

**MANAGERIALISM AS A PROFESSIONALISING CATALYST
FOR THE FRONT-LINE PRACTITIONER COMMUNITY
OF NEW ZEALAND'S
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Science

at
Lincoln University

by
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Lincoln University

2003

Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Applied Science, Lincoln University, New Zealand.

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ABSTRACT

Since 1984, public service occupations in New Zealand have been subordinated to the over-determined bureaucratic structures of contemporary managerialism. The reactions of front-line public servants to New Management's unfamiliar 'market-place' imperatives and the concomitant loss of occupational autonomy have received very little rigorous qualitative analysis. This study addresses that shortfall, taking as its cue a key question in the sociology of 'profession'—what arouses or subdues the inclination of bureaucratised occupations to professionalise as a means of reclaiming autonomy? It explains the nature and meaning of strategies adopted by front-line practitioners in New Zealand's Department of Conservation (DOC) to defend their marginalised work conventions and collegial culture. Symbolic interactionist analysis shows that profoundly personal values and beliefs connect vocationally motivated practitioners with their 'mission' (to conserve natural and cultural heritage). These powerful intuitive connections play a crucial role in subduing interest in resistance and organised strategic action, principally by converting conservation labour into the pursuit of personal fulfilment. Practitioners respond to managerial intrusions on their core work (the source of their fulfilment) by defending these personal connections rather than group interests. As a result of this introversion, perceptions of 'community' and occupational identity are disorganised and become a further reason for inaction. Practitioners resolve the conflict between self-interested pursuit of fulfilment and the altruistic goals of conservation by negotiating an unspoken bargain with DOC's authority structures. The 'pay-offs' for deferral to managerial authority win the space to pursue fulfilment through immersion and conspicuous achievement in work, obviating the need for more concerted defensive action. Accordingly, managerialism has not acted as a professionalising catalyst for this group.

KEY WORDS: autonomy, beliefs, closure, collegiality, community, conservation, economic rationalism, front-line practitioner, identity, symbolic interactionism, managerialism, mission, occupation, professionalisation, values, vocation, work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During this project, I am privileged to have been supported by good friends, family and colleagues. Without them, this project would not have come about at all, or have been completed.

Bob Gidlow willingly undertook to supervise me, believing, I suspect, that this might be one of the quicker ones. His patience was tried sorely, I'm afraid, but if his uplifting confidence in my ability ever faltered, he was compassionate enough not to show it. I owe **Dr Pat Devlin** gratitude in equal quantities for his guidance and encouragement. His familiarity with the world of conservation and its practitioners kept me honest on numerous occasions. I apologise to you both for the long droughts and high floods, but I hope that this work has done justice to your interests and intellects. And to **Professor Harvey Perkins** (saviour of errant ecologists' souls), my thanks also. Were it not for the hours passed in the car, the mai mai and at dinner, debating conservation's obligations to humans, I doubt that I would ever have come to rummage in the social science toolbox. Mind you, I'm not convinced yet that you're right.

My gratitude also to **Douglas Broughton, Evert Kampert** and **Bernadette Mani** for guidance with funding, equipment and administration at Lincoln.

I am indebted to **Lesley Hunt** who read chapter drafts for me, and to **Michael Hamblett** who generously agreed to proof-read my final draft.

This research was made possible by **Mike Cuddihy**, Conservator, Canterbury, who has been very generous in the DOC time and resources he allowed me to use. His confidence in social research as a conservation tool has been less of a gamble, I believe, than allowing me "of all people" to study the human dimensions of DOC. I hope that my work has not injured this trust, despite its subject matter. In DOC also, I am grateful to **Andrew Squires, Bernard Timings** and **Mike Massaar** who were obliging in providing demographic data and other information, and to **Steve Tully** who helped with funding assistance for my course of study.

And of course, to **my practitioner colleagues** who participated in this research, my profound appreciation for your insights, honesty, trust and good-humour, even when you were wondering what on Earth it was that I was trying to do. Thank you also to my many other colleagues who collected material for me, commented constructively on my ideas, read drafts and assured me that this project had something important to say. I hope that I have given few of you cause to say, “But that’s not how *I* feel.”

Finally, my lasting gratitude to **Kate**, my wife and friend, who has carried the family and financial burdens of this study along with her own workload. It has been hard at times, but it feels great to give you back your evenings and weekends. To my patient daughters **Mirrin** and **Briar**, I’m back! Let’s go camping.

*

This research and preparatory course work has been supported by a Lincoln University Graduate Scholarship, and funding from the Environment, Society & Design Division of Lincoln University.

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Chapter Three—Social And Theoretical Contexts | 25 |
| 3.0 Overview | 25 |
| 3: Part One—The Sociology Of Profession | 26 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 26 |
| 3.1.1 A brief historical overview of professions | 26 |
| 3.1.2 Defining profession | 27 |
| 3.1.3 The taxonomy of profession | 28 |
| 3.1.4 Problems with the <i>attribute</i> approach | 29 |
| 3.1.5 The <i>power</i> paradigm | 31 |
| 3.1.6 Problems with <i>process</i> -based definition | 33 |
| 3.1.7 Interactionist approaches | 34 |
| 3.1.8 Interactionism and occupational ‘power’ | 37 |
| 3.1.9 Merits of interactionist method for this study | 38 |
| 3.1.10 The fate of expert occupations in complex organisations | 38 |
| 3.1.11 ‘Collegiality’ and ‘community’ | 42 |
| 3.1.12 Summary | 45 |
| 3: Part Two—Managerialism | 47 |
| 3.2 Introduction | 47 |
| 3.2.1 What is managerialism? | 47 |
| 3.2.2 Managerialism in New Zealand’s public sector | 49 |
| 3.2.3 Relevant reform objectives | 50 |
| 3.2.4 Role of managers | 52 |
| 3.2.5 Implications for public sector practitioners | 53 |
| 3.2.5.1 Disconnected approaches to work | 56 |
| 3.2.5.2 Commodifying of service and production effort | 56 |
| 3.2.5.3 Distorted service relationships | 57 |
| 3.2.5.4 Cost recovery impacts on workloads and effectiveness | 58 |
| 3.2.5.5 Rationing and neglect of need | 58 |
| 3.2.5.6 Individualistic controls on practitioners | 58 |
| 3.2.5.7 De-skilling | 59 |
| 3.2.6 Professions as models | 59 |
| 3.2.7 Summary: Implications for professionalising action | 61 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Chapter Four—Who Are DOC’s Front-Line Practitioners? | 63 |
| 4.0 Overview | 63 |
| 4: Part One—The Front-Line Practitioner Group | 65 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 65 |
| 4.1.1 Group parameters inside DOC | 65 |
| 4.1.2 Technical disciplines | 66 |
| 4.1.3 Group demography | 67 |
| 4.1.3.1 Gender | 69 |
| 4.1.3.2 Age | 69 |
| 4.1.3.3 Ethnicity | 70 |
| 4.1.3.4 Salary | 71 |
| 4.1.3.5 Qualifications | 72 |
| 4.1.3.6 Internal learning | 73 |
| 4.1.4 The nature of practitioner work and knowledge | 73 |
| 4.1.5 Work frontiers | 74 |
| 4.1.6 Legal, political and social mandates | 76 |
| 4.1.7 Origins of the group and occupation | 78 |
| 4.1.7.1 Orphans of structural reform | 78 |
| 4.1.7.2 The ‘ranger’ tradition | 80 |
| 4.1.8 Summary | 83 |
| | |
| 4: Part Two—Managerialism In The Workplace | 85 |
| 4.2 Introduction | 85 |
| 4.2.1 Organisational framework | 86 |
| 4.2.2 Organisational principles | 88 |
| 4.2.3 Accountability | 88 |
| 4.2.3.1 Accountability and cohesion | 89 |
| 4.2.3.2 Accountability and coercion | 91 |
| 4.2.4 Managerial leadership | 92 |
| 4.2.4.1 Structural implications of managerial leadership | 95 |
| 4.2.5 Role and functional clarity | 95 |
| 4.2.5.1 Practitioner deployment | 96 |
| 4.2.5.2 Work modes, roles and levels | 97 |
| 4.2.5.3 Working relationships and interactions | 99 |
| 4.2.6 Summary: Occupational implications of managerialism | 100 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Chapter Six—Conclusions | 167 |
| 6.0 Introduction | 167 |
| 6.1 Principles and pay-offs: strategic responses to managerialism | 167 |
| 6.2 Managerialism as a professionalising catalyst | 171 |
| 6.3 Interactionist theory and method as an explanatory framework | 173 |
| References | 176 |
| Personal Communications | 183 |
| Appendices | 184 |
| Appendix 1: Research Subjects, Locations and Titles | 184 |
| Appendix 2: <i>Conservation Act 1987</i> —Functions of DOC | 185 |
| Appendix 3: Quality Conservation Management Wallet Card | 186 |
| Appendix 4: Goals Of The New Zealand Conservation Institute | 187 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | | Page |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Figure 1</i> | Administrative boundaries of the Department of Conservation in New Zealand | xi |
| <i>Figure 2</i> | Institutional origins of conservation-related staff joining the newly constituted Department of Conservation in 1987 | 79 |
| <i>Figure 3</i> | Organisational structure, functional roles, and modes of work in New Zealand's Department of Conservation | 94 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | | Page |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Table 1 | Major conservation disciplines and associated tasks of front-line practitioners in the New Zealand's Department of Conservation | 68 |
| Table 2 | Gender mix of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand's Department of Conservation at 1 October 2001 | 69 |
| Table 3 | Age structure of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand's Department of Conservation's at 1 October 2001 | 70 |
| Table 4 | Ethnic composition of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand's Department of Conservation's at 1 October 2001 | 71 |

REGIONS, CONSERVANCIES, AND AREAS

- Regional office
- Conservancy office
- Area office



Figure 1

Administrative boundaries of the Department of Conservation in New Zealand (DOC, 1999)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Research overview

This thesis examines the proposition that contemporary forms of managerialism may act as a professionalising catalyst for specialised and highly motivated occupational groups in New Zealand's public sector. By analysing one such group—the front-line practitioners of New Zealand's newly constituted Department of Conservation (DOC)—a key question in the vexed sociology of professions is addressed: what arouses or subdues the inclination in non- and sub-professional occupations to embark on the strategic action necessary to become accepted as a profession?

Managerialism is an appropriate and timely trigger to study in the New Zealand context. In the mid-1980s, the fourth Labour Government orchestrated radical 'New Right' reforms of public administration, adopting management doctrines which contended that the liberal market-place mechanisms of the private sector could and should govern public sector activities (Cocklin, 1989). Today, these reforms are regarded in western parliamentary democracies as the most rigorous and penetrating of experiments with economic rationalism (Nagel, 1997; Schwarz, 1997). As a result, management—the hand-maiden of economic rationalism—has been elevated to precedence over all other functions in State sector occupations. Managerial authority is now consolidated in new organisational frameworks built around discrete and resolute management infrastructures. Occupational values and orientations of much longer standing are actively subordinated to managerial philosophies and practices modelled on private sector analogues. Similarly, long-established work traditions and conventions have been subjected to managerially expedient forms of codification and bureaucracy.

For non- and sub-professional occupations keenly aware of being disenfranchised in this way, professional claims-making is a plausible strategy for re-

claiming meaningful measures of influence over their own affairs and identity. Claims to have acquired professional status command the respect and autonomy customarily due to professions.

To test whether managerialism can act as a catalyst for strategic action, the professionalising temperament of DOC's very highly motivated conservation practitioners was explored between the years 1998 and 2001. The full force of managerialism has come late to the group, in 1996—just two years before the study commenced, but nine years after DOC's inception, and thirteen years after the reforms had been launched in 1984. The group was selected for the study because the author believed that there was a high probability of conflict between the powerful conservation ideals underlying its traditions of practice, and the doctrines of economic rationalism articulated so succinctly in DOC's new organisational framework.

1.1 Research subjects

In April 1987, when DOC drew its first full breath as an operational entity, New Zealand embarked optimistically on a long-overdue integration of conservation functions in the public sector (Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society *et al.* 1982; Working Party on Environmental Administration in New Zealand, 1985). Integrated also, for the first time in the century-old and visibly fragmented history of their occupation, were front-line practitioners gleaned from five disparate natural resource management agencies dismantled or reconstituted in the reforms: the New Zealand Forest Service, the Departments of Lands & Survey, and Internal Affairs, and the Ministries of Agriculture & Fisheries, and Transport.

As the founders of DOC's new front-line occupational group, these orphans of reform found themselves thrust into an unfamiliar environment where they were confronted with the sudden juxtaposition of divergent, sometimes conflicting cultures, traditions and outlooks carried with them from their parent agencies. But they shared a persuasive common interest—a 'mission': to conserve New Zealand's remarkable natural and cultural (historical and back-country recreation) heritage. Today, the common interest prevails and, despite

the group's very apparent functional heterogeneity, it is expressed most emphatically in the urge to protect natural heritage. The dissonant character of the early group has been relieved by time, attrition and the recruitment of graduates and other new entrants who carry little or no historical baggage.

For the purposes of this research, the occupational group is taken to comprise the 1000-plus generalist and specialist staff stationed throughout New Zealand as DOC's 'thin green front-line'. They are distinguishable from DOC's administrative, managerial and scientific staff in having operational responsibilities directly or closely connected with the hands-on management of protected natural and valued cultural resources. They make the technical decisions at the workplace, operating in both human and natural communities as DOC's public face and finger-tips. Work is situated in the field, often in remote, hazardous wilderness locations, or in the offices, schools, committee rooms, marae, quasi-legal fora, media and other public arenas where the hazards are more political and interaction with the public aims to improve conservation awareness.

1.2 Research interests

The research has been inspired by two interests. The first—arguably the nobler of the two—is sociological. It concerns itself with the social effects of managerialism on New Zealand's front-line public servants (a narrative interest), and with the origins of professionalising action (a theoretical consideration).

The second interest satisfies a more visceral imperative. These practitioners are my work colleagues. My interest in subjecting them to formal scrutiny arises from the failure of casual observation to explain perplexing and contradictory elements of their behaviour. This personal interest equips the study with a series of assumptions which act as stepping-off points for the research. These are outlined below.

The two motivations for this research—sociological and personal—are interdependent. The sociological concepts pressed into the service of my personal quest for explanations are themselves subjected to inquiry by the quest.

An incidental historical interest is also served by the study. This thesis marks a place in the chronology of the occupation's fortunes. Future reviews of changes in the character and strategic activities of the group will have this snap-shot available as a point of comparison.

1.2.1 Social effects of managerialism and 'New Right' reform

This research fills a conspicuous gap in the understanding of how New Zealand's front-line public servants have responded as individuals and occupational collectives to infra-structural and ideological change in their workplaces. These *social* impacts of New Right reforms have received exceedingly little qualitative scrutiny, despite the fact that the reform experiment itself has run for nearly two decades, and has attracted the attention (and approval) of international commentators in the fields of economics and public administration. As Chapter Three discusses in further detail, a modest body of literature marks the growth of scientific interest in the social effects of managerialism specifically and of New Right reforms generally. Because no other western parliamentary democracy embarked on such radical change, the overseas literature has largely inferential significance for New Zealand. A small component of emerging literature addresses impacts on New Zealand occupations. Hunt (2003) is the most recent entrant in the field. Her study of corporatised Crown Research Institutions examines the forms of resistance adopted by public sector scientists to protect their traditional modes of work and 'public good' motivations from the alienating effects of normative corporate control.

A comparable body of 'grey' literature exists also, in the form of economic, political and industrial relations commentary and polemic. In this country, managerialism has been under attack by a select group of dogged critics. Easton's (2000, 2003) critiques of the 'cult of the manager' and Jesson's (1999) formidable analysis of New Right's socio-economic impacts are indicative of a modest groundswell in domestic commentary. None of this commentary deals directly with the impacts of reform on the professionalising disposition of individual public servants or their occupations. This study puts a modest marker in the ground for qualitative scrutiny of the issue, and, at the time of writing, marks

the inaugural investigation of effects in the sector charged specifically with management of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage.

The sceptical tenor of emerging literature, especially the commentary, has influenced the position taken in this study. For the sake of argument, it is assumed that the New Right's rapid managerial restructuring of New Zealand's public sector has disturbed whatever accommodations expert, public service-oriented occupations have reached with former administrative arrangements. In Chapter Three, the expectation of a more abrupt collision between occupational and organisational values is presaged by a definition of managerialism and the reasons for its adoption as a mode of organisation in public sector governance. Managerialism is shown to be based on commodifying ideologies which interpret human effort as transient capital (Buchanan, 1995; Jesson, 1999) subordinated to the processes of achieving organisational goals of efficiency, accountability and functional clarity. The secular hand of economics is clearly visible in these doctrines. Accordingly, work focused traditionally on serving the 'public good' is rationalised and partitioned to meet the competitive demands of a 'market-place' for products rather than the social realities of each occupation. Chapter Four examines the implications of this managerial discourse for DOC's organisational structures and management practices specifically. This too is a sceptical account in which likely encroachments on a subordinated DOC practitioner sub-culture are identified as potential triggers for professionalising action.

1.2.2 Professionalising triggers

Sociologists have been interested in constructing analytical models of 'profession' since the early decades of last century. Unfortunately, their understanding of how occupations become professions has been unable to rely on a systematic definition of what constitutes a profession. Robust definition has remained elusive despite energetic debate occupying much of the literary horizon in the sociology of work and occupations (Abbott, 1993).

This study does not intend to engage in the definition debate directly, but investigates the origins of professionalisation—the process through which non-

sub- and para-professional occupations attempt to secure the prerogatives of self-determination traditionally associated with professional status. This analytical focus is a logical extension of efforts to construct coherent explanatory models of the professions as special forms of occupation. So too is its inverse, deprofessionalisation (or proletarianisation as it is known in Marxist accounts)—the process of losing professional credibility and influence. Logically, each process is a potential outcome of the conflict between the three ideal-typical methods of controlling the conduct of work in modern society: Adam Smith's free-market model in which market-forces determine arrangements; the bureaucratic model in which rational-legal systems of control prevail; and the collegially based model in which occupational participants organise their own affairs (Freidson, 1992). As should be apparent already, this study is situated firmly in this conflictual context.

Explanation of professionalising and deprofessionalising processes has its own problems, in part the consequence of having no uniformly accepted definition of profession to refer to, but also because little agreement has been reached (if it is possible to develop a single unifying explanation at all) on what circumstances predispose groups of workers to advance their occupational interests and status. Specifically, firmer grasps are needed on the intrinsic and extrinsic features of occupations which excite or restrain professionalising instincts (Klegon 1978; Freidson, 1992), or influence the fate of attempts to professionalise (Pavalko, 1988).

1.2.3 Theoretical approach

This study addresses these questions directly. To do so, it adopts the symbolic interactionist approach to analysis originating from the influential mid-twentieth-century Chicago School of social theory. Interactionist method is the study of social actors and actions, and the reflexive means by which they construct their social 'realities' using imagery and symbols to refer to the empirical world (Blumer, 1969). Behaviour, normative structures and other social phenomena are taken to be the 'accomplishments' of voluntaristic action and belief, a principle central to interactionist analysis. The interpretive emphasis is on what actors *perceive* and *do* to negotiate the nature of these phenomena rather

than on what the phenomena *are*. Explanation of group behaviour adopts the same theoretical stepping-off point; as for social structures, group action is taken to be the sum of individual actions and of the beliefs which determine their form and purpose.

Interactionist analysis is an entirely appropriate approach for this study, for two reasons. First, by grounding explanation of social behaviour in the exercise of individual will rather than in functional determinism, it allows analysis to focus directly on the intrinsic features of an occupation group which influence the choice to professionalise. In other words, the values and beliefs governing individual and group choices and actions to professionalise become the primary objects of analysis. Extrinsic factors in their working environment are closely integrated into this explanation because individuals do not act in isolation from their social environments. Instead, they respond to them on the basis of beliefs they hold and negotiate through interaction with others.

Second, the approach allows analysis to tread the troubled theoretical middle-ground between the two dominant tracks taken historically to defining professions: the so-called *attribute* and *process* approaches. The first and older of these placed occupations aspiring to recognition as professions on linear scales of various types, along which they advanced or retreated as they acquired the attributes of established professions. As Chapter Three discusses in further detail, this approach is dismissed as subjective and flawed by contemporary sociologists, the majority of whom use concepts of conflict, power and autonomy to define professions and their struggles to achieve occupational self-governance, jurisdictional control, and monopoly.

Interactionist analysis negotiates the theoretical stand-off between the two approaches by acknowledging each basis for definition but arguing that the proper sociological enterprise is to look *behind* appearances, structures and relationships to see what social and organisational processes are at work in particular contexts (Becker, 1970; Freidson, 1983). This is the line of inquiry taken by this research.

1.2.4 Specific research focus

In explaining the professionalising temperament of the group, then, this study is guided by a quite specific question: how do the individual values and beliefs of DOC practitioners influence their responses to managerialism in their working environment? The question takes its lead from Abbott's (1988) assertion that it is not possible to analyse external effects without first studying the internal dynamics they disturb.

The study follows this line of inquiry first by exploring the values and beliefs which practitioners hold about their work and its goals. Second, it examines how these values are instrumental in shaping individual awareness of belonging to an organised occupational collegiate. These are pivotal focuses of the study, because the intensity of affiliation with colleagues and occupational culture provides a 'barometric' measure of community cohesion and mood. Further, the values, motivations, ambitions and norms which bind practitioners together are likely to feature in constructions of professional identity, as Larson (1977: *x*) considers them to be:

These uncommon occupations [professions] tend to become 'real' communities, whose members share a relatively common permanent affiliation, an identity, personal commitment, specific interests and general loyalties.

The connection between occupational cohesion and professionalising action rests on the assumption that credible claims to professional status (directed at both internal and external audiences) cannot be contemplated unless community members have an understanding of the values, norms and ambitions they hold in common. Internal organisation of the group is commonly held to be a prerequisite for this understanding (Freidson, 1977, 1992). This study tests the importance of this connection. It examines whether, in the managerialised working environment of DOC, the effects of impaired or enhanced understanding of community identity and collegial sub-culture affect the group's disposition towards professionalising action. These inquiries are intended to determine the role played by the value-base of the group in constructions of collegial identity capable of sustaining a 'professional project'—an organised pro-

gramme of *collective strategic* action to win acceptance for claims to 'professional' authority over work and collegial affairs (Larson, 1977).

Building on previous studies of the group and of professionalisation in general, this thesis also examines which features of group values, work and mandates confer professionalising advantages. These features are not taken *a priori* to indicate that practitioners are actually embarked on a professional project, but they are useful as benchmarks in documenting how much DOC's organisational environment and the beliefs of practitioners themselves have affected their inclination to exploit these advantages.

In the course of examining how far DOC practitioners have progressed towards a professional project in response to managerialism specifically, the study explores the importance of perceptions of 'profession' in the occupational community as a model for professionalising action. These perceptions are shown to be more than reflections of professionalising temperament. They provide important clues to the convictions practitioners hold as individuals about their entitlement to respect and self-determination in DOC's organisational environment.

The study achieves its narrative and sociological objectives by examining the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and the relative importance of each in explaining the strategic choices practitioners make in their managerialised circumstances.

1.3 Personal research agenda

This research also achieves a personal ambition. I have been a conservation practitioner for more than twenty years. My understanding of my front-line colleagues has been formed through close working associations in various corners of our occupational landscape. But my *knowledge* of them as a group is clearly inadequate, since I have not yet been able to make out a cultural view of this occupational community as a whole, or its strategic aspirations. The questions asked through this research are diagnostic as a result. Have my colleagues recognised the opportunities offered by the social relevance and broad public

endorsement of their work to advance their occupational interests inside DOC? How far have they moved, as a collective, beyond enthusiasm for their work to regard gaining control of their occupational affairs as a passage to greater effectiveness and arguably more contentment as conservation experts?

1.3.1 Previous studies

My personal interest in defining my work colleagues has prompted two previous studies, the first of which was an attempt—again through qualitative research—to understand what makes us ‘tick’ as an occupational collegiate. Kennedy (1998) was a preliminary investigation of the importance my colleagues placed on field work. My findings on field activity’s central significance for collegial awareness are elaborated in the present study. During that earlier research, I encountered practitioners who were deeply dissatisfied with the way in which DOC’s fragmenting organisational arrangements and managerial practices impeded their performance. As competent operators, they felt disempowered by these obstacles. But these findings were tentative. The study was based on interviews with a very small sample of front-line workers in a Conservancy widely regarded in the practitioner group as being ‘unhappy’. The current study is motivated by a desire to confirm whether field work’s insights to the practitioner ‘soul’ and the assumption of widespread discontent give a valid account of the broader occupational community.

In a second study, Kennedy and Perkins (2000) assessed the effects of DOC’s organisational structure and managerial philosophies as two of a range of challenges confronting long-established traditions of wildlife management and skills development in New Zealand. It was argued that paradoxically, despite the advances for conservation won from integration of its many disciplines in 1987, the new organisational framework adopted by DOC was fragmenting effort and undermining the effectiveness of front-line practitioners. Structural arrangements and managerial philosophies were more attuned to the administration of sedentary resources such as leases, forests and reserves than to the demands of transient, highly dynamic wildlife resources.

These two accounts of the community treated the impacts of organisational factors as occupational threats to which practitioners were reacting adversely. Kennedy (1998) looked behind the complaint and dissatisfaction encountered to analyse what practitioner values were offended by these factors. Sense of community and collegiality emerged as casualties, but neither study correlated the effects of institutional fragmentation with intrinsic features of the practitioner community to assess relative contributions to the injury. Nor was an attempt made to understand how the occupational values which had been offended by DOC might influence political actions taken in response. Practitioners were clearly moved to complain, but these limited studies had not detected pervasive signs of co-ordinated political action. Were practitioner inclinations to act together in strategic defence of occupational values aroused or subdued by the nature of those values? This study sets out to explore this neglected ground.

1.4 Assumptions tested by this study

In the sociological literature, opinion is divided on whether employment in complex bureaucratic organisations creates professionalising or de-professionalising conditions for expert, knowledge-based occupations (Hall, 1968; Pavalko, 1988; Freidson, 1994; MacDonald, 1995). To test the conclusions reached in the earlier accounts of DOC practitioners, this study assumes that managerialism will quicken rather than disable practitioner affection for professionalising strategies. Specifically the study has been guided by these assumptions:

- 1 Highly motivated practitioners will regard the subordinating and secularising effects of managerial ideologies and practices in their working environment as antipathetic, if not actually hostile, to their conservation ideals, occupational objectives and operational needs. They will feel alienated from the means of control over their occupation's work, identity and integrity.
- 2 This treatment will prompt them to organise strategically in collective defence of these values, adopting professionalisation as a means of negotiating greater degrees of occupational autonomy

within DOC. Managerialism will provide both the pretext to professionalise and an adversarial context in which a legitimate audience (of managers) is created for strategic responses of this sort.

- 3 The instinct to professionalise will be comforted by constructions of occupational identity organised around collective understandings of 'collegiality' and 'community'. These self-conscious elements of group cohesion will have been intensified in an otherwise heterogeneous group by integration in a single organisation and closer collegial interaction with like-minded colleagues.
- 4 The strong instincts for operational collaboration and risk-taking identified in Kennedy (1998) will also serve the interests of collective strategic action.

