expectations and procedures that are proscribed by general rules and managed by hierarchical regulation. In the language of NPM, the Weberian bureaucratic state and its interventions were cast as obstacles to economic and social development by proponents of NPM (Clark, 2002, p. 771). NPM was depicted as a means of reforming government structures through institutionalized market and managerialist ideologies, but it did not quite erase the Weberian features of the old system (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007, p. 2). The overall intended effect was a streamlined bureaucracy that used fewer public resources and more technology, resulting in less government expenditure and more private-sector involvement, and leading to achievement of more ambitious performance targets that served the clients (previously named citizens) who used public services.

In terms of its reception, the rise of NPM aroused strong and varied emotions among public servants. Those who embraced NPM viewed it as the only means for correcting the irretrievable failures of traditional bureaucracy and those who dismissed NPM regarded it as a “gratuitous and philistine” destruction of more than a century’s worth of developing a distinct public service ethos (Hood, 1991, p. 4). The fractious nature of NPM may, in part, reflect this polarized reception, which has contributed to the lack of any single definitive exposition on NPM as a management philosophy.

Critics attacked its foundations, arguing, like Paul Thomas did in 2003, that NPM was “never all that new,” “never public,” and “never strictly management,” as its major principles were mainly borrowed from private sector experience and were tied to specific, neoliberalist ideology. This is in stark contrast to Hood’s (1991) discussion of NPM’s claims to political neutrality. NPM advocates purported it to be an apolitical framework that could effectively accommodate many different values. Critics maintained that there was no such thing as a purely technical and apolitical method of organizational reform (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007, p. 223). Instead, they argued that NPM was part and parcel of a minimalist approach to the welfare-state as managed through “*pro-market, non-market*” practices (Baines, 2004, p. 5). Undeterred, NPM advocates maintained that these reforms were necessary to address the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of Weberian bureaucracy. They suggested that NPM reforms would empower both individuals working in public sector organizations and the citizens dependent on services provided by these organizations. In *Reinventing Government* (1993), Osborne and Gaebler portrayed the NPM-styled public sector as follows:

Most entrepreneurial governments promote *competition* between service providers. They *empower* citizens by

pushing control out of the bureaucracy, into the community. They measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on *outcomes*. They are driven by their goals – their *missions* – not by their rules and regulations. They redefine their clients as *customers* and offer them choices.... They *prevent* problems before they emerge, rather than simply offering services afterward. They put their energies into *earning* money, not simply spending it. They *decentralize* authority, embracing participatory management. They prefer *market* mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And they focus not simply on providing public services, but on *catalyzing* all sectors – public, private, and voluntary – into action to solve their community problems (p. 19-20).

Similarly, Aucoin (2002) argued that, by focusing on reducing debt and increasing efficiency, NPM reforms constituted “corrective measures” that were required to restore citizen confidence in the management of public funds (p. 44). In this view, the desire to slow down the growth of government and disenchantment with the traditional bureaucratic system produced a group of NPM advocates who saw the reforms as inevitable.

#### *Economic Theories Underlying New Public Management*

Kaboolian (1998) describes NPM as a set of reform movements and a series of innovations that, when considered collectively, embody a move toward public choice models, transaction-cost relationships, and preferences for efficiency over equity. NPM promotes a quasi-market orientation and goals of increased efficiency, reduced costs, and improved quality of services coinciding with a simultaneous reduction in direct government involvement (Rankin & Campbell, 2006, p. 14). The economic theories underpinning NPM-reforms were based on New Institutional Economics, with public choice theory heavily influencing institutional reform and design (in some jurisdictions) and agency theory focusing on accountability in relationships (in others) (Boston, 1996).

The motivation for incorporating these economic principles was to make the processes of public sector institutions and organizations (and, therefore, the individuals who work within them) more business-like, market-oriented, performance-driven, cost- and efficiency-optimizing, and audit-ready (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 893). Such a reform strategy is challenging, if not outright hostile, for a traditional public sector ethos, as it insists on disciplining the provision of public goods through a conversion to quasi-market, competitive systems. The creation of an “audit culture” in which what is really being evaluated is procedural efficiency, rather than the impact of public policy on people’s lives, results in an institutional culture where that which cannot be financially represented is ruled inappropriate or irrelevant (Gledhill, 2004, p. 341; see also Clarke, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, NPM represents a shift of not only resources, but also social policy and responsibilities, toward private-sector notions of economic efficiency and neoliberal market values, and away from the social equity values of the bureaucratic welfare state.

#### *The Managerialist Imperatives of New Public Management*

As a management paradigm, NPM represents a “set of assumptions and value statements about how public sector organizations should be designed, organized, managed and how, in a quasi-business manner, they should function” (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 893). The managerialist systems underpinning NPM reforms were borrowed from generic private sector management practices that heavily emphasized improved performance, performance measurement and monitoring, increased efficiency, accountability, and productivity through personnel (Whitcombe, 2008). NPM-style reforms were typically top-down, driven by a reformist central government seeking to

optimize the functions of large operational agencies (Andresani & Ferlie, 2006, p. 416). Such reforms represented a departure from traditional bureaucratic administration structures, which NPM subordinates and treats as overly cumbersome. NPM reforms also saw a move toward hybrid bureaucracies and privatization, with some services being outsourced outside the direct responsibility and control of the executive branch (Pal, 2001, p. 193).

In terms of managerialism, NPM can be better understood as a movement that did not quite abolish the bureaucratic organization, but rather attempted to alter its function. On one hand, there is an argument for NPM-empowered public managers, who are depicted as more flexible, individualistic, and entrepreneurial than traditional bureaucrats. Osborne and Gaebler (1993) enthusiastically endorse NPM as an empowering set of reforms that opened up space for individuality and personality. In several of his works, Paul du Gay (2000, 2005) discusses the idea of NPM as an empowering reform, but he does so in a critical context. Both du Gay (2000, 2005) and Kallinikos (2006) argued that by removing the impersonal element of public service, NPM reforms have made it more difficult for public managers to separate their public (work) lives from their private (home) lives, thereby encroaching on the division that public servants may have counted on to maintain their sense of self as separate from the requirements of their profession. Du Gay (2000) also cautioned that in single-mindedly pursuing a culture of entrepreneurialism and liberated excellence, NPM advocates tend to mask the complexity of public interest and constitutional legitimacy by oversimplifying managerialist reforms. It can also be argued that the performance measurement and audit culture heralded by NPM did little to simplify bureaucratic systems and instead created an even more

cumbersome system of rules, procedures, and regulations (Kallinikos, 2006, p. 614).

Contract negotiation, competitive resource management, and performance monitoring have proven to be complex and demanding in terms of operational management. As Aucoin (2002) noted, the hubris associated with the first expressions of NPM has, over time, given way to more realistic depictions of the challenges faced by public sector organizations (p. 50).

#### *Portrayal of the Public Manager in NPM*

While NPM may have created space for public servants to bring more of their own identities to their work, the language of NPM does not clearly indicate that this is desirable. If it is true that public managers hardly constitute a unified group, it is interesting to observe that the multiple and subjective identities (such as a gendered subjectivity) of public managers are unacknowledged, silenced, if not totally excluded, in NPM discourses. Like many organizational models, individuals in an NPM-dominated public sector seem presented as bodiless, and thus genderless, or as entities for whom their bodily self is separated from their professional office (Aaltio & Lepisto, 2003). The Weberian paradigm achieved a somewhat similar end through the separation of public and private, which insisted on a total distinction between the public (genderless) persona of the bureaucrat and the individual (gendered) identity they took on in their private life. NPM challenged the Weberian public-private distinction by reconstituting the identity of the public manager as being couched on their individual performance, rather than a particular public sector ethic, creating room for individualism and subjective interpretation of appropriate work processes (Caron & Giauque, 2006; see also Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). Many interpretations of NPM, particularly those heavily influenced by

public choice theory, tend to see the individual identities and values held by public managers as a significant part of the problem with bureaucracy, rather than a means of enacting organizational change (McLaughlin, Osborne & Ferlie, 2002, p. 156). In a remaining vestige of the Weberian model, the apparent neutralizing of the public manager in the language of NPM seems to strip these individuals of any unique or identifying characteristics, removing their subjective identities and replacing them with a faceless, genderless, objectified placeholder who occupies a specific office – an objectified entity that is essentially interchangeable with any other. Doing so discounts the practical reality in which an individual public servant’s decision making process is driven by their experiences, meaning that individuals with particular perspectives will view public policy and management responsibilities through a lens shaped by their own worldview and their perception of the issues at hand (Allison, 1971).

### ***Feminist Approaches to Bureaucracy, Bureaucrats, and New Public Management***

Bureaucracy, as an organizational structure that encompasses various procedures, protocols, and regulations, has long been the target of feminist critique. Perhaps the most notable of such critiques is Kathy Ferguson’s *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (1984), which presents a rather nihilistic view of the relationship between feminism and bureaucracy. Public administration and administrative discourse are summarily rolled into Ferguson’s (1984) critique of bureaucratic systems and structures. Setting the tone for her analysis, Ferguson refers to public administration as “the most visible offspring of the unholy marriage between political science and the state” (1984, p. 61). In analyzing public administration as a bureaucratic discourse, she argues that public administration is a disciplinary matrix that, at best, falls short of effectiveness due to self-serving

superficiality, and, at worst, constitutes a carefully-crafted cycle of domination. Therefore, in her view, it is inadequate to stop at eliminating gender bias in public administration; real change requires a new approach that takes full account of the historical-cultural experiences of women (Ferguson, 1984 in Shafritz, 2000, p. 32-33). Even if feminists were able to infiltrate the hierarchy and secure positions of power, they would not be able to pursue or promote feminist goals or politics due to the requirements of the bureaucratic structure: conformation to bureaucratic norms, the adoption of a forced unified vision of reality for bureaucrats, and a distant relationship to subordinates (Ferguson, 1984 in Weldon, 2002, p. 112). Similarly, Camilla Stivers has argued that public administration is structurally male, despite any claims to neutrality, due to its continued reliance on the sexual division of labour that overwhelmingly burdens women with performing the domestic functions that support every aspect of life (1993, p. 5). Additionally, Stivers (1993/2002, 2003) points out that the norms and practices of public administration, and by extension, public management – those practices that claim objectivity, expertise, leadership, and virtue – are culturally constituted as masculine, not feminine. Revealing public administration as structured along gender lines produces tension between feminist theory and practice and the widely accepted perceptions of public administration.

While feminist engagements with bureaucracy as a tool of state power, such as Ferguson's seminal theoretical study, provide compelling and often passionate investigations, such critique is not entirely unproblematic. Critiques such as Ferguson's (1984) risk reproducing essentialist perceptions of gender and the problematic power relations created by viewing gender as a biologically reductive binary identity category.

Presenting the feminist case in this light potentially serves to reinforce social stereotypes of what constitutes male or female work and behaviour (Due Billing, 1994, p. 180).

Further, for the purposes of this thesis, the kind of critique work that has been done regarding bureaucratic structures and discourse does not yet appear to have been fully mobilized toward investigating the institutionalized processes through which management theory and practice constitute gender.

Moving toward an analysis based more specifically in the experience of bureaucrats, rather than the whole of bureaucratic structure, Thomson (2001) and Yeatman (1990) present relevant and insightful studies that investigate the experiences of feminist public servants during the height of NPM's popularity. However, their work appears to focus more on the interplay of feminist politics and the structure of state power, rather than specifically engaging with management theory and practice. Thomson (2001) and Yeatman (1990) analyze the gendered experience of professional public managers by examining their presence and participation in the governmental public sector. Yeatman's *femocrat* depicts a narrow view of a gendered bureaucrat – defined as a female career public servant who self-identified as feminist and worked for the Australian government in areas and agencies explicitly associated with women's interests during a particular period in the 1980s. The femocrat is gendered, but in a specific way (must be female) and is feminist insofar as a strict definition of feminist practice is applied (must self-identify, must be working in women's agencies). These qualifiers significantly limit the applicability of Yeatman's (1990) analysis in terms of broader gendered interpretations of the influence of management paradigms within and across the public bureaucracy. Thomson (2001) uses the work of Yeatman (1990) and Anne Goetz

(1994) to frame his discussion of the apparent feminization of government in the United Kingdom following the 1997 Labour victory. Thomson (2001) uses a more open classification of a feminist bureaucrat. However, Thomson's (2001) analysis is obscured by his use of the terms woman and feminist as interchangeable, which is not necessarily the case. Both Thomson (2001) and Yeatman (1990) appear to place considerable weight on the presence and proportion of women in government; both note the unprecedented numbers of women and self-identified feminists that entered government in Australia and the United Kingdom. This phenomenon, however, is marked by Thomson (2001) and Yeatman (1990) with the disappointing conclusion that these women were unable to radically alter the bureaucratic systems in which they worked as a result of the broader cultural shift to a political discourse that trumpeted the free-market (i.e. neoliberalism) and maintained the inequalities that a feminist agenda promised to address. Yeatman's femocrats ultimately felt that their participatory feminist agenda had been co-opted and subsequently subordinated by the state, robbing them of whatever impact they might have once believed they could enact on the management structures and systems that regulated their workplaces. Thomson (2001) refers to Yeatman's (1990) analysis of the femocrat experience and notes that many feminist bureaucrats experienced a conflict between their ideology and the need to adopt masculine management styles in order to access high profile (and perceived masculine) portfolios (p. 200). Thomson (2001) and Yeatman (1990) bring us to the edge of NPM, but not quite into an analysis of how NPM continued to produce a gendered structure in the public sector and why it appeared so impenetrable for a feminist agenda.

Where more in-depth and specific examinations of the gendered implications of NPM are found, they tend toward the micro-level. There are numerous studies that have explored the experiences of individual public managers in the context of the policing system, universities, and in health care (e.g., Rankin & Campbell, 2006; Thomas & Davies, 2002; Thomas & Davies, 2002a; Davies & Thomas, 2002). These studies tend to take on the character of case studies or micro-level ethnographies and are typically informed by focus groups and interviews, making it difficult to extrapolate the findings to a more generalized account of gender and NPM. Additionally, where research extends beyond micro-level analysis, there is a tendency toward field-specific discussions. There is little engagement at the institutional level that considers NPM as a phenomenon on its own, outside the boundaries of the particular requirements of post-secondary education or health care. For example, Rankin and Campbell (2006) use an institutional ethnography from the nurse's perspective to consider the impact of NPM on the restructuring of health care nursing practice in Canada, presenting an insider-specific account of a niche-application of NPM. Thomas and Davies (2002) explore the extent to which NPM reforms in British higher education have influenced individual women academics' day-to-day experiences of the gendered academy with regard to their professional identities. In another study, they take a similar approach to exploring the reconstitution of gendered professional identities in the context of NPM reforms in the United Kingdom's police service (2002a).

In *Gendering and Gender in Public Service Organizations*, Davies and Thomas (2002) focus on the relationship between gender and NPM at two levels: *gendering* in organizations, where the gendered meanings of NPM are explored in terms of the

promotion of new professional/managerial subjectivities; and gender *in* organizations, where the implications of the enactment of NPM are considered with regard to male and female public sector professionals. While this study incorporates a more institutionally oriented investigation of the relationship between gendered subjectivities and NPM, it is still empirically grounded in interviews and questionnaires, and focuses on individuals with specific professional designations across a range of public sector organizations. Though these studies illustrate how the individuals considered in the research use gender frameworks and feminist politics of resistance to exploit the weaknesses and contradictions within NPM discourse and practice, with the exception of institutional ethnographies, which are more substantive and can be translated into more theoretical analyses and critiques due to the specific underlying principles of institutional ethnography as a methodology and practice, many empirical analyses of NPM still represent highly specific accounts drawn at the micro-level that cannot be easily translated into a more institutional or theoretical generalization.

### **Approach to Study**

This thesis takes a critical look at NPM at the institutional level from a feminist perspective. Foucault's concept of discourse is used to translate NPM into a discursive field. Then, using the theoretical framework provided by feminist post-structuralism, the discursive field is analyzed in order to reveal the ways in which NPM genders and whether a feminist critique of NPM is possible. I have chosen to examine NPM in this way as a means of extending Ferguson's (1984) project of mobilizing a feminist critique of bureaucratic structures. Ferguson (1984) referenced Foucault in her analysis of bureaucratic discourse and argued that power is indicated and legitimated through

authorized discourse, which communicates what is valued both in statement and by omission (Foucault, 1981, p. 27 in Ferguson, 1984, p. 68). Specifically, I seek to examine NPM as a type of bureaucratic/administrative discourse that “expresses and reflects a particular structure of institutions and practices” (Ferguson, 1984, p. 59). Scott and Hart (1979) proposed that, “modern organizations are run by managers who are all schooled in the same organizational values... [and it] is largely through the personae of managers that the values of the modern organization have pervaded society” (p. 5). In undertaking this project, I use a feminist-based research practice informed by Foucauldian post-structuralism to investigate the organizational values and managerial subjectivities that have been institutionalized through NPM discourse. Employing this particular framework has produced specific research priorities, questions, and decisions about the relationship between gender and NPM as an institutional discourse. By looking for gender in the authorized discourse of NPM, both in statement and in silence, I seek to analyze the institutional qualities of NPM that give rise to a specific politics of power and constitute gendered knowledge claims, values, expectations, and practices.

### **Looking Ahead: Organization of the Study**

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 explains the framework that informs the epistemological and theoretical choices that serve as the foundation of this thesis; Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach that has been applied to the analysis and critique of NPM; Chapter 4 maps NPM as a discursive field and then approaches this field from a critical feminist post-structuralist perspective in order to highlight the means by which NPM theoretically and discursively genders; and Chapter 5 synthesizes the

overall arc of the paper before highlighting the key implications and conclusions I have drawn from my research.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Class, race, sexuality, gender and all other categories by which we categorize and dismiss each other need to be excavated from the inside. ~ Dorothy Allison*

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical frameworks that inform this thesis. First, I describe feminist theory and practice, specifically acknowledging my own feminist practice and my approach to gender as an analytical category. Second, I review the relevant aspects of Foucauldian discourse analysis and Weedon's (1987/1997) feminist post-structuralism.

The theoretical frameworks outlined in this chapter are the foundational aspects of this thesis in a number of ways. First, it is necessary to outline Foucault's theory of discourse before addressing Foucauldian methodology and presenting NPM as a discursive field. Second, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical aspects of feminist post-structuralism, particularly as promoted by Weedon (1987/1997), as this marks an appropriation of Foucault's philosophy for feminist purposes. This framework constitutes the means by which I investigate gender within the discursive field of NPM. Due to the complex nature of setting up the theoretical underpinnings of my investigation, I have chosen to limit my analysis and critique to the use of Foucault and feminist post-structuralism to keep the scope of this thesis within reasonable boundaries.

## Personal and Theoretical Commitments

### *Reflexive Practice*

In most feminist research practice, researchers are encouraged to be transparent about the role of their own individual backgrounds and biases in shaping the research process. Doing so demystifies how researchers have arrived at their particular questions, the places that they have chosen to look for answers, the kind of tools they have used for investigation, and the manner in which they have arrived at and reported their findings. Thus, I would like to pause to explain the personal and theoretical commitments that have shaped my research approach.

### *My Background*

Having completed the coursework and co-operative education employment placements required for the completion of the Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) program at the University of Victoria, I arrived at the stage of completing a capstone project with the desire to undertake a more theoretical, intellectual exercise within the field of public administration. I was interested in further developing the academic skills that had been emphasized in my undergraduate education in International Development at the University of Guelph, which I felt had been somewhat under-employed in the practitioner-focused coursework required for the M.P.A. program. As a result, I elected to complete the thesis option, rather than the advanced management report that is the typical capstone project completed in the final stages of the M.P.A. degree program.

What brought me to my curiosity about gender in public management theory and practice, and what ultimately led to my research question, was two-fold: first, I felt that the bulk of the coursework for the M.P.A. program focused very specifically on policy

analysis and similar technical competencies, leaving little room for training or discussion regarding public management theory and practice (or professional competencies); second, in what literature on public management theory and practice I had been exposed to, I could not find anything that spoke to me or resembled who I perceive myself to be as an individual. As a gendered individual who self-identifies as feminist, I could not find myself, nor anyone I knew or could imagine encountering in my future professional life, in any of the depictions I read regarding public managers or management practice. I became curious about why I might be encountering this issue and what might be producing this effect. As a result, I decided to look at the language of a specific public management paradigm – NPM – as a means of beginning an investigation into what I perceived to be a critical, yet strangely absent, element in the process of how public managers are constituted: gender.

### ***Feminist Theory and Practice***

Part of the preliminary work of this thesis involved wading through feminist literature and deciding on what kind of feminism would ground the work of my project. This is not a simple matter of choosing one camp over another. Choosing where to locate my own feminist commitment has produced some specific consequences for the kind of questions I have asked, the literature I have reviewed, the work I have done, and the discoveries I have produced. While many feminisms present compelling arguments for their employment, none was completely comfortable; there was always something that chafed around the edges. As a result, I have made epistemological and ontological choices that have produced the particular feminist practice employed in this thesis.

Feminist ideology, theory, and practice have undergone remarkable shifts, with both massive revolutions and slow-burning evolution taking place since the suffragettes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (in Canada). Feminism is political, contested and contestable. As a result, feminist scholarship continues to be a diverse and highly charged field where various feminisms are often dramatically and passionately challenged among and between scholars and practitioners across a wide range of disciplines, professions, and social arenas.

Feminism is often described as occurring in waves. First wave feminism advocated for the granting of basic (*de jure*) legal rights and equality for women, though it remained an exclusionary form of activism that was almost exclusively the domain of upper-middle-class, white, Western women, a quality that formed a central part of the critique of second wave feminism (Georgetown College; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). Second wave feminism sought the implementation and enforcement of official and unofficial (*de facto*) equality for women. Second wave feminists campaigned with the slogan, “the personal is political,” and feminist advocacy and activism was extended beyond basic legal equality to encompass socioeconomic equality (Georgetown College; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). In the early 1990s, third wave feminism began to challenge essentialist notions of gender by arguing that previous understandings of what it means to be feminine or masculine were biologically reductive and did not take account of the cultural scripts that society uses to inform what it means to be a man or a woman. Third wave feminists sought the recognition of multiple feminisms and promoted the concept of intersectionality through the recognition of standpoints. Intersectionality refers to the idea that identities are produced by the

intersection or simultaneous layering of multiple subjectivities or standpoints, such as race, religion, gender, and class, which shape an individual's understanding of the world (Sellnow, 2009, p. 92; see also Georgetown College; and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). The precept of intersectionality is that oppression and equality exist on multiple planes for any given individual. Third wave feminism mobilized the feminist cause for addressing the oppression of all marginalized people. In emphasizing disunity and diversity, third wave feminism also brought on increasing contestation over women's individual identity and autonomy in contrast to the importance of solidarity and a sense of shared community among all women and/or groups of women sharing similar intersectional identities. Whether taken as a theoretical framework or social practice, the richness of third wave feminism also brings with it serious tension resulting from its recognition of multiple divergent threads that are often at odds with each other, if not outright exclusionary or hostile toward certain feminisms. Discourses on individuality, identity, difference, and independence further complicate these debates. Despite such debate, or perhaps because of it, gender remains a critical area of social politics. All feminists, no matter their theoretical orientation, are actively engaged in examining the ways in which the social category of gender exploits, oppresses, or marginalizes women and their experiences. While part of the power of feminism lies in its diversity, feminist theory and practice remains a project of undertaking an analysis of the systems and structures of a world that marginalizes women.

Initially, I was drawn to Chafetz's (2004) minimalist approach to gender and feminism, which she characterized as follows:

- (1) Whatever else it may also be, gender is a system of inequality between males and females as sex categories by

which things feminine are socially and culturally devalued and men enjoy greater access to scarce and valued social resources.

(2) Gender inequality is produced socioculturally and is not immutable.

(3) Gender inequality is evaluated negatively as unjust, unfair, etc.

(4) Therefore, feminists should strive to eliminate gender inequality. (p. 965-966)

Chafetz (2004) further noted that, “even with this minimalist definition there is plenty to debate concerning the causes of gender inequality... how best to change the system, and even the meaning/components of the very term *gender inequality*” (p. 966). Nancy Hartstock (1998) similarly proposed that, “at bottom, feminism is a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women” (p. 35). However, after more critical consideration, this mode of thinking appears to take for granted a static binary between male and female. To do so relies on biological essentialism and structures gender as something physiologically intrinsic, where a strict dichotomy offers only two possible gender identities.

Additionally, the focus is on a reductionist view of gender inequality as what could be categorized as a zero-sum game. It is difficult to use feminism for analytical purposes if socially produced gender differences are equated with biologically determined sex differences or if gender and sex have been combined and naturalized as interchangeable (McGinn & Patterson, 2005, p. 931). In such circumstances, where naturalized differences are considered immutable, possibilities for inquiry and analysis arrive rather quickly at a dead end.

I have found the work of Judith Butler (1999), specifically her concept of performativity, useful in understanding gender as something that is not natural and inevitable, but performed into being through cultural scripts, expectations, and practices.