As I have indicated earlier, these assumptions are conditioned by a sceptical view of managerialism, a view which may or may not be symptomatic of practitioners' attitudes. The sociological literature also offers some comforts for the central assumption that practitioners will adopt professionalising action to negotiate greater degrees of occupational autonomy within DOC:

[Professionalising occupations] feel strongly that their work is hampered by the interference of laymen [sic] who do not fully understand all the problems involved, the proper standards to be used, or the proper goals to be aimed for.

[Becker (1970: 97)]

[The concept of profession] is based on the democratic notion that people are capable of controlling themselves by co-operative, collective means and that, in the case of complex work, those who perform it are in the best position to make sure that it gets done well.

[Freidson (1992: 176)]

The detailed description given in Chapter Four of DOC's organisational framework elaborates this hypothetical basis for treating managerialism as a profes-

sionalising catalyst. The weight of assumption appears considerable but in this project, it is prevented from distorting research perspectives by the choice of an interactionist research methodology. As Chapter Three explains, this allows DOC's front-line practitioners to speak for themselves, so that questioning of these assumptions is freed from any other forms of prejudice.

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis comprises five further chapters, some of which are divided into several parts as a consequence of having to deal with the double hermeneutic of managerialism and professionalisation.

Chapter Two—Research Goals, Methods and Terminology outlines the research goals and methodology. Key terms and concepts used in the text are defined.

Chapter Three—Social and Theoretical Contexts reviews relevant themes emerging in the peer-reviewed literature on managerialism and the sociology of professions. Each review identifies the theoretical foundations of this research, but the latter places the study in its social context and narrows the sociological focus to the fate of expert public service occupations working within complex bureaucratic organisations adjusted to neo-liberal modes of work control.

Chapter Four—Who Are DOC's Front-Line Practitioners? sets the scene for the study. **Part One—The Front-Line Practitioner Group** begins with a brief demographic account of the research group, then proceeds to an 'objective' description of the occupation as it is visible to external observers. This description identifies central features of the occupation and its broader social context, some of which confer a professionalising advantage on the practitioner group. **Part Two—Managerialism In The Workplace** investigates the managerial character of the group's working environment, and draws attention to probable (hypothetical) implications for practitioners themselves.

Chapter Five—Who Do DOC's Front-Line Practitioners Think They Are? investigates the character of collegial consciousness, cohesion and identity

through the subjective views and values of individual practitioners. These findings are used later in the chapter to interpret the professionalising temperament(s) in the practitioner community. In **Part One—‘Community’ Values**, the origins of practitioners’ work motivations are identified in their conservation ethics and ideals, beliefs, values and norms. The implications of these subjective motivations for perceptions of ‘community’ and collegiality are explored. **Part Two—Understanding of Group Identity** examines the investments which practitioners make in constructions of identity as an occupational collegiate. The intention is to determine whether an occupational sub-culture is defined and defended by practitioners. **Part Three—Professionalising Consciousness** examines the evidence of professionalising temperament and activities. **Part Four—What Do Practitioners Think They Are Doing?** explains the group’s response to managerialism by interpreting the influence of *individual* values, beliefs and motivations on the professionalising disposition of the *group*. The chapter concludes with an account of how practitioners reconcile their choice of action with the realities of their occupational circumstances.

Chapter Six—Conclusions draws the study to a close with a summary of key findings. Their contribution to theoretical conceptions of professionalising action is discussed, and comment is made about the appropriateness of interactionist frames of reference for analysis of professionalising choices in this occupational group.

Chapter Two, which follows, outlines the specific goals adopted by this research to interrogate the questions identified in this introduction. Research methodology and key terms used in the text are explained also.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH GOALS, METHODS AND TERMINOLOGY

2.0 Overview

This chapter specifies research goals, explains key terms used in the text, and gives an account of research methods.

Since the intention is to describe the careful track negotiated through the complex social and theoretical landscapes of this study, a precautionary explanation is given of the questions which are *not* asked by this research.

2.1 Research goals

This study serves two masters—one narrative, the other theoretical. Each stands alongside the other as an important inquiry in its own right, but the relationship between their theoretical and narrative interests is mutually beneficial.

2.1.1 GOAL ONE—Managerialism as a professionalising catalyst

The first goal of this research is to determine whether the introduction of full-scale managerialism to New Zealand's recently constituted Department of Conservation has acted as a professionalising catalyst for highly motivated front-line practitioners employed by the Department.

This goal is relevant to the study of work and occupations generally, and, as Chapter Three explains, bears directly on the question of how expert occupations fare in the complex bureaucratic environments of modern public sector organisations. This goal equips the study with a pertinent contemporary social context in which to pursue Goal Two.

2.1.2 GOAL TWO—Intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the choice to professionalise

The second aim of the study is to determine:

- (a) how the work values and personal beliefs of individual front-line practitioners in DOC influence group perceptions of occupational ‘community’ and collegiality;
- (b) whether and how these self-conscious forms of identity influence the choice of strategic action taken by DOC practitioners in response to their managerialised working environment.

Realisation of this goal is intended to advance understanding of what triggers a bureaucratised public sector occupation to contemplate professionalising action as a means of regaining meaningful measures of control over work and occupational affairs. As I discuss in Chapter Three, this is a long-standing concern of interactionist researchers engaged in the sociology of professions.

The intention is *not* to evaluate whether the conduct of DOC practitioners and their work conforms to one or a range of the conceptual models of profession discussed in the following chapter. These questions introduce forms of analytical bias which make observers of occupations and professions into apologists for the political actions they witness (Roth, 1974). Equally, this study avoids the temptation to pass judgement on whether the claims practitioners make to ‘profession’ and ‘professional identity’ are credible in themselves, or likely to convince others. Those judgements are appropriately left for the occupation’s audiences to make. More importantly, they obscure the proper function of interactionist analysis, which is to interpret the social meaning of these claims and their theoretical ramifications.

In the DOC practitioner group, the questions asked by the two goals of this study are examined on several planes—individual practitioner, occupational group and organisational structure. Each assists the analysis of how intrinsic features of the group and extrinsic factors in its organisational environment

conspire to shape occupational and professional self-consciousness in the group. But conspicuous emphasis is given in these analyses to *individual* thought and action. This emphasis is reiterated in the choice of participant observation and face-to-face interviews as qualitative research methods.

2.2 Research methodology

In keeping with the traditions of ethnographic research, this study commenced with the question, *what's going on here?* The approach frees exploration of social activity from distracting obligations to theory (Blumer, 1969). As Hodson (1991: 50) remarks in relation to his own investigation of workers in organisational settings, this release from theoretical constraints has the potential to 'yield genuinely new concepts and theoretical propositions.'

These were lofty ambitions for this study. As I have conceded already, my initial interest in the behaviour of DOC's front-line practitioners was kindled by a more self-serving desire to define the occupational community and culture in which I have been immersed since DOC came into being in 1987. By good fortune more than by design then, my immersion in the society and work of my research subjects had already occurred, allowing me to take the first important step in naturalistic research methodology.

Immersion in the *study* of this society was not entirely open-minded. As I have indicated in Chapter One, the apparent inability of my colleagues to co-ordinate political and industrial action had perplexed me for some time. Put simply, although highly motivated in their work, they were dreadful at looking after their own *and* their occupational interests in DOC. Complaint about DOC was endemic in the parts of the community I knew well, suggesting that the community had at least one unifying basis on which to mobilise collectively. Yet, to borrow from the managerial vernacular which was a common object of this complaint, there was little 'walking the talk'.

My interest in professionalism as an analytical focus was ignited by colleagues who were referring to themselves and their work as 'professional.' This claim was not obviously associated with complaint, but was suggestive of political

consciousness. The self-labelling as 'professional' seemed therefore to be at odds with their political disarray. Accordingly, with explanation of this contradiction in mind, I started by investigating what these notions of professionalism in the practitioner community could tell me about the work motivations and political ambitions of my occupational peer-group. Initially, this was an attempt to define the dimensions and stability of our practitioner sub-culture, but it became a free-ranging exploration of the values and beliefs on which I anticipated this sub-culture to be based and defended.

Investigation of my colleagues was conducted using qualitative research methods—a combination of participant observations and in-depth face-to-face interviews. As I shall explain, initial interviews were semi-structured but narrowed their focuses as themes required elaboration or were discarded from analyses.

2.2.1 Workplace observations

Participant observations were conducted in offices, field environments and public arenas of three South Island Conservancies. North Island practitioners were present on several of these occasions. I obtained the consent of other participants to observe and make notes at these gatherings. I attended one public workshop at which front-line practitioners were facilitating and delivering presentations as conservation experts on behalf of DOC; in-house technical workshops and training sessions; one managerial briefing session on training matters; one managerial seminar on a new work specification process; species recovery group meetings; divisional staff meetings; one divisional recreation work-day; industrial relations meetings; staff meetings with senior managers; tea-break gatherings; two executive meetings of the new professional staff association; and one informal meeting of Conservancy specialists convened to discuss a DOC-commissioned review of their functional relationships with allied work units.

These observations were useful sources of data on practitioner language, image-projection, sub-cultural values, and attitudes to work and employer.

2.2.2 Interviews

The most consistently informative data on practitioner values were obtained through audio tape-recorded interviews with research subjects in their offices, field sites, or in some cases at alternative venues of their choosing. Initially these were relatively unstructured, free-ranging affairs, especially when feeling out the ground with unfamiliar colleagues. As key research themes emerged, interviews became semi-structured and ultimately quite specifically focused. In the later stages of my field work, short encounters were used to clarify areas of uncertainty or to confirm tentative conclusions. These interviews sometimes developed into discussions but the risk of leading questions was avoided as much as possible.

I interviewed thirty-one colleagues, all but one of whom I considered to be front-line practitioners by the loose definition I applied at the outset of research. This definition is explained at the beginning of Chapter Four. For views from outside this nominal 'group', I asked to speak with two practitioners who had recently resigned from DOC and one Conservancy-based member of DOC's clerical staff. These respondents, and others consulted during research, have their confidentiality protected in this thesis by the use of pseudonyms (see fold-out, Appendix 1). Where necessary to protect identity, I have also generalised work to one major discipline.

All but four interviews were conducted face-to-face with individuals. Through funding constraints on travel, the remaining interviews were conducted by phone. Except for the latter, most were generally of one to two hours' duration. On several occasions I asked for follow-up meetings to clarify points raised earlier or to explore important questions more fully.

The majority of interview subjects came from South Island Conservancies, where it was easier for me to meet them personally. Four were from the North Island. This imbalance was as much an artefact of asking South Island colleagues to recommend research subjects as a late decision on my part to interview by telephone.

2.2.3 Selection of research subjects

Candidates were selected using the non-random 'snow-ball' approach through which I sought out practitioners who were more likely to be thinking about the issues of interest to this study. Usually, at the end of interviews, I asked respondents to recommend community 'thinkers' or 'leaders' they knew (or knew of), if they felt comfortable doing so. In my view, the fact that South Island practitioners predominated in their recommendations reflects the degree of collegial isolation in the occupational community.

Nominees recommended independently more than once were given preference as research subjects. A small number of others was selected from my own knowledge of politically or strategically minded colleagues. In this case, I took the opportunity to counter where I could an emerging bias in biodiversity practitioners. Given the considerable diversity of conservation functions in this occupational community, the absence of only one functional sub-grouping (statutory land administrators) is quite an achievement, I believe.¹

Potential research subjects were advised in writing of my study's purpose and focus ahead of our meetings, so that their choice to participate was informed. None declined my invitations.

2.2.4 Supporting data

Supporting data were obtained from DOC staff databases, official files, institutional instruction manuals, organisational review reports and plans, internal letters made available by practitioners, organisational material retained in practitioner 'archives', DOC staff-relations plans, professional staff association letters; external relations publications, conservation and organisational strategies, and annual reports to Parliament.

¹ A number of respondents counted fire-fighting and search-and-rescue among their duties. Those functions have been 'covered' in this way.

2.2.5 Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and notated as soon as possible after recording to ensure that subsequent interviews could capitalise on emerging themes. When visiting several Conservancies on any one journey, this proved to be impractical and I had to rely on my own sense of themes evolving to avoid covering too much 'old ground' in interviews. (As it transpired, the need to deal with the striking diversity of opinion I encountered required a certain amount of staying with the original 'plan' anyway. I discuss this further at the beginning of Chapter Five).

Generally, interview transcripts ranged from 45–75 tightly packed landscape pages. Later interviews were shorter and more structured. Data were categorised in themes in columns alongside the interview scripts on each page, then collated with associated script into folders dedicated to each theme. Notes on notes were made at the time but despite the considerable diversity in views reported in this thesis, I discovered that themes did not evolve markedly. Instead, they tended to gain or lose relevance as my research focus narrowed.

I encountered a good deal of uncertainty in answers to some questions, and formed the impression that respondents were answering 'on-the-fly' to disguise the fact that they had not thought about the issues we were traversing. Although the lack of opinion on these matters was a research finding in itself, I have not relied on these 'contrived' data in reaching my conclusions. A related problem arose over questions about 'profession' and professional identity. Some respondents were not prepared, I felt, to imply through rejecting these labels that they were something less than professional. I treated their answers with equal caution. I refer to this issue again later in the thesis.

At several stages during my write-up, I took advantage of opportunities to conduct what I came to call 'gut analyses'. It seems an appropriate term, given the occupation. At work gatherings or elsewhere, individual or groups of colleagues often asked me to explain my research project. If they agreed, I would run quickly through my findings to see if their 'entrails' confirmed that I was on the right track. On one occasion, I asked two colleagues to read Chapter Four,

to ensure that my interpretations of managerialism in DOC were valid. The assurances and guidance received kept my arguments grounded in my subject group's perceptions rather than my own. It was clear also that a group of practitioners normally averse to sociology were intrigued by its insights to their group behaviour.

2.2.6 Countering selection bias

Initially, I was disconcerted by the number of biodiversity practitioners recommended (see Appendix 1—Research Subjects). Reflecting on this, I feared that it might distort the picture I was forming of work and political sentiments in the practitioner community. Indeed, the emphasis placed in this thesis on the natural (biological) world as a reference point for the practitioner mission gives the appearance of bias in my account of the community as a whole. In fact, the over-representation of biodiversity workers in recommendations is a research finding in its own right—a clue to the existence of a set of core occupational values around the defence of which centres of political action in the community might be expected to form. In Chapter Five, I say more about this finding and its implications for analysis of practitioner behaviour. Through the compensating selections I made, I discovered that workers in other functional subgroupings could be just as motivated and sensitive to managerial offence; but these were *my* selections as a researcher, not those of my research subjects. Of course, there is some comfort also in the knowledge that qualitative research does not depend on the reductionist practice of representative sampling in social environments to construct its explanatory models.

2.3 Terminology

There are a number of terms used frequently in this thesis as shorthand for broad or complex concepts. Their meanings are explained below.

'Conservation domain' refers to the broad occupational landscape in which the many crafts of conservation management are practised, either by salaried or waged employees of local and central Government agencies, consultants, and

contractors; or by the unpaid practitioners of non-government organisations (NGOs), volunteer groups and private landowners.

‘Conservation mission’ is shorthand for the body of conservation philosophies, ideals, values, imperatives and practices which constitute the conservation cause. The mission can be a shared or an individual enterprise. **‘Sense of mission’** refers to awareness of vocation in conservation work. **‘Commitment to the mission’** means loyalty to the conservation cause and the behavioural norms which have grown up around it in the front-line practitioner community.

‘Occupation’ is used as a generic term to differentiate conservation management as a form of labour (with its associated ideals, norms and philosophies) from the day-to-day conduct of technical **‘operations’**. In the context of this study, the term has a political connotation. Hence, the term **‘occupational goals’** refers to political or strategic ambitions for conservation management as a form of labour.

‘Occupational autonomy’ is a defining goal of professions in process-based definitions. It refers to occupational self-governance by authorised or accredited members of the occupational group: control of work practices, work priorities, practitioner conduct, ethics, entry to the occupation, training, skills retention, and ideological development. Within public sector bureaucracies, autonomy may be achieved despite, or with the complicity of regulatory authorities, as is often the case with State-licensed professions. In fact, as Freidson (1992) argues, State sanction is often the only means knowledge-based occupations have of securing the privilege of self-determination.

‘Occupational context’ refers to the broad social environment in which the occupation is situated. The term includes public understanding and expectations of the work. Context may be supportive or problematic. For instance, it may be approving (general public endorsement for conservation); ambiguous (endorsed in principle by the public but in conflict with key sectors); or dislocating (caught between opposing public and organisational expectations of performance). **‘Context’** differs from the term **‘occupational circumstances’** which situates the occupation in the organisational environment of DOC.

‘Operational’ refers to technical aspects of conservation practice. So, when practitioners are said to be focused on **‘operational horizons’**, they are pre-occupied with technical issues associated with their work generally, or with projects specifically.

‘Practitioner’ is used in this thesis as a generic term for DOC’s front-line specialists and generalists. The term is defined more closely in Chapter Four.

‘Professional rhetoric’ is the strategic use of images of ‘profession’ by an occupation to negotiate claims to higher status and respect. Typically, the occupation claims that it resembles professions in the ways which suit its arguments. Rhetoric may be ideologically inspired and mythical in character if based on claims which are questionable or invalid.

‘Wilderness’ is shorthand for the outdoors of New Zealand as a place of work. The term is intended to convey meanings of contact and affinity with the natural world, natural landscapes, and flora and fauna. In the context of this study, the ‘wilderness’ need not be the remote back-country; it can also include front-country workplaces and natural settings in urban environments.

These then are the ambitions and language of this research. ‘Exploration’ and ‘inspection’—the inseparable allies of qualitative analysis (Blumer, 1969)—are embedded firmly in the research design. In the following chapter, the theoretical and contextual landscapes of the study are defined. These reviews assist ‘exploration’ of the DOC practitioner world with a succinct account of contemporary managerialism, and guide ‘inspection’ with an informative theoretical framework.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

3.0 Overview

In this chapter, the central assumption of this study—that managerialism has the potential to stimulate professionalising action in DOC’s front-line practitioners—is placed in its social and theoretical contexts.

Part One—The Sociology Of Profession situates the study, its interest in the origins of professionalising action, and the choice of interactionist research method in an overview of the sociology of professions.

Part Two—Managerialism describes the ideological roots and principal features of contemporary managerialism. Particular attention is paid to the forms managerialism takes in the administration of central Government affairs in New Zealand.

Part One—THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSION

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this theoretical overview is to explain how this research is informed by, and contributes to current thinking in the sociology of professions, particularly the analytical treatment of professionalising processes and their origins. Two themes in this sociology are accentuated: the situation of expert, collegially based occupations working in bureaucratic organisations, and the significance of internal collegial arrangements for professionalising action.

In addition, this review establishes the basis for the choice of interactionist research method, demonstrating how the method's explicit emphasis on social action allows more penetrating insights to social behaviour and its many complexities. Finally, it provides support for the assumption that professionalising action is a logical means of recovering control over work—what empowers professions and grants them autonomy over their work may well appear advantageous to bureaucratised and disenfranchised occupations seeking comparable prerogatives.

3.1.1 A brief historical overview of professions

Professions occupy a prominent place in the sociology of work and occupations (Abbott, 1993), just as they do in public appraisal of occupational authority and credibility. Their evolution as social and occupational phenomena has been conditioned by their historical circumstances and associations, influences which continue to operate today. 'Status professions' first emerged when medieval occupations acquired high social status through their connections with landed aristocracies (Elliott, 1972). The 'classic' professions of medicine and law took root in this early history. As society industrialised, occupations became increasingly specialised and discrete. Competition in the market prompted them to protect their expertise as a means of improving their status and reward. As a result, professions became occupationally based.

The emergence of the welfare state increased State control of free-standing occupations *and* professions, and spawned a further breed of specialised occupations, those located within organisations which empowered them but subordinated them to organisational goals. Today's service-oriented State sector occupations of nursing, teaching, social work, social counselling, and conservation typify this new breed, along with many others. Some have attempted to professionalise, with varying degrees of success (see for instance, MacKay, 1990; Roach Anleu, 1992; Miller, 2002). Increasing specialisation in knowledge-based societies has accelerated this trend.

Since the 1960s, the growth of consumerism and liberal market ideologies has subtly eroded the traditional authority and social standing of professions. They find themselves obliged to compete in the private sector with growing numbers of specialised occupations acting as alternative sources of authoritative advice and service. The new market environment not only creates the opportunities but also encourages these occupations to make competing claims for legitimacy, social relevance, autonomy, and jurisdiction. Notions of 'profession' have become more dynamic and elastic as a result, a key consideration in the emergence of interactionist approaches to defining the phenomenon (Freidson, 1983).

The extension of market doctrines and private sector managerialism into the State sector has redefined relationships between employers, occupations and the public. Interaction with other occupations and professions in both sectors has created the conditions for and expectations of professionalising action.

3.1.2 Defining profession

Professions are taken to be special forms of occupation, but attempts to define by sociological criteria what makes them 'special' and how they come to be accepted as 'special' have a long and disturbed history. Despite the optimism of Hall (1983), who declared the principal questions in the sociology of profession resolved by what is known as the 'power' paradigm, the debate is by no means closed. The sociology of professions is quite conspicuously lacking a convincing systematic theoretical foundation (Freidson, 1994).

Historically, efforts to construct a convincing explanatory model of profession have been grounded in numerous theoretical frameworks which have stood more often in opposition to each other than in company. Points of departure have fallen along the conceptual fault line between structural-functionalism and agency, the arch-rivals of sociological thought. On either side of the divide, the theory informing research has followed a range of tracks. Durkheim's (1957; 1966) interests in the division of specialised labour and his eufunctional view of professions as bulwarks against moral anomie in modern society have jostled for running space in the field with the social stratification and power themes of Marxist thought, and the social action, mobility, conflict, and closure themes of Weber (1978).

Key elements of these themes resonate in the two pre-eminent modes of definition: the *attribute* and the *process* approaches. Though distinct in their emphases on structure and social function in the first instance, and on occupational power and social action in the second, the two are related: the *process* approach evolved in response to the logical and explanatory weaknesses of attribute-based models of profession.

3.1.3 The taxonomy of profession

Until the 1970s, attempts to explain professions concentrated on developing authoritative indices of irreducible attributes which could be used to differentiate them from semi- or proto-professions and other occupations. Researchers dissected the histories of established professions in an effort to detect patterns of organisation common to the courses they took to professional recognition (Abbott, 1988). The doyen of structural-functionalism, Talcott Parsons was not the first into this field (see for instance, Flexner, 1915; Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933) but is credited with being among the earliest to address professions in theoretical terms (Freidson, 1994).

These taxonomic efforts yielded lists of attributes in which, unhappily, the order of priority varied according to the professional model on which each list was based. Even so, key attributes recurred: well-defined specialised, abstract or esoteric knowledge, the possession of which sanctioned claims to 'superior

technical competence' (Parsons, 1939); professional authority reinforced by monopoly over expertise and practice; prolonged and rigorous training, preferably in dedicated tertiary institutions where recruits were inducted into both technical practice and professional culture, ethics and norms; relevance to social need and altruistic motives; impartiality and objectivity; life-long vocational commitment; autonomy granted by State licence and public sanction; formal codes of ethics and the internal means of enforcement; professional associations; and the appearance of 'community' defined by shared interests, languages and common sense of identity (Greenwood, 1957; Goode, 1957, 1960; Barber, 1963; Hughes, 1963; Millerson, 1964; Wilensky, 1964; Hall, 1968; Jackson, 1970; McKinlay, 1983; MacDonald and Ritzer, 1988; Pavalko, 1988).

The notion of an evolutionary continuum transformed inventories of attributes from simple measures of profession into linear scales on which non- or semi-professional occupations progressed towards the professional ideal-type in a measurable fashion, according to the number of attributes accumulated or the degree to which they were exhibited. Wilensky's (1964) sequence of five cumulative steps to full professional status is a frequently cited scale. In contrast, Barber's (1963) model of professionalisation refrained from an emphasis on attribute-counting and stressed instead progress towards the professional end of the continuum as standards of conformity with key characteristics became more 'professional'.

3.1.4 Problems with the *attribute* approach

These typologies of profession and professionalisation may have overlapped but ultimately, diversity and case-by-case scrutiny denied taxonomists the satisfaction of an empirically robust catalogue of essential attributes (McKinlay, 1973). The method was also dismissed as atheoretical (MacDonald and Ritzer, 1988). Essentially, it described what a profession was, or pretended to be (Larson, 1977) rather than explaining how it came to be that way, how it organised its affairs, what it did and how it interacted with other occupations and social actors. The approach delivered impoverished structural depictions of professions much as describing the seating arrangements, dress and demeanour of

musicians would do little to explain the musicality, internal dynamics and broader social meaning of an orchestra.

Among the specific complaints laid against the *attribute* approach and its models of professionalisation were that they failed to take into account their broader social, political and historical contexts (Abbot, 1988; Parry and Parry, 1974); they failed to analyse sufficiently the connections between special knowledge, skill, altruism and ethical conduct, and the granting of autonomy, special rewards and social privilege (Saks, 1983); there was no agreement on which were genuine characteristics of professions, and which were simply desirable features; uncritical acceptance of these attributes caused researchers to abdicate their responsibilities to analytical detachment and made them participants in the making and legitimising of professional claims (Roth, 1974); the pre-occupation with defining the precise traits of a profession deflected the sociology from close examination of empirical referents, the theoretical implications of any trait, and the relation of one trait to another (Freidson, 1977). Key themes in these criticisms were analytical misconduct and the failure to reconcile models with the empirical evidence of everyday observation.

Professionalising scales drew criticisms in equal measure, especially for their subjectivity and simplistic assumptions. In his amusing but penetrating critique, Roth (1974) lamented their focus on the products rather than the processes of professionalisation. Analytical problems recurred. How *sufficiently* did an attribute such as special knowledge have to be demonstrated, for instance, before it stopped being a measure of 'occupation' and became 'professional'? Typically, the scales were uni-dimensional and linear, ignoring the evidence that occupational fortunes fluctuate, causing occupations to advance towards or retreat from professional status. Passage along such scales was considered to be marked by advances through a series of prerequisite steps, but in reality, the characteristics of profession could be acquired a-sequentially.

Despite its short-comings, and the suspicion with which the approach (or anything resembling it) has been regarded by mainstream sociologists since the 1970s, it remains relevant to an understanding of what prompts occupations to professionalise. Miller (2002) shows, for instance, that occupations can still make instrumental use of 'professional' attributes in their rhetoric, knowing

that their audiences often refer to the diagnostic features of the 'classic' professions to judge the credibility of their claims. Through this vital endorsement of audiences, lay or—as Becker (1970) termed them—'folk' concepts of profession become a part of the 'external dynamic' of professionalisation (Klegon, 1978).

In the views of its many critics, pre-occupation with occupational taxonomy was also offensive to proper analysis. Defining professions by this method distracted researchers from examining why occupations sought these attributes, how they achieved them, and what lay behind their claims to possess them (Becker, 1970). Neglected also was the question of how claims and aspirations of this sort served occupational quests for legitimacy, power and prestige as a profession. These questions opened the way to the *process* mode of definition and the *power* paradigm which it embraced.

3.1.5 The *power* paradigm

The *process* approach was more expansive than its taxonomic predecessor. It emphasised the strategic value of attributes sought by professionalising occupations, and assessed their significance for the appropriation of social prestige and self-determination. In this scheme, professional status was won and recognised through internecine and intra-occupational conflict. Analytical focus shifted accordingly to the self-interested motivations of professions and aspirant occupations—on their desire for economic and social privilege, for advantage over competitors in the division of labour, and for monopolistic control of expertise, practice and jurisdiction. Larson's (1977) landmark study of professions argued these motivations from a neo-Weberian perspective, establishing the term 'professional project'—coherent programmes of strategic professionalising action—in the sociological vocabulary. In Larson's conception, the impetus to professionalise was generated in the desire to secure a monopoly over expertise and services in the market. In keeping with its Weberian origins, Larson's was a more socially beneficent view of motivation than those taken in Marxist analyses. In Johnson's (1972) analysis, for instance, professions were regarded as associates of the powerful elites in capitalist society, and, in keeping with the central importance of the relations of production, profession was defined as a method of exercising control over work and the proletariat. By

these constructions, professionalisation became both a defensive and offensive tactic in the ruthlessly competitive socio-economic environments of industrial capitalism.

The concept of power was axiomatic to process-based definition, and it remains the dominant consideration in sociological (as opposed to lay or 'folk') constructions of 'profession'. The 'power' wielded by professions has two attractive implications for occupations desiring professional status. Professions control social exchanges with society and clients, largely as a result of reciprocal sanction to practice exclusively as trustworthy experts. They also exercise power when able to organise their own affairs without interference from outsiders (clients, competitors or employing organisations). This last quality of power has acquired its theoretical significance through interactionist frames of reference.

In *power*-based models of profession, the exclusionary concepts of occupational 'closure' and 'autonomy' were considered the necessary expedients to secure power, and to defend values, knowledge, and jurisdictions from competing or fringe-dwelling associates whose own ideologies and practices might undermine public confidence. Once monopoly and social approval had been gained, professions had a freer hand to control their own work, to manipulate the defining of client need and the nature of remedies, and to challenge the controlling authority of the State.

Though researchers in the interactionist tradition may disagree, neo-Weberian and Marxist orientations are considered by many observers (see for example, Saks, 1983) to dominate the sociology of professions after the demise of the descriptive period. Through the focus on self-interest, both approaches are inherently sceptical (Halmos, 1973), and certainly hostile to the euphoric (but assuredly ideological) views of professions held by Parsons (1939) and other early attribute-counters.² To venture from scepticism to cynicism, researchers did not have to look far to find professions whose behaviour or extravagant fees contradicted their claims to have social or client interests at heart. Through its

² Early functionalists had generally followed Durkheim's view that through their altruistic conduct, professions performed a morally stabilising function in modern society, resisting the self-interested motivations implied in all behaviour by prevailing economic and rational theory.

particular focus on voluntaristic action, interactionist research contributed its own critical disclosures of the ways in which members of occupational groups consciously manipulated the symbols and mannerisms of professions to create impressions which did not always bear close scrutiny.

Cynicism could also flourish in *process*-based models of profession through poverty of insight. Without investigating the peculiar social and organisational circumstances of aspirant occupations, researchers ignored the many different motivations for professionalising action. Those insights were pursued by interactionist researchers.

3.1.6 Problems with *process*-based definition

Shifting analytical focus from taxonomy to process gave greater emphasis to professionalisation but did little to develop a satisfactory definition of profession (Freidson, 1983). Although the new emphasis took account of the socio-economic conditions which encouraged or discouraged professionalising actions, they did not explain adequately why some occupations succeeded in these environments and others did not. Nor did the approach explain why some occupations, such as policing, plumbing or pharmacology, fail to achieve professional recognition when they too serve important social needs and possess many of the functions, characteristics and strategic aspirations of professions. Similarly, it struggled to explain why some workers *choose* to exploit professionalising advantages (their abstract or specialised knowledge bases, for example, or socially beneficial, non-routine tasks, monopolies, and advanced degrees of operational autonomy), but others do not.

The approach dwelt on form rather than content. It took the existence of social structures such as 'class', the 'State' and 'occupations' for granted, operating with a mind closed by-and-large to the motivations of the participant actors in whose beliefs and actions these social phenomena are constituted. *Process*-based models of professionalisation suffered a similar penalty. Although they accepted 'power' and 'closure' as the goals of strategic action, they were guilty of reifying these concepts as self-evident, intrinsic qualities of professions. Along with reliance on other attributes of 'professional' ideal-types to specify tactical

goals (social status, privilege, monopoly or self-interest), this acceptance exposed the models to the analytical flaws of the old *attribute* approach. The sophisticated three-phase 'power-index' model suggested by Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) suffers this fate. Although image-building and claims-making are identified as prominent professionalising actions, this attempt to integrate elements of the two approaches is weakened by uncritical acceptance of the professional qualities claimed and exploited for advantage.

Both *attribute* and *process* approaches to definition aspired to construct unifying static models of profession but struggled to account for the bewildering diversity in form and circumstance of Anglo-American occupations. The polarising of the two approaches and their underlying theoretical frameworks has frustrated explanation also, as has the quantifying of profession as an ideal, highly valued but discrete form of occupation (MacDonald, 1995; Collins, 1990). Symbolic interactionist frames of reference have made good progress in resolving some of the tensions and analytical difficulties created by these factors. They have offered productive, but not infallible, theoretical and methodological alternatives to explaining the professional phenomenon and the origins of professionalising action.

3.1.7 Interactionist approaches

Key interactionist researchers have not dismissed the *attribute* and *process* approaches to explanation. Early proponents of interactionism such as Everett C Hughes had always questioned the dominance of the *attribute* approach, and later researchers such as Becker and Freidson expanded conventional notions of power and autonomy.

Interactionism puts a human face back into sociological analysis. Determinism is simply dismissed as a consideration. Instead, interactionism adopts as its subject-matter the beliefs, actions and interactions of individuals and groups. Explanatory models of human behaviour are derived from the search for underlying patterns or consistencies in human beliefs and actions. In this way, the social concepts and structures taken for granted by the *attribute*- and *power*-

based definitions become the situation-specific *achievements* of voluntaristic social action and social organisation. Occupations are one such achievement.

The particular circumstances in which occupations attempt to professionalise become more prominent in analysis of professionalising processes because individuals and groups are considered to refer and respond reflexively to their surroundings when constructing beliefs about themselves and their worlds (Blumer, 1969). Responses to the internal and external circumstances of occupations are central therefore to negotiating courses of strategic action. Advances in occupational status and influence are ‘accomplished’ rather than being the *consequence*—intended or otherwise—of choices and actions (Dingwall, 1976).

Through this frame of reference, profession ceases to be construed as a discrete, static form of organisation at which professionalising occupations eventually ‘arrive’. Instead, as Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) remark, it is treated as a negotiated social process embedded in relations between the participants of an expert occupation and other groups of actors. In the context of this study, the principal ‘others’ are the managerial actors in DOC who symbolise the bureaucratic authority of the State. This social process is subject to change in *any* direction as actors respond to the shifting contextual features in which these relations are situated. ‘Profession’ then is simply one form of organised activity in a generic conception of occupations struggling in socially dynamic circumstances for influence and recognition (Freidson, 1983).

Since it is not precious on the matter of attributes, the interactionist method also allows for—or more accurately, it insists on (Becker, 1970; Dingwall, 1976; Freidson, 1983; Hall, 1988)—the integration of lay and scientific concepts of profession in ways which other theoretical traditions do not or prefer not to do. Interactionism argues that without understanding the lay or ‘folk’ vocabularies of commonly understood attributes—based as they are on professional ideal-types symbolising integrity, expertise and service—objective, generalising approaches to definition will be incomplete, because they neglect professionalising signals read by occupations and their audiences alike.

The significance of these analytical stepping-off points is that interactionism is much more responsive to nuance and variation in human behaviour and social environments. Since beliefs and actions of actors are likely to differ according to many differing sets of circumstances, it argues for close empirical observation of multiple centres of action in society or specific social arenas. It stays very close to its empirical data to depict the particular colour and character of contexts in which actors frame their beliefs and actions.

This drive for analytical authenticity is not without its penalties. The focus on specific circumstances militates against generalisation, a crucial problem for symbolic interactionism (Saks, 1983). Moreover, as Abbott (1988) points out, the study of professions is bedevilled by naturalistic case-by-case analyses which frustrate the evolution of theoretical models. Interactionism is a principal culprit.

Nevertheless, from the theoretical and methodological position of interactionism, analytical approaches which are not specifically action-based appear to 'legislate' definitions of profession and professionalising processes (Freidson, 1983). They embark on more generalised accounts in which the beliefs and circumstances of individual actors are subjugated to process and structure as objects of inquiry. In contrast, interactionism builds its explanatory models of social phenomena from the 'bottom up' by grounding inquiry in the actions of social participants. Analysis is qualitative rather than quantifying.

As a consequence of these properties, the *action*-based approach broadens the explanatory reach of concepts of professions and professionalising action. It allows them to embrace the peculiar and dynamic social circumstances of occupations as objects of analysis. This satisfies Hall's (1983) desire for more 'ecological' conceptions of occupational activity, embedded in rather than isolated analytically from institutional and broader social contexts.

More specifically, analysis is able to examine important issues associated with the intrinsic qualities of occupations. These are intimately connected with the values and perceptions of occupational participants themselves. Freidson (1992, 1994) considers several such issues to have been inadequately addressed so far.

For instance, how do different kinds of knowledge and work affect choices of professionalising action? How do the members of occupational communities organise themselves internally to exclude outsiders from the management of their affairs (especially those representing hostile free-market modes of organisation)? What must the members of professionalising occupations do to obtain the privilege of self-determination through State sanction? What role does the bureaucratic authority of the State play in the choice to professionalise? These issues are directly relevant to this study.

3.1.8 Interactionism and occupational 'power'

Interactionist and *process*-focused researchers asked the same question: *what do occupations do to become professions?* The processes of 'closure' and 'autonomy' were regarded by both as instrumental in securing 'power', but interactionists were suspicious of simplistic and uncritical reliance on power to explain professions as a dynamic social phenomenon (see for instance, Freidson, 1983). Their suspicion prompted the shift away from the question of what defines professions and occupations to the circumstances which excite interest in professionalising action, and affect the outcome of struggles to succeed.

In this way, the concept of 'power' is reframed and extended. It is not exclusively an instrument of dominance necessary for the struggle with outside interests to realise professional ambitions, but an *outcome* of those conflicts. In his formative investigation of the British and American medical professions, Freidson (1970) expressed this concept of power as 'autonomy'—the struggle with internal interests, kindred occupations or centres of bureaucratic authority for the freedom to control internal arrangements. As a result, interactionist analysis devotes itself to analysing how occupational participants draw on their values and beliefs to organise themselves internally as a collegiate, and how their efforts to do so are adjusted to their particular social, political and organisational contexts. Hughes's (1951: 340) formative early question is therefore as relevant to this frame of reference as it is to the current study:

What are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professionals?

3.1.9 Merits of interactionist method for this study

As I have outlined in Chapters One and Two, early interest in conducting this research grew from the observation that my front-line practitioner colleagues in DOC showed visible and voluble signs of discomfort with their newly managerialised working environment but appeared unable to co-ordinate political action. Functional heterogeneity in this community argued for a research perspective attuned to the probability of internal parochialism, exaggerated perhaps by the forms of structural segregation imposed by DOC's new organisational framework. (In my preamble to Chapter Five, I discuss the wisdom in this prediction.)

The two dominant theoretical approaches to modelling professionalising processes do not offer the prospect of sufficient sensitivity to the likelihood of multiple centres of thought and action in the practitioner community. Interactionism's analytical perspectives avoid their interest in 'fitting' the state of professionalising temperament in the community or the paraphernalia of strategic action to generalised and generalising theoretical models. Instead, they open the way to more penetrating analysis based on interpretation of value relations between this particular occupational group and DOC's authority structures.

Because the origins of strategic action rather than its features and outcomes are the critical objects of analysis, clearer account can be given of practitioner responses to DOC's increasingly complex bureaucratic environment. The importance of collective self-consciousness to their choices of strategic action can be determined more readily also. In the next two sections, I examine each of these considerations more closely.

3.1.10 The fate of expert occupations in complex organisations

In the question of conflict relations, the struggle of professions to achieve and sustain self-determination in complex organisations has much to offer analysis of occupations operating in similar environments. Researchers in all theoretical traditions have recognised that work and occupations are increasingly based in such settings (Hall, 1968; Murphy 1990; Roach Anleu, 1992). The juxtaposition

of professions and bureaucracy has received particular attention (Hall, 1968) because the dissimilarities in their respective means of organising labour are more conspicuous.

Freidson (1973, 1992) defines bureaucracy as the monocratic ordering of work functions into discrete jobs governed by particular legal-rational rules. In contrast, professions (and, I prefer to add, expert occupations) represent collegially mediated sets of values and practices organised around the authority of special knowledge and expertise. This seems an adequate basis for the assumption that these two modes of organisation are incompatible and will conflict.

In view of the inevitability of this conflict (Freidson, 1992), the question asked typically by researchers is *what are the consequences for professional power and autonomy of working in a bureaucratic organisation?* And typically, the predictions have been that the power of professions will be either augmented or diminished. In other words, neither outcome can be taken for granted.

A growing body of opinion argues for a de-professionalising outcome—the weakening of professional power and autonomy. These arguments adopt the Weberian conception of bureaucracy as an ‘iron cage’ within which professions are subsumed into the organisational apparatus (Mills, 1956, cited in MacDonald, 1995). In complex organisations, bureaucratic rule-systems marginalise the autonomous decision-making authority of professions and the collegial conventions through which this authority is controlled. Accountability reduces this authority further to unfamiliar indices of labour and performance (Haug, 1973; Murphy, 1990). Through rule-directed processes of standardisation and codification, knowledge and expertise shifts from professional to managerial control. Experience and judgement—crucial determinants of professional authority—are codified also, undermining the moral basis of resistance to rationalisation and subordination. Self-regulatory capacity is diminished through loss of control over recruitment, training, resources and rewards, as a consequence of which professions are forced increasingly to adopt proletarian organising and bargaining practices typical of mundane occupations (Oppenheimer, 1973). Inability to control clientele and the nature of service relationships undermines social power and authority, the fundamental bases for claiming the right to self-

determination (Roach Anleu, 1992). Bureaucracy is less sensitive to the distinctions between professions and their fringe-dwelling associates, encouraging the latter as legitimate competitors in labour markets which did not operate traditionally in the public sector (Haug, 1973). In Toren's (1975) view, professions are inherently predisposed to the loss of status in these circumstances because the increasingly specialised nature of modern work creates allied forms of knowledge which competitors can claim as their own.

These dismal prognoses follow a compelling logic, but as numerous researchers observe, established professions seem able to survive in complex organisations with important elements of their discretion and identity intact. In fact, they are likely to benefit from the association (Portwood and Fielding, 1981; Murphy 1990; MacDonald 1995). In his comparison of professionalising occupations, Hall (1968) noted that the *a priori* assumption of an inverse relationship between profession and bureaucracy could not be supported by empirical observation. Although his comparison was based on statistical analysis of key attributes (hardly capable of qualitative insights), his findings indicated that the more internally organised his sampled occupations had been (possessing professional associations, for instance), the greater had been their resistance to bureaucratic control. Freidson (1970) would not have agreed with Hall's methods but supports his optimism when he observes that the relationships occupations maintain with society are braced by partnerships with employing organisations. Hughes (1963) goes further by predicting that work in complex organisations will benefit expert occupations by obliging them to extend their services beyond the constraints of traditional free-lance profession-client relationships.

Direct inferences from professional analogues for bureaucratised occupations may not be safe. If anything, the fate of their professional projects is more open to conjecture, because occupations are not able to call on professional authority and traditional relationships with society to counteract the subordinating effects of bureaucracy. At the very least, their autonomy is confined to what Murphy (1990) calls their 'technical' discretion (control over the conduct of work) which survives even if 'ideological' discretion (the purpose of the work) has been appropriated by organisational authority. Freidson (1973) adopts a comparable position, arguing that complex organisations can only put an ad-

ministrative framework around this central locus of autonomy. Hope of achieving further discretion lies, he contends, in the fact that post-industrial relations enable workers to control managers in ways not possible through the strict segregation of labour and authority in industrial society. In this sense, the gate to the path of professionalising action is open.

Along with many others, MacDonald (1995) raises a point relevant to this study that despite inevitable conflicts between modes of organisation and their value systems, a relationship of interdependence exists between professions and complex organisations. Employers rely on professions for the competent conduct of work, and professions enjoy advantageous guarantees of resources, mandates, social legitimacy and clientele, even if they are not able to control them. The tension between conflict and dependence results in an ambiguity to which individual occupations may respond in their own ways according to their own circumstances and understandings of themselves. Over-arching explanations of bureaucratic effects are unlikely to explain all such responses and their outcomes. The prudent approach is, as Roach Anleu (1992) believes, to regard all forms of occupation and bureaucracy as separate systems of social organisation grounded in the expectations, interests and values of their respective actors. Analysis should concentrate on how these impinge on each other through multiple relations in specific contexts. This is the approach adopted in this study.

A final observation—Freidson's (1983) conception of modern occupations as work values and skills institutionalised through collegial solidarity is also helpful to this study. In post-industrial society, workers are no longer disenfranchised aggregations of coincident skills, but are likely to form occupational communities organised around their skills and the licence to practise them. When this occurs, Freidson argues, work becomes a 'social, political and economic enterprise', dependent for its authority and 'muscle' in complex organisations on the degree of internal organisation, solidarity, and I would add, the willingness to defend occupational interests.

3.1.11 'Collegiality' and 'community'

Nestled among the artefacts of profession in both *attribute* and *process* accounts are the inseparable notions of 'collegiality' and 'community'. In functionalist hands, these concepts are defining attributes of professions (Goode, 1957; Hall, 1968); in conflict-based models, the 'community' is a strategic asset, the platform from which professionalising occupations launch their pursuits of autonomy, monopoly, and their associated rewards (Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988). These and interactionist views overlap in recognising the Weberian concept of self-interested 'closure': an exclusive 'society' to which entry is controlled by members, and whose social boundaries are defended to protect against encroachment or control by outsiders (Becker, 1970).

For this study, Ihara's (1988) concept of 'connectedness' is helpful to defining 'collegiality' and its relationship to 'community', although I am wary of his interpreting either as solely professional virtues. In Ihara's scheme, connectedness makes co-workers into colleagues when it has as its basis the shared sense of being part of a larger interdependent whole. In itself, mutual respect for the possession of comparable skills and knowledge is not sufficient to guarantee this sense of connectedness, or to engender its sense of obligation to support and co-operate with colleagues. Instead, collegial connectedness has two critical features: the shared commitment to the values and goals of the occupation—a belief in working together as integral parts of a cause-related enterprise (the cause could be justice, learning, or conservation)—and commitment to the group itself which pursues those goals. Connected in these ways, an occupation becomes a 'community' defined and held together by collegial affiliation and obligation. In contrast, an occupation lacking these qualities would simply be an aggregation of workers with comparable skills and knowledge, acting as a society of individuals on their own understandings of standards, values and expectations of reward.

Collegiality is, then, as Waters (1989) says, the consensual form of organisation on which the community is based. It embodies the qualities of mutual respect, trust, loyalty and co-operation necessary to maintain the community as a coherent entity. Collegiality preserves the community's integrity and identity by

equipping it with an internally mediated value-base, norms, and standards, and sustains collective momentum towards community goals. In these senses, collegiality is also a normative form of organisation.

The concept of equality is fundamental to the survival of this form of organisation, especially in a heterogeneous occupation confronted, as DOC's practitioners are, by the individualism of free-market ideologies and the segregating forces of monocratic control in bureaucratic organisations. Although formal or informal hierarchical structures may operate in the community, or be imposed on it, all colleagues are made equals ultimately by loyalty to their community's objectives. Subjugation of self-interest to the common goal resists the disaggregating forces of bureaucratic control. Collegially motivated interaction also resists the secularising forms of individual reward favoured by bureaucratic control, by establishing the value and standards of excellence in occupational practice. As Freidson (1992) contends, colleagues who have internalised these expectations derive symbolic reward instead from the community's approval of their work and behaviour—reward which is symptomatic of vocational commitment to the community's work (Ihara, 1988).

Differing understanding or levels of commitment to community goals need not be fatal to the community or its strategic actions, so long as the goals themselves are acknowledged to exist (Larson (1977). Indeed, as MacDonald (1995) illustrates in his summary of accountancy and architecture, 'community' is not synonymous with 'homogeneity'. Occupations may be divided internally in their traditions, divisions of labour, internal arrangements, or in even in daily practice (barristers in a court-room, for example). Collegiality transcends these divisions.

Shared and internalised rules and norms are essential instruments of cohesion in collegial communities because they moderate the effects of internal discord or division and control internal behaviour (Freidson, 1992). In a community in which autonomous or isolated practice is normal, the existence of collegially negotiated norms improves confidence that the intentions of colleagues are mutually aligned.

Equally, within occupational collegiates, sense of connectedness itself can vary. As would be expected, the closer the familiarity with colleagues, the stronger the commitment to fulfilling collegial obligations towards them. The closer the alignment of internalised values and occupational goals, the greater the probability and reach of collegiality (Ihara, 1988).

For occupations pursuing professional status, recognition of credibility by other powerful actors, especially the State, is in doubt if displays of 'collegiality' and 'community' are unconvincing (MacDonald, 1995; Freidson, 1992). It is important, therefore, that the aspirant group acts, and is seen to act as a community bound together by more than the fact that its members claim to possess the same sets of special skills and interests. For occupations contemplating strategic action, the marks and instruments of collegiality are the vital and strategically advantageous symbols of integrity.

In interactionist views of professionalising action, sense of community and collegial identity are pivotal objects of analysis because they symbolise cohesion and internal organisation. Logically, a group which has limited or no coherent idea of community and collegial identity is unlikely to be sufficiently organised internally or disciplined to embark on a structured, purposeful programme of strategic action.

As summarised by Freidson (1992) who borrows from other interactionist observers of the professions, the notions of 'collegiality' and 'community' symbolise the democratic foundations to action-based models of professions and occupations. Not only are people considered capable of controlling their own work by co-operative means, and of knowing best how complex work should be done, but they constitute a community when these actions are informed by commonly held beliefs about the goals of their work. Through reflexive interaction with colleagues, the community itself becomes the reference point for its members. Professional projects are construed as a result to be more than the actions necessary to win support for the claims to self-determination. They comprise the actions occupational participants must take to bring the community into existence, to negotiate a unifying sense of collegial identity internally, and to present a public face which projects that identity convincingly.

These are the cues I am using in this exploration and explanation of professionalising temperament in DOC's front-line practitioner community.

3.1.12 Summary

In Section One of this chapter, I have situated this research project in the sociology of 'profession', a significant but inadequately lit room in the sprawling house of work and occupations. The choice of 'profession' as an analytical context has been conditioned by preliminary observations of the DOC practitioner group, but the major themes of 'conflict' and 'self-determination' in the sociology of profession are appropriate to the group's occupational circumstances.

Accounts of the dominant theoretical and methodological frameworks in this sociology have explained the virtues and shortfalls of each. Each offers insights to professionalising processes, but none has yet developed a satisfactory model capable of predicting whether occupations will succeed or fail in their professionalising actions. The phenomenological approach of symbolic interactionism is shown to offer the best hope of illuminating these circumstances reliably, an important step in defining them ultimately.

The action-based perspectives of interactionist analysis are well suited to the task undertaken by this research. They encourage scrutiny of questions to which other explanatory frameworks are much less attentive. In particular, they direct investigation of professionalising temperament in DOC's front-line practitioner group to the nature of practitioners' connections with their work and with each other. In Chapter Five, I adopt these cues to examine first, the value-base of the group, and second, the degree to which these values influence internal understanding of collegiality and community. My intention is to determine whether and how the forms and strength of collegiality in the group affect perceptions of managerialism as a threat to occupational self-determination.

In the remaining section of this chapter, I define managerialism as the form of bureaucratic organisation to which the occupational values of DOC's front-line practitioners are currently subjugated. This definition situates my research in the external circumstances of DOC's front-line practitioner group and links an-

alysis of group responses to the other relevant theme identified in the sociology of profession: the conflict between collegially based methods of organising work and the modes of legal-rational control favoured by bureaucracies.

Part Two—MANAGERIALISM

3.2 Introduction

In this section, managerialism is defined and an account is given of the structural reforms in New Zealand's public administration. Recent literature on the effects of reform on public sector practice and workers is analysed.

Neither account nor review is intended to be exhaustive. The purpose is first, to describe how managerialism has altered the socio-political environment in which DOC operates; and second, to illustrate how managerialism has modified expectations of public sector ideals and practice. In Chapter Four, closer attention is paid to the face of managerialism in DOC itself.

The sceptical nature of the literature reviewed should not be taken to imply that DOC's practitioners recognise in their own working environment *all* of the disabling impacts of reform reported. But the critiques do reinforce the assumption made at the commencement of research that disabling impacts are the important professionalising triggers for the practitioner group.

3.2.1 What is managerialism?

In its simplest terms, managerialism is a systematically structured set of beliefs and practices axiomatically centred on the conviction that improved management can solve a wide range of economic and social problems (Pollitt, 1990). This conviction rests on the belief that social progress is procurable through uncompromising pursuit of efficiencies in economic activity. Managerialism will realise these goals if management is treated as a discrete organisational function, and if managers are given the freedom to strategise, conceptualise work, organise the means of production, and measure efficiencies. The pivotal role of management implies that all work processes can and should be broken down into their constituent parts for better control, and that the *means* of achieving organisational objectives must be a pre-eminent consideration of organisational function (Hough, 1995: 178, paraphrasing Ingersoll and Adams, 1986). But the

primary emphasis must remain on efficiency, which is, as Hood and Jackson (1991: 182) put it, the 'monarch of administrative virtues'.

Managerialism has its roots in private sector management practice, where, since the origins of management thought in the late (industrialising) 1800s, the well-defined economic currencies of production have favoured its goals and development. Over the intervening century, it has evolved in this sector an extensive repertoire of approaches and techniques conditioned by philosophical shifts in belief about the function and obligations of management. These have varied from the extremes of individualist philosophy, expressed in late nineteenth century doctrines of social Darwinism (survival of the fittest) and the authoritarian dictates of Taylor's (1911) rational scientific model, to more inclusive human-centred models derived from mid-twentieth century developments in industrial psychology. These recognised organisations as complex social systems and workers as sentient constituents of organisational communities. But in all forms, individualistic or humanised, the core beliefs in efficiency and the primacy of management as an organisational function prevailed.

Elements of all historical shifts in management belief resonate in contemporary managerialism, but it is discernibly neo-Taylorist in character (Hood and Jackson, 1991). Taylor's formative model regarded managers and workers as mechanistically motivated by simple incentives of reward and punishment. Its central tenet—that management is a science whose precise laws are applicable to all aspects of social life—emphasised the separation of *objective* management from the *subjective* intrusions of external political or social values. As I have described earlier in this chapter, this is the crucial point of tension between bureaucracy and service-oriented expert occupations.

Rapid advance across the many theoretical thresholds in private sector management has not discouraged the migration of managerialism into the public sector, where its rhetoric elevates the virtues of flexibility, versatility, and goal-directed management over the pre-occupation of traditional bureaucratic hierarchies with authority, rigidity and structure. But differences in private and public sector ideologies makes the transition problematic. The public sector produces goods and services which vary quite significantly from those of the

private sector. In their traditions of thought and practice—serving the principles of justice, fairness, participation, equality and, not least, the public interest—public goods have been treated quite differently in their means of management and production (Easton, 1995). The work of public servants is more explicitly motivated by these social objectives, and the relationships governing the choice of service and transactions are generally more complex and long-lived than those of the private sector (Pollitt, 1990).