Building on Butler's ideas, my interest in feminist critique comes from questions of what gender means and what implications gender has for who we are and how we act within our particular subjectivities, as determined by the interactions of political, economic, social, and cultural forces and discourses. As a result, my approach to feminism has become, simply, that feminist theory and practice results from the awareness and engagement of gender politics in social phenomena.

Framing feminism in this way has had a singularly important role in shaping the work of this thesis. My research question involves the constitution of gender – in any form, whether masculine or feminine – in the discourses of NPM. Fitting within the overall arc of this project, framing feminism as the active awareness and engagement of gender politics appeals to the more general sentiment informing the research question and analysis and critique of this thesis, for if we do not find gender in a given social phenomenon, then we are not seeing it clearly (Sprague, 2005, p. viii). Additionally, this approach aligns with the post-structural methodology of this thesis, which calls for the recognition of multiple realities instead of essentialist binary identities, while still recognizing the argument that gendered experiences and identities do matter in the social arena. As a result of this approach to feminism, my thesis aims not to use feminist politics to argue for a particular reinterpretation, reform, or revolt of or against NPM. Instead, I use feminist scholarship to investigate the ways in which gender operates in NPM discourses and to look for potential sites of political struggle between gender and NPM. Doing so addresses the implications of gender as an analytical category and produces a means of understanding NPM as a set of institutional practices that have specific gendered meanings. Rather than work within a narrowly defined view of what feminism

means, this thesis seeks to use feminist theory and practice as a type of x-ray focus that makes gender politics visible within a specific social phenomenon (i.e. NPM) and to ask if, why, and how gender is involved in the processes, standards, and values of NPM.

### ***Gender***

From the preceding discussion of my approach to feminist practice, gender emerges as the critical category of analysis at the centre of my own feminist practice and as the fundamental level of inquiry for this thesis. Gender is the driver of investigation as well as the means of framing the analysis and critique of NPM. Viewing the world through a gendered lens requires that assumptions about gender that seem to be pervasive in social sciences research and in shaping the social world be unpacked. Clarifying my approach to gender as an analytical category will also explain the theoretical aims of this thesis. For these reasons, it is critical to discuss how I approach gender.

In alignment with post-structuralist principles, I have come to the investigation of my research question with a commitment to the distinction that gender is not a binary identity category. This means that I reject the notion of gender as representing essential male or female qualities, values, behaviours, or identities. Rather, I consider gender as an analytical category useful for organizing and understanding social relations, practices, and processes (Gartside, 2007). In rejecting an essentialist view of gender as a binary identity category, I also reject any claim to finding specific, essential male or female qualities and/or values within the discursive field of NPM. Thus, gender becomes a means of organizing social structures and relations within institutional structures, representing “a set of cultural beliefs and ways of interacting with others” (Taylor, 1999, p. 9; see also, Gartside, 2007). As such, gender is considered an active, evolving medium

in which understandings of femininity and masculinity are constantly defined, challenged, redefined, reconstituted, and reconstructed through the interactions, relationships, and cultural scripts exchanged among and between groups and individuals through and across the various and multiple layers and levels of the social world.

Walby (2004) identified four interwoven elements that produce and constitute gender in the social world: (1) the overall social system; (2) the point at which a given political regime is positioned on the continuum between domestic to public, such as market-based or economy-driven neoliberal states or the social-democratic welfare state, and their associated levels of gender inequality; (3) the domains of economic, polity, and civil society; and (4) social practices and discourse (Walby, 2004; see also Gartside, 2007, p. 35). These four elements work in concert to constitute gender in various cultural, political, social, and economic projects. Through this process, gender constitutes identities, perceptions, interactional practices, and the foundations of social institutions (Sprague, 2005, p. viii). Gender, therefore, emerges as a dynamic and powerful analytical category for framing social processes. Through the articulated rules and regulations of social relationships and how meaning is constructed, conceptions of gender produce and are produced by mechanisms of social relations and organization (Scott, 1986; see also Gartside, 2007, p. 34). Therefore, as proposed by Butler (1999), gender is not only a system of order relations, but also a conceptual category that holds within itself multiple identities that are forged by the interaction of political, economic, social, and cultural forces and discourses. Butler (1999) proposes that this construction or performance of gender is fundamental to understanding the power relations that function through the cultural programming that produces gendered structures. As a result, it is important to

question the issue of gender, the terms of gendered divisions, what gender means, and what implications it presents for individual identity. With this view, my approach to a feminist critique sees gender as a tool of management, where its position in the discourse both evokes and conveys particular meanings. In my analysis of NPM, I seek to investigate how gender is constructed in discourse in order to reveal the shape and texture of gender politics embedded in this particular system of social relations.

### ***Subjectivities and Identities***

Before going further in this thesis, it is necessary to explain how I have interpreted the terms *subjectivity(ies)* and *identity(ies)*. The terms are often used in the literature in ways that suggest they are interchangeable (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). This seems particularly the case in discussions of gender, where, if we add a distinction between subjectivity and identity, articulating a clear analysis becomes increasingly problematic. Indeed, there is considerable overlap between the two terms. The primary difference appears to come from a difference in perspective.

Discourses can only be effective in creating meaning if they recruit subjects (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). Subjectivity arises from the conscious and unconscious thoughts, emotions, and experiences which constitute our sense of who we are and where we are located within a given social system. We experience subjectivity in a social context, where our experiences are given meaning through language and culture via discourse (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). Subjects are, therefore, subjected to discourse; they must take it up as individuals who position themselves accordingly. In this view, subjectivity has a double meaning: it refers to the process of subjection to discourse as well as to agency as active participation in a situation, as in the subject of a sentence.

Individuals are constituted as subjects within or by power structures as much as they are by their own experiences. Subjectivity implies a dynamic and reflexive process where multiple subjectivities are possible. Identity suggests a more stable position which is formed through the taking up of various subjectivities by an individual. Through the work of Judith Butler (1999/2006), I have come to treat identity as constituted in the subjectivities offered by discourse. As such, the ascription to or adoption of a particular identity is the result of the coming together and crystallization of several specific subjectivities. For the work of this thesis, subjectivity and identity are used mostly as complementary terms that indicate a similar phenomenon.

Having thoroughly discussed my personal approach to feminism, gender, subjectivity, and identity, I will now turn to a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, specifically post-structuralism, Foucault, discourse and the discursive field, and the feminist appropriation of these theoretical frameworks.

### **Post-Structuralism**

Post-structuralism is the theoretical tool which I will use in my critical engagement with NPM. To do so is to move beyond the generalities of structuralist approaches to language and investigate NPM as a historically and circumstantially specific area of social knowledge and practice.

Post-structuralism developed as a critique of structuralism and offers a form of study that accounts for how knowledge is produced culturally and historically. Specifically, post-structuralism is interested in addressing the plurality of meaning and possibility of changes in meaning in specific discourses, a phenomenon not accounted for in Saussurean structuralism. Saussure theorized language as possessing pre-determined

meanings and a fixed structure prior to its actualization in speech or writing, making language an “abstract system, consisting of chains of signs” (Weedon, 1997, p. 22-23). Saussurean linguistics attempts to locate meaning within this system, but then views meaning as socially or culturally “fixed” within language. As a result, Saussurean linguistics and structuralism cannot explain why signs and signifiers may have many conflicting meanings which may change over time (Weedon, 1997, p. 23-24). While building on Saussure’s theory, post-structuralism radically transforms some of its important aspects. Post-structuralism takes from Saussurean linguistics the idea that meaning is produced within language, rather than reflected by it (Weedon, 1997, p. 23; see also Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 141). However, post-structuralism seeks to look more closely at the contexts of specific moments and locations in time in which historically specific discourses constitute language formation and use. Intricate networks of discourses are exposed by examining how, when, and where they are articulated, including any justifications for institutionally legitimized claims to knowledge (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 171). Further, post-structuralism rejects notions of binary opposition and challenges essentialist categorization; there are no definite, discrete, and/or static categories of identity, such as man or woman. More fluid, dynamic, and nuanced understandings of identity and social relations are emphasized; it is proposed that there may be multiple truths and conceptions of reality. These multiple truths are formed by the language and discourses that construct boundaries and categories through the temporary fixing of meaning, which involves both interests and questions of power (Weedon, 1997, p. 171). In using a post-structuralist approach, I seek to explore the gendered discursive positioning produced by NPM as an institutional discourse.

### ***Foucault, Discourse and Power Relations***

Though Foucault claimed to be a genealogist, not a post-structuralist critic, his work on discourse and power fits well with and has been woven into post-structuralist theory. With regard to language, Foucault claimed that discourses are “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and the relations between them” (Weedon, 1989/1997, p. 105). Language is a system that always exists in historically specific discourses, where multiple and competing discourses give meaning to the world and organize social relations and power. Discourses are produced through language in an active and dynamic process through the act of speaking and in the production of texts. A discourse is more than oral or written language, however; it encompasses ways of thinking, behaving, valuing, interacting, and feeling. Discourse creates knowledge and allows individuals to explain their own actions as well as the actions of others (Weedon, 1987/1997, p. 105). These meanings are produced within, but not guaranteed by, social institutions and practices in which individuals, as shaped by these institutions, are the agents of change, rather than its authors (Weedon, 1997, p. 25). Changes in discourse, via social institutions and practices, may either serve dominant interests or challenge existing power relations. Further, more than just ways of thinking and producing meaning, discourses constitute the body, both the conscious and unconscious mind, and the emotional life of the subjects that they seek to govern. In this context, neither the body nor thoughts nor feelings have any meaning outside of their discursive articulation (Weedon, 1997, p. 105). Similarly, Ferguson (1984) argued that language and discourse are “*constitutive* of political phenomenon rather than... merely *about* political phenomenon” (p. 60). This discursive articulation and constitution of the minds and

bodies of individuals is always embedded in a larger network of power relations

(Weedon, 1997, p. 105). Foucault explained how power relations operate as follows:

[the exercise of power is] a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term *conduct* is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to *conduct* is the same as to *lead others* (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. (1982, p. 789).

Thus, power possesses a dual nature. Power both creates and sets limits for individuals within certain systems and power relations are what govern the social arena; these processes are shaped through discourse.

According to Foucault,

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance (1981, p. 1010 in Weedon, 1997, p. 107).

Therefore, power is produced and transmitted through the interactions among people and institutions. The result is a multitude of contesting discourses that are neither unified nor coherent, but always shifting and evolving. Therefore, power is not the exclusive right of certain powerful individuals or segments of society, but is exchanged through the interactions and competition among multiple discourses in what Mills termed an

“interactional relation of power, rather than imposition of power” (2004, p. 79; see also Gartside, 2007, p. 72). However, dominant discourses – those that are engaged and advanced by individuals or institutions that hold substantial social, economic, or political advantage in a given society – do hold significantly more power and exert more influence because they are taken up and circulated within the domains of powerful and influential social institutions.

The dominant discourses in a given society are often rooted in institutions. These institutions are themselves sites of contestation and struggle where dominant discourses – those that determine and govern organization, norms, rules, and practices – are constantly challenged for supremacy by multiple other discourses and reverse discourse. By seeking to destabilize and undermine the dominant discourse, reverse discourse produces new discourses of resistance for those who are forced into a particular subordinate position by the dominant discourse, producing the potential for significant challenges for the legitimacy of the dominant discourse. However, discourse does not operate in a simple bipolar dichotomy between power and powerlessness (Weedon, 1997, p. 107). Instead, discourses function as “tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations” (Foucault, 1981, p. 101). Force relations are power relations that take on specific forms in a given society depending on a variety of organizing and analytic categories, such as race, gender, class, or religion. Included in the field of force relations are social institutions, which act as sites of discursive contestation and struggle in regard to the constitution of subjectivities, social relations, and social control, and become critical in the constitution and governance of individuals within a given society.

### *The Concept of the Discursive Field*

The concept of the discursive field comes from Foucault's attempt to understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity, and power. Using discursive fields to examine social phenomena represents a means of analyzing culture not only as a set of possibilities but also as a system of constraints on social movements (King, 2007, p. 302).

Discursive fields are constituted by sets of discourses. Each discourse represents a relatively stable system of meaning that both influences and is influenced by the discursive repertoires of individuals and organizations within a particular social institution or system (King, 2007, p. 303). A given discursive field contains a variety of competing and contradictory discourses, all with varying degrees of power to give meaning to and to influence the organization of social institutions and processes. Each discourse seeks to define and regulate individual and organizational behaviour in a specific manner, though not all discourses carry equal power in their ability to give meaning and/or regulate social systems (Weedon, 1997, p. 34). Additionally, each set of discourses offers a range of modes of subjectivity (Weedon, 1997, p. 35). A discursive field creates "effects of truth" through organizing ideas, signs, and symbols into a body of knowledge (a discipline) and/or through techniques of social control (disciplinary practices) (Kroll-Smith Gunter, 2005, p. 349 in King, 2007, p. 303). Foucault was particularly interested in social control through institutionally-based discourse.