Although the rational origins of neo-Taylorist managerialism imply that the generic skills of management are applicable in *any* context, experience has shown that it has often obtained its leverage in the public domain by reforming public structures and functions rather than adapting its own doctrines to the new context (Pollitt 1990). This is certainly so in New Zealand, where managerialism was ‘force-fed’ to the public sector as an integral component of structural reforms in the late 1980s.

Managerialism has become the indispensable instrument and bureaucratic face of economic rationalism, the neo-liberal ideology driving the reforms. Economic rationalism contends that the *laissez-faire* economic doctrines and practices of the market-place are the most effective mechanisms for extracting efficiencies from the manipulation of capital and human resources, so long as they remain unencumbered by broader social considerations. In economic liberalism and managerial rigour, the ideals of efficiency overlap. The marriage of the two is consummated in the pursuit of efficiency through accountability, leadership and assiduous performance measurement.

3.2.2 Managerialism in New Zealand’s public sector

Installation of managerialism in New Zealand’s public sector followed intuitively from aggressive economic reforms launched by the incoming Labour Government of 1984. The reforms were precipitated by a crippling financial crisis inherited from the interventionist economic policies of the Muldoon era. In the view of the public sector’s critics, especially those in Treasury who became key theologians of the reforms (Easton, 1995; see also New Zealand Treasury, 1987), the social and commercial returns from public expenditure had become

inhibited by poor management, anachronistic financial systems, confused goals vulnerable to capture by interest groups and lack of transparency in government departments (Scott *et al.*, 1997). These were key ‘evils’ in public administration to be remedied by reform.

Monetarist reform of the economy conducted in the new Government’s first term was joined in its second by reinvention of the roles and functions of government. The combined reform programme, steeped in a particularly undiluted form of economic rationalism, was the most radical of any followed in OECD countries (Nagel, 1997; Schwarz, 1997).

Traditional public structures, staff and services were dismantled, and the doctrines and practices of managerialism installed. The reforms profoundly altered the roles and status of public servants at the front-line, their management as a resource, and the way in which they conducted their business.

The reforms were justified to a marginalised public by contending that the reinvigorated public service could not stifle innovation and economic development as had the old introspective model with its prescriptive culture of rule and regulation. Rhetoric of this sort resonated with long-held popular conceptions of an indolent public workforce, a view exploited—if not actively reinforced—by Roger Hall’s stage and television satires of the public service, *Glide Time* and *Gliding On*.

3.2.3 Relevant reform objectives

The New Zealand public was encouraged to expect from the reforms superior service tailored to their needs as customers, at markedly reduced cost. Although the reform rhetoric stressed improved performance, the ‘cost less’ ideal proved to be the driving force of reform (Kettl, 1997).

To reduce public expenditure and improve clarity of purpose, commercial and social functions of the public sector were separated and installed in their own agencies. Through a programme of rapid corporatisation, the Government withdrew from commercial enterprises which could operate in the open mar-

ket. Other departments which had managed public lands and forests with commercial potential but significant social or conservation values were transformed into State-Owned Enterprise corporations with profit-making mandates. These measures contributed significantly to a reduction of the New Zealand public service to one half of its former size (Kettl, 1997).

DOC was a product of functional segregation, but the character of its administration was determined by the extension of lessons from corporatisation into the remainder of the public sector.

Endorsed by bumper-sticker prompts that there should be 'Less Government in Business, and more Business in Government', the reform programme applied to the remainder of the public sector the co-ordinating market mechanisms of the private sector. The *State Sector Act 1988* and *Public Finance Act 1989* consolidated the transformation, making Government departments into business-like entities. Private sector policies such as contracting out and 'user-pays' were adopted. Reform intent was communicated through the language of the market: public departments became service 'providers', and users of the services they 'delivered' were referred to as 'customers' or 'clients'. A Total Quality Management regime was adopted as the means of aligning public sector culture with market outlooks. There was a liturgical manner about the new language: 'best practice', 'working smarter', 'continuous improvement', 'customer focus', 'good process', 'adding value', and 'audit and review'.

Public administration was restructured to insist on efficiency and improved performance through clear views of unambiguous goals, performance assessment, fiscal restraint, contractual relationships and competition. Efficiency was measured primarily in economic terms (often as cost-savings). Performance was measured in 'outputs' which were more readily quantified and managed than 'outcomes'. The narrow emphasis on outputs, 'purchased' annually from departmental chief executives by Government, was itself a measure of New Zealand's singular commitment to the rationalist model. All core business conducted by public servants was reduced to 'output' units of measurement, written into departmental performance contracts which were reviewed regularly by

Government and Treasury to ensure that outputs were being achieved with minimal input costs.

Efficiency and innovation were encouraged by harsh budget cuts imposed to reduce public expenditure. These had predictable effects on wages and employee numbers. The prevailing mantra, *Do More with Less*, invoked the image of a 'lean', 'mean', entrepreneurial public sector responding effectively, at minimal cost, to a growing number of new challenges.

3.2.4 Role of managers

Guardianship of the reformed public sector and its new efficiency ideals was vested in a new management framework in which managerial authority and accountability are linked. Authority is devolved by chief executives through flattened, decentralised structures—the 'Line'—populated by managers empowered in differing degrees to find their own means and resources to achieve explicit performance objectives (Scott *et al*, 1997). Discretion of this sort required line managers to compete in their departmental 'market-places' for limited financial resources.³ In DOC, for instance, allocations are negotiated between managers through complex budgeting processes in which practitioner input is largely advisory.

The role of the manager is crucial to the development of organisational dynamism (Davis, 1995) and the cultural alignment of practitioners. Managerial vision, strategic acuity, energy and control of incentives are the keys to liberating the performance potential of staff. Managers are responsible for focusing this potential on approved outputs, plugging human resources in and out of projects as their organisation's strategies require (Buchanan, 1995).

Compliance with performance contracts through delivery of high quality outputs is a precondition of salary movements assessed by individual managers. Within limits prescribed by sectoral employment contracts with chief exec-

³ Reliance on competition to drive individual performance distinguishes New Zealand's managerial model (making managers manage, to stay alive in the 'market') from more moderate forms adopted in Australia and Sweden which rely on consensus, mutual trust and cultures of co-operation ('letting managers manage') (Schwarz, 1997; Kettl, 1997).

utives, practitioner salaries and bonus awards are manipulated by managers as incentive mechanisms.

Although the managerial model emphasises the strategic and conceptualising roles of managers (leaving technical discretion in the conduct of projects to practitioners), management exercises the pivotal function of integrating technical perspectives in the case of multi-disciplinary occupations. The role is a key element of a broader political obligation to reconcile technical advice received from practitioner specialists with competing social, political or economic demands on services or resources. As a consequence of these integrative roles, it is frequently the manager who interacts with the public as the authoritative voice of technical specialists.

These roles are consistent with the claims of managerialism that efficient management can solve almost any problem (Rees, 1995a), and that managers skilled in the generic arts of management can conduct any business (Easton, 1995). In such a pivotal position in this managerial model, managers are the 'heroic' game-makers and problem-breakers of the New Zealand public sector. For these reasons, management has been elevated to prominence over the service delivery functions of public departments. Managers are rewarded and privileged accordingly (Hood and Jackson, 1991), and practitioners are marginalised by definition (Pollitt, 1990).

3.2.5 Implications for public sector practitioners

Much of the literature assessing the efficacy of managerialism in the public sectors of western democracies addresses the degree to which the new management structures have served the economic, administrative and governance objectives of reforms. There is a proselytising element to some reviews. For instance, Scott *et al.*, (1997)—key architects of the New Zealand reforms—base their case for extension of the New Zealand model into the American public sector on favourable assessment of economic returns from restructured management, on measured shifts in management culture, and on the benefits for public sector administration. In other reviews, such as Schwarz (1997) who compares the effects of the New Zealand management model with a Canadian

variant, references are often made to impacts on service relationships with the public, but little or no commentary on the consequences for front-line public servants is evoked despite near-prurient interest in the severity and rigour of the New Zealand reforms. This may not be surprising: the reluctance of managerialism itself to measure the impact of its activities on workers is a conspicuous omission in its reflexive evaluation of performance and efficiency (Easton, 1995; Solondz, 1995).

The relatively spare literature dealing with the human costs of New Zealand and Australian managerial models concludes that they have had predominantly demoralising effects on practitioners and professionals. In both narrative and analytical accounts, workers are reported as suffering chronic stress, anxiety, ill-health, loss of morale, and a debilitating sense of betrayal and powerlessness (see for example, Solondz, 1995; Britton, 1995; MacKay, 1990). These effects are generated by, among other things, burgeoning workloads in occupations arbitrarily stripped of resources and labour; climates of persistent audit and review; job insecurity; parsimonious remuneration; competitive work environments; relentless reporting regimes, frequent restructuring and adjustment, and the devaluing of commitment to service and the social goals of public enterprise.

In its most depressing insights, the literature is punctuated by rhetorical articles and polemic in which repugnance to the managerial model is explicit and betrays the extent of personal injury and distress. These views are typified by Rees' (1995b) explanation of managerial greed (extravagant reward and exit payments for managers of low-paid, retrenched work forces) and bullying (intimidatory control of workers fearful of long-term unemployment) as logical products of managerial dogma. Writing under an apparently necessary pseudonym, Col Face (1995) chronicles a dismaying series of inconclusive community services reforms in New South Wales, Australia. Excessive exercise of managerial authority combined with retrenchments, upheavals and displacement of sector-wise managers by private sector newcomers marginalised practitioners, increased their workloads, devastated morale and eroded institutional memory. Largely by force of description, Salvaris (1995) condemns the intimidating managerialism of the Kennett Government in Victoria, Australia,

but signals incidentally that managerial behaviour of this nature may originate more in New Right policies hostile to public expenditure than in its own doctrines. Although the human costs outlined in these three case studies are echoed in varying degrees in others, the studies allow extremes of managerial practice to divert attention from more generic shortfalls of managerialism as a model for public sector administration.

Cultural dislocation is a recurrent theme in the more analytical critiques of public sector managerialism. Pollitt (1990) remarks that the simplicity of the managerial model seldom reflects the complexity of thought and functioning in the public sector, or the contingent nature of its work. Managerialism's obligations to reform objectives, its ever-tightening focus on the instruments of administration, and its cost-accounting culture subjugate the values of social justice, democracy and redistribution which are the traditional marks of public sector work.

Misalignment of values is most conspicuous in the resistance of established public sector professions to the reductionist demands of managerialism. The tensions occur when the business of management competes aggressively with the business managed for what Pollitt (1990) calls 'guardianship of organisational purpose'. In New Zealand, the tensions regularly reach flash-point in the professionalised sectors of health, education, social welfare and child protection, where the mechanisms of management displace professional judgement, and threaten traditional forms of organisation and relationships with the public. As Davis (1995) explains in his review of managerialised health care in Australia, the harm to workers' morale and health arises largely from the internalising of value conflicts by practitioners unwilling to betray their professional ethics, priorities, and traditions of care. Quieter feelings of desperation may be felt in other public sector occupations where similar values are held but are not quite so well articulated. Front-line practitioners may assume the rituals and language of the new environment but carry on doing what 'needs to be done'.

The cultural conflict is fought at too many points of contact between management and occupational practice to be traversed here. For the purposes of this study, some brief illustrations will suffice to demonstrate the impacts of man-

agerialism on front-line public servants. To compensate for the paucity of New Zealand case-studies, I have also included Australian occupations as examples.

3.2.5.1 Disconnected approaches to work

Managerial pre-occupation with control results in hierarchical top-down authority structures which corrupt the ideal of devolved accountability and local empowerment. This commits practitioners already marginalised by loss of control over work to vertical forms of response to problems best solved through horizontal co-ordination (Kettl, 1997). Managerialism's restless pursuit of goal specification exacerbates this restraint by obliging practitioners to compartmentalise work in discrete clusters of outputs rather than in broader categories of outcome which recognise the inter-connectedness of problems and their systemic causes. In New Zealand's Children and Young Persons' Service (NZCYPS) (Duncan, 1995), social workers dealing with multi-faceted child protection problems often found that the funds were not available in the budgets of occupational associates to manage complementary elements of cases.

3.2.5.2 Commodifying of service and production effort

The focus on outputs as unitary measures of efficiency subordinates professional and occupational ideals to managerial needs, commodifying both public services and the human effort of producing them (Rees, 1995a). To win pay increases, child protection workers in NZCYPS found themselves obliged to meet performance criteria which demanded increases in case load, treatment within arbitrary timeframes, and higher rates of case closure (Duncan, 1995). The result was more encounters with child welfare crises but unduly limited contact with families and unsafe short-term solutions. Typically, the quality of such work which is important to practitioners is difficult to measure, so it becomes a secondary consideration (Mützelfeldt, 1995; Kettl, 1997). Hunt (2003) reports that public sector scientists working in one of New Zealand's recently corporatised Crown Research Institutes experienced emotional stress and feelings of alienation from their work when obliged to treat it as a commercial product instead of a valued social labour. Demoralising feelings of estrangement followed

from the perception that society no longer valued them as a result of this 're-packaging'.

3.2.5.3 Distorted service relationships

Practitioners find themselves compelled by other aspects of managerial pre-occupation with efficiency to adopt unfamiliar forms of relationship with the public. In the managerial model of public interaction, users become uni-dimensional 'consumers' instead of citizens, and services become 'products' so that they can be managed efficiently to meet a consumer's immediate needs (Pollitt, 1990; Mützelfeldt, 1995). The shift to the market model of retailer–customer relationships has threatened the moral basis of traditional service-oriented relationships. This is particularly so in relationships where significant social values or needs are being addressed. Clients or service-users trust professionals and practitioners to place their individual needs above self- or institutional interests. In return, clients do not expect specific results or the forms of guarantee associated with purchase of goods and commodities (Wilensky, 1964). The treatment of service as a saleable commodity weakens this moral basis to the relationship.

Charging for social services hardens client expectations of quality and satisfaction. In New Zealand's education sector, the practice imposes an arbitrary market-transaction character on teacher–student relationships which have traditionally served education needs through more complex and longer-term associations. Aside from the secularising effect of the transaction, the transfer of goods implied by the payment of university tuition fees has resulted in students expecting service and academic achievement of higher quality than over-worked and increasingly under-resourced teaching staff can deliver (H. Perkins, 2002, pers. comm.). A pay–effort 'bargain' has emerged: the more students are obliged to pay as university 'customers', the less effort they believe they need to exert to obtain their credentials (R. Gidlow, 2003, pers. comm.).

3.2.5.4 Cost recovery impacts on workloads and effectiveness

Efficiency measured in terms of more goods and services amplifies other strains on practitioners. In the private sector, more products in demand mean more income to cover costs, but in a public sector actively starved of funds by New Right ideology, more demand means higher costs because the political risks in passing on real service costs to tax-payers are too high. Typically in these circumstances, managers with few other options to deflect these costs call for more 'efficiencies' from their depleted workforces (Davis, 1995; Pollitt, 1990). Quality of work and practitioner health suffer, along with practitioners' social effectiveness. Alternatively, managers concentrate on services which cost less. The practice obliged clinicians in Australia's public hospitals to discharge patients quickly, or if they could not, to treat them economically as investments whose life-expectancy determined the level of service they received (Davis, 1995).

3.2.5.5 Rationing and neglect of need

The drive for efficiency through cost-cutting can place professionals and front-line practitioners in the distressing position of being the public face of rationed services. In this position, they become reluctant apologists to an angry public for decisions on 'product' quotas with which they do not agree. In Australia's reformed education and health sectors, State and Federal Government funding was based on school enrolment numbers or on contracts for completion of particular treatments rather than on the real needs which were visible to front-line practitioners. As a result of the tension between perceived and neglected need, morale and traditional indicators of performance quality declined (Mützelfeldt, 1995).

3.2.5.6 Individualistic controls on practitioners

The contractual nature of practitioner–public interactions is mirrored in practitioner relationships with managers. The quasi-legal status of performance agreements argues for increasing specification of a worker's outputs and performance measures. Linked with merit pay regimes, these are individualistic instruments of control which encourage practitioners to compete with each

other for recognition of achievement. This relationship implies mistrust of practitioners (O'Neill, 2002). It reinforces their subordination to managerial authority and the loss of their professional or occupational autonomy. More importantly perhaps, it militates against co-operative consensual modes of work by denying practitioners the unconditional support of colleagues. Scientists in Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) reported that competitive (and secretive) processes of performance appraisal also increased friction in what they had formerly enjoyed as a collegial working environment (Rees, 1995a).

3.2.5.7 De-skilling

Managerial insistence on reducing complex work to sets of tightly defined outputs induces a de-skilling trend (Hough, 1995). So too does the market-place practice of contracting-in technical specialists for specific projects. Often, these specialists are engaged on temporary contracts to fill gaps in capacity contrived by earlier 'rationalising' of human resources. Comments made by DOC practitioners during this research reveal that many find the inferior pay and conditions of these workers offensive to their notions of equity in work teams—especially if the contractor is a former colleague made redundant through restructuring. They are aware also that institutional memory and skill-bases suffer when the contractor departs with the knowledge and expertise gained on the project. Contracting has a dumbing-down effect on public servants and their organisations. They become contract-minders whose views of the front-line are mediated through contact with transient specialists.

3.2.6 Professions as models

This study is mindful that established public sector professions might act as models for managerialised occupations. Established professions in the health and legal sectors have been relatively successful in preserving their collegial structures, identities and values (Easton, 1995; Duncan, 1995). These will help them make necessary adaptations to the new environment without compromising central values (Davis, 1995).

From a theoretical point of view, logic advises against this use of models. The rise of managerialism confirms Weber's (1978) conviction that the authority structures of bureaucracy, based as they are on *Zweckrationalität* (action oriented to material or self-interested ends) would prevail over collegial structures based on *Wertrationalität* (action oriented to the realisation of a social value for its own sake). Increasing specialisation and rationalisation of modern industrialised life would favour the survival of bureaucracy because of its more rapid decision-making capacities, its greater administrative efficiency and the greater ease with which its authority and performance are judged (Waters, 1989). Bureaucratic structures are also better adapted to managing and manipulating resources, so that they are able to influence what is done by collegial structures. In New Zealand's public administration, conditions of tight fiscal restraint favour this unequal relationship.

But this relationship is sensitive to changes in the broader social environment. The power of collegial structures is related to social mandate and cultural legitimacy, so that if values important to individual and collective social needs are injured by bureaucracy's materialistic functions, the conditions are created in which the authority of collegial structures grows again. This may be so in New Zealand, where the social costs of economic liberalism have become more apparent. Professions have taken on the appearance of repositories of morality, altruism and ethical standards which contradict the motives of self-interest implicit in bureaucratic and managerial forms of organisation. In this sense, they confirm Durkheim's conception of professions as agents of social equality and solidarity confronting the increasingly divisive effects of specialisation and inequality, effects which are given a particular virulence by economic liberalism. Talcott Parsons would be pleased.

These have been compelling cues to follow in my analysis of professionalising disposition in this subordinated occupational community. I looked for evidence that practitioners took heart from the capacity of professions to 'ride out' managerial storms. The fact that they were aware of this would show at least that they were politically conscious. In Chapter Five, I am able to show that DOC practitioners do indeed refer to professional models when judging their own

potential to professionalise, and that these comparisons do influence the choices they make.

3.2.7 Summary: Implications for professionalising action

Despite its ideals of versatility, flexibility and the liberating of human potential, managerialism has not relaxed bureaucratic control of public organisations but tightened it (Duncan, 1995). Its assumption of authority over work specification, performance measurement, skills development, and reward has effectively disempowered the practitioners who conduct the front-line business of public organisations. The ways in which they operate, interact and organise their resources have been realigned to managerially expedient modes of practice and economically defined values. The consequences have often been to estrange practitioners from their colleagues and the social objectives of their work.

As I have discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, sociological observers of work and occupations are not yet able to predict the mobilising effect of these impacts. Commenting presciently well before the New Right reforms in western democracies, Wilensky (1964) suggests that in complex organisations, subjugation and the dislodging of social values on which occupations and professions are based can be significant barriers to professionalisation. Closer to the present, Solondz (1995) has argued that loss of control over work and culture has had a de-professionalising effect on the quality of services and on public sector occupations themselves. The obligatory codifying and commodifying of work accentuates this effect. Managerialism has substituted an environment in which the moral, ethical and philosophical bases for their social service ideals have been subjugated, denying practitioners the sources of personal and collective enrichment necessary for their sense of purpose and social relevance. Logic would suggest that, for highly motivated, socially oriented occupations, these are justifiable provocations to embark on professionalising action.

In Chapter Four which follows, a brief description of DOC's front-line occupational group is provided, along with an 'objective' account of its broader social context and relevance. By way of contrast, a closer look is taken at the managerial structures and practices which shape the working environment of these

practitioners. Whether their circumstances in DOC excite desires to regain control of occupational affairs and practice, or extinguish them as Wilensky predicts, is the question addressed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHO ARE DOC'S FRONT-LINE PRACTITIONERS?

4.0 Overview

This chapter introduces my research subjects, DOC's front-line practitioners, and describes the nature of their work. The account I give connects my later analysis of group self-consciousness with the broader societal context of their work, a context to which practitioners prove to be sensitive because of conflicting signals of acceptance and rejection. As Chapter Five discusses, the insecurities engendered by this ambiguity have their parallels in relations with managerial authority inside DOC, and express themselves in projections of identity and other devices used to defend occupational integrity.

The present chapter also profiles DOC, the organisation which equips the practitioner group with its operational platform, legal mandates, ideological legitimacy, and, by no means least, its crucial operating resources. This description defines the principal features of managerialism in the group's working environment. These embody the rationalising ideals and practices of managerialism as I have described them in Chapter Three.

The chapter is divided into two parts.

Part One—The Front-Line Practitioner Group outlines the parameters of the occupational group as they appear to 'objective' observation. I describe the group's origins, skills composition, qualifications, demographic characteristics and work. The intention is to clarify the character of the group, its work and its social context. Sources of fragmentation and unity are explored briefly. The section concludes by assessing which of the group's characteristics might be advantageous to a professional project.

This account speaks *of* practitioners—it does not presume that this is how they might speak for themselves. That view from ‘within’ is elaborated in Chapter Five.

Part Two—Managerialism In The Workplace describes the institutional environment in which practitioners act and interact. DOC’s key management philosophies are described and attention is drawn to the ways in which these are articulated in structural arrangements and managerial practices. The implications for practitioner group status, deployment, functions, roles, and internal relationships are examined. This narrative shows that the working environment of DOC is structured by ascendant cultural imperatives which deny practitioners significant degrees of occupational self-determination. Illustration of these extrinsic features of the occupational group supports the study’s central hypothesis that public sector managerialism provides a logical pretext and catalyst for professionalising action.

Part One—THE FRONT-LINE PRACTITIONER GROUP

4.1 Introduction

DOC's front-line practitioners are the largest single aggregation of salaried conservation workers in New Zealand. They have the appearance of being a coherent group unified in conservation purpose and function by virtue of their employment by DOC. DOC itself is the only wholly dedicated conservation agency in New Zealand which integrates the innumerable crafts and specialist disciplines of conservation practice on a national scale. Inside the organisation, practitioners are distinguishable from other DOC workers by the nature of their work, roles and history.

4.1.1 Group parameters inside DOC

DOC's front-line practitioners perform the practical, hands-on tasks of conserving New Zealand's protected natural resources and key elements of the nation's historical and back-country recreation heritage, on a full-time basis. In functional terms, they are the finger-tips of the organisation, working at the operational extreme of the organisation's work spectrum. They make the technical and tactical decisions at the workplace which govern the daily conduct of conservation work.

Defined in this way, practitioners are distinguishable from three other employee groupings in DOC. They differ from administrative staff whose services to front-line operations are largely clerical; from scientists who share many front-line objectives but work in a discrete manner, and are trained and remunerated on different bases; and from the organisation's managers⁴ whose functions, status and authority are the most sharply differentiated.

⁴ Some managers claimed a little indignantly during my field research that they too were 'practitioners' in the sense that their relationships with conservation associates and stakeholders were often of a 'front-line' nature. This is an interesting clue to 'connectedness' between managers and their staff (a point on which I elaborate in Chapter Five) but this form of work is neither their full-time focus nor the primary role prescribed for them in DOC's new organisational plan.

The majority of practitioners are deployed in DOC's Area and Conservancy offices—on what one practitioner described wryly as 'the lower decks of the organisation'. Area and Conservancy offices are located in every corner of New Zealand (see *Figure 1* at the beginning of this thesis), close to the social and outdoors arenas in which practitioners operate on a daily basis. A further group of colleagues engaged in comparable work, but on a national scale, operates as a small team called the Biodiversity Recovery Unit (BRU), based in Head Office in Wellington.

In October 2001, DOC had 1082 front-line practitioners on permanent staff, a little over 75% of the organisation's 1440 employees. The majority of practitioners (65%; n = 703) worked from local Area offices from which most front-line operations are launched. Just over half this number (34%; n = 367) worked from Conservancy offices which advise and inform Area operations; and 12 practitioners (1%) were attached to the BRU which has a national technical advisory role.

Homogeneity in the group is far from absolute. Sub-groupings are defined on several planes, but diversity in function and technical discourse is the most evident and pervasive. Dress codes (uniform-casual), job titles ('rangers'-others), and modes of work (generalist-specialist; office-field) intersect the functional differences. The organisational framework imposes its own forms of demarcation, in remuneration, strategic and operational hierarchies, and segregated perspectives, status and roles. These are elaborated in Part Two of this chapter.

4.1.2 Technical disciplines

Five major conservation disciplines are distinguishable in practitioner work: protected natural area management; threatened species recovery; historic asset management; recreation management, and community relations (Table 1). These disciplines command a large range of skills, many of them highly specialised and closely connected with scientific inquiry. All contribute directly in one way or another to conservation 'on the ground'. Within functional sub-groups, these skills tend to be interdependent. Collegial interaction and intui-

tive interest ensure that practitioners are generally acquainted with the occupational perspectives and goals of neighbouring disciplines.

The group comprises statutory planners, statutory land administrators, graphic designers, land information specialists, journalists, educators and advocacy specialists, licence and concessions managers, fire-fighters, ecologists, botanists, zoologists, recreation planners, outdoor recreation facilities managers, historians, archaeologists, builders, engineers and quantity surveyors, wild animal managers, search-and-rescue specialists, bio-security and law enforcement officers, and labourers.

These divisions of practitioner labour can be communities in their own right. Zoologists, for example, may specialise in invertebrates, reptiles, birds or mammals. Ecologists may be experts in wetland, forest, montane, grassland, riverine, coastal, or marine ecosystems. Or they may be skilled in the demanding arts of weed, wild animal and predator control, habitat restoration, or inventory and monitoring.

Some of these technical skills and practices are peculiar to the occupational group, especially those associated with threatened species recovery and management of introduced predators. As the primary developmental platform for such skills, the occupational group itself is recognised as an audacious pioneer in conservation know-how and achievement (Diamond, 1990). Skills are so advanced that practitioners are increasingly seconded overseas as consultants or working specialists.

4.1.3 Group demography

DOC's human resources data do not permit much more than a basic understanding of practitioner group demography. Unfortunately, there are no data available on such key trends in the occupational group as age and gender mix, the ratio of new entrants to founder staff, or even the ratios of staff with tertiary qualifications. For this reason, it is not possible to quantify the ways in which changes in the character and composition of the group may have influenced professionalising potential in the last fifteen years.