Recently, there has been interest in using discursive fields to better understand the relationship between structure and culture (King, 2007, p. 303). As expressions of relations of domination, discursive fields carry the power of institutionalized hierarchy into meaning-making by limiting the potential range of meanings and values which might

logically enter an interaction. Spillman (1995) proposes that the discursive field, by allowing the production of repertoires of meanings and values, acts as a tool of meaning (p. 140 in King, 2007, p. 303). Because discursive fields are fluid, flexible, and without definite or fixed borders, they shift and evolve as discourses and practices change over time, the repertoires of meanings and values they produce are historically and circumstantially specific (King, 2007, p. 303).

Chris Weedon (1987/1997) further developed Foucault's notion of the discursive field. Her interpretation of the discursive field proposes that language, organized in the form of discourses, gives structure to the possible identities individuals can legitimately assume in a particular context (in Howard, 2010, p. 77). By providing the preconditions required for individual identities and the range of emotions and interpretations felt by individuals, discourse and language are responsible for the constitution of possible individual identities and subjectivities that individuals can legitimately assume in a given social context. As a result, language and discourse, and by extension, discursive fields, fundamentally affect prevailing institutional arrangements and power hierarchies by producing and limiting what is constituted as legitimate meaning and knowledge (Howard, 2010, p. 277). Within a discursive field, there are often several discourses existing in hierarchical dominant-subordinate relationships (Weedon, 1987/1997). These discourses tend to simultaneously overlap, underlie, compete, and cooperate with each other in producing social experiences, identities, and subjectivities of individuals who interact through a given discursive field.

### ***Foucault and Feminist Post-Structuralism***

In recent decades, feminists have actively and extensively challenged, critiqued, interpreted, and appropriated the work of Foucault. In the 1996 volume *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*, editor Susan Hekman proposes that Foucault offers feminists neither a theory nor a politics, but instead offers a radical shift toward a new epistemological space and method for considering both politics and the subject (p. 3). However, that does not mean that feminism and Foucault make for easy and comfortable theoretical partners. There is considerable tension between Foucault and many feminist theorists. Due to Foucault's denial of universal values, his theory is also without obvious means for justifying normative political judgements, despite making such claims in his work; a paradox highlighted by feminist scholars like Nancy Fraser (1996, p. 24). As a result, Fraser and others have raised the question of whether Foucault is useful for feminist theory and practice.

This question has been the subject of lively debate, with some (such as Chris Weedon) arguing that a feminist appropriation of Foucault is necessary for the continued progression of feminist political practice. Others (such as Nancy Hartstock) have argued that Foucault is not at all useful or appropriate for feminist scholarship. The issue that so deeply divides feminists with regard to Foucault is his conception of the subject. Specifically, those who are critical of Foucault's appropriateness for feminism are concerned that his deconstruction of subjective identity and his rejection of a stable subject removes all possibility for a feminist politics (Hekman, 1997; see also Jenkins, 2002).

Foucault's work on the concept of power and the subject evolved during the course of his career. In his earlier works, Foucault emphasized the external constraints on

the exercise of power via disciplines, which produced the notion of the docile self or subject. In his later work, Foucault offered a different framework that allows for individual agency and the presentation of a more active subject. However, even given Foucault's shifts in emphasis from knowledge, to power, to subject, the underlying theme of his work is subjectivity (McLaren, 2002, p. 5). Foucault sought to create a history of the different ways in which human beings are made subjects. For Foucault, subjectivity is the result of specific discursive formations and linguistic practices. Foucault rejected the idea that power could be a possession, arguing that it was actually a relation. Foucault's subject does not, and cannot, exist outside of discursively constituted power relations. However, in his later work, Foucault's subject is not entirely passive within the operation of power relations. This is because power relations are presented as a function of every human relationship. Power relations influence individuals to behave in specific ways. This influence is not inherently negative or restrictive. It is only when power relations harden into what Foucault termed *domination* that the exercise of power closes off all possibility of resistance on the part of the subject. Thus, in the exercise of power relations, the possibility of resistance must still exist. If resistance was impossible, if the possibility for violent resistance, flight, deception, or other strategies of reversing the situation did not exist, there would be no power relation at all (Foucault, 1994, p. 292 in Jenkins, 2002, p. 5). For power relations to exist, they must also contain agential relations; similarly, agency can only exist in the context of power relations. Foucault's subject does not possess inherent agency; rather, the subject may exercise a type of relational agency (Picard, 2010). Tied to power relations, agency relations refer to the ability of an individual to transgress limits and alter how they fit within a particular set of

power relations (Jenkins, 2002, p. 5). In exercising relational agency, an individual may alter the power relations themselves, establish new systems and practices, and reconstruct a new set of power relations.

Feminists are under no obligation to accept the totality of any theorists work, and Foucault's is no exception. Rather, for feminist theory and practice, it is important to critically examine and appropriate the aspects of theory that best advance the feminist project. However, appropriation must be done carefully in order to avoid theoretical cherry-picking. For the work of this thesis, I have found Chris Weedon's feminist interpretation and appropriation of Foucault to be useful. Weedon (1987/1997) puts forth a feminist post-structuralism that is grounded in Foucault. Weedon seeks to understand how power works on behalf of specific interests and to analyze opportunities for resistance (1987/1997). She identifies her use of Foucault as *feminist* post-structuralism because she seeks to diffuse the nature of power in order to explore how power creates marginalization based on socially produced categories, such as gender, race, sexuality, and ability. Even while proposing that gender identities are not essentially bound, Weedon's framework recognizes that they are nevertheless robust (McNay, 2000 in Thomas & Davies, 2002, p. 377). While she does not claim or identify a stable subject, Weedon maintains that the nature of power relations still produces marginalization based on certain subjectivities. The self is not determined, but regulated by discourses and disciplinary practices that shape how individuals come to think of themselves, subjectively. This approach allows for the analysis of gender as an analytical category, but rejects essentialist views of gender. The result is an approach that creates the possibility for a more complex and nuanced analysis that is contextually sensitive to the

discourses of a given society or institution. For the feminist project I seek to undertake, Weedon's approach to power relations offers a more accurate description of how gender figures in social systems than a theory that relies on essentialist binaries and characterizes embodied women as the perpetual victims of conscious and intentional oppression by embodied men. Problematizing dichotomous and essentialist gender binaries is useful for demonstrating that traditional gender roles are historical and contingent, which suggests the possibility of alternatives to the status quo (Jenkins, 2002). Feminist post-structuralism, therefore, allows for the choice to investigate different discourses and different accounts of reality, depending on the social phenomenon being studied and the basis of its social implications.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have explicitly attended to reflexive practice by outlining my personal approach to feminism, gender, and the concepts of subjectivity and identity. I have presented my approach to feminism as the awareness and engagement of gender politics in social phenomena, where gender is considered a socially determined analytical category rather than a biological, binary identity. I have explained that, in my approach, identity and subjectivity are complementary and interdependent terms for describing a similar process of defining who we are in a given social arena, where identity represents the collection and crystallization of a set of discursively constituted subjectivities.

Additionally, in this chapter I have outlined the theoretical frameworks that have gone into developing my critical engagement with NPM. I have discussed how post-structuralist analysis, particularly through the concept of discourse and the discursive field, exposes intricate networks social values, norms, rules, and practices by examining

how, when, and where they are articulated. I will utilize the principles of post-structuralist analysis to examine NPM and map its discourses into a discursive field.

This chapter concluded with a discussion of how feminists, and Chris Weedon (1987/1997) in particular, have approached and appropriated Foucauldian analysis. I will use the feminist appropriation of post-structuralism to investigate the ways in which gender operates within the discursive field of NPM.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

*But here is an example of another possible orientation. In analysing a painting, one can reconstitute the latent discourse of the painter; one can try to recapture the murmur of his intentions [or]... set out to show a discursive practice that is embodied in techniques and effect... shot through with the positivity of a knowledge (savoir). It seems to me that one might also carry out an analysis of the same type on political knowledge. ~ Foucault, 1972 (p. 214)*

This chapter describes Foucauldian discourse analysis and how I plan to use it as a method for mapping NPM as a discursive field. Additionally, I explain the way in which I will mobilize feminist post-structuralism to critique NPM as a discursive field. Finally, I discuss the material I have selected for this study and explain the choices made in the selection of this material.

### **Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

Much has been made of Foucault's reluctance to clearly outline a specific research method. Stating, "I take care not to dictate how things should be," Foucault openly disliked prescriptive philosophy (1994, p. 288 in Graham, 2005, p. 2). His writing was purposefully provocative and meant to disrupt equilibrium and certainty (Graham, 2002, p. 2). This practice underscores the post-structuralist emphasis that claims to truth, in and of themselves, can be understood as a powerful rhetorical practice (Edwards & Nicoll, 2001, p. 105 in Graham, 2005, p. 2). Further, the process of analysis in post-structuralist scholarship is intended to be interpretive, contingent, and always presented as a particular reading from some specific epistemological, theoretical, or ethical

standpoint (Wetherall, 2001, p. 384 in Graham, 2005, p. 3). As a result, there is no definitive Foucauldian method and no universal principle for analyzing society (Kearins & Hooper, 2002, p. 735).

In challenging the then prevailing French structuralist perspectives, Foucault adopted a methodology for discourse analysis that contained two specific means of investigation: archaeology and genealogy (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 642). During interviews later in his career, Foucault noted that he considered archaeology and genealogy to be conceptually intertwined. In Foucault's use of the term, *archaeology* is a historical method in which discursive practices are unearthed in the same way one might unearth physical artefacts of a past civilization during an archaeological expedition (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 642). Undertaking a Foucauldian archaeology exposes the historicity of human understanding and the knowledge embedded in discourse. This process reveals the means by which humans have constructed particular meanings about reality and about themselves. In his 1960s writings, Foucault argued that patterns of knowledge shift and evolve over time. This process occurs through changes in frameworks of knowledge that shape discourse, what Foucault termed *epistemes*. Epistemes represent the collective system of linguistic tools, rules, descriptions, and habits of logic that produce specific understandings of the world and set in motion particular social practices (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 642).

Foucault's methodology changed considerably in the 1970s, corresponding to a shift in the focus of his discourse analysis. Borrowing heavily from Nietzsche, Foucault used the term *genealogy* to refer to a method of socio-historical analysis that investigates the impact of power on discourse (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 643). Where

archaeology examined the role of discourse in the production of knowledge, genealogy sought to articulate how the production of knowledge is dependent on relationships of power (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 643). Where Nietzsche used genealogy in reference to exploring how values and norms change with respect to morals and law, Foucault expanded on these motifs by using socio-historical discourse analysis to consider punishment and sexuality. The goal of Foucault's genealogy is to provide a history of the present by using retrospective analysis to critique the present by examining the historical establishment of systems that continue to exist (Lotringer, 1989, p. 64 in Kearins & Hooper, 2002, p. 735; see also Dean, 1994 in Kearins & Hooper, 2002, p. 735).

It is difficult to separate Foucault's methodological approach from his theorization. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he sets out what is probably his best representation of genealogical analysis. However, *Discipline and Punish* (1975) represents the finished analysis rather than a guide for undertaking the genealogical process. Instead of highlighting exact guidelines for undertaking his type of analysis or providing a complete theoretical map for explaining social phenomena, Foucault's work suggests a toolbox of interpretative measures that one might choose to use in undertaking a Foucauldian analysis.

In the context of the oblique nature of Foucault's methodological approach, it is interesting to note that he conceptualized the relationship between archaeology and genealogy as that between process and goal. Archaeology represents his methodological framework and how material is located for analysis; genealogy is the reason and target of analyzing discourses as events. Archaeology reveals the complexities in a given text, which genealogy then questions and critiques. Archaeology operates along the "truth

axis,” where the focus of analysis is on the discursive conditions of existence (Mahon, 1992, p. 104-105). Genealogy operates on the “power axis,” and seeks to examine the ways in which culturally true discourse has become embedded into institutional and other non-discursive practices. They are not separate methodological processes, but rather work in concert to deeply examine discourses and their implications in terms of power relations, knowledge, and the constitution of the historically and circumstantially specific subject. Using archaeology and genealogy to their best advantage reveals the ways in which discursive events have determined what constitutes the present and what constitutes how we think of ourselves, through our knowledge, practices, rationality, and relationships to ourselves and others (Mahon, 1992, p. 105). Bridging archaeology and genealogy creates a kind of anti-method that seeks to produce a discursive account of history that accounts for power relations and is of political use (Shiner, 1982, p. 386).