Table 1

Major conservation disciplines and associated tasks of front-line practitioners in New Zealand's Department of Conservation

| DISCIPLINE | OBJECTIVES | TYPICAL TASKS |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Protected natural area management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of national parks, forest parks, terrestrial and marine reserves, and conservation areas • Protection of indigenous ecosystem types (forests, freshwater systems, high country, coastal and marine) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weed control • Fire control • Wild animal control • Native plant propagation • Habitat restoration • Survey, inventory and monitoring • High country tenure review |
| Protected species management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of native plants and animals in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems • Recovery and maintenance of threatened species populations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant and animal pest control • Survey, inventory and monitoring • <i>In situ</i> species management • Species transfer • Species rescue • <i>Ex situ</i> captive-rearing • Rare plant propagation |
| Recreation management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of visitor experience on conservation lands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of commercial recreation and tourism concessions • Maintenance of backcountry huts, structures and tracks • Sign-posting • Publicity and interpretation • Search and rescue |
| Historic asset protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of historic resources and knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological excavation • Public interpretation • Historic site protection • Research and archiving of historical records • Restoration and maintenance |
| Community relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation advocacy, education and public relations • Management of conservation work opportunities • Statutory planning advocacy • Conservation and biosecurity law enforcement • Protection of conservation values on conservation lands affected by commercial activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation and public awareness events • Volunteer management • Media articles, publications, school visits and talks • Consultation with associates and NGOs • Treaty of Waitangi relations • Border control, surveillance and criminal prosecution • Strategic and tactical plan development, scrutiny and commentary • Statutory advocacy in formal hearings and courtrooms |

A snapshot of the group at October 2001 *is* possible using pay-roll data requested from DOC for this study.

4.1.3.1 Gender

The majority (70%) of practitioners are male (Table 2). The gender imbalance is indicative of gender ratios in DOC as a whole. The percentage of women has remained reasonably constant at 31–32% for the past four years, well below the public sector average of 55% (DOC, 2001a). In front-line Area offices where the work is more frequently of a manual or labouring nature, the imbalance is accentuated further.

Table 2

Gender mix of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand’s Department of Conservation at 1 October 2001.

| LOCATION | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL | M-F RATIO |
|------------------------|------|--------|-------|-----------|
| Area | 540 | 163 | 703 | 3.3 : 1 |
| Conservancy | 210 | 157 | 367 | 1.3 : 1 |
| BRU | 10 | 2 | 12 | 5 : 1 |
| Total by gender | 760 | 322 | 1082 | 2.4 : 1 |

Source: Human Resources Division, Department of Conservation

4.1.3.2 Age

The practitioner population is ageing, a characteristic which has persisted at least for the past four years despite a reasonably consistent average 10% annual turn-over of DOC staff (DOC, 2001a). Annual turn-over rates elsewhere in the public sector range from 12–16% (A. Squires, 2003, pers. comm.). What older practitioners refer to self-deprecatingly as a ‘demographic bulge’ is clearly visible in the 41–50 and the 51–60 age-groups where 52% of practitioners reside (Table 3).

The low percentage of young practitioners reflects limited rates of recruitment to the occupational group historically, a trend which is attributable in part to central Government policy to reduce full-time employee numbers in the public sector. Practitioners of all ages are also reluctant to give up their jobs in the occupation, an important indication of their vocational commitment on which I elaborate in Chapter Five.

Table 3

Age structure of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand's Department of Conservation at 1 October 2001.

| AGE-GROUP 10-yr classes | AREA | CONS | BRU | TOTAL | Percentage of Total |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Unknown | 13 | 11 | - | 24 | 2.2 |
| 11–20 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 0.2 |
| 21–30 | 95 | 47 | 4 | 146 | 13.5 |
| 31–40 | 206 | 103 | 5 | 314 | 29.0 |
| 41–50 | 240 | 127 | 2 | 369 | 34.1 |
| 51–60 | 119 | 73 | 1 | 193 | 17.8 |
| 61–70 | 28 | 6 | - | 34 | 3.1 |

Source: Human Resources Division, Department of Conservation

NOTE The 'unknown' category comprises practitioners who have not declared their age in Departmental documentation.

4.1.3.3 Ethnicity

Of those practitioners who have declared their ethnicity in departmental documentation, the vast majority (78%) claim predominantly NZ European/Pakeha ethnic origins (Table 4). A much smaller percentage (10.3%) is of New Zealand Maori or dual Maori origin. The remainder claim predominantly Asian, Pacific Island or other European ethnicity.

Table 4

Ethnic composition of the front-line practitioner group in New Zealand's Department of Conservation at 1 October 2001.

| ETHNIC GROUP | AREA | CONS | BRU | TOTAL | Percentage of Total |
|----------------------------|------|------|-----|-------|---------------------|
| Unknown | 54 | 23 | 5 | 82 | 7.6 |
| NZ European | 524 | 304 | 6 | 834 | 77.1 |
| NZ European/other | 2 | - | - | 2 | 0.2 |
| NZ European/other European | 4 | 1 | - | 5 | 0.5 |
| NZ European/Pacific Island | 2 | - | - | 2 | 0.2 |
| NZ Maori | 70 | 11 | - | 81 | 7.5 |
| NZ Maori/NZ European | 20 | 8 | - | 28 | 2.6 |
| NZ Maori/other | 2 | - | - | 2 | 0.2 |
| Other ethnic group | 3 | 2 | - | 5 | 0.5 |
| Other European group | 21 | 14 | 1 | 36 | 3.3 |
| Pacific Island | 1 | 1 | - | 2 | 0.2 |
| Pacific Island and Asian | - | 1 | - | 1 | 0.1 |
| Asian | - | 2 | - | 2 | 0.2 |

Source: Human Resources Division, Department of Conservation

NOTE: The 'unknown' category comprises practitioners who chose not to declare their ethnicity in Departmental documentation.

4.1.3.4 Salary

In 2001, the average salary for the occupational group was \$36,887 (range = \$21,000 – \$60,750). Although the salary maxima for Area, Conservancy and BRU staff are roughly the same (\$56,000–\$60,000), Area practitioners receive the lowest salaries on average (\$34,504), and BRU practitioners the highest (\$44,396). Conservancy-based practitioners average \$41,205. These salaries are based on DOC's own assessments of the 'market' value of practitioners' work, using cross-sector averages adjusted conservatively in accordance with central

Government practices in keeping public sector wages lower than private sector equivalents.

4.1.3.5 Qualifications

There are no prerequisite educational standards or credentials for entry into the occupation. As a result, the group possesses a heterogeneous mix of qualifications. Unfortunately, the ratios of secondary–tertiary, and trade–academic qualifications cannot be determined because DOC does not keep qualification profiles of its non-managerial staff.

Overall, insofar as external qualifications are concerned, the group has the appearance of being in transition from a technically qualified to an academically credentialled workforce. University-educated graduates were less numerous in the group historically—a reflection of the occupation’s outdoors and back-country origins (for a comprehensive account, see McBean, 1992)—but today the numbers are rising. Trade credentials are not necessarily displaced but are less common, in part because trade-certificated practitioners are disappearing from the group through restructuring losses and attrition, and through the increasingly prevalent practice of contracting technical tasks out.

The rising sophistication in credentials coincides with the increasingly specialised nature of conservation work, but the trends are not the result of pressure exerted by the practitioner group. Some elements of the group—such as statutory planners, journalists, information managers, and archaeologists—have well-articulated expectations of qualifying standards for their particular disciplines (expectations shared by their peers in other agencies). But there is no evidence of the group pressing collectively for a uniform qualifying entry standard for entry to DOC or for the establishment of academic schools specific to the occupation. DOC itself has taken no specific action to establish professional schools, ostensibly because academic training to professional standard has not been considered to be core business.⁵ On the other hand, since 1997, it has ad-

⁵ In the opinion of one middle-level manager (since departed), DOC preferred historically to buy its training in the form of graduates whose education had not been a cost against the organisation (K. Hughey, 1994, pers. comm.).

opted the practice of supporting practitioners who want to improve their skills and knowledge through academic training. This research is a beneficiary of the new mood.

4.1.3.6 Internal learning

DOC's predecessors used internal apprenticeships to combine academic learning and on-the-job training. These schemes were abandoned at DOC's inception, creating a technical training vacuum for the practitioner group. Practitioners pressed for their reinstatement, especially during staff consultations over the Department's formative staff-relations '*People Plan Atawhai Ruamano*' (DOC, 1994.) After initial resistance, DOC reinstated a sub-professional trainee scheme in 1999, basing it at Nelson Polytechnic. Internal technical training courses for existing staff were resumed in 1996 and tied to NZQA standards. Participation is voluntary.

4.1.4 The nature of practitioner work and knowledge

DOC recognises the work of practitioners as its most important form of labour (DOC, 2001a), despite the fact that this labour attracts the lowest salary rates in the organisation. In fact, the work gives DOC its principal meaning and relevance, translating the institutional vision of conservation into action on the ground. Practitioners are very mindful of their importance to the organisation's social function. Although other agencies (local authorities and non-governmental organisations such as the New Zealand Fish & Game Council) employ conservation practitioners of their own, none is guided by so single-minded a focus on conservation, and none unites so many conservation disciplines in speaking for the natural world in social and political debates. These marks distinguish DOC practitioners and their work from counterparts elsewhere, even when occupational affiliations and generic traditions (in journalism, archaeology, graphics design, or planning, for instance) might suggest closer similarities.

The work of DOC's front-line practitioners is concerned with change and repair. Because it serves the interests of biological and human communities rather

than profit motives, it is grounded in altruism. Its closest analogues in the public sector are the core social services of health and education whose nurturing and improving ideals are also fundamental to the conservation ethos. Practitioners devote themselves to improving the health of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage, goals which ultimately serve the well-being of society at large. Given the advanced state of impairment to this heritage (Ministry for the Environment, 1997), a real and immediate sense of urgency drives the work.

The work is frequently of a politically complex and highly technical nature. The particular skill of the occupation is in defining complex ecological problems and combining intuition with forms of abstract knowledge to solve them. Academic learning, scientific inquiry and long traditions of practical experience and experimentation underwrite these skills. Many tasks are routine but working with dynamic natural systems and human idiosyncrasy constantly compels practitioners to reach beyond conventional understandings and methods. This expertise has a distinctly New Zealand bias—a product of isolated conditions on a temperate, biologically distinctive, island archipelago (Wilson, in prep). On the other hand, the skills and knowledge are regarded internationally as the 'currency standard' for conservation know-how (Diamond, 1990).

4.1.5 Work frontiers

In key respects—principally its pioneering character—the work of front-line practitioners is conducted on two 'frontiers', each typical for an emerging occupation breaking new ground socially and environmentally.

The 'wilderness' frontier is the world of biological and geo-physical resources, where the rhythms of work are necessarily defined by the life-cycles of natural organisms, environmental fluctuations, and, all too often, the weather—rhythms which are often inconvenient to DOC's inelastic administrative arrangements. On this frontier, practitioners are the principal custodians of New Zealand's natural heritage. The 'workplace' is the 8 million hectares (more than 30%) of New Zealand's landmass administered by DOC, and the 1.1 million hectares (7%) of the country's marine environment protected in marine reserves, sanctuaries and parks. On this public 'estate', practitioners manage

protected places such as marine and terrestrial parks, reserves and conservation areas; protected indigenous forests, inland waters and wild or scenic rivers; transient wildlife and dynamic ecosystems. They also range beyond the public conservation estate to protect what they can of native flora, fauna and history on lands in other tenure. Where they do not have direct responsibility for control of the areas, the work is significantly more political, and compromises are more frequent.

The 'human' frontier is, as two research subjects described it thoughtfully, the new frontier for the occupation [Murray, Derek]. In their view, engaging with human communities and interests represents a mature acceptance of the work's political realities. On this front, practitioners carry their conservation battles out of the wilderness and into society's heartlands where almost all conservation problems have their origins. The workplace is the office, school, marae, committee room, resource planning tribunal, court-room, media, outdoors event, and innumerable other public arenas. They engage in strategic and tactical planning, education and public relations, maintenance of information systems, management of back-country recreation, concessions, leases and licences, negotiation, consultation, and the many other more sedentary tasks of administering the legislation which guides DOC's activities.

Two forms of challenge confront them. First, they must develop new approaches and arguments to engineer environmentally sympathetic shifts in public attitudes and behaviour. Second, they must find ways to mobilise public effort for the collaborative enterprise of conservation which is a primary goal of the organisation (DOC, 1999). The risks are political, but ultimately the costs are borne by New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage.

Practitioners are generally familiar with the work and landscapes on each of these frontiers. Some, such as those engaged in historic restoration or in the enhancement of recreation opportunities in the back-country, must balance human and wilderness needs carefully. Others—particularly species and wild animal managers, or journalists—can operate comfortably on one frontier for much of their time.

4.1.6 Legal, political and social mandates

The occupational group's legal operating mandate is indivisible from DOC's statutory obligations received from the State. Although it is the overriding agency of authority in New Zealand society, the State's expectations of DOC are themselves the products of social and political endorsements from the New Zealand public.

DOC (and practitioner) functions are defined in the organisation's founding legislation, the *Conservation Act 1987* (Appendix 2). Expressed briefly, the Act obligates DOC to protect and conserve New Zealand's natural and historic resources through active intervention and remedy, through advocacy and education, and through promoting recreational and commercial tourism opportunities designed to enhance public enjoyment of natural and historical environments.

In strict intent, the Act requires the organisation to function as both curator and advocate for heritage protection in wider social and political debates on the future of natural and historic resources. Although consideration must be given to the views of *all* New Zealanders on whose behalf DOC considers itself to be acting (DOC, 2001c), the organisation is more explicitly obligated to the custodial role than are other organisations which may count conservation among their particular duties. In the 'market-place' for advice to Government on resource use, DOC competes with persuasive resource exploitation interests, some, such as State-Owned Enterprises, instruments of the State itself. As Chapter Five reveals, practitioners perceive that they speak for resources which cannot speak for themselves in this market, and in the internal debates through which DOC develops its political stances.

The roles of curator and advocate are consolidated by numerous bodies of related legislation which guided the activities of DOC's predecessors but are unified by the *Conservation Act 1987*. Principal among them are the *National Parks Act 1980*, the *Reserves Act 1977*, the *Wildlife Act 1953*, the *Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978*, the *Marine Reserves Act 1971*, the *Historic Places Act 1980*, the *Wild Animal Control Act 1977* and the *Fisheries Act 1983 (Part V)*. Later legislation,

such as the *Resource Management Act 1991*, the *Biosecurity Act 1996* and the *Crown Pastoral Lands Act 1998*, empowers practitioners to pursue the conservation interests of natural and historic resources in areas over which the Department has no direct control.

Legislation of this type (especially the *Resource Management Act*) obliges practitioners to deal with interests which are often very hostile to their conservation arguments. Under fire in confrontational circumstances or in conditions of significant disadvantage, practitioners and their conservation discourse find themselves on tough proving grounds. Adversity may be dispiriting at times, but it can also strengthen understanding of collective purpose. The pressure to compromise requires them to consider what is being compromised, and to reflect on the social relevance of their work and its underlying philosophies. In effect, the legislation affirms the right of practitioners to develop and defend the philosophical basis of their occupation and its associated bodies of practice. This is an important form of social validation for the group's work.

Companion obligations of the Department also signify that practitioner work and its underlying philosophies are central to broader social interests. DOC is obliged to strengthen national identity, a role which includes observance of Treaty of Waitangi principles. Likewise but less centrally, conservation practice is obligated to *improve New Zealanders' skills* and to *grow an inclusive innovative economy for the benefit of all* (DOC, 2001c: 19).

The organisation's goals and work receive broad public approval. In fact, as Cocklin (1989) remarks, public demands that central Government should take a lead in conserving natural resources had been mounting long before DOC was established. Knox and O'Connor (in prep.) note that 'this greening of the New Zealand Government reflected the greening of the governed'. The significance of this social endorsement cannot be overstated, for without the deepening ground-swell of public concern for protection of New Zealand's natural heritage, it is debatable whether DOC itself would have come into being. Environmental administration may simply have remained a side-show rather than a central consequence of public sector reforms precipitated by larger-scale economic and political agendas (Memon, 1993).

It is clear from these mandates that the goals and work of the practitioner group sit centrally in public consciousness, and are prominent in the consciousness of the State as a result. The publication of the *New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy* (Department of Conservation and Ministry for the Environment, 2000) is symbolic of that significance. Conservation is regarded as being socially relevant, beneficial, and—certainly by the late 1980s—mainstream.

4.1.7 Origins of the group and occupation

The work and ideological traditions of the occupational group have their roots in a long, sometimes turbulent history of institutional fragmentation and internecine conflict between conservation agendas, jurisdictions and work cultures (for an account, see Kennedy and Perkins, 2000). This troubled history did not augur well for collegiality and a coherent sense of collective identity in the group's newly integrated form. Indeed, echoes of occupational fragmentation reverberated for some time in the group following integration in 1987.

4.1.7.1 Orphans of structural reform

In the sense that most had their parental organisations dismantled around them, DOC's founder practitioners were orphaned by the fourth Labour Government's restructuring of environmental administration and planning. Six Crown organisations responsible historically for resource management were dismantled, restructured or had elements of their staffing reassigned to new agencies as befitted their original roles (*Figure 2*). DOC inherited the conservation-oriented staff from the New Zealand Forest Service and the Department of Lands & Survey, each with more than a century's experience in natural resource management. The Department of Internal Affairs relinquished the New Zealand Wildlife Service and Historic Places Trust *en masse*. Marine area and mammal specialists were acquired from the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, and the Ministry of Transport surrendered its harbours and coastal waters administrators (for full summaries and interpretations of the changes, see Cocklin, 1989; Memon, 1993).

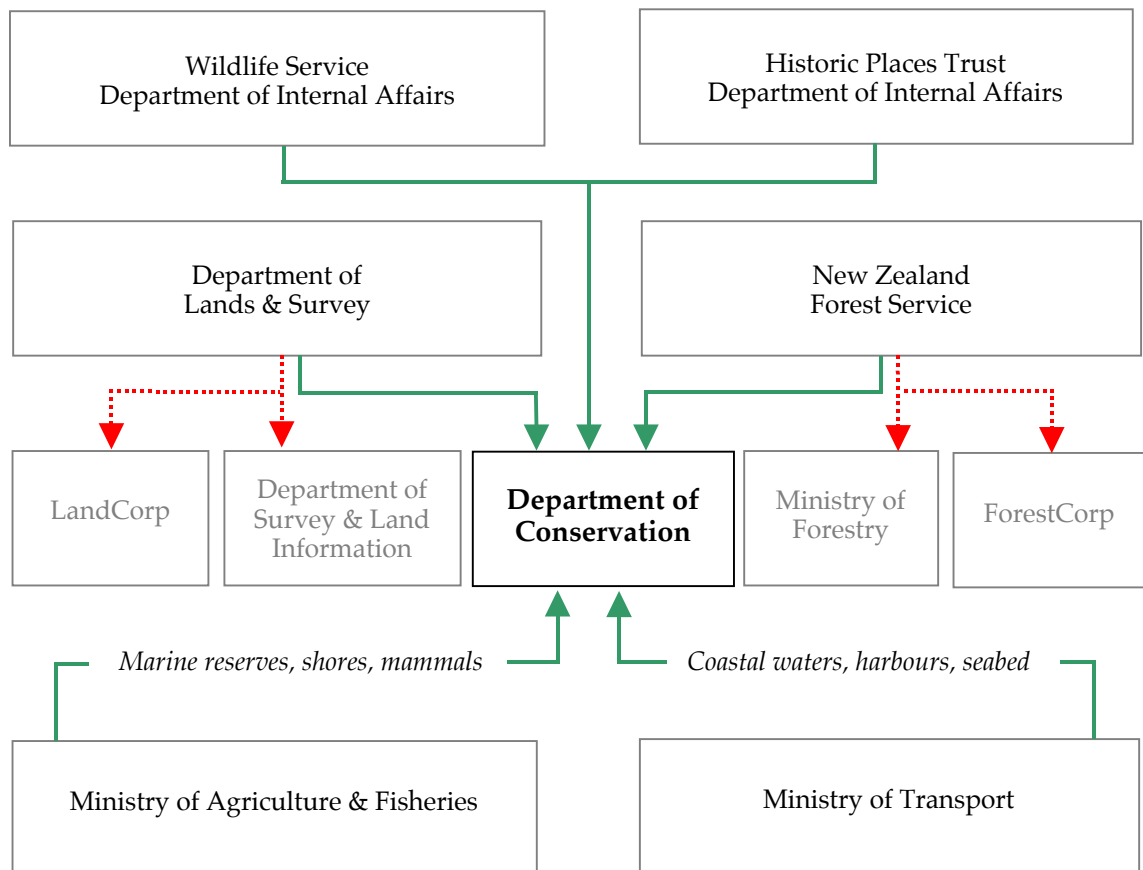


Figure 2 Institutional origins of conservation-related staff joining the newly constituted Department of Conservation in 1987. The dotted lines represent the destinations of commercially oriented staff in DOC's parental organisations

The intention of the Labour Government was to unify and integrate conservation functions in a single organisation (Cocklin, 1989) but front-line practitioners were drawn from the quite different organisational cultures, outlooks and working traditions of their parent agencies. In the turbulent first years after transition, many of these refugees of reform found themselves working alongside old adversaries. Others were thrust into unfamiliar niches in the new organisation, often charged with responsibilities for which their parental histories had not equipped them. For many, it was an unhappy transition, later acknowledged by the first Director-General as having been handled insensitively and likely to leave a legacy of suspicion of the organisation (K. Piddington, 1989, pers. comm.). Successive restructurings did not help: the weight of retrench-

ment fell most heavily on the front-line practitioners and the skills they possessed (D. Scott, 1997, pers. comm.). In its brief history, the practitioner group has been subjected by DOC and the State to periods of significantly disruptive change and stress. As Chapter Five discusses, this treatment has hardened attitudes to authority and drawn practitioners together in times of adversity.

There are other more constant unifying influences at work. In the fifteen years since inauguration, the old parental allegiances have been submerged by loyalties formed along new lines of association, defined largely by technical function and consolidated by collegial interaction. The voices of the past have been muted with time along with the recollection of who came to DOC from where. The newly integrated goals of DOC are powerful reminders of a common purpose. And, the practitioner group has a common heritage in the centuries-old tradition of back-country ranging.

4.1.7.2 The 'ranger' tradition

Practitioner work has its origins firmly in the tradition of back-country 'ranging'. In New Zealand, rangers employed by early colonial governments followed the historical English convention of forest protection (Round, 1987), but were concerned with safeguarding the commercial potential of rapidly diminishing natural resources. The emphatic shift to today's protection and restoration agendas was marked by the establishment of national parks, and by central Government efforts to satisfy new public interests in back-country recreation and the conservation of indigenous heritage. The meaning of 'ranger' became more closely associated in the perception of practitioner and public alike with the late nineteenth-century American tradition of park rangers.

Early front-line operations of DOC's three major parental organisations were conducted predominantly by back-country rangers. Their work was physically demanding. In addition to stamina, it required an intimate familiarity with the wilderness, and an exacting range of wilderness traversal and survival skills—all symbolic of competence and self-sufficiency. In the days before managerialism, these rangers could expect to advance into more senior positions in administrative hierarchies, where political debates over the form and function

of their organisations benefited from their experience of ranger practice and perspectives. These were respected elements of governance. The migration of front-line expertise into administrative hierarchies continues in DOC, although as Part Two of this chapter demonstrates, managerialism subdues the authority of ranger perspectives significantly.

Ranging was not a stranger to fragmentation, and as work diversified, the pattern for today's differences in occupational sub-groupings emerged. On a horizontal plane, operational roles evolved to meet the goals of employing organisations which were themselves claiming differing, if not exclusive resource management jurisdictions (McBean, 1992). Ultimately, individual groups of rangers became identifiable through their particular connections with forests, wildlife, fisheries, national parks or reserves. Vertically, ranger work 'deepened' in response to the growing scale and complexity of natural resource management tasks. Within the institutionalised ranger groupings, tasks became more specialised, so that the term 'ranger' retreated a little from its original notion of multi-skilled 'jacks-of-all-trades'. The ideal of versatility survives in practitioner consciousness but the place of the generalist is confined to DOC's 'lower decks' today.

Despite the growing need for specialised management of natural and recreational resources, the trend towards bureaucratic control of work was also set in train. Government-subsidised work schemes in the 1970s and 1980s expanded the range and scale of work done but forced rangers themselves into the management of the labouring or contract teams. The occupation retreated from the field, though it did not surrender its connections with the back-country. Supervision, budgeting and project planning became the daily distractions of rangers, in both senses of the word. This remains the condition of many of DOC's practitioners.

Reading between the lines of McBean's (1992) history of ranging in New Zealand, it is clear that over time, the term 'ranger' has conveyed a series of meanings to practitioner and public alike. Historically, the term has evoked the image of resilient outdoors specialists who are personally and professionally competent in the field, versatile, self-reliant, highly motivated and—at least un-

til the late 1970s—predominantly male. Ranger work and interests have been regarded as fundamentally custodial, and the work itself as uniquely situated at the point of connection between two worlds—the unfamiliar, potentially hostile wilderness and the familiar society of humans.

Inside the practitioner group, as I will establish in Chapter Five, these meanings have been retained in the form of group values and norms, crucial elements of practitioner self-definition.

The concept of ‘ranging’ has significant social currency also, as a well-received television documentary series entitled ‘Park Rangers’ (Television One, 2002) demonstrated recently. With the complicity of DOC which was a willing participant in the production, the series encouraged the public to become acquainted with a generalised and idealised image of conservation practitioners based on the social meaning of ‘ranger’.

In fact, this popular image gives a misleading impression of the group, and public contact with DOC today is more likely to mean an encounter with practitioners wearing shirts and ties rather than boots and back-packs. Many publicly visible forms of front-line work still resemble the labour of early rangers, but the distinctive role of heritage protector and advocate is now less prominently associated with the ranger image for practitioners working in complex technical, social and political environments. Few feel that the term ‘ranger’ adequately describes their roles, a view which signals consciousness of having grown and matured. In other words, major elements of the practitioner group regard the occupation as having moved on, even if it retains its affection for ranger virtues.

Their view coincides with the fate of the title ‘ranger’ which has fallen variously into disuse and been rejuvenated. Since 1997, Area-based practitioners have been called ‘rangers’ again, but this is a title resurrected by DOC’s current Director-General rather than by the practitioners themselves.

4.1.8 Summary

As the resident curators of natural and cultural interests increasingly central to New Zealanders' consciousness of national identity, then, DOC practitioners enjoy significant social approval and a prominent position in the division of expert public sector labour. The group itself has the appearance of stability in purpose, culture and identity, reinforced by its integration in DOC, the unremitting urgency of the need it serves, the privileged possession of specialised knowledge and practice, the longevity of its workforce, and visible connections with a long and culturally conditioning occupational history.

The stability is deceptive. Practitioners work in conditions of constant change. Some of this is internal and gradual. The group is in transition from its founder population to an academically qualified workforce. Its knowledge and skills bases are evolving and diversifying to meet increasingly sophisticated social and environmental challenges. Some of the change is uncertain or ambiguous. Practitioners work in highly dynamic environments where they may have the ample assurance of social approval and hard-won experience but the hostility of competing interests and the ever-present uncertainty of working with unpredictable resources. Other change is traumatic. Their troubled history has been punctuated by administrative dislocation and profound upheaval.