### ***Application to NPM***

I will be using Foucauldian analytical principles and discourse analysis to map NPM as a discursive field, examine its discursive conditions, and investigate the manner in which gender is embedded in NPM discourses. Because NPM is a relatively recent phenomenon in public administration and has also decreased in popularity in the last decade, mapping its discursive field represents a historically specific account of discursive practices that continue to have implications in terms of how we think of public management, public sector organizations, and public managers.

### **Method of Critical Engagement**

Weedon’s (1987/1997) feminist post-structuralism offers a means of critique that examines the relationship between language, subjectivity, social organization, and power

(p. 12). Language becomes an important site of political struggle (Weedon, 1987/1997, p. 23). Weedon applies a form of critical deconstruction in revealing the meanings and values held within discourse. Deconstruction, a dominant analytical approach in much of feminist post-structuralism, is crucially dependent on Derrida's concept of difference. Difference follows Saussure's structuralist linguistics and proposes that meaning is created through implicit or explicit contrast (Scott, 1988, p. 36-67). A positive definition is only possible through the negation or repression of something that is cast as antithetical to it (Scott, 1988, p. 36-37). As a result, any unitary concept actually contains subordinated material, as it can only be expressed in opposition to some other term. Thus, deconstruction suggests that subjects are created by the very discourse in which they are embedded (Calhoun, Gerteis & Moody, 2007, p. 187). Deconstruction examines the textual staging of knowledge within a specific social context and can be broken down into three steps: (1) identify the binaries that structure an argument; (2) reverse/displace the dependent term from its subordinate position and identify it as the very condition of the dominant term; and (3) create a more fluid, less coercive conceptual organization that transcends binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms (Lather, 1992, p. 96). This process does not represent an annihilation of all values or differences. Rather, it is an attempt to follow the subtle, powerful effects of differences that are at play within the illusion of a binary opposition (Johnson, 1980 in Scott, 1988, p. 38).

In order to reveal meaning, analysis must tease out the repressed material and figure out how the relationship between the positive/negative positions operates in specific contexts (Scott, 1988, p. 37). Deconstruction, as employed in feminist post-

structuralist manner, offers a method of decentering the hierarchical oppositions that underpin notions of gender and makes room for new, more progressive theories (Weedon, 1997, p. 160). The feminist use of this method proposes that, in patriarchal discourse and society, the difference between masculine and feminine serves to establish and encode meanings that have no relation to the physical body (Scott, 1988, p. 37). In this manner, the meaning of gender becomes tied to many different cultural representations, which, in turn, establish the terms by which relationships between gendered individuals are organized and understood. Deconstruction becomes a critical tool for feminist critique of this process by providing a method for examining the ways in which ideas are ordinarily expressed and exhibited in patterns of meaning (Scott, 1988, p. 38). Examining these patterns exposes the interdependent nature of dichotomous terms and their meanings relative to a particular historical circumstance. Thus, to employ the post-structuralist use of concepts of difference and deconstruction to engage in feminist critique means to take a gendered lens to investigating which discourses are given primacy, which are repressed or made derivative, and to explore the discursive process of subordination for the purpose of commenting on the way in which meaning is constructed.

### ***Application to NPM***

In order to critique NPM from a feminist post-structuralist perspective, I will actively deconstruct the binaries and oppositions found in NPM discourses. By examining which discourses are afforded primacy and a positive position, I will subsequently reveal which discourses they subordinate and negate or repress. Because I am using a gendered lens, my critique will focus on deconstructing gendered binaries, if they exist, within NPM discourses.

### ***Material Considered in the Study***

On pragmatic grounds, the scope and purpose of this thesis requires the suppression of some of the complexity of NPM. Therefore, the textual field has been narrowed in the interest of maintaining the accessibility of analysis. In constructing NPM as a discursive field, I have used Foucauldian principles and, in the convention of critical qualitative research, I have focused on a limited selection of texts and conducted a close reading to identify the major discursive themes NPM. I have found Hood's *A Public Management for All Seasons?* (1991) and Aucoin's *Administrative Reform in Public Management: Paradigms, Principles, Paradoxes and Pendulums* (1990) particularly important for this study, but have supplemented these articles with the work of other critical contributors and commentators, where necessary and appropriate. Furthermore, along with making ontological and methodological choices, critical scholarship needs to decide which types of material are most suitable for a given purpose. In this thesis, I have chosen texts that speak to the institutional level of analysis in which I am engaged, rather than empirical studies of NPM reforms in action. These articles can also be thought of as fragments of the larger picture, as NPM is not a cohesive theory and lacks a single definitive text. Articles were chosen for their recognition as critical in the development of NPM, for the material they cover, and for their suitability in terms of their length and depth in relation to the limits of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE

*'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.' ~ Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll (1988, p. 196 in Brodie, 2008, p. 145)*

This chapter describes the major discourses, values, themes, and practices that comprise the discursive field of NPM. First, using Foucauldian discourse analysis, the discursive field is constructed and described. Next, the major discursive themes are analyzed and critiqued using a feminist post-structuralist approach. Both the analysis and the critique of this chapter are organized according to the major themes of the discursive field of NPM. The ways in which NPM discourses gender are highlighted and the implications of this gendering are discovered through critical engagement. This chapter serves to demonstrate that a feminist critique of NPM is, indeed, possible and to illustrate what such a critique might look like.

In using post-structuralist analysis, it is my goal to illustrate that NPM is constituted around particular, culturally specific norms, values, and power-relations. I argue that the political elements of NPM are discursively embedded, rather than produced by political corruption or misappropriation by elected officials. For the purpose of exposing the manner in which NPM produces specific gender meanings, arguing that NPM is inherently political serves to tie its discourses to broader cultural scripts that have been institutionalized and replicated through the adoption of NPM management principles.

The analysis and critique contained in this chapter does not represent an exhaustive or comprehensive examination of NPM from a gendered point of view – that is a much larger project and beyond the scope of this thesis. Additionally, I do not propose that there is something inherently wrong with NPM or suggest a plan for reform of future public management practice. Instead, I am interested in the way in which gender figures in the discursive field of NPM. The major contribution of this thesis is the crafting of a new lens for examining NPM on theoretical, discursive grounds from a gender perspective. In the following chapter, I outline the form of feminist critique made possible through the use of my institutional level, discursive field approach. In order to illustrate what NPM looks like through my new critical lens, I examine some illustrative aspects of what is seen when NPM, previously formulated as gender neutral, is taken apart and engaged from a critical feminist perspective.

### **New Public Management as a Discursive Field**

In taking a Foucauldian approach to examining NPM, the project becomes one where the focus is placed on how, rather than why, power relations produce dominant and subordinate subjectivities through discourse. The process of mapping the topography of NPM begins with questions of how subjectivities are constituted, which is required to chart critical inroads in understanding the uncovered processes of elevation or subordination.

NPM, as a broad catchall for a set of similar administrative doctrines, is a paradigm with boundaries that have never been clearly defined. Thus, NPM represents a rhetorical engagement in which the practices of public managers are simultaneously prescribed and described. It is this pre-/descriptiveness that gives discursive analysis of

NPM particular value for understanding how public managers are constituted, categorized, and given meaning within this particular field. There are several discourses contained within the discursive field of NPM. These discourses may belong to the same family, but they are not necessarily always cooperative or compatible relatives. Instead, the discourses contained within NPM sometimes work in concert while simultaneously overlapping, underlying, contradicting, and competing with each other.

Forged out of the combination of two dominant discourses of the 1980s, NPM is constituted through the language of the neoliberal ideology of free markets, customer sovereignty, and individualism, as well as the language of the “postmodern organization,” which emphasizes change, discontinuity, and flexibility (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 462). The overall effect of these discourses is the critique and subordination of traditional bureaucracy, “either for its inefficiencies or for its obsolescence” (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 462). Akin to neo-Taylorism and scientific management, these discourses were otherwise called *new institutional economics* and *managerialism* in the accounts of NPM by Hood (1991) and Aucoin (1990).

As argued in Christensen & Laegreid (2007), NPM represented significant changes in the dominant language and values used in the public sector. The collectivities of people who once made up public organizations were transmogrified into *human resources*, to be managed through *human resource management*, which serves the need of modern organizations (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007, p. 224). Individuals working in NPM-regulated environments have been commodified as technical resources, a term drawn from economics, indicating that they can be controlled efficiently in order to increase productivity. Similarly, an exponential growth in the use of acronyms in place of

agency titles and the increasing use of highly technical language in management guidelines all imply a degree of instrumental rationality (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007, p. 224). The assertion of technical competence seems to present the image of absolute certainty in the management of public organizations, masking the inherent political conflict and ambiguity involved in social interactions.

Broadly speaking, the shifts in language represented by NPM can be described as promoting four key themes: (1) management is a “higher order function” than administration; (2) modern private sector management theory and practices can and should be applied in public management; (3) economic principles can also assist in the enactment of public management; and (4) because service delivery is important to citizens, public management should become more citizen-centred (O’Flynn, 2007, p. 354). The promotion of these practices is a direct challenge to the Weberian model of public administration (Stoker, 2006, p. 36 in O’Flynn, 2007, p. 354). Large, multi-purpose, hierarchical bureaucracy is cast as inferior to the leaner, flatter, more flexible and autonomous organizations regulated by management practices taken from the private sector and steered by specific and tightly controlled economic principles.

Like other social movements, NPM contains a specific set of discourses that dominate its field. Because NPM is a fairly broad paradigm, its field is dominated by more than one discourse. As the dominant discourses, new institutional economics and managerialism establish new and potentially challenging claims to knowledge, values, and experience, particularly with regard to how bureaucratic subjectivities are constituted. However, NPM is not a cohesive doctrine. In addition to the tension produced through the dominance of new institutional economics and managerialism,

there is competition for primacy between these dominant discourses. As Hood noted, *free to manage* (managerialism) is rather different in message and tone than *free to choose* (neoliberalist economics) (1991, p. 6). Interestingly, the competition between new institutional economics and managerialist discourses for ultimate dominance is not clear cut. There is no clear dividing line between the two and they are not entirely competitive nor entirely sympathetic. Each dominant discourse contains values and meanings that overlap and cooperate, as well as values and meanings that conflict. Thus, NPM holds within its field an interesting relationship of sometimes cooperation, sometimes competition between new institutional economic discourses based in neoliberal economics and managerial discourses rooted in the division of administration from policy.

### ***Managerialism***

As a field, NPM vividly portrays a dichotomy in which *new* is good and *old* or *traditional* is bad (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000, p. 58 in Dent, Chandler & Barry, 2004, p. 207). In this context, it is interesting to note that the management principles and discourses that have gone into the fashioning of NPM were actually reformulated versions of traditional models of management theory (Aucoin, 1990, p. 118). Originating external to the public sector and public management, managerialist discourses come from the private sector and give primacy to managerial principles over the traditional bureaucratic ethos (Aucoin, 1990, p. 115). Managerialism sought to “trim the fat” in “bloated bureaucracies” by promoting the economical use of organizational resources and increased productivity through creative, efficient, and effective management (Aucoin, 1990, p. 118). The effective public manager pays close attention to the mission of the

organization, the personnel who work for the organization, and the customers/clients who are served by the organization.

Key to managerialist discourse is the very term *management*. The language of management, drawn from the private sector, is placed in direct opposition to *administration*, drawn from the traditional bureaucracy. The use of the term management denotes a particular concern for the proper use of organizational resources to achieve specific results (Aucoin, 1990, p. 118). Administration is negated and repressed as an overly formal system of processes and procedures. Traditional bureaucrats are cast as administrators and, thus, inferior to their private sector equivalent – modern managers – who *manage* their organizations. Professional management expertise is prized, while technical or specialized knowledge in a particular field is considered non-essential. The NPM-styled public manager prioritizes performance measurement, generally, and output measurement, in particular (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, p. 83; see also Hood, 1991). Managerialist discourses promote what Osborne and Gaebler (1993) termed *entrepreneurial government* or *entrepreneurialism*. Entrepreneurialism refers to an organizational design that allows public managers to be hands-on and empowered to take risks, make decisions and take action, and clarify missions and objectives. It also connotes a public manager who is responsive to both clients/consumers (the re-imagined term for citizens) as well as the personnel that work for them in the organizations that they manage. Decentralization, deregulation, and delegation figure prominently in managerialist discourse (Aucoin, 1990, p. 122).

*Decentralization*. Decentralization emphasizes the primacy of a public manager who takes initiative to realize targets and achieve results; in other words, a public

manager “gets things done” (Aucoin, 1990, p. 122). Organizations are designed to be leaner and flatter than traditional bureaucratic hierarchies. Clear communication facilitates a unified sense of the organizational mission and objectives from the very top of the chain of command through to entry-level personnel. In contrast to the “constipated” bureaucrat, who suffers “paralysis-by-analysis” and is preoccupied with administering processes and systems, the public manager has been empowered to manage people and operations and acts with authority (Aucoin, 1990, p. 122). This is accomplished through devolving authority beyond the level of the executive head of a given agency and through the dismantling of hierarchical structures of authority.