Instability of this sort can be destabilising or it can create opportunities to capitalise on change. If practitioners choose to exploit professionalising action as their response to managerial change, there are features of their group and work which would hasten their journey down the path to professional recognition. In themselves, these qualities do not guarantee audience acceptance of professionalising rhetoric, but as noted in Chapter Three, they are traditional marks of occupations aspiring to professional status.

As the public face of DOC, the group is visible and definable, albeit in a generalised sense given the group's size, diversity and dispersal. Through association with DOC, practitioner work has vital social and political sanction, State guarantees of operating resources, and exclusive legal mandates. Most of the group's special skills have their origins and validation in hands-on experience

of work in which the practitioners are recognised as pioneers and experts. The group's knowledge base is specialised and largely inaccessible to the uninitiated. It benefits increasingly from academic learning and discipline in tertiary institutions.

The group enjoys a near-monopoly in the conservation domain, applying skills and esoteric knowledge to solving problems of significant social importance. Inevitably, much of the work is routine, but the audacious successes of New Zealand's conservation practitioners signal quite conspicuously (though not necessarily correctly) that practitioner specialists are sufficiently conversant with the theoretical and philosophical dimensions of their disciplines to deal competently with new and unfamiliar problems which would defeat the uninitiated. This capacity distinguishes professions from mere occupations in popular perceptions, as I have indicated in Chapter Three.

Practitioners populate the landscape everywhere in New Zealand, where they are seen to have exclusive jurisdiction over highly valued tracts of public land, rare and fragile natural resources, and public access to back-country amenities. On the other hand, their jurisdiction operates uniquely at the lightly populated nexus of human and natural worlds where understanding of conservation philosophy and possession of special knowledge are necessary to authenticate claims of individual and occupational competence. Close working relationships with recognised professions (legal, scientific, resource planning) add credibility to these claims.

Popular perceptions of professions are receptive to these occupational attributes. Exclusive operating jurisdictions, mandates and occupational monopoly bear closer similarity to sociological definitions of professions, in which occupational closure and autonomy are critical determinants. Chapter Five will examine whether and how practitioners choose to capitalise on their professionalising advantages in claims they make to occupational autonomy.

How much the professionally managed working environment of DOC *tolerates* occupational autonomy is the subject of Part Two of this chapter.

Part Two—MANAGERIALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

I can't believe how differently everything is done here. Everything's so structured, so *regimented*.

[Louise, newcomer to DOC]

4.2 Introduction

In this section, an account is given of DOC's organisational framework and management philosophies. As signalled at the beginning of the chapter, this narrative is intended to show which features of managerialism elaborated in Chapter Three are encountered by practitioners in their institutional environment. The account draws extensively on DOC's own managerial literature, especially the *General Managers' Handbook* (2001c) in which the new managerial arrangements and philosophies are set out succinctly for all managers and staff (Logan, 2001a).

The implications of these arrangements for front-line workers and their labour are assessed also. These assessments argue that practitioners have cause to act strategically in defence of their occupational values and collegial ideals. The commentary supports the hypotheses underlying my study, but as evaluation, it takes its authority from two sources. First, it draws on my long immersion in the DOC practitioner community, observing my colleagues and experiencing their reactions to the new managerial environment. Second, it follows the logic, outlined in both parts of Chapter Three, that bureaucratic value systems are well equipped to prevail over collegial systems in the workplace.

The organisational environment of DOC is described largely as it has been since 1996, when the first steps were taken after the Cave Creek disaster to revise DOC's structure and management practices. The result is shown to be a closely inter-related mix of rigorous new structural arrangements, systems, processes, roles, codified work and behaviour, and culture—all of them goal-driven instruments of contemporary managerialism.

DOC is striving to develop an organisational structure and culture which promotes excellence and efficiency in everything it does. In its new language, DOC refers to this agenda as 'Quality Conservation Management', a concept derived from managerialism's Total Quality Management doctrines, and applied to all aspects of departmental work and functioning. To achieve its objectives, DOC has re-engineered every element of the 'way work is done' to accentuate the force of managerial principles. Micro-management has been adopted as guardian of the principles. The effect has been a pronounced gathering in bureaucratizing momentum, a trend which DOC regards as crucial to achieve its stated primary aim of providing high quality conservation services to the Minister of Conservation and public alike (DOC, 2001c).

Micro-management has introduced numerous forms of functional and cultural discipline. Many are simply realignments of old arrangements and conventions familiar to front-line practitioners. Others are unfamiliar. All are underwritten by new notions of practitioner roles and status which determine the limits to the contributions practitioners make to the organisation's work. Taken together, the old and the new have enveloped practitioners in a working environment which permits them technical discretion in the conduct of their work—the central locus of autonomy, in the views of Freidson (1973) and Murphy (1990)—but imposes significant constraints on what work they do, the style in which they do it, and how they interact when they do it.

4.2.1 Organisational framework

DOC's new organisational arrangements have been adopted through a quite understandable concern to avert a recurrence of the systems failures deemed to have contributed to the tragedy at Cave Creek (Department of Internal Affairs, 1995). The disastrous collapse of the DOC viewing platform prompted widespread tightening of controls on management of all public services in New Zealand. In DOC (whose staff constructed the fatal platform), the changes have been embraced with particular vigour so that risk—both political and operational—is managed swiftly, effectively and very visibly.

The new organisational framework made for a more intimate connection with the principles of economic rationalism and the 'market-place' than had been DOC's experience previously. The structural and cultural overhaul begun in 1996 imposed business-like arrangements, disciplines, language and ideals designed to strengthen institutional control of work quantity and quality. For the first time in DOC, practitioners heard the new rhetoric of 'promoting excellence' through being 'enabled' and 'empowered' as individuals.

The new framework is known as the 'Bach Model'.⁶ It is based on a set of mutually reinforcing management principles amplified by structural arrangements, systems and procedures. It is an inviolate institutional blue-print against which DOC constantly evaluates its adherence. Continual refinement through monitoring and audit gives it the character of a 'living' framework.

The Bach Model is intended to be normative in all facets. It defines the nature and centres of authority, organisational structure, responsibilities, accountabilities, roles, modes of work, internal and external working relationships, and even internal language and job titles. It determines what work is done by whom, and who sets the standards for that work. It specifies how standards are to be set and met. Its reach extends further, to defining behavioural norms, work styles, and the culture desired by the organisation. It takes the view, for example, that *if left undefined, organisational culture will be determined by behaviours which are condoned rather than by those that are sought* (DOC, 2001c: Section 1: 22). The broad goal of the model is to have key elements of its organisational culture internalised by staff (DOC, 2001c). Systems of many types and purpose are used instrumentally to encourage appropriate forms of behaviour and work ethic. Alternative value systems are tolerated by the Bach Model only if they do not weaken its authority or contradict its underlying principles.

The model has imported the universal language of managerialism, rich with acronym and business-speak. Management jargon is under-scored by the harmonics of market idiom. Its symbols range from the expensive and generic paraphernalia of branding and corporate well-being to coffee mugs embla-

⁶ The model takes its name from the Australian firm of management consultants which adapted private-sector concepts for the Department.

zoned with structural principles, and wallet-cards reminding staff of quality conservation management doctrines (Appendix 3).

4.2.2 Organisational principles

The Bach Model articulates managerialism's three central principles of organisation: accountability, managerial leadership and clarity of purpose and function. These are immediately recognisable as the objectives of reform in public administration as a whole. Each (and its corollaries) supports the others, but the principle of accountability has the most far-reaching influence on practitioner work and collegial relations. It is the fundamental driver of DOC's systems-based approach to achieving quality conservation management.

4.2.3 Accountability

In the Bach scheme, accountability refers to a duty to explain how a certain task or activity conforms with approved goals or strategies. This duty is inalienably an individual obligation: only individuals are permitted to make the decisions which guide their actions, and only individuals can be held accountable for them (DOC, 2001c). For practitioners, the duty of explanation is upwards, and to managers alone rather than to peers. Explanation concerns itself with 'outputs' and their consequences (especially the political implications for DOC) rather than with how results have been achieved. The distinction signifies that accountability is less attentive to the technical dimensions of practitioner work.

In order to explain, individual DOC practitioners are placed in positions of being able to explain. They (or rather the positions they occupy) are given temporary authorities to execute the tasks set for them by their managers (DOC, 2001c). This is called 'enabling' and 'empowering', but because the authority is delegated, the Bach Model intends managers as the *delegators* to be accountable for the work. To ensure that each individual understands what is expected, formal definitions of role, focus, tasks, behaviour and working relationships are mapped out and written into contractually based performance agreements. These definitions are designed to *limit* rather than expand work horizons. In practice, managers negotiate some of these definitions with their

staff—especially if there are technical complications—but functional roles and focus are hard-wired into the organisational framework. Practitioners have no control over these at all. I describe these roles and focuses briefly in Section 4.2.5.2.

Formal prescription of work and roles eases the way for a suite of performance monitoring, assessment and reporting procedures. The emphasis on accountability demands objective measurement, compelling practitioners to quantify many forms of qualitative work, including their relations with colleagues and the public. At performance reporting times, I have observed the frustration of practitioners obliged to report in the language of awkward or contrived measures. The adoption of ‘market’ discourse in formal working relationships (Section 4.2.5.3) creates additional tensions. These are workaday realities of managerialism’s commodifying ideals discussed in Chapter Three.

4.2.3.1 Accountability and cohesion

In what appears to be the logic of the Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ at work, the assumption implicit in accountability is that the sum of individual efforts will amount to collective excellence. The assumption is not taken for granted by the Bach Model but its pre-occupation with *individual* accountability prevents it from exploiting collegiality and team work as primary means of encouraging collective effort. Indeed, in the *General Managers’ Handbook* (DOC, 2001c), ‘collegiality’ is mentioned only rarely, either as an after-thought or as a consultative mechanism to inform individual decision-making among managers.

Managers often expressed the need for and desirability of collaborative effort but team work is more often appealed for than insisted upon (see for example, Logan, 2001b). The Bach Model itself sees team work only as *an important part of the Department’s way of working* [but not] *a form of relationship which is... part of the model* (DOC, 2001c: Section 2: Part III: 71). Even then, it prefers team work to be structured through committees and approved networks, none of which may operate independently of managerial control.

To counteract the potential for disorder and confusion inherent in its individualism, the Bach Model embeds the principle of accountability in organisational systems and structures whose force is intended to be cohesive and stabilising. Reliance on system-based controls has a profoundly straitening effect on the way practitioners work.

Cohesion is sought as a by-product of order and control. In DOC, a strong emphasis on consistency, routines and standardisation extends beyond the relatively trivial (standard document formats or generic job descriptions, job titles and work competencies) to fundamental elements of departmental function. For example, the Bach Model aims to have the conduct of up to 80% of DOC's work—much of it the core work of practitioners—codified as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (DOC, 2001c: Section 2: Part IIB: 60). Standardisation relies on specifying courses of action in relation to possible outcomes, a requirement through which accountability insists on the bureaucratising of conservation work.

Cohesion is induced by making accountability a central element of reward systems. In order to win salary increases and other privileges, practitioners are obliged to convince their managers how well, as individuals, they have conformed with the organisation's expectations and goals. Only recently have reward assessments included investments in team work as a performance criterion, but objective measures of team work are lacking.

In fact, disunity may be a likely unintended consequence of this reward instrument. Reliance on managers alone to make the judgements on individual worth and reward can engender suspicion, especially as New Zealand's privacy legislation prevents others from seeing how fair and objective managers have been. Competitive rather than co-operative interaction is more likely if colleagues feel obliged to limit their sharing of skills and knowledge in order to protect reward-winning advantages.

The Bach Model anticipates any such potential for division by placing the onus on managers rather than on practitioners to 'encourage' collegial behaviour and to co-ordinate collective effort (DOC, 2001c: Section 1: 28–29). Managers rely on

structured and accountable relationships between practitioners to do this—relationships which *override* collegial connections.

4.2.3.2 Accountability and coercion

Though intended to liberate staff potential, resolute administrative controls are coercive in several ways. DOC's pre-occupation with the standardising and codifying of work may act as an instrument of cohesion but the emphasis is on managing conformity.

Managerial systems and structures are regarded as too indispensable to organisational integrity to be undermined; deviation is permitted only by managers, and only in exceptional circumstances. The model's reliance on these instruments to preserve stability and cohesion also ensures that review and refinement become unavoidable necessities. Attending to the needs of systems accounts for a pronounced inward-looking focus on the organisation itself, especially by managers who, as keepers of the systems, are accountable for maintaining their integrity. Few practitioners are able to avoid the effects of this pre-occupation. It gives rise to a pervasive climate of review and audit intended to assure managers that regulation and control are delivering the desired results. Review fatigue can be as much a problem for managers as it is for their staff (see for example, R. Sadleir, retired Director of Science for DOC; Letters, *New Zealand Listener*, 15 March 2003).

In circumstances of such dependence on formal controls, unplanned eventualities arising from the actions of *people* can be taken to indicate a failure of *systems*. Conditioned by the Cave Creek tragedy, the reaction perpetuates the instinct to refine the controls and affirm the legitimacy of the broader institutional framework.

As a cardinal principle of managerialism, then, accountability resonates in the working environment like an insistent harmonic, conveyed to the practitioners through the webs of systems and protocols which structure their work. Its companion principle of managerial leadership does more than act as custodian; it gives accountability full reign over the work of the occupational group.

4.2.4 Managerial leadership

To practitioners, managers are the visible face of the Bach Model. In such a compartmentalised organisation, practitioners refer to small segments of the management structure only, but what they see represents the whole of the managerial philosophy. The management blue-print is based on the concept of 'Line' management outlined in Chapter Three.

The 'Line' is the sole substantive hierarchy in DOC. It proceeds directly downwards from the Director-General through all levels of the structure to managers at the workplace (*Figure 3*). Managers in and alongside the 'Line' share a common, crucial duty to provide a stable management platform for the organisation's work. By design, this emphatic line of authority is reflected in and sustained by organisational structures and systems (DOC, 1997).

In DOC, the primacy of the 'Line' represents a significant shift away from earlier axes of control operating in parallel administrative and operational hierarchies. The contraction of authority diminishes the status and influence of operational jurisdictions—a marginalising outcome institutionalised by the Bach Model.

Managerial authority means exclusive executive licence over work functions and content, discipline and compliance, and decision-making. Above all, it means leadership, a role extended by the Bach Model to considerations of occupational ethics, style, behaviour and culture. The meaning of managerial leadership is elaborated at length in the *General Managers' Handbook* (DOC, 2001c), and reiterated in numerous other internal publications.

Leadership is central to the manager-employee relationship around which the organisational framework is designed (DOC, 2001c). The relationship is governed by four powerful rights over the practitioner group. These rights are referred to collectively by the acronym 'VARI'. Managers can *veto* appointments, *assign* work, differentially *reward* individuals for performance, and *initiate* removal of individuals (DOC, 2001c: Section 2: Part II: 53). As I have discussed in

Chapter Three, ownership of these rights is central to considerations of occupational autonomy and professional identity.

Leadership sanctions further interventions in the work of the practitioner group. By virtue of their unique hierarchical relationship, managers are the sole keepers of the conservation overview. In addition to communicating the conservation vision, all managers expect to act as personal and occupational confidants and mentors. In every aspect of their own conduct, they lead by acting as role models, projecting the attitudes, behaviour, and styles symbolic of the organisational culture. The role is intrinsically paternalistic, though not at the expense of its capacity to be authoritarian.

Inasmuch as managers determine the course and quality of conservation work, and maintain the standards of occupational performance and behaviour, they are the designated leaders in the technical heartland of practitioners. Given that they function at one or more removes from a great deal of the front-line work, leadership in this territory has an intrusive and presumptive character to it. (Personal contact with work on the ground is sustained, for example, through a mandatory contrivance called 'management by walking about'.) The possibility of offence is exaggerated by the visibly superior status of the people who do not *do* the work and their unavoidable obligation to interpret front-line work in terms of its meaning for the organisational model and for the organisation itself.

But, while offence is possible and observable, it is not universal, arguably because managerial intrusiveness is moderated by two important considerations. Many managers have been practitioners themselves. Hands-on experience allows them to comprehend practitioner work and collegial sub-culture, even if the Bach Model limits their freedom to endorse their values and aspirations. Equally, their leadership role does not extinguish the technical licence of practitioners to make tactical decisions in the field—to control the nuts-and-bolts of conservation work itself. Each of these considerations helps to give managerialism a more benign face in DOC.

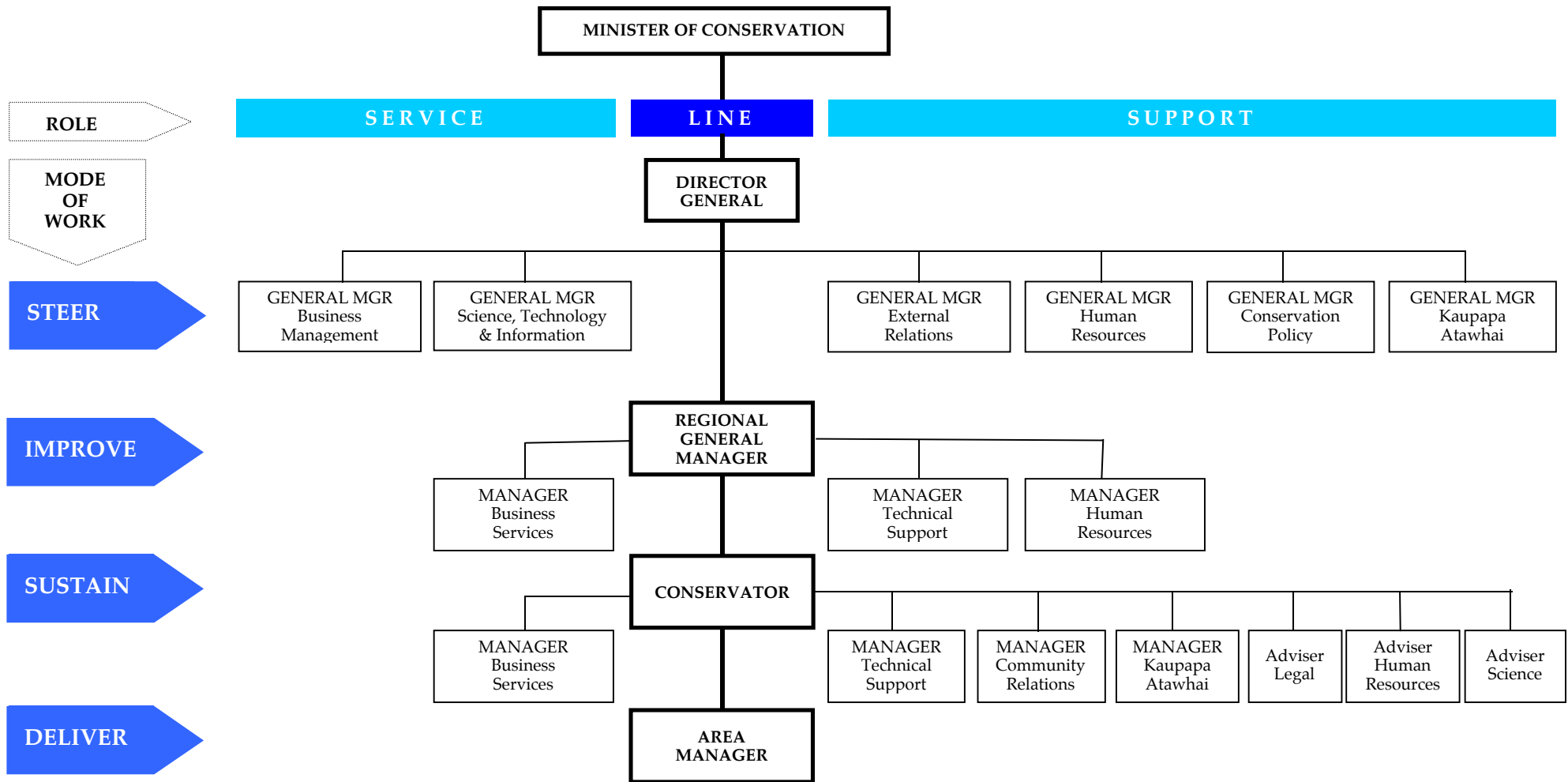


Figure 3 Organisational structure, functional roles and modes of work in New Zealand's Department of Conservation. Adapted from *Restoring the Dawn Chorus 2001–2004* (DOC, 2001b).

4.2.4.1 Structural implications of managerial leadership

Managerial authority has numerous other implications for practitioner work, most insisting on unconditional deferral to the 'Line' and its needs. To avoid weakening managerial capacity to manage, for instance, strict limits (in effect, quotas) are placed on the numbers of staff reporting to each manager. Limiting the number of 'reports' has direct consequences for DOC's structural configuration. At each level, the number of staff in work units, the allocation of work responsibilities and resources, and ultimately, the setting of administrative and operational boundaries are constrained by reporting quotas. Conservation need is permitted to breach them in exceptional circumstances only. As a consequence, the earlier priority given to protecting managerial authority governs how *much* work can be done locally, and what quality of effort can be brought to bear on problems and issues.

Integration of the occupational group's work is also expropriated in the interests of sustaining managerial authority. In DOC, integration is achieved primarily through formal linkages between managers in and alongside the 'Line'. Managers themselves rely on an increasingly elaborate range of procedural instruments to ensure that integration is an informed process, well nourished by high quality advice from practitioners. Information flows to the 'Line' are managed through structured and standardised relationships between practitioners who have little influence over the specification of technical linkages and consultation protocols.

It is clear from these illustrations that the organisational framework of the new DOC requires managerial authority to be the principal reference point for practitioners and their work. Managers act therefore as the leaders of their occupation and keepers of its integrity.

4.2.5 Role and functional clarity

DOC's structural arrangements are modelled on the principle of clarity in role and function, the third of managerialism's organisational principles. Well-defined vertical and horizontal partitioning of the organisation establishes the

pattern through which work functions and operational mandates are segregated. In effect, the principle of role and functional clarity determines how and where DOC's practitioners are deployed in the organisation, the limits to their operating horizons and technical licences, and what part their prescribed labour is expected to play in the work of their occupation. The potentially divisive effects of role separation are counteracted by specifying internal and external service relationships for all roles. For practitioners, this means that institutional rather than operational needs define who they interact with formally, and what the nature of those interactions is intended to be.

4.2.5.1 Practitioner deployment

Structurally, DOC employees are arranged in four tiers (*Figure 3*)—at Head Office in Wellington, and at Regional, Conservancy and Area levels. With the exception of the small policy advisory team of BRU-based specialists in Head Office, all conservation practitioners are deployed in the third-tier Conservancy and fourth-tier Area offices. Lines of report and command between all tiers are managerial rather than operational—technical specialists in a Conservancy office do not dictate what Area specialists do.

In these tiers—the 'lower decks' of DOC in my wry colleague's perception—practitioners are separated from the centres of strategic and policy development in Head Office and from the pivotal functions of work quality assurance and standard-setting in Regional Offices. Accordingly, although intimately connected with front-line operations, they are less influential in determining the course of conservation work. In contrast, Head Office and Regional staff are granted greater freedom of thought and action so that their capacity to guide the work is unimpeded. They are more highly paid than their third- and fourth-tier colleagues (DOC, 2002a), the reward differential reflecting the higher value placed on managing political risk to the organisation, developing conservation vision, and sustaining organisational systems. Unlike front-line practitioners, most such staff are retained (along with managers) on individual employment contracts whose superior forms of reward for performance are commensurate with their 'superior' functions.

Perspectives and rewards of a more proscribed kind predominate in the third and fourth tiers where the emphasis is on meeting the organisation's operational targets. New Zealand is divided into thirteen third-tier Conservancies whose administrative horizons conform more or less to provincial boundaries (*Figure 1*). Conservancies are divided further into fourth-tier Areas whose managers represent the end of the line of authority. Area Managers are connected by direct line of report to the Conservator of their host Conservancy and are accountable for all aspects of front-line work and administration.

4.2.5.2 Work modes, roles and levels

In keeping with the ideal of functional clarity, each of the four tiers in the organisation is assigned a specific role, mode and level of work (*Figure 3*). 'Modes of work' are the parts of the collective conservation effort actively differentiated in order to ensure that each is accountable. 'Level of work' refers to work complexity, the assumption being that labour at each level becomes progressively more complex the further it is *removed* from the workplace. Level of complexity is a key determinant of salary and privilege. In addition to these distinctions, staff are assigned specific roles, or working relationships to the 'Line'. These are generic and prevail at all levels of the organisation.

These separations intersect horizontally and vertically, creating an organisational matrix in which the arbitrarily partitioned work of practitioners is confined to the lower, less complex quadrants. Activities in all quadrants serve the 'Line' and are subordinated to its authority. With a few anomalous exceptions which DOC was unable to explain for me, front-line practitioners are assigned to 'supporting' the 'Line'. The relationship is advisory and non-binding, and in this capacity, practitioners are accountable for the quality of advice they offer (DOC, 1997). By definition, their project work is reinterpreted as a form of support, since it gives form and substance to the decisions taken by managers.

Segregation is emphasised by the fact that practitioners must argue their cases through managers in order to influence the technical course and quality of work done by the occupational community. The effect is to introduce an arbitrary separation of front-line workers whose knowledge and labour, logic sug-

gests, should be seamlessly connected through close team work and collegial interaction. The artifice also often *weakens* the force of practitioners' arguments, since managers at all levels weigh their technical advice against its political and fiscal implications for DOC. Loss of control over conservation arguments in this way jeopardises the reputation and social standing of front-line practitioners, much as I have illustrated in the context of 'rationing' in Chapter Three. One executive member of a prominent conservation NGO (who preferred to remain anonymous) considered, for instance, that the organisation's reluctance to defend worthy conservation arguments in public was symptomatic of its 'cringe mentality', a label he applied indiscriminately to managers and practitioners alike.

Within the occupational group itself, the partitioning of work has separated specialist knowledge from the workplace and created varying degrees of confusion about responsibility for work. To validate the distinction between Conservancy and Area work components, for instance, the Bach Model has 're-mapped' the functions of Conservancy specialists (DOC, 1997; 2002b), stripping many of their traditional expectations of 'hands-on' work. Field-time is restrained, placing these specialists in the ambiguous position of being experts without adequate opportunities to keep their knowledge current.

On the other hand, in every-day work practice, this distinction might be disregarded, especially if Areas do not possess appropriate numbers of staff or the necessary skills and knowledge to meet project requirements. The Bach Model makes allowance for this deviation from roles by condoning a degree of overlap in responsibilities. But it does not permit the fact of overlap to unseat the principle of functional clarity, no matter how arbitrary front-line practice may show this to be in many situations. As a result, tensions are created at the workplace between colleagues unsure of their authorities and jurisdictions, or confused by what DOC desires and defends, and what they may see as operationally prudent. These tensions are important to my account in Chapter Five of how practitioners form their views of colleagues' trustworthiness and relevance.

4.2.5.3 Working relationships and interactions

Beyond the informalities of daily interaction, DOC practitioners relate to their colleagues in ways defined for them by organisational need. Some forms of relationship originate from structurally induced divisions of conservation labour, but others are based on the ideological and cultural imperatives of the Bach Model. Among these, particular weight is given to the conviction that DOC must adjust its internal relationships to the reality of working in a broader social 'market-place' for services.