*Deregulation.* Deregulation is tied to decentralization in that it emphasizes a system wherein public managers are free to exercise devolved authority. Public managers are free to make decisions about the use of resources and the work of personnel (Aucoin, 1990, p. 123). They are not bound by complex systems of procedures and rules, but are encouraged to use their own judgement in how to best pursue and achieve organizational missions and objectives. The meaning of deregulation rests on “productivity through people” (Peters & Waterman, 1982 in Aucoin, 19990, p. 123). The emphasis is on optimizing the managerial skills of public managers rather than going “by the book” and relying on regulatory administrative systems (Hansen & Levine, 1988 in Aucoin 1990, p. 123).

*Delegation.* Complementing decentralization and deregulation, delegation promotes the elimination of complex matrix structures. Where deregulation represents the streamlining or outright elimination of rules and regulations, delegation suggests that these be replaced with an organizational structure that allows agencies to pursue clearly

defined, coherent missions (Aucoin, 1990, p. 124). Both discourses emphasize the role of a public manager who is autonomous and responsive to their immediate environment as well as to clients/consumers. By crystallizing the organizational mission and stripping away everything but the essential objectives to be achieved, delegation stresses the importance of single-function agencies and clearly defined roles for public managers. Single-function agencies are portrayed as being more directly responsive to the needs of the clients or consumers they serve. With a clearly defined job description, public managers are better able to act with authority within such an agency. The autonomy of the public manager, in this instance, rests on the acceptance of a simple, clear definition of the mission, mandate, and objectives of the organization. Once this is accomplished, it is assumed that every individual working within a particular organization will know precisely what they should be doing and responsibility for ensuring that objectives are achieved can be properly allocated.

### ***New Institutional Economics***

As a discourse, new institutional economics is made up of a collection of similar, mostly economics-based discourses that are concerned with the efficient use of public resources through marketization. Heavily influenced by liberal and neoliberal ideology, these discourses give primacy to budgetary restraint and public choice theory (translated into representative government) (Aucoin, 1990, p. 115). The free and self-determining individual is assumed, both with regard to individuals who interact with public sector organizations and the individuals who work within those organizations. New institutional economics extends beyond general public management discourses through an ideology of applied marketization. New institutional economic discourses can be understood as an

expression of what Hood categorized as sigma-type values: keeping processes lean and purposeful, with an emphasis on frugality and efficiency (Hood, 1991, p. 15). (For a full account of the three sets of core values that go into designing administrative arguments, see Appendix B, Table 2). Ideas of public choice (rational choice), principal-agent theory and transaction costs-economics all fall under the new institutional economics umbrella.

*Public Choice Theory.* The central tenet of public choice theory is the assumption that “man is a rational being, active or desiring autonomously, and seeking to satisfy his personal best interest; in short, *homo economicus*” (Boston et al., 1996 in Tolofari, 2005, p. 80). Aucoin proposed that new institutional economics discourses use public choice theory to promote representative government over bureaucracy as the primary means of controlling and dispensing the main resource of the state - “the public purse” (1990, p. 116). Traditional bureaucratic structures are subordinated through a depiction that presents them as havens for self-interested and manipulative bureaucrats, rife with inefficiencies, and unresponsive to the direction of elected officials and the citizenry that they represent. Public choice discourse attacks bureaucracy as a system that allows bureaucrats to maximize their budgets and subsequently waste resources in the pursuit of power, status, patronage, income, ideology, and ease of management, resulting in allocative inefficiency and oversupply (Boyne, 1998a, Niskanen, 1971, Rowley, 1995, Walsh, 1995 in O’Flynn, 2007, p. 355). In place of a behemoth bureaucracy, public choice discourse promotes re-centering administrative power in the hands of elected officials whose main concern is responding to the demands of the citizens who have elected them. This is accomplished by breaking up monopolies of supply and by closely monitoring public managers, whose mandate is shifted from policy development to

citizen-centered service delivery. Thus, public choice discourse subordinates the bureaucrat and bureaucracy by asserting the primacy of a public manager who works within a streamlined organization that is regulated by incentive structures based on principal-agent theory and property rights, and driven by mechanisms that increase efficiency with respect to both policy direction and budget (O’Flynn, 2007; see also Aucoin, 1990, p. 117).

*Principal-Agent Theory.* Principal-agent theory plays an important role on the field of NPM. Principal-agent theory underpinned many of the practical reforms of NPM, including the structural separation of the purchasing and provision functions of government through the establishment of contractual and quasi-contractual relationships (O’Flynn, 2005a in O’Flynn, 2007, p. 355-6). The public manager is identified as the purchaser, who articulates policy, sets performance standards and, in a competitive market, chooses an agent who will act on behalf of the government to deliver goods and services according to pre-determined outcome targets (Kelly, 1998 in O’Flynn, 2007, p. 355-6). Principal-agent theory separates the public manager from the actual delivery of services to clients/customers. This represents a radical shift from traditional bureaucratic operation, where public servants were directly involved in a service-delivery relationship with citizens. In one version of NPM, through the language of principal-agent theory, the public manager is engaged in managing and monitoring contracts for the provision of services by some other entity. In another approach to NPM, the public manager is removed to an arm’s length service organization. In either interpretation of principal-agent theory, the public manager is removed from service delivery entirely.

*Transaction Cost Economics.* Based in Coase's (1937) theory of the firm, transaction cost economics is translated as a method of procurement decision making in the public sector. Transaction cost economics provides a means of making decisions regarding whether public organizations will produce a good or service themselves (i.e. make) or whether they will contract production out (i.e. buy) (Coase, 1937, Williamson, 1999 in O'Flynn, 2007, p. 356). This discourse emphasizes the requirement of a public manager who is skilled in assessing transaction characteristics using rationality, opportunism, and asset specificity, and is dedicated to reducing transaction costs. In this sense, transaction cost economics discourses propose a public manager who will always make a decision that favours the option that has the most value-for-dollar and lowest overall cost.

### ***Cooperation, Competition and Discursive Tensions***

It is clear that NPM contains multiple conflicts and tensions that arise from the contrast and competition among and between its various elements. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) summarized the tensions found within NPM discourses in a list of ten candidate contradictions, as follows: (1) increase political control of the bureaucracy/free managers to manage/empower service consumers; (2) promote flexibility and innovation/increase citizen trust and therefore governmental legitimacy; (3) give priority to making savings/improving the performance of the public sector; (4) "responsibilize" government/reduce the range of tasks government is involved with; (5) motivate staff and promote cultural change/weaken tenure and downsize; (6) reduce burden of internal scrutiny and associated paperwork/sharpen managerial accountability; (7) create more single-purpose agencies/improve policy and programme coordination; (8) decentralize

management authority/improve programme coordination; (9) increase effectiveness/sharpen managerial accountability; and (10) improve quality/cut costs (pp. 180-181). These contradictions appear to fall into themes of control versus free to manage, flexibility and risk versus trust and accountability, and savings versus performance, and can be illustrated in the relationships between new institutional economics discourses of principal-agent theory, public choice theory, and transaction cost economics, and managerialist discourses of decentralization, deregulation, and delegation.

Principal-agent discourse conflicts with ideas of citizen-centred service found in the managerialist discourse, which casts the public manager as being in-touch with and responsive to the needs and wants of citizens (du Gay, 2000, Kettl, 1993 in Howard 2010, p. 77-78). In contrast to the public manager of principal-agent theory, the public manager depicted in citizen-centred service is actively involved in service delivery and engaged in a relationship with citizens, rather than clients or consumers. Similarly, an interesting relationship is created between principal-agent discourse and discourses that emphasize the re-centering of administrative power in the hands of elected officials via increased coordination and control at the executive level (Aucoin, 1990). Principal-agent theory, as appropriated by NPM discourses, demands the creation of market-like competition for the provision of services. This separates management from service provision, transforming public sector managers into accountants and contract managers. Similarly, by emphasizing skills in contract negotiation and evaluation, transaction cost economics cooperates and complements principal-agent discourses by subordinating discourses that promote relationship building and citizen-centered service. In contrast, public choice

theory, as employed in representative government, seeks to re-center administrative power in the hands of elected officials who are directly connected to the citizenry who elected them. The tension between citizen-centered service/public choice theory versus transaction costs economics/principal-agent theory creates a certain amount of tension in the constitution of the public manager, whose behaviour is regulated by expectations that are at odds with each other. In some ways, non-elected individuals working in the public service face discourses that demand they be responsive to a citizenry to which they are not directly electorally beholden; at the same time, these individuals face yet another set of discourses that demand they be apolitical, and by extension, detached from that same citizenry.

The discourses of decentralization, deregulation, and delegation found in managerialism work in concert with as well as compete with the resource-conscious, competitive, and responsive public manager constituted by principal-agent theory, transaction cost economics and public choice theory. In one instance, managerialist discourses cooperate and complement public-choice models by promoting autonomous and responsive public managers. In another, they challenge the emphasis that new institutional economic discourses place on regulated systems of contracts, incentivization, and performance measurement. The major tension between managerialism and new institutional economics as dominant discourses arises from whether relationship management or resource management are considered the essential feature of the public manager. This is the result of different perceptions of what makes traditional bureaucracy an outdated model, or what Aucoin referred to as “the bureaucracy problem” (1990, p. 126). Where new institutional economics discourses attribute the “bureaucracy problem”

to an inappropriate or inadequate approach to resource management on the part of the bureaucrat, managerialist discourses attribute the problem to an inappropriate or inadequate approach to personnel management. Individuals working in public sector organizations regulated by NPM discourses are simultaneously portrayed as both the cause of and the cure for the ills of bureaucracy (Aucoin, 1990). Depending on the circumstance in which they are read or applied, managerialist discourses can appear as being actively subordinated by new institutional economics, and vice versa. In attempting to reach an organizational compromise, NPM has incorporated two complex sets of discourses. The inherent tension between these discourses is what dominates the discursive field of NPM.

As a discursive field dominated by managerialist and new institutional economics discourses, NPM promotes a specific view of organizational behaviour that emphasizes individualism, instrumentality, and individual rationality (O'Flynn, 2007, p. 357). These assumptions lead to new institutional arrangements and performance motivated management principles, which, in turn, produce new structural forms and new managerial doctrines (Kelly, 1998 and Lynn, 1998 in O'Flynn, 2007, p. 357). As a result, public managers are regulated by an institutionalized system of language, norms, rules, and practices that demands they be resource conscious and focused on achieving precise outcomes, become much more consumer and market-oriented, and take on managerial values and concerns, such as incentivizing for particular behaviours (Brewis, 1999, p. 87). NPM represents a management paradigm where the dominant discourses stress the achievement of specific performance targets through the use of tightly controlled, rigorously monitored, and frugally dispensed resources as managed by an individual who

is entrepreneurial and competitive, responsible and relatable, economically minded and client oriented. It appears a rather tall order that these qualities be taken up by a single individual, and NPM-regulated environments may face serious challenges in accommodating all of these demands. In order to synthesize the relationships among the various discourses contained within NPM, I have visually mapped its field in Appendix C, Figure 1. In this map, the major themes of new institutional economics, managerialism and traditional/Weberian bureaucracy are laid out as clusters of sub-discourses that interact with each other through various competing, complementary, cooperative, repressive, negative, or overlapping relationships. Thus NPM represents a discursive field in which there are inherent tensions between two particular dominant discourses and various sub-discourses that sometimes cooperate but are always competing for dominance and, thereby, produce a complex field of power relations.

### **Mobilizing Critical Feminist Engagement with NPM**

A core tenet of NPM has been the promotion of reconstituted managerial subjectivities for individuals working in public sector organizations (Miller, 1994, du Gay, 1996, Halford & Leonard, 1999, Whitehead & Moodley, 1999, Barry et al., 2001 in Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 462). NPM discourses are underwritten with particular ideological motives and, as such, have subjected public servants to a variety of disciplinary technologies designed to institutionalize new values, priorities, attitudes, and self-understandings. However, with few exceptions, the new managerial subjectivities and identities offered by NPM discourses have been understood in a deterministic way. Public servants are portrayed as a homogenous social group on which NPM is exercised and who passively receive its discursive practices (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 462). To

portray it as such is to ignore the complex and dynamic way in which NPM is enacted. Problematizing the managerialist and new institutional economics discourses of NPM results in a more nuanced analysis; drawing out the explicit and implicit contrasts within NPM draws attention to the asymmetrical gender relations produced when certain discourses dominate others.

In the following sections, I use a feminist post-structuralist critique to argue that, as a discursive field, NPM discourses are gendered in two specific ways. First, on the surface, NPM is essentially preoccupied with masculinity. Second, the tension between new institutional economics and managerialist discourses can be read as producing a new gendered division of labour. My critical account of gendering in NPM examines the new subjectivities created in NPM-regulated organizations.

### ***Applying the Gender Lens***

Approaching NPM from a gendered perspective establishes the limits of engagement and defines the range of struggles that may be addressed. Using a gender lens to analyze and critique NPM means investigating how gender figures in the values and priorities found in the dominant and subordinate discourses, and in the relationships and tensions within the discursive field of NPM.

Understanding how gender is constituted in NPM discourses requires knowledge of the more widespread cultural scripts that regulate and influence gender discourses in the arenas in which NPM operates. These cultural scripts inform the dominant understandings of what it means to behave in either a feminine or masculine manner. In Western culture, masculinity has been tied to values and behaviours that are not emotional, but are instead rational and logical (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 463).

Femininity has taken its meaning in opposition to masculinity; to be feminine is to be emotional, empathetic, caring, nurturing, or otherwise supportive. Assuming a patriarchal social system, the feminist perspective argues that, even in modern organizations, masculinity is privileged and awarded hierarchal primacy (Brewis, 1999, p. 85 in Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 463). Reflecting on this perspective, it has been argued that the institutional discourses that regulate public sector organizations inherently favour the masculine over the feminine. Brewis (1999) went so far as to argue that the organization “is a man’s world” (p. 85). This primacy of the masculine is often referred to as hegemonic masculinity, connoting the political, economic, and cultural power afforded to and exerted by masculine discourses over all other social discourses – particularly the feminine. As McGinn and Patterson (2005) have argued, it is important to recognize the power of gender lenses for exposing “the depth and power of gender structures in everyday administrative and organizational life” (p. 930). The post-structuralist use of a gender lens focuses on the dominant quality of power tied to masculine discourses in order to examine how power is exercised and to what effect.

In approaching NPM as a discursive field and taking a feminist post-structuralist approach to critically investigating the manner in which NPM genders, it is crucial to view NPM as being part of a process of institutionalized dominant masculinity, rather than a system in which embodied men are essentialized as the perpetrators of inequality and embodied women are forever defined as victims (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1992, Davidson & Burke, 1994 in Kerfoot & Knights, 1998, p. 8). Examining gender relations through the concepts of masculinity and femininity avoids equating gender differences with differences between sexed bodies, working instead under the argument

that gender differences are socially constituted. Doing so reveals gender relations as the product of social processes and power relations, rather than as a fixed, biological identity. Crucially, such an analysis resists presenting gender as a characterization of person and instead focuses on gender relations as a principle of social organization (Ferree et al., 1999, Bacchi, 2004 in Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 25). This is a fundamentally different undertaking from empirical research that studies the lived experiences and embodied representations of the marginalization and subordination of women in public sector organizations.

Drawing on broader cultural scripts and context, the following sections present a critical feminist engagement with NPM that illustrates the gendered mechanisms contained within the discursive field of NPM. First, it is argued that NPM discourses serve to reinscribe dominant masculinity. Second, it is argued that NPM discourses depend upon a gendered division of labour to manage the inherent tensions within its discursive field, marking a distinct change from the Weberian model of managing masculine (public/work) and feminine (private/home). Both arguments suggest that power relations are implicitly skewed in favour of the masculine through NPM discourses, though the incorporation of the feminine into the formal operation of the workplace does present some promise as a means of loosening the tight bond between masculinity and management. The critical analysis that follows seeks to examine how power relations work to institutionalize gendered meanings within the discursive field of NPM.

### ***Dominant Masculinity***

NPM discourses do not explicitly or obviously state that public managers must be masculine. However, it does appear that NPM has institutionalized a particular set of discourses which offer subject positions that “expect managers to be men, in the most essentialist sense of the word” (Brewis, 1999, p. 90 in Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 464). Though NPM-reforms posed a challenge to the “bureau-patriarchal power relations” of the Weberian model, it appears that NPM discourses have actually served to reinscribe dominant masculinities in a slightly different configuration (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 464). Through the assumptions of its discourse, it appears as if NPM continues the tradition of modern management being predicated on metaphorical disembodiment, a Cartesian separation of mind and body, in which the public manager sees and understands the world through detached, objective, and entirely cerebral observation (Lennii, 2000, p. 130-5 in Linstead, Brewis & Linstead, 2005, p. 551). Though NPM discourses suggest gender neutrality in their use of terms like *rationality* and *objectivity*, these values are often culturally coded as masculine. Additionally, I argue that presenting concepts such as organization or management as objective and gender-neutral only serves to mask the reality in which all individuals have become subjects to masculinist management discourses, practices, and subjectivities.

One of the major discursive themes of NPM that can be identified as masculine is entrepreneurialism. Collinson and Hearn (1994) identified entrepreneurialism as one of five pervasively masculine organizational forms. Linked to ideas of objective, rational, and calculative behaviour, entrepreneurialism is also equated with a type of “macho masculinity” that emphasizes a ruthless, competitive, and individualistic subject position (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 471). By emphasizing economic efficiency and managerial

control, entrepreneurialism suggests a predatory, mobile manager who is willing and able to work long hours and meet tight deadlines while using limited resources (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). The entrepreneurial public manager is “hard-nosed and competitive,” whose allegiance is to the public (work), rather than the private (home), and is totally dedicated to the organization (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 464). While entrepreneurial discourses challenge the notion of the traditional bureaucrat, they nevertheless reinscribe gendered subjectivities that are based on dominant masculinities. The expectation that the ideal public manager is an individual who can be present at all times (*competitive presenteeism*) is only possible given a very specific configuration between work and home. As a result, those with domestic responsibilities – who are much more likely to be women who have adopted the expected culturally feminine subjectivity of care-giver and house-keeper – face significant challenges in meeting the expectations of an entrepreneurial public manager. By emphasizing the dominance of the public (work) sphere, these discourses promote an environment where commitments outside of the workplace – such as pregnancy, child-care, or caring for dependent relatives – are removed of value and made taboo (Davies & Thomas, 2002; see also Collinson & Hearn, 1994).

Some have argued that the conveyance of autonomy to public managers in the creation of tele-work and virtual offices have created more flexible work arrangements and empower those with domestic responsibilities through the breaking-down of the boundaries between work and home (e.g. Tremblay, 2002). Where NPM-regulated organizations foster presenteeism and relentless performance improvements, the emphasis on individual responsibility in flexible work arrangements appears to ignore the

hazard of taking up such options. Where the home becomes the office, there is the possibility for intensification of entrepreneurial expectations. By being totally accessible at home, work responsibilities may encroach on the limited time available to individuals and they may experience increased pressure to be available beyond the defined limits of their job in order to live up to the expectations that they be completely dedicated to organizational goals. Increased flexibility in work arrangements may actually increase the burden on culturally feminine individuals by institutionalizing a disregard for the demands of unpaid work at home (Brady, 2008). Finally, where NPM-regulated workplaces demand high visibility and loyalty from public managers, the benefit of more flexible work arrangements can be overshadowed by the public-to-private encroachment and compel-and-control nature of NPM-regulated organizational structures (Acker, 1998 in Barry, Berg & Chandler, 2006). The result appears to be the reinscription of asymmetrical power relations that are demonstrably gendered.

It appears that NPM discourses offer a system of values and expectations that promote implicit, situational masculinity. This presents a significant challenge for individuals who otherwise ascribe to feminine subjectivities. By maintaining organizational structures and practices that reinforce dominant masculinity, NPM-regulated environments may create pressure for an individual to appear masculine, even if they are biologically female or prefer to emulate feminine cultural scripts. For those who do not fit within this particularly narrow conception of masculinity, this creates tension in identity management and in rationalizing their own experience with workplace expectations (Collinson et al., 1990 in Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 479). This presents the argument that, while NPM restructuring may pose a challenge for all bureaucrats, who

must transform themselves into public managers, the challenge may be greater for those who do not identify with masculinity. Further, by not questioning or challenging the institutionalized gendered sub-structure of the organization and its managerial processes, already existing asymmetrical power relations are left untouched and subsequently legitimized (Davies & Thomas 2002, p. 480).

### ***Re-imagining a Gendered Division of Labour***

The move to flatter, more flexible organizations and the focus on personnel management and citizen-centred service found in NPM reforms has been characterized by some as a *feminization of management*. It is suggested that organizational restructuring and cultural change programmes may make room for individuals to exploit the discursive gaps that arise when dominant masculine discourses are disrupted, creating space for the extensive inclusion and utilization of culturally feminine discourses and qualities (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 465). As the general trend in management theory moves away from command-and-control and toward more integrated and fluid organizations, there may be benefits for those who ascribe to and employ feminine subjectivities in their managerial roles. Calling on the ideas of responsiveness and the image of the effective public manager as being someone who listens, motivates, and provides support, arguments have been made that tie these discourses to feminine cultural scripts (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 464). To some extent, this argument aligns with work by Ferguson (1984), Iannello (1992), and Acker (1990, 1992), who all argued that hierarchy is an inherently masculine system that requires radical transformation to allow room for feminine subjectivities (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2002, p. 2). The feminization of management thesis proposes that culturally feminine traits, such as

stronger communication skills, a proclivity toward nurturing and caring roles, and a more harmonious and collaborative leadership style, are preferred characteristics of modern public managers (Krishnan & Park, 2005; Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2002; Syed & Murray, 2008). While feminist critique often focuses solely on the repression of the feminine, the feminization of management thesis appears to offer a gendered approach that favours the inclusion of discourses that privilege femininity; previously subordinated discourses of femininity appear employed as a type of reverse discourse in challenging dominant masculinity. The feminization of management thesis offers a structural mechanism through which individuals may engage in strategic affirmation or denial of feminine or masculine subjectivities for the purpose of renegotiating and repositioning themselves within the organization (Barry, Berg & Chandler, 2006, p. 281).

There does exist a large body of research that remains critical of the epistemological and empirical limits to the feminization of management theory (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 464). Critics of the feminization of management theory argue that it only serves to reinforce stereotypes about what types of skills are inherently feminine. By continuing to equate feminine subjectivities with emotionality and passivity, the feminine continues to be subordinated by being cast as inferior to a number of other “essential” management skills (Davies & Thomas, 2002, p. 480). The association of gendered traits with particular managerial qualities seems to appeal to dichotomous stereotypes. By valorizing feminine subjectivities (to whatever extent), the values behind the feminization of management theory serve to reproduce a system in which old stereotypes are not challenged, but reinscribed and inverted so that the feminine is prized over the masculine (Wajcman, 1998). This inversion relies on symbolic polarities and a gendered hierarchy

to feed essentialist gender binaries in which masculinity can mean only one set of values and femininity can only mean another, oppositional set. Further, the feminization of management thesis appears to be contingent on, even celebrating, the location of the feminine within the division of labour perpetuated within a patriarchal society (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000). The celebration of patriarchy in such a manner may result in a gender trap, wherein particular roles are labelled either masculine or feminine, which ignores the possibility that individuals may take up or put down, in turn, masculine and feminine subjectivities in order to meet the conflicting expectations required in an NPM-regulated organization. Individuals may call on cultural scripts and programming in order to perform gender and manage their managerial identity by using gendered lenses to interpret the requirements of their professional lives. Oversimplifying various managerial roles as either masculine or feminine negates the complex reality in which individuals operate.

It is important to characterize NPM as a management paradigm that genders, rather than rehash a critique of NPM as a purely exclusionary paradigm. To think of NPM this way requires an understanding of organizations and individuals not as fixed nouns, but as constituted through processes and practices (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). As a result, footholds for motivating a feminist use of NPM discourses and identities do exist. In the traditional Weberian model of bureaucracy, the gendered division of labour is accomplished through a strict separation of the public (work, masculine) from the private (home, feminine). While the feminization of management is a problematic concept, it permits the interpretation of NPM as a discursive practice that genders the public sphere in ways which can be masculine *and* feminine. Viewing NPM-regulated organizations in

this manner allows that such organizations may be using gender relations and divisions as a means for managing the inherent tensions within NPM as a discursive field.