The shift in focus from managing conservation interests to providing a service to stakeholders has the subtle effect of elevating broader political and social agendas to prominence over the more central issues of conservation practice and philosophy. It also obliges the Bach Model to specify the 'correct' style of internal and external interactions appropriate for delivering services to the 'market' efficiently. The secular notion of contractual obligation has been introduced to internal relationships, marginalising collegiality as their basis. These are internally directed manifestations of the distorted service relationships discussed in Chapter Three. Interactions are interpreted as exchanges of services, the recipients of which are 'customers' rather than colleagues. Exchange-of-service ideals treat each Conservancy and Area as a 'business', emphasising their administrative autonomy and underwriting practices such as invoicing neighbours for the cost of 'contracted' staff and resources. 'Customer satisfaction' displaces the technical quality and effectiveness of work as a measure of their performance.

The depersonalising language of the market is super-imposed on the technical discourse of practitioners. For practitioners engaged in daily interactions with colleagues and the public, it appears to have little relevance, especially for those who consider their rightful 'customers' to be the biological and cultural resources in their care. Community relations practitioners also find that their conservation advocacy and social engagement with the public relies on more personal, unconditional forms of interaction. Though they may use these forms in daily practice to avoid alienating the people they deal with, they do so in breach of Bach Model expectations of their conduct.

The contractual basis to manager–employee relationships is overlaid with a reciprocal service ethos also. Practitioners serve their managers by supplying them with the ‘outputs’ they desire and the technical advice they need to make decisions about those outputs. In return, managers serve their employees by authorising their opportunities to work, demonstrating correct ways of working, and ‘adding value’ through mentoring and problem-solving. In the Bach scheme, a manager is only able to act as a servant if practitioners accept and defer to their authority (DOC, 2001c).

Less structured relationships do exist between practitioners, based on their preferred forms of interaction, as I discuss in Chapter Five. To a significant extent, freedom of informal association eases the tensions engendered by the Bach Model’s modes of association. But like all such relationships, informal connections are dependent on practitioners’ knowledge of each other, and are therefore poorly suited to overcome the segregating effects of DOC’s organisational framework.

It is reasonable to expect that practitioners would adopt conventions in their working relationships which benefit their practice and the resources they manage. Certainly, as I have illustrated in the earlier part of this chapter, the nature of practitioner work with complex ecosystems and their interwoven human interests argues for less loaded and more collegial forms of interaction. But these conventions are not given free reign by an organisational framework pre-occupied with its own interests in efficiency, control and risk management.

4.2.6 Summary: Occupational implications of managerialism

DOC’s front-line practitioners work in a highly structured, increasingly bureaucratised and purposefully introspective organisation which defines them and their functional niches by its own institutional needs, standards and norms. The organisational framework itself is defined by neo-liberal convictions which are new to this sector.

This environment confronts the practitioner group with a potentially disabling series of paradoxes. Most visibly, the ideals of integration are pursued through

sharply differentiated divisions of conservation knowledge and labour. The ideals of work excellence are pursued by situating ownership and control of excellence *outside* the occupational group. Organisational principles strive for collective excellence by emphasising and rewarding individualism. Staff are elevated to the organisation's most valued resource but the Bach Model reduces the products of their labour to dehumanised market commodities, 'outputs' and 'services to customers'. The 'enabling' and 'empowering' doctrines of managerialism are expressed by disempowering practitioners—divesting them of occupational autonomy. 'Empowering' and 'enabling' rhetoric implies that practitioners are trusted to excel at the opportunities they are given, but, as O'Neill (2002) contends, managerialism's reliance for quality assurance on micro-management implies a distrust of the occupation. Arguably, this originates in managerial wariness of broader public disapproval.

In this environment, as John Ralston Saul (1995: 200) observes sceptically of managerialism in general, *the function [of management] has... been elevated to the noblest of levels*. Just as the 'market-place' of environmental administration has become the reference point for DOC's work, managerial authority has become the obligatory external reference point for the approval, valuing and remunerating of the practitioner group's work. Deference to this authority rather than to peers or to the occupational group as a whole undermines the means of collegial self-determination.

There is no evidence that the management *profession* in DOC is following an agenda of its own to suppress the professional aspirations of other employee groupings in the Department. But by insisting on the primacy of its own needs and on compliance with its own disciplines and standards, the Bach Model catapults professional *management* into the jurisdictions of DOC's other occupations. Managerial structures and strictures intrude on the freedom of practitioners to control their work. They define the limits to technical discretion, and restate them constantly by obliging practitioners to work through managerially expedient systems and processes. The stabilising rule of process and standardisation imposes mechanistic forms of thinking and interaction on practitioners. Work goals are aligned with managerial visions of conservation, and manager-

ial ideals define work standards and norms. Managers control work priorities, overviews, sanctions, and resources.

The working environment bends practitioner work to bureaucratic dictate by converting it into the 'products' of process rather than of human effort. The effect is to secularise the occupation's labour and abstract knowledge base. Commodification argues for this too, treating practitioners and their knowledge as tools or modular components of systems, to be plugged in and out of projects as the moods of the 'market' dictate.⁷

Along with collegiality, sense of occupational identity is at risk as a result. The Bach Model 'repackages' the occupation as a service competing in a notional market for stakeholder satisfaction. Occupational discourse is overlaid with market-place vernacular and customs. Meaningful career paths are extinguished by the reduction of work to a truncated and disconnected assemblage of its constituent parts. Occupational status, development, discipline and vision are in the hands of managers looking in other directions. The occupational group is fragmented on many planes which predispose practitioners to isolation—in status, perspectives, reward, and practice. Individualism in the environment undermines collegial values by compelling practitioners to focus first and foremost on their own particular tasks and rewards. The consequences for occupational overviews are predictable. In simple terms, practitioners are denied a collegial basis for meaningful technical and occupational self-determination.

This account of managerialism in DOC is a 'tough' assessment of the DOC workplace. But is the working environment soured by a wholly mechanistic, repressive and depersonalising organisational framework? As the following chapter describes, this is not so. Even under the weight of administrative authority and the relentless pressure of work, the society of DOC has an optimism and energy about it, and is decent and welcoming. Relations with managers are generally dignified and respectful. DOC is still committed to following a People

⁷ I have referred to this earlier, in Chapter One. The concept of transience agrees with the market logic identified by Jesson (1999) who argues that the harnessing of labour to global capital demands the expedient transferability of both.

Plan (DOC, 1994), a genuinely solicitous strategy intended to maximise the human value of the workforce and the humanising potential of the work. Individual Conservancies may even negotiate their own such humanising agreements with staff (DOC, 1998), albeit in the 'liberating' language of the Bach Model.

This *subjective* face of DOC society suggests that my narrative does *not* account adequately for the practitioner group and its behaviour. Other factors are at play. The following chapter examines how practitioners define themselves in these occupational circumstances, how their own work values affect their collegial arrangements, and how they choose to respond to managerialism.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHO DO DOC'S FRONT-LINE PRACTITIONERS THINK THEY ARE?

5.0 Overview

In this chapter, DOC's front-line practitioners speak for themselves.

Based on interviews and observations in the workplaces they populate, and in keeping with the interactionist frames of reference adopted in this study, this account examines the beliefs and values central to the work of these practitioners, their motivations and their definitions of themselves as workers. Analysis identifies which beliefs held by individuals are instrumental in holding their community together and how these foster a collegial sub-culture recognisable to practitioners everywhere in such a dispersed and heterogeneous community.

The intention is to establish how value-based constructions of collegial identity influence practitioner responses to managerialism. My findings address the underlying assumptions of this study that managerial trespass on core work beliefs and conventions will have prompted practitioners to act collectively in defence of commonly understood occupational values and jurisdiction.

Analysis proceeds in four stages, each building towards an explanation of the group's choice of strategic action.

In **Part One—'Community' Values** the work beliefs and values of front-line practitioners are outlined and related to their perceptions of 'community' and collegiality. As I have explained in Chapter Three, interactionist researchers consider that these intrinsic features of an occupation symbolise the internally mediated forms of social organisation in which professionalising action might logically be grounded.

Part Two—Understanding Of Group Identity examines the investments which practitioners make individually and collectively in constructions and projections of occupational identity. This investigation illustrates the ways in which practitioners resist managerialism and defend their sub-culture internally against its perceived intrusions.

Part Three—Professionalising Consciousness In The Group inquires whether these forms of defence are indicative of professionalising temperament in the practitioner group as a whole, or in strategically minded elements of it. Evidence of professionalising activity is interpreted in the light of practitioner views of professionalism.

Part Four—What Do Practitioners Think They Are Doing? draws the chapter to a conclusion by examining how the strategic choices taken in the group can be explained by understanding practitioner values and beliefs. This returns the study to the key questions asked at the beginning of Chapter One: has managerialism acted as a professionalising catalyst for this highly motivated, expert, occupational group; and what has influenced the group's disposition towards strategic professionalising action?

Part One—‘COMMUNITY’ VALUES

5.1 Introduction

At the conclusion of Chapter Four, I explained that managerialism has established an organisational framework in which, by ‘objective’ assessments, an environment for resistance and strategic action has been created. In contrast, my immersion in this environment has informed me that front-line practitioners interact with DOC’s authority structures on a daily basis in ways which are not indicative of open resistance. My exploration of this contradiction has every reason to ask, then, *what’s going on here?*

5.1.1 Preamble: keeping my eye on the ball

Investigation of my colleagues proved to be an unnerving experience. In contrast to the comparative uniformity in views I had encountered at ‘home’ in earlier research (Kennedy, 1998), I discovered that colleagues further afield held a disconcerting range of views on their jobs, their managers, DOC, which ‘teams’ they belonged to, and the character of their working environment. It was not just a case of polarised opinion; some held views, some did not. Some held them strongly, others were much less certain of their opinions. Some were pessimistic and downcast about the institutional circumstances of their work, but others were openly optimistic and enthusiastic. As my research proceeded, the divergence in views was confirmed, offering some assurance at least that it was not an artefact of incomplete or flawed investigation. On the other hand, the prospect of encountering a uniform understanding of occupational ‘community’ and identity did not look good.

Conscious of Ajzen’s (1991) proposition that what individuals say or signal is the best proximate indicator of how they intend to act, I found myself attempting to reconcile these many views. It was soon apparent that trying to distil elements of uniformity in beliefs about work and identity from so much variation would result in generalisation on a meaningless scale. In other words, my analyses were misdirected. The fact that diversity existed was the more import-

ant finding. My proper research task was to discover its origins and meaning for practitioner awareness of collective and professional identity. Even so, given the degree of diversity, expectations of an organised advance on professional status appeared to be unrealistic.

Despite this prognosis, the diversity I observed was clearly not symptomatic of an occupational community at odds with itself. Although they held quite dissimilar views, practitioners sought out co-operative working arrangements and socialised readily, often re-affirming when they could the personal connections they had made with colleagues. Logic suggested that practitioners' differing outlooks on occupational matters were disguising the existence of common ground on which they based and fostered collegial relations. Furthermore, mutual understanding of this ground had to be sufficiently robust to tolerate the corrosive effects of divided opinions and perspectives. The lack of face-to-face animosity between practitioners indicated that this understanding was also likely to be a durable source of cohesion in the group.

I began to listen 'past' the diversity to see what lay behind. This allowed me to resume a more consistent interactionist approach to identifying the common ground familiar to my research subjects. While listening carefully to *what* each individual was communicating in interviews and encounters, I began to investigate *why* it was being said. I discovered that behind the differences, DOC's practitioners do indeed share a number of fundamental beliefs and values, that most of them adhere to these values with varying levels of enthusiasm, and that as a body of ideals, these values are an adequate foundation for explaining the collegial sub-culture of practitioners and important features of their behaviour.

This still did not explain why practitioner opinions differed so much. Why did a group which embraced a mutually acknowledged value system hold so many differing opinions? The answer to this question came as a further surprise to me, especially as it revealed a fatal flaw in the collegial foundations of the group, a weakness which explained the strategic choices practitioners make in response to managerialism.

5.1.2 The conservation 'mission'

It is abundantly clear that most front-line practitioners in DOC are highly motivated to achieve what they understand to be the necessary goals of their conservation work. Common to the individuals I encountered during my research was a vital sense of purpose coupled with an engaging 'can-do' attitude—although their functional reference points and technical conversations differ, these workers are clear about what conservation means, and they understand the aims of their work. They are confident of their ability to solve complex and seemingly intractable problems, and are undaunted by the technical and socio-political challenges they see ahead of them. This sense of purpose—the mission to conserve New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage—is the common ground on which this heterogeneous occupational group operates.

On this ground, achievement is the universally prized measure of excellence and merit. The expression 'making a difference' surfaced so frequently in interviews (and will do so again in the quotes which follow) that it could almost suffice as an occupational motto:

For me personally, I have to make a difference. I'd hate to think that at the end of my time in [the Area], I couldn't see anything that I'd created or made happen.
[Shelley]

Accounts of practitioners' various sub-occupational missions revealed that their sense of purpose is embedded in the ethics of a predominantly western conservation discourse. This in turn is informed by knowledge derived in the rational scientific tradition. Practitioners are not only ardently committed to translating this system of rationalist conservation belief into practice but are convinced of its necessity and nobility as a way of thinking and acting.

The majority of practitioners have unshakeable belief in the importance of conserving New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage. This conviction is not peculiar to the occupational group, of course—many New Zealanders share it—but unlike the interested public, practitioners are propelled by their sense of purpose to engage personally in conservation practice. For them, passive enjoyment of nature, the outdoors or the historic is not sufficient.

It soon became apparent in interviews that conserving *nature* is the most widely and powerfully subscribed of all such interests, even in functional sub-groups removed from biodiversity work. This is what gives the conservation mission relevance for most practitioners, and draws them to work in DOC. It was also to individuals who held this interest that I was directed most frequently when I asked colleagues to recommend politically and strategically minded research subjects. Because it seemed reasonable to infer that strategic action might be organised around defence of this interest, I treated it as symbolic of a primary interest for the group as whole. As the basis for illuminating the practitioner sub-culture, ideals and norms, it proved equal to the task.

The emphasis on protecting nature varies between disciplines, but very few practitioners would concede that it has no relevance at all. Whatever priority individuals may give to human interests in natural resources (recreational, commercial, historic, cultural), protecting nature from injury is a non-negotiable bottom-line in the group's differing work agendas.

The concepts of a 'natural world' and 'naturalness' are central to the mission. Asked to describe his motivation to work, for instance, a biodiversity specialist said

My philosophy is to preserve and protect ...and enhance New Zealand's naturalness. I think as a society, we are destroying a lot of that naturalness, and it's the naturalness, or preserving that naturalness that appeals to me. It distresses me to see a lot of that naturalness disappear, so it's satisfying to be a part of an organisation that's trying to protect... improve it. [Geoff]

Although 'naturalness' implies the existence of some independent and preferred state of the environment, its concepts are rarely taken to be absolute values. The majority of practitioners do not make hard-and-fast distinctions between biological and human worlds—a very important indication of the mission's 'inclusive' ethos which bears directly on perceptions of community parameters, as I shall explain later in this chapter. On the other hand, most practitioners are sympathetic to the view that the natural world has intrinsic rights of its own. Biological communities and their constituents are deemed to exist for their own sakes, having a dignity which does not require human sanction for its

legitimacy. This is a core belief for some, who, faced on a daily basis with evidence of society's encroachment on this right, are much less likely, I believe, to tolerate their own organisation's failure to respect it.

Practitioners do make a very firm distinction between what is indigenous, and what is not of New Zealand origin. Janet illustrated this widely held conditional view of the natural world when describing what motivated her in her work:

New Zealand's native organisms are amazing...unique. I mean, we don't want to lose all the things that we have. We must try to protect them because everything is so modified now. We'd be losing just so much diversity, and we really don't know the implications [of losses].

Practitioners in all functional sub-groupings are guilty of this indigenous parochialism, but it is an essential driver of the work. Not only does sensitivity to native values compel practitioners to interrogate their surroundings more critically than the uninitiated could, but the difference between what they observe and what they feel they must achieve is likely to accentuate the necessity of the mission. Shelley captured a little of this tension in these comments:

I do not look at a landscape and think of it as just plants. I see what belongs from our indigenous culture. I see what's affecting it, what's invasive. [This is] a different way of looking at things... I do not think "what a pretty view". Now I ask myself "what of this is the *original* landscape?"

5.1.3 The mission as a personal journey

In analysing the importance of the mission as a value basis, I discovered that enthusiasm to make a difference for conservation rarely originates in the *logic* of conservation philosophy. Instead, it derives from unwavering personal affection for natural and cultural treasures. In many practitioners—not just those who work with biological resources—personal beliefs about nature run deeper than that: their's is an intuitive affinity for it. It is this affinity which connects individuals so powerfully and intimately with the conservation mission, and it is through contact with nature that their feelings are consummated. This con-

nection is pivotal to understanding perceptions of collective identity and the group's professionalising temperament.

Passion for nature and the 'wilderness' in which it is idealised is not openly declared or discussed among practitioners. It is internalised and simply taken to be a necessary attribute for the work. In the place of declaration, colleagues assess the intensity of one another's affection for nature on the basis of their achievements or their force of argument. Affinity can be signalled in other ways too: a surprising number of my interview subjects had declined attractive (and lucrative) promotions in order to remain in the front-line positions which guaranteed them hands-on contact with nature.

In my own experience in the occupation, I have found that practitioners are happier to communicate their passion in the company of trusted and familiar colleagues (a case of familiarity breeding *content*). In interviews with less familiar co-workers, I encountered a perplexing reluctance to describe the conservation ethos they claimed to embrace. In fact, many became unexpectedly hesitant and awkward; I formed the distinct impression of a connection so profoundly personal that my exploration of it was akin to asking about their sexuality.

The candour of colleagues I knew well contrasted markedly with the discomfort of others. Rhys, an Area-based specialist with whom I have shared many field trips, described his attachment to nature in this way:

I love communing with nature. I just love being among it... being involved with the plants and animals where it's incredibly close involvement. Where you actually interact with them...

This is not just a case of being excited by contact with nature. Rhys's sense of intimacy in the relationship is spiritual, approaching a degree of pantheism perhaps. He went on to say:

One of the things I love particularly is when I work on islands. Being out there on your own, you can actually see how everything you do is affecting the ecosystem you are living in. We don't just sit outside [nature] and float around it... we're

smack dab bang in the middle of it. I enjoy that realisation and having it reinforced.

In our interview, Rhys lapsed comfortably into a subtle form of anthropomorphism, demonstrating how easily his ‘incredibly close involvement’ becomes a personal conversation with nature:

I certainly have an affinity for animals because they’re living, moving things. But I have an affinity for plants also... they’re really groovy. They can’t exhibit behaviours like animals do, but you can still look at them and their lifestyles and say, “oh, you cunning little plant... so *that’s* how you do it!”

Miles was quite open about the personal connection he made with nature, and the motivations he had for looking after it:

I get my motivation from achievement on the ground ...the fact that this forest is much healthier... has a lot more bird life than it had initially. I get quite a lot of pleasure out of seeing people developing with the project. It’s a fairly useful training ground. I get very direct pleasure from being out in the bush and observing a bird in a tree, calling at me...just knowing that that bird is still there. I engage at quite an intimate level with the birds, I suppose.

More reticent colleagues conveyed their feelings about nature to me in the warmth and enthusiasm with which they described their field work experiences, the locations in which they worked, or simply their outdoors interests. I noticed that many became more comfortable and animated in interviews when we traversed these topics.

The attachment to nature is ‘innate’ in committed practitioners. Only one of my interviewed colleagues had come to DOC without this attachment, but he had developed a strong commitment since arriving. Because it is innate, motives to work conform primarily to an “in-built personal standard”:

[I’m motivated by] my in-built personal standard of how I perceive the environment and nurture and look after it. It’s a personal contribution and also a society contribution. [I do it] for the rest of society, but it’s not *completely* altruistic.
[Rhonda]

Few could explain it otherwise. Some like Wilson simply said that their interest had been awakened by sympathetic parents or significant others in their lives:

How did I become interested in conservation? I dunno... It's one of those things that are maybe a little innate in certain people. As a kid I was always interested in conservation, you know... wildlife and things like that. It sort of followed from my interests in trout-fishing, tramping...

Most interview subjects simply *knew* that conservation felt like the 'right' thing to do. For this reason, the work is not so much a job as a way of life into which many practitioners feel that they have born rather than educated. In other words, conservation is a vocation:

It's our passion for the work...It's beyond a job, so for most people it's a way of life. That's why most keep doing it, dissatisfied or not [about DOC], because that's basically what they'd be doing in their free time anyway. [Miles]

Miles's remark about persisting 'dissatisfied or not' is symptomatic of most practitioners I met. It signifies resistance, generated by strong feelings of vocation, to factors in the working environment which are perceived to threaten the mission.

In summary, then, most practitioners are subjectively connected to their work. Achievement of conservation objectives represents the realisation of personal as well as occupational ambitions. For practitioners drawn intuitively to conserve, duty to the cause is a duty to the self before it is anything else. Consequently, as I demonstrate next, the rewards sought are personal *fulfilment* and self-esteem rather than material advantage or the mere satisfaction of doing a good job.

5.1.4 The mission as a source of reward

Practitioners have many motivations to seek employment with DOC but immersion in the labour, society and landscapes of conservation is the most compelling and rewarding:

I think there's a range of things that make the job rewarding. One is the feeling that you're making a difference... making an improvement in what's currently

existing in the environment. There's a lot of satisfaction in that. There's some satisfaction in righting some past wrongs. And working with a bunch of like-minded people who are committed to the same sort of thing. Oh, and the great environment to work in here. Look out the windows... If you can't get out there, you just stand up and have a look to derive some bloody feeling for it. [Tony]

Paid participation in this work is regarded as a rare privilege, all the more so because practitioners know that the perimeters of the occupation are crowded with growing numbers of eager replacements:

We see that it's a huge privilege to do this type of work, and we're damned lucky to have the opportunity. There could be ten thousand other people who want to do this type of thing for work. *We* get to go to neat places, neat islands... and cuddle the megafauna. [Roger]

Gratitude of this kind is commonly expressed, and provides some justification for the perception among practitioners that few committed colleagues will leave the community.

It is clearly a reason also for the loyalty many practitioners show towards the Department. This loyalty is not unconditional, of course—as I illustrate later, it does not preclude them from mounting their own criticisms internally. Nor does it mean that all feel a commitment to working *for* DOC:⁸

I was not drawn to work for DOC. I was drawn to work in the field that DOC is responsible for... to the birds rather than to the profession. [Rhonda]

I belong to conservation. When people say, 'who do you work for?' I say I work for conservation. I don't say I work for DOC, you know... So at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if the boss is a complete wanker because I'm not producing widgets for him. I work for conservation rather than for the Department. [Malcolm]

⁸ Interestingly, I observed a ready willingness to associate with the organisation when practitioners saw DOC reported in the media. They felt apprehensive in case a poor image was projected (by managers or colleagues) but took vicarious pride in the success stories and were quick to identify with DOC if they felt that criticism was unjustified. I attribute this fine- or foul-weather 'loyalty' to their belief that their own values are being celebrated or censured.

Like Miles, Malcolm's personal values offer him a convincing basis for detachment as a form of resistance to adversity in DOC. Later in this chapter, I discuss how much they feel able to rely on others resisting on this basis.

Clearly, the conservation mission has a strong nurturing imperative which takes individuals beyond mere affection for resources to the desire to protect and rehabilitate them. As many were happy to declare, the rewards which come from nurturing are intensified when they work with resources which are rare or special in some way. Since these mean a great deal to them personally, in effect, they are nurturing a part of themselves.

Field work offers those lucky enough to experience it the opportunity to connect with this powerful motivation. In the field, two principal sources of reward in the mission coincide. Practitioners can immerse themselves in the environments from which they draw personal inspiration. And in achievement on the ground, they give the mission the most potent practical expression available to them.

Escape into the field is not only a physical distancing from the frustrations and indeterminacy of office work, but a release into core productivity for which practitioners willingly invest extra personal time and energy:

In terms of enthusiasm, I'm far more prepared to do the longer hours in the field...do the longer hours and weekends than sit in the office. In the field, you've got a far better focus. [Wilson]

It's a lot easier to have pride in your work when you're actually *doing* something physically on the ground. As soon as you get to Conservancy level, you become removed from the reality of achieving a result. We're lucky in that we're working in a really *productive* Area office, so we feel good about what we're doing. People work through their smokos and lunchtimes. Unlike the Conservancy office, there aren't many nights when the office is empty before 6 o'clock. [Hamish]

Achievement is richly satisfying and important for self-esteem:

What gives me satisfaction primarily is to go out there and play with kiwis and stuff, 'cos then I'm connecting with what I really want to save, you know? With

my *cause*. But my *job* satisfaction comes in reaching milestones. Like, at the end of an aerial operation, it's a really good feeling to know that I've sprayed 100 tonnes of 1080 out in the bush. I'm fully aware of the non-target [problems]... but it's a really good feeling at the end of the day. [Jane]

Shelley illustrated how field work on a remote oceanic island created a feedback loop in which 'seeing change' reinforced her bond with nature and stimulated the instinct to do more:

Because I have that regular association with the island, I have a bit more of a 'baby' feel towards it...want to see it nurtured and grow and *see* the change ... Because you have the sense that you can actually make the island repair, and make nature come alive and do it's own thing, you have more of a bond to the place. [Shelley]

It is for these reasons that 'making a difference' on their various front-lines is so highly valued by practitioners, and—as is discussed later—is so crucial a basis for constructing their notions of collegiality and identity.

Field-work is so important a source of reward to practitioners that they will not permit it to be compromised. Several interview subjects had adopted deliberate go-slow tactics in their work in retaliation for perceived inadequacies or injustices in DOC, but they were careful to ensure that these actions did not jeopardise their projects and field work opportunities. Angry at his manager's poor decisions over performance pay, for instance, Rhys revealed both the desire to have some control over the apportioning of occupational reward, and the instinct to preserve the integrity of field work:

Everyone wants to think that the system is fair, and you want to see evidence... know who gets what. Then you can make your own assessment. So, you can say, "Yeah, well, I agree. I think that person's a real worker, and goes hell-for-leather, and they probably deserve what they got." Or you can say, "That wanker! Fuck off!" You know that it's corrupt, and that alters your whole attitude to [DOC]. Not to your work on the ground, but to some of the other work that you might do. You think, "Well, screw you, pal..."

A good number of my interview subjects did not have comparable 'fields' into which they could escape, so that their rewards were neither quite so immediate

nor so visibly associated with any one form of work. Nevertheless, they sought rewards of much the same type from ‘hands-on’ activities on their own front-lines. It is this satisfaction—or the real potential for it—which sustains them in DOC. Michael recognised, for instance, that his opportunities to work occasionally on important biodiversity projects in remote locations was a form of reward unique to DOC and adequate compensation for being paid less than the industry’s standard in his own form of work.

The very personal connections with the mission make the work of many practitioners more than a duty to the self. As a way of life, it becomes the pursuit of personal fulfilment. In ways which are discussed in the following section, the rewards obtained in pursuit of this goal are intensified by working alongside similarly motivated colleagues. Hands-on practice satisfies the urge to participate in the work while drawing practitioners together as occupational associates. In conducting my research, it appeared to me that this was the most profitable place to be looking for the origins of collegial identity and sense of ‘community’.

5.1.5 The mission as the basis for collegiality and ‘community’

The conservation mission binds practitioners together in several important ways which counteract the isolating effects of structural and functional segregation. Logically, it provides practitioners with a form of ‘cultural commons’ on which they can trade in familiar ideological and operational currencies and converse in a universally understood language. The bonding rituals of ‘story-telling’ and ‘talking shop’ to which I allude in the next part of this chapter are pivotal forms of conversation on the ‘commons’.