Under NPM, a gendered division of labour still appears to exist, but has been brought entirely into the workplace, with particular practices and behaviours coded masculine or feminine. This gendered division occurs by tying cultural scripts for masculinity and femininity to the competing dominant discourses in NPM – new institutional economics (masculine) and managerialism (feminine). NPM maintains multiple competing discursive assumptions and prescriptions, and relies on a gendered division of labour to manage the tension between these practices. This division is not always accomplished in a neat divide, but is rather performed in a matrix form. For example, in one instance, managerialist discourses seem to recall a masculine public manager who is aggressive and competitive; in another instance, they recall the feminine qualities of flexibility, relationship-building, and citizen-centered service. NPM requires public managers to occupy a position where they face multiple, competing expectations for their subjectivity, not the least of which appeal to gender. While feminine discourses are incorporated via the feminization of management thesis, they must still compete with masculine discourses. However, because individuals may take up multiple subjectivities, conceptualizing the gendered divisions within NPM as being fixed and tidy cleavages ignores the ways in which NPM discourses may depend on individuals incorporating and containing these contradictory subjectivities within themselves. As a result, it is important to view the gendered binaries within NPM discourses as part of a fluid and dynamic gendering process, rather than producing singular and divided gendered subjectivities in the constitution of the public manager.

Critically destabilizing the feminization of management thesis illustrates how NPM discourses serve to gender in ways that appear to elevate the feminine while functionally sustaining the location of the feminine within patriarchal social structures. Similarly, there is the possibility that the feminization of management could result in the exploitation of the feminine as being solely and only responsible for managing feelings and relationships, turning them into emotional labourers (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p. 155). It seems critical, then, to approach the feminization of management with scepticism. It is perhaps better to view the incorporation of culturally coded feminine values into NPM discourses as a type of critical inroad toward the loosening up of management being culturally connected to masculinity, rather than a straightforward and complete feminization of management.

### ***Critical Accounts of New Subjectivities under NPM***

The gendered aspects of NPM are opaque and occur beyond what is immediately observable. Gender functions beneath the surfaces created by the explicit discourses, working instead through implicit meaning. Gender is never figured into NPM discourses, producing a tacit understanding that gendered subjectivities have no role. However, Paul du Gay (2000) characterized NPM as an identity project – something that seeks to transform identities by offering new subjectivities. Proposing that discourse is never neutral, I have analyzed and critiqued NPM as an institutionalized discourse that produces interesting gendered subjectivities for public managers. A reading of the dominant discourses reveals that NPM reinscribes dominant masculine organizational priorities and structures. Deconstructing the oppositional binaries in NPM, however, illustrates that NPM also appropriates the feminine in order to manage the inherent

tensions between its dominant discourses (new institutional economics and managerialism). Coupled with the growing awareness that “gender matters” for public managers, examining NPM as a discursive field has produced a critical account of new subjectivities created under NPM, which appear to implicitly offer both masculine and feminine subjectivities without using explicitly gendered discourse. Both the subjective identities offered to public managers and the organizational structure in which they must work serve to reinforce a patriarchal system by reinscribing dominant masculinities at the structural level and by relying on a gendered division of labour to manage the inherent tensions in the expectations created by managerialist and new institutional economics discourses.

## CHAPTER 5: SYNTHESIS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

*In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act. ~ George Orwell*

### Synthesis

In this thesis, I have mapped NPM as a discursive field for the purpose of mobilizing a critical feminist engagement with NPM discourses. The focus of this analysis was to highlight the inherent tensions within the discursive field of NPM and to examine these tensions with a critical eye to the ways in which they ascribe gender.

In Chapter 1, I argued the case for engaging with NPM from a gendered perspective by providing a systematic account of NPM and of previous feminist engagements with bureaucracy, bureaucrats, and NPM. After noting gaps in the existing literature, I posed the research question of whether a feminist critique of NPM at the institutional level is possible and, if so, what does it reveal about the way in which NPM genders.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I accounted for the theoretical and methodological choices that produced the research question, the approach to analysis, and the way in which the findings of this study were discovered. Foucauldian discourse analysis is explained as the method used for mapping NPM as a discursive field. Post-structuralist feminism is discussed as a method of approaching that discursive field with a critical approach to gender.

In Chapter 4, NPM was constructed as a discursive field. The dominance of managerialism and new institutional economics was explained and the inherent tensions

produced by these two powerful discourses were explored. The discursive field and its tensions were then critically examined through a feminist post-structuralist lens to reveal how NPM discourses and the tensions between them operate as gendered models for public management principles and practice. Through this engagement, it was argued that NPM discourses gender in dual manner: in a surface reading, NPM discourses serve to reinscribe dominant masculinities by reinforcing existing patriarchal structures and values that privilege masculine identities;<sup>1</sup> in a deconstructed reading, NPM discourses use gender as a means of reconciling the inherent tensions within its field, coding some discourses as masculine and others as feminine and placing the two in an interesting cooperative-competitive relationship. Through this critical engagement, it is argued that NPM offers new gendered subjectivities for public managers.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Like other feminist interrogations of NPM, this thesis proposes that NPM discourses do, in fact, gender. Though gender seems completely subsumed in NPM discourses, its very absence makes it a salient point of entry for critical engagement. Going back to my argument that feminism can be understood as the active awareness and engagement of gender politics, my feminist critique of NPM focuses on bringing gender into the picture. By specifically highlighting the explicit and implicit functioning of gender relations in the institutionalized discourses of NPM, my critique of NPM serves a dual purpose: asking questions about gender relations and gendered subjectivities raises

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<sup>1</sup> Though I have generally avoided equating the term “masculine” with the notion of biological or embodied “men”, at some level, a gendered critique of NPM does imply the patriarchal privilege of biological or embodied men. However, any discussion of the implications of NPM discourses on the embodied, lived experiences of public managers must be arrived at through an empirical study and, as a result, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

awareness of the dominant nature of masculinity, where it is found to be implicitly privileged in institutionalized discourse; secondly, by examining gender relations, rather than gender inequality, and avoiding equating gender with sexed bodies, I have exposed the ways in which the feminine has been incorporated into NPM discourses, which serves to locate political footholds for a feminist project, where before there were only landmines. The result is a feminist project that is self-aware of the political dimensions and dangers of essentializing the sexed body and acknowledges the institutionalization of a complex matrix of discourses and practices that regulate power relations in NPM-dominated organizations.

The feminization of management thesis, in particular, represents an interesting use of NPM discourses in a manner that is not exclusionary, but still problematic. Observing that this type of gendered division of labour is one way that NPM-regulated organizations might handle the inherent tensions in NPM discourses produces challenges for previous feminist assumptions about the functioning of public sector organizations. By disrupting the dominance of masculine subjectivities in NPM, the feminization of management and the re-imagined gendered division of labour emphasizes that public management can never be one-size-fits-all. However, the feminization of management thesis is rather limited in its ability to promote a more balanced and integrated approach to gender. Without the simultaneous radical transformation of cultural scripts *and* organizational structure, the ability of a feminist political project to mobilize the feminization of management thesis into a full-blown re-imagining of the gendered nature of management that truly recognizes and incorporates any possible configuration of a public manager's subjective identity is severely limited.

The implications of a critical feminist engagement with NPM are manifold: NPM cannot be presented nor understood as gender-neutral. NPM offers critical new subjectivities to public managers. Its discourses may challenge traditional patriarchal bureaucratic structures, but they will likely reinscribe the dominant masculine substructure of public institutions and practices if this substructure is not actively addressed. Even if they are dominantly masculine, NPM discourses cannot be assumed as completely exclusionary towards the feminine. Taken together, these implications mean that as Western governments experience the legacy of NPM-style reforms and move toward the next re-imagining of public management discourse and practice, it is important to examine and address taken-for-granted assumptions about gender in the structures and philosophies that guide public management principles and paradigms.

### **Conclusion and Possible Directions for Future Research**

The work of this thesis is based in the belief that organizations are social arenas in which subjectivities and identities are constituted and contested. The management of these organizations is subject to competing ideas about the exercise of power. It has been my goal that, by questioning the ways in which NPM discourses produce gendered meanings and subjective implications, this thesis has brought to the fore questions of how power and gender operate within NPM to create sites of both struggle and opportunity for a feminist politics.

The work of this thesis fits within a much larger arc of possible research. By crafting and employing a new analytical lens, I have demonstrated that a feminist critique of NPM is, indeed, possible. I have explored one possible feminist critique and provided some illustrative examples of that critique in action, positioning my work in the middle

place between purely doctrinal theory and empirical analysis of public managers' lived experience. Future research should focus on converting the discoveries made in this thesis and other feminist research into an activist feminist practice within public management that continues to pursue dialogue on how subjectivities of public managers are institutionalized through discourse. Pursuing this kind of research is ultimately an empirical project.

There is the need for more critical ethnographic research that recognizes the power of discourse in constituting the subjective identities of public managers, as well as the how reverse discourse or discourses of resistance are being employed. Critical ethnographic study would be ideally suited to analyzing the impact or influence of NPM and its enactment on the subjectivities of public managers. An institutional ethnography approach may be useful for examining the implications of gender relations in NPM discourses on the embodied subjectivities of public managers. The principles underpinning institutional ethnography were initially considered for their potential contributing to the work of this thesis. However, at its core, institutional ethnography requires an empirical dimension and must be based on the lived experience of individuals within a given system, which ultimately made it problematic for this specific project. Though not a perfect fit, institutional ethnography is compatible with and complementary to the Foucauldian and feminist post-structuralist work completed in this thesis; as analytical frameworks, these approaches can be made to work well together to produce different types of analysis. However, employing institutional ethnography results in a much different and much larger project.

I propose that the next phase of critical feminist engagement with NPM might take the form of an institutional ethnography that employs the new analytical lens crafted in this thesis to engage in a more systematic and broad survey of NPM from a gendered perspective. I am quite confident that undertaking an empirical project that uses institutional ethnography to investigate gendering in NPM is consistent with the work I have done at the theoretical-institutional level and predict that it may uncover important aspects of gendering in NPM. In doing so, it may reveal opportunities for reforming public management practice that take a more self-aware approach to gender subjectivities.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**DOCTRINAL COMPONENTS OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**Table 1**

Doctrinal Components of New Public Management

No.	Doctrine	Meaning	Typical justification
1	<i>'Hands-on professional management'</i> in the public sector	Active, visible, discretionary control of organizations from named persons at the top, 'free to manage'	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action, not diffusion of power
2	<i>Explicit standards and measures of performance</i>	Definition of goals, targets, indicators of success, preferable expressed in quantitative terms, especially for professional services (cf. Day and Klein, 1987; Carter, 1989)	Accountability requires clear statement of goals; efficiency requires 'hard look' at objectives
3	Greater emphasis on <i>output controls</i>	Resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance; breakup of centralized bureaucracy-wide personnel management	Need to stress <i>results</i> rather than <i>procedures</i>
4	Shift to <i>disaggregation</i> of units in the public sector	Break up of formerly 'monolithic' units, unbundling of U-form management systems into corporatized units around products, operating on decentralized 'one-line' budgets and dealing with one another on an 'arms-length' basis	Need to create 'manageable' units, separate <i>provision</i> and <i>production</i> interests, gain efficiency advantages of use of contract or franchise arrangements <i>inside</i> as well as outside the public sector
5	Shift to greater <i>competition</i> in public sector	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures	<i>Rivalry</i> as the key to lower costs and better standards

6	<i>Stress on private-sector styles of management practice</i>	Move away from military-style 'public service ethic', greater flexibility in hiring and rewards; greater use of PR techniques	Need to use 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector
7	Stress on greater <i>discipline</i> and <i>parsimony</i> in resource use	Cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, resisting union demands, limiting 'compliance costs' to business	Need to check resource demands of public sector and 'do more with less'

*Note.* From "A Public Management for All Seasons?" by C. Hood, 1991, *Public Administration*, 69, pp. 4-5.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SIGMA, THETA AND LAMBDA VALUES**

**Table 2**

Sigma, Theta and Lambda Values

	Sigma-type values	Theta-type values	Lambda-type values
	Keep it Lean and Purposeful	Keep it Honest and Fair	Keep it Robust and Resilient
Standard of Success	Frugality (matching of resources to tasks for given goals)	Rectitude (achievement of fairness, mutuality, the proper discharge of duties)	Resilience (achievement of reliability, adaptivity, robustness)
Standard of Failure	Waste (muddle, confusion, inefficiency)	Malversation (unfairness, bias, abuse of office)	Catastrophe (risk, breakdown, collapse)
Currency of Success and Failure	Money and time (resource costs of producers and consumers)	Trust and entitlements (consent, legitimacy, due process, political entitlements)	Security and survival (confidence, life and limb)
Control Emphasis	Output	Process	Input/Process
Slack	Low	Medium	High
Goals	Fixed/Single	Incompatible 'Double bind'	Emergent/Multiple
Information	Costed, segmented (commercial assets)	Structured	Rich, exchange, collective asset
Coupling	Tight	Medium	Loose

*Note.* From "A Public Management for All Seasons?" by C. Hood, 1991, *Public*

*Administration*, 69, p. 11.

### APPENDIX C VISUAL MAP OF NPM AS A DISCURSIVE FIELD

Figure 1 – Visual Map of NPM as a Discursive Field