I believe that exchange of mission currencies creates and sustains a sense of community. For instance, when I asked practitioners whether they felt any sense of attachment to a community or common culture, the first point of reference was generally to awareness of belonging to a group of like-minded people:

I think most people in the organisation feel the same way about what they’re doing. Everyone wants to make a difference for the environment. Yeah, I do

really [feel I belong a common enterprise]. There's a commonality of purpose.
[Douglas]

'Commonality' is not confined to purpose, but to adverse circumstance also:

I certainly have a sense of connection with the people doing [my type of work]. I mean, when we get together, which we did recently for the first time in a couple of years, you certainly feel like part of a club. Similar frustrations! I'd say that's one of its [main features]. There's usually a significant *bitch* session. I don't know if that's constructive. You're probably finding that, are you? The frustrations are similar for everyone... same experiences. [Malcolm]

I found that despite Malcolm's view of unity among practitioners, not all feel this broad connectedness strongly, or at all. Smaller circles of association substitute for many. It is safer to conclude therefore that the mission serves as the basis for collegial recognition within and between *clusters* of practitioners.

I could discern no pattern in work-type which accounts for this variability in collective consciousness, but I did discover that personal familiarity with colleagues reduces its severity. This finding bears out the assumption made in Chapter Four that managerial partitioning of work and work teams has a depressive effect on practitioner collegiality. The effect is not entirely disabling; as I reveal in the discussion which follows, a weakened sense of belonging to a broad 'community' does not necessarily signify the absence of group norms and standards, or a failure to recognise the cultural values of the group.

There is evidence that those who do not feel a compelling sense of belonging are 'falsely' conscious. Jane held the uncertain view that her 'team' was limited to her immediate work associates. Yet, she was able to make an instant connection with a distant colleague of whom she had no previous knowledge. The mission was the common denominator:

I would say [that I do not belong to a larger team] because I've never met these people, so how could you be part of a team? But I *do* know that when I had to phone [HW]... apparently my equivalent in Nelson... I've never met her, but we instantly had things in common to talk about. So in a really *loose* way, there is an extended team.

This is quite typical of practitioners meeting colleagues for the first time. I discuss later how meeting and socialising rituals assist this recognition of shared identity.

The mission provides practitioners (falsely conscious or otherwise) with additional bases for collegial affiliation. In the sections which follow, I outline how working interaction with colleagues has given rise to group understanding of occupational norms and standards. These are germinated in individual beliefs about the mission but act on the group as a whole to regulate collegial behaviour, attitudes and the character of their occupational community. They are instrumental therefore in shaping practitioners' awareness of an occupational sub-culture of their own making. Some of these normative and sub-cultural understandings are articulated explicitly; others are internalised and resistant to open expression (like the conservation ethos). Nevertheless, they are symbolic of the values which practitioners defend against managerial incursions.

5.1.5.1 The benefits of association

Personal interaction with like-minded co-workers amplifies personal motivation and collegial bonds by augmenting awareness of how strongly other colleagues feel about the work too. Shelley explained how, in a chronically dysfunctional office, her feeling of belonging to a 'community of interest' was reinvigorated when she and her Area colleagues were permitted to visit each other's projects again and could share their knowledge and skills at the work-face:

I think we've moved into a sense of teamship. Not that everyone's perfect but we're all starting to work together and that gives us a sense of community. Which is good... I support an environment of like-minded people as a synergistic thing... as a nourishing thing for me.

As I have observed earlier, personal *working* familiarity with dedicated colleagues is a crucial determinant of how acutely practitioners feel a sense of belonging to an occupational team or community. This is consistent with Ihara's (1988) views on the strength of connectedness in occupational collegiates. Social

or recreational contact outside work may enrich this feeling but it is symbolic of collegiality rather than the source of it.

The desire for working contact with colleagues is strong. It fuels aspirations to work collaboratively in teams devoted to the fulfilment of mission objectives. Team-building on other bases is not valued as highly, a point illustrated emphatically by a Conservancy staff meeting at which practitioners rejected a managerial instruction to attend a course in team-building skills. They argued instead that doing more field work together would strengthen their team more effectively [Geoff].

Individuals and the group as a whole benefit from collaborative effort. It is clear to most practitioners that complex projects require integrated effort:

It's far *easier* to work in a team environment. The job's too big for one person to cope with alone. Take our [field] project. You've got trappers... people doing the video monitoring... specialists who give a little more impetus. Each one of those groups has an important role to play. It improves their projects basically. [Tom]

The motivation is not entirely altruistic because an 'improved project' also represents achievement, a primary source of individual reward, as I have concluded earlier.

Through peer review and knowledge transfer at the workplace, practitioners adjust their labour and expectations to agreed understandings of mission need. By rubbing shoulders, they can 'locate' themselves and their beliefs in the practitioner community, using authoritative collegial reference points of their own choosing. The importance of verifying for themselves that they sit in sympathetic alignment with the values of colleagues was stressed by Tom, who had no doubt that project work with conservation-minded people strengthened and *validated* his belief in the mission:

If [my project companions] are not enthusiastic about the work, it's a bit of a *dampener*, isn't it. I mean, maybe I'm not working on something important after all! But if they get pretty enthused about it, then it helps you justify putting your effort into it ... it's worthwhile.

The companionship and enduring intimacy of field society is especially effective in encouraging collegiality. My colleagues speak warmly of this society, even those who visit the field only occasionally. Personal barriers are broken down through shared labour and risk, or through close confinement in isolated field camps. Differences in technical focus are eroded through mutual dependence. Geoff's extensive field experience had long convinced him that this society was more rewarding and unifying because it overcame the inhibiting social norms and façades of office relations. Comparing the more visible comradeship of field practitioners with that of office-bound colleagues, he said

It's easy to be someone else for eight hours a day, but when you're living with [colleagues in the field] twenty-four hours a day, it's very hard to keep that front up. You're actually dealing with them on a different level—personal as well as professional. You get to know them reasonably well, and that sort of intimacy carries through into normal work days as well.

I agree entirely with this view. My closest and most trusted colleagues in DOC have been those whose company I have shared in the field.

Putting faces to names—by whatever means—is a highly valued prerequisite for engendering trust between practitioners. It follows, then, that trust is a casualty of estrangement, a point I shall illustrate in Part Four of this chapter. Through personal knowledge of one another, judgements are made on conservation integrity and the merit of ideas. This is demonstrated in the confidence practitioners express in the informal networks they establish with colleagues they have met and worked with. These networks act primarily as information and problem-solving conduits, and are the most important means practitioners have of transcending institutional impediments to face-to-face contact. More importantly, they function free of the suspicion some practitioners have of DOC-organised gatherings in which proceedings are often felt to be hijacked by managerial dogma, talk-down or instruction [Hillary].

Through their networks, practitioners can interact more spontaneously on terms and in terminology they control, and which suit mission needs. Practitioners value them for these reasons, but these webs of association are imperfect in-

struments of cohesion. The linkages they sustain are dependent largely on the trust engendered by irregular contact with colleagues.

Even so, networks are vital for binding isolated practitioners into teams of convenience. Although they overlap, they do not bind them into *one* team. Yet, all operate on common understandings of the mission, as Jane has indicated through her instant connection with a distant colleague, so that the associations practitioners sustain through them become important threads in the fabric of practitioner society.

Finally, collegiality benefits from association in a way which contradicts the individualism of the Bach Model directly. In equality of purpose, practitioners are drawn into productive working coalitions as equals. Alignment of individual desires to meet mission goals engenders feelings of egalitarianism which subordinate self-interest and blind team members to issues of status or authority in DOC:

I work *with* my delivery staff member, rather having him work *for* me. Because that's the sort of environment we have. [Jane].

As I have suggested in Chapter Three, the virtues of equality and selflessness are core elements of collegiality as a form of internal organisation.

The unconditional sharing of skills and knowledge indicates that teams operate *inclusively* to meet mission goals. The goals themselves are understood to necessitate this approach:

Most people doing this work are fairly free with the work they do... they do not hold out on information. You know, "This is *my* patch, don't come in!" You have to be accepted into the group, but once you're in, we tend to work as a team, and we're pretty free and frank with our advice. There is a general *expectation* that when you write up reports, for example, you acknowledge everyone as fairly as possible. If they contributed equally, then they share the authorship. That all builds collegiality. [Tom]

As Tom intimates, equality of reward is an important ingredient of egalitarianism. The Bach Model's reliance on the preferential treatment of individual effort

can injure this egalitarianism. In Rhys's opinion, it disturbs the vital homogeneity which collaborative pursuit of mission goals brings to this heterogeneous group:

There's a certain warmth and security... homogeneity, if you like... in seeing people work [in teams] as equals. But you know, bonuses, or that sort of differential reward system is seen as a threat to that homogeneity. When people feel as though they are contributing to some sort of team, then they think, why are those individuals getting rewarded for what they're doing?

Through these forms of association, the mission becomes the ground in which collegiality takes root in this scattered front-line community. Contact reaffirms and aligns personal beliefs. Collaborative rather than competitive interaction based on trust and equality is favoured as a means of fulfilling mission objectives.

In interviews, practitioners spoke enthusiastically of the opportunities managers had given them to interact face-to-face with their peers. But opportunities to rub shoulders on mission business are uncertain. In the despondent opinion of Miles, they are increasingly hard to engineer in the new Bach Model environment:

All that sort of stuff's largely lost, I think, with the new accountabilities and fewer managers being prepared to give a bit of leeway. It's a pretty restrictive environment really.

Variable consciousness of belonging to a broad occupational community is symptomatic perhaps of this irregular contact. Centres of community consciousness are forming around local interactions instead. It was surprising, then, to find during research that expectations of collegial behaviour and outlook were held so uniformly. The reason for this I attribute to the fundamental platform of personal beliefs which align practitioners with the shared ideals of the mission.

5.1.5.2 Group norms and standards

Regardless of their differing technical alliances, practitioners subscribe to universal expectations of personality, behaviour and performance. These act as norms for the group, their limits defined and familiar to practitioners through example and tacit understanding. Though neither recorded formally nor rigorously enforced, these norms and standards were articulated readily and commonly enough in interviews to be regarded as a code of conduct and ethics for the group.

To establish what these normative thresholds were, I asked colleagues to nominate role models from within the practitioner community and to explain their choices. Preferred attributes in their nominees were consistent with immersion in the mission and fulfilment of mission objectives. Good practitioners are considered to be those who are emotionally attached to the resources they manage, and are passionate about conserving them. They must be staunch in defence of mission ideals and wholeheartedly committed to making a difference on the ground. Talking is not sufficient.

Richard, an Area-based generalist, referred to these qualities when describing his admiration for a specialist who demonstrated his willingness to involve himself in hard and dirty work he could legitimately have directed from a distance. In Richard's assessment, this commitment gave the specialist *mana*; he acquired a natural authority which exceeded the authority claimed by managers:

I thought, "Now here's a guy who practises what he preaches." That guy had overall control of the whole situation, but he was not afraid to go out and spend all bloody night up there in the tent, in the rain, and passionately carry out his duties! He had the shorts on, the gumboots... Yeah! Nice guy. If only we had a few more like him!

Practitioners place considerable importance on the possession of 'hands-on' experience as a quality. Well- and widely practised colleagues are highly regarded. Experience symbolises achievement and maturity in knowledge and intuition, themselves artefacts of immersion in the mission. Practitioners aspire

to comparable experience, desiring continuity of contact with projects in order to maximise its benefits:

I'd hate to be in a job for two years, just get a feel for it, and move on without getting to the point of contributing. Understanding takes a while to develop. That sense of how things operate and interact develops with observation and experience. If you walk out early, you're probably not going to make a big difference.
[Shelley]

Experience is regarded as a special qualification of and *for* the work. Graduate entrants to the practitioner community appear to comprehend quickly that they lack this vital attribute—that in a sense, without dirt under their fingernails, they have not yet 'graduated' into practitioner society. Several felt that without the knowledge and intuition acquired through hands-on practice, the value of their qualifications was not fully realised. They deferred to highly practised colleagues—so long as they perceived them to be competent also—and were apprehensive about being accepted by them.

Numerous other qualities surfaced in interviews as the 'right stuff' for the job: versatility, hunger for work and learning, self-sufficiency, humanity, humility (respecting the limits to ability), humour (especially if bordering on iconoclasm), egalitarianism, competence, conscientiousness, compassion, resilience in conditions of uncertainty or physical discomfort, and inventiveness. Productivity, effectiveness and the possession of special skills and knowledge are emphatic measures of performance. As the list suggests, important life-skills are numbered among these attributes, a convincing clue to how intimately life and work are connected for highly motivated practitioners.

Subjugation of self-interest to the good of colleagues and the mission is germane to these attributes. Good practitioners are those who act freely as mentors with no concern to secure status or superiority in doing so. They are deemed to have the interests of the mission at heart if they show sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of colleagues in other conservation disciplines and can adjust their own technical interests to broader conservation perspectives.

Self-sufficiency is a highly respected quality which does not compromise the ideals of selflessness or collaboration. Collegiality benefits from the setting of standards for behaviour and expertise implied in being self-sufficient. For field operators, there is something of the ‘good keen bloke’ in this quality: practitioners respect colleagues who can look after themselves in the wilderness or indeed, on other proving grounds.⁹ Among group members, widespread affection for remote places indicates that the ranger tradition of back-country proficiency survives in practitioner consciousness and sub-culture.

I love remote places. I love being self-sufficient, having life-and-death responsibility for myself... and maybe for those who are with me. [Rhys]

But as Rhys went on to say, high regard for self-sufficiency also has the effect of drawing like-minded and comparably skilled practitioners together:

You rely very heavily on those with you to have the same sense. It’s a critical component of identifying the sort of people you can actually work with.

Although the iconic Kiwi image of the ‘good keen bloke’ has obvious associations with the occupation’s back-country heritage, its traditional connotations of ‘rough-as-guts’ individualism do not sit comfortably with practitioners. Competence, confidence and professionalism are the preferred marks of self-sufficiency because they signify the ability to produce high quality work without complicating the efforts of others to do the same.

In common with the other expectations of colleagues, belief in the quality of self-sufficiency acts as an occupational standard for practitioners. As the basis for collegial relationships, these are the attributes favoured over the Bach Model’s contrived and formalised connections. Through conformity with these

⁹ The concept of ‘proving grounds’ has not been investigated directly by this study, but there are indications from interviewees that proving oneself competent and self-sufficient on the front-line is seen as a necessary step in the process of acceptance into the practitioner community. Certainly, the ‘old hands’ judge the merit of newcomers by their abilities to come to terms quickly with conditions at the workplace. They are intolerant of colleagues who require constant help or support. Janet, a recent graduate arrival, revealed that the physical demands of the bush had been as much a challenge to her as learning to be bush-savvy. This is presumably the case for many practitioner recruits who do not have previous familiarity with the occupation’s demanding work environments.

sub-cultural ideals, practitioners encourage them to prevail in the DOC environment.

These qualities emphasise an individual's fitness to be a custodian of the mission. Not all practitioners possess them—they are human, after all—but as Jane claimed, those who do display them 'stand out' among front-line operators. Typically, these individuals are looked to for leadership and role modelling.

5.1.5.3 Establishing who belongs in the mission community

For the group generally, all of these qualities act in tandem with loyalty to the cause as qualifying criteria for inclusion in teams and the broader practitioner community. As has been observed earlier, practitioners are drawn intuitively to work with colleagues who share these virtues.

Practitioners make personal and operational investments in others who are judged to share their sense of mission. This is an important driver of socialising processes in the community. Staunchness in mission ideals is used as the primary benchmark to assess whether these investments are worthwhile. By being selective on this basis about who he chooses to associate with, for instance, Tom is investing in both the perpetuation of the mission and the character of the teams he belongs to:

Everyone I align with *closely* in the Department has a similar view—they are absolutely, totally committed and dedicated to the work. You soon learn when you're doing fieldwork *who* those people are. You commit yourself and build your alliances with the people who share the same philosophy. You know that they're the ones who are in there through the thick-and-thin of it...You learn that there are some people you want to spend time with...devote energy to.

Practitioners shun or invest little in those who lack the 'right stuff'. They become impatient with hapless, hopeless or free-loading co-workers who impose unduly on their time and talents, because they distract them from the principal tasks at hand. Rhys referred to them as 'oxygen thieves', individuals who steal

the air a better person could be breathing in this privileged community.¹⁰ He justified his intolerance when speaking of co-workers whose insensitivity to the unspoken rules of field society demonstrated a lack of *behavioural* self-sufficiency:

There's a lot to do, and you've only got *x* amount of energy to put into projects. Therefore, the more energy you can direct to the problems in front of you, the better. So, the less energy you're spending trying to cope with all the *social* crap, the better!

As the basis for inclusion in the community, the mission has interesting implications for constructions of collective identity. In particular, belief in the overriding necessity to achieve mission goals at the expense of individual interests creates tension, I believe, between the desire on the part of practitioners to structure the character of the group in their own likeness by careful selection of colleagues, and the instinct to disregard station and status in the interests of collaborative interaction (equality of purpose and recognition). This results in elastic and permeable parameters in perceptions of community boundaries. The implications of this ambiguity are analysed further in Part Two of this chapter.

5.1.6 Summary of mission values

My colleagues populate DOC in a heterogenous community of front-line operators united ostensibly by the fact of co-habitation in the same organisation, but otherwise adjusted to differing operational horizons and discourses. Even so, within and between functional groupings, practitioners recognise—however vaguely or acutely—that they operate in this organisational environment alongside colleagues who feel the same compelling sense of purpose.

Individually, most are motivated to participate in the work by a desire for personal fulfilment originating in deeply felt beliefs about the virtue and necessity

¹⁰ This terminology had its equivalents in DOC's predecessors. In the New Zealand Wildlife Service, for instance, I know that colleagues judged unsuitable for the job were called 'pot-lickers', an uncharitable reference to dogs which eat the food provided but do no work. [I am indebted to Roger for allowing me to refer to one of the few surviving copies of the *New Zealand Wildlife Service Dictionary*, an extensive, and at times eyebrow-raising compendium of Service vernacular—even if it did not contain the term 'pot-licker'!]

of conservation as a way of life. As a consequence, relationships with the work are inherently subjective. Individual understanding of mission imperatives becomes a more broadly shared comprehension through face-to-face interaction with like-minded colleagues, especially in the field. The *practice* of conservation furnishes them with a 'cultural commons' on which the potentially divisive forces of functional heterogeneity abate considerably.

Cohesion is derived principally from the active alignment of individual beliefs. Germinated in these beliefs, collegial values and expectations have evolved to suit the shared labour and risks of conservation practice. They migrate across functional boundaries to the larger practitioner community where they establish tacitly communicated occupational standards for behaviour and performance. Coupled with loyalty to the mission's underlying philosophies and aspirations, compliance with these norms serves simultaneously to create an inclusive and largely egalitarian society of like-minded co-workers, while providing the community with distinctive criteria for deciding who qualifies to be a worthwhile member of that society. The critical qualities of belief and competence distinguish the 'keepers of the faith' within the organisation from those who are perceived to lack or betray commitment.

But these bases for cohesion in the practitioner community are more internalised than explicitly enunciated. The lack of more *organised* normative and collegial structures accentuates the potential for the variable, localised, sometimes quite isolated understandings of collegial affiliation which I encountered. This internal 'insularity' leads me to conclude that regardless of how powerfully and consistently individual motivations agree and how much that agreement revitalises motivation in turn, practitioners have not moved much beyond being a community united by personally compelling philosophies, ideals, expectations and purpose.

In the remaining parts of this chapter, the strategic implications of this coincident foundation for community identity and action are examined. In Part Two which follows, I investigate the beliefs which, in Freidson's (1983) analytical scheme, lie 'behind' the investments which practitioners make in external and internal projections of occupational identity.

Part Two—UNDERSTANDING OF GROUP IDENTITY

5.2 Introduction

DOC's front-line practitioners confounded this research with contradictions. Prominent among these is the disjunction between the sharing of a powerful motivation to work for conservation and the subdued understanding of community just outlined. Given the very evident strength of their conservation convictions, and the importance of the signals they send within the community, it was a surprise to find that practitioners do not refer to any organised constructions of collective identity of their own making when defining themselves in- or outside DOC.

This does not mean that practitioners fail to project *any* form of identity. On the contrary, in ways which this section traverses, individuals express their identity subtly or by implication, using cues which are recognisable within the practitioner community and by attentive audiences.

Logically, the absence of an organised form of group identity suggests that practitioners hold diffused or divergent perceptions of who they are as an occupational community. Taken at face value, the lack of functional homogeneity in the practitioner group supports this assumption. While this divergence could be construed as disabling to a professional project, I found that individual statements of identity—subtle and indirect though many were—bore a remarkable similarity, indicating that the group's value-base, as I have described it in the previous section, might be operating as a unifying influence at this level of action too. In the following sections, I outline the investments which practitioners make in constructions of identity and their motivations for doing so.

5.2.1 Projections of public identity

It seems illogical to have examined how practitioners define themselves externally when my research was focused on relations with authority structures inside DOC. As it transpired, these inquiries furnished important clues to their in-

house actions. I discovered that they invest less in external projections of identity than they do internally; that although some of these projections are little more than managing appearances, they are responses to insecurities about their occupational credibility; and that they are sometimes caught in a dilemma between an inherently inclusive conservation ethos and the desire to maintain control over the integrity of work and its underlying philosophies. Each of these aspects of external self-definition helped me to explain what motivated their projections of identity to internal audiences in DOC, and ultimately their choice of strategic responses to managerialism.

5.2.1.1 Inclusion

In interviews, I investigated how much practitioners drew consciously on the character of their work and their conservation philosophies to project any sense of special or distinctive public identity, either as individuals or as a group. The sheer scope and quantity of their conservation work was often invoked as a distinguishing characteristic of the group, as was their special legal duty of care for very important national resources. Few research subjects saw themselves as holding an exclusive moral authority to act as public ‘keepers’ of conservation ideals. On the contrary, the majority recognise that they share these views with sections of the environmentally mindful public, and that more of the public must be made aware of them if the root causes of conservation problems are to be treated satisfactorily. As has been discussed in Part One, these are the politics of inclusion and collaboration in work teams.

In fact, the practitioner mission embodies a strong evangelistic imperative which aims to broaden understanding of the conservation cause—to include rather than to exclude outsiders. Advocacy specialists work at the sharp end of this imperative, but most practitioners believe that it is a cardinal necessity of their work. Collaborative interaction with outsiders is often perceived as an opportunity to indoctrinate outsiders into the mission:

Generally speaking, if you’re wanting to keep people involved, you try to get *co-operative* projects going with them, so that you can get them interested and enthused in the project... rather than it being a strict provider–customer relation-

ship. I try where I can to involve groups and get them *keen* on my [conservation interests] [Tom]

Janet's comments below about obligatory understanding would undoubtedly startle her colleagues who are advocacy specialists, but her opinion reflects a widespread desire among practitioners to see understanding of conservation values incorporated into mainstream thinking:

It should be enforced really. Everybody should be taught about [conservation]. Like, it should be brought into part of everybody's lives really. You just can't divorce yourself from your environment like that!

I consider that universally held convictions of this kind go a long way to explaining the surprising lack of uniformity in understanding where occupational boundaries with the outside world fall. This lack has predictable consequences for practitioners' sense of occupational identity and for the harmonising of signals sent to external audiences.

In the absence of any practitioner consensus on the matter, default to the organisation's identity is common. If this is not the case, practitioners may feel a stronger sense of affiliation with their occupational peers outside DOC, especially if working contact with outside associates is frequent or they practise in widely recognised or professionalised occupations. Planners, journalists and information specialists have these external points of reference available to them. Alternatively, as Malcolm has revealed, others may simply 'belong' to the conservation cause.

Generally, I have to say, I formed the distinct impression from many inconclusive stabs at describing the occupational group as they might like the public to see it, that interview subjects were answering 'on the fly'. In other words, the issue of occupational boundaries or public identity is simply not a matter to which very many have given thought.

Initially, I was inclined to accept the crusading imperative of the mission as the culprit, surmising that constructing a distinctive identity might be repugnant to practitioners who felt that it signified elitism and defence of jurisdiction. Self-

serving barriers of this sort might well be thought to conflict with their desire to educate the public through inclusion and unconditional relationships. This proved to be too simplistic an explanation, because it became clear that evangelism has not made occupational boundaries absolutely permeable.

5.2.1.2 Defence of occupational identity

Two forms of practitioner behaviour signal that occupational values and identity are defended against the risk of external trespass.

As I demonstrated in Part One of this chapter, practitioners are unwilling to accept newcomers who do not conform to their behavioural and attitudinal expectations. Yet, on this count, practitioners cannot be said to be *actively* defending their norms through external projections of identity. They do not have formalised prescriptions on which to base these projections, and in their absence, they prefer to rely on managers to deal with defaulters who penetrate the occupation. Or they themselves fall back on tactics of ostracism or simple avoidance, as they do in their work-sites (especially by 'going bush'):

We've had a few people here who've been a bit full of themselves or hungry for fame. You just know that you don't want to work with them again. It's as simple as that! [Bob]

The second symptom of identity defence is more telling, and has a direct parallel in relations with managerial authority. I found that practitioners *were* inclined to jurisdictional defence when they considered that unfamiliar conservation agendas might encroach on or trivialise their own ideals. Colleagues engaged in co-operative working arrangements with the public conceded that they felt comfortable only when outsiders respected the conservation ideals which had underwritten project design or could fit the project into the broader ecological perspectives they held as experts. They rationalised their anxieties as concerns to preserve the integrity of projects, but in effect, they were asserting the primacy of the principles and ideologies which define their work. Rationalising of this sort resembles the jurisdictional claims-making observed in social workers (Roach Anleu, 1992) and nurses (Turner, 1986) attempting to define

professional niches for themselves alongside influential occupational associates in Australian hospitals and related institutional environments.

In my DOC colleagues, there was evidence that personal interests lay at the heart of their defensive behaviour too. Their disquiet revealed a certain preciousness about their work. They conceded that whenever associations with projects were weakened or severed, their emotional connections were severed too.

Declarations of identity expressed through jurisdictional anxiety of this sort may be more common than most interview subjects were prepared to reveal, but they are incidental and expedient rather than structured or organised on any collective basis. This is the pattern I found for most such declarations made externally and internally. Nevertheless, the anxieties place individuals in an ambiguous position personally. There was no evidence of practitioners jeopardising the mission by actively spurning opportunities to ‘include’ the public, but the instinct is there to look after their connection with values important to them personally. The conflict in interests is a likely source of confusion about where the limits to their occupational identity lie.

5.2.1.3 Managing appearances

Finally, the practice of managing external appearances reveals that many front-line operators at the sharp end of conservation issues are concerned about how they, their work and their arguments are regarded by the public. Except in the most hardened of campaigners (and there are a few), there is a discernible degree of apprehension about public acceptance and credibility. Internal projections of identity to managerial audiences proved to be responses to the same insecurities. In the public domain, this apprehension is a product, I believe, of mixed messages practitioners receive in their workplaces (the occupation’s social context described earlier in Chapter Three)—broad public approval but daily reminders of ambivalence and hostility.

To gain public respect for their ideals, practitioners work hard to sustain the appearance of professionalism, efficiency and competence—virtues which they

borrow from their mission ethos. They take pride in the way they present themselves and their work, abhorring the actions of colleagues which compromise appearances.

Bob managed appearances in his jurisdiction by the simple expedient of ensuring that his staff and contractors did not 'lean on their shovels' when working in the public gaze. I obtained a more succinct indication of agreement on collective identity from the number of practitioners who distanced themselves from damaging associations, especially environmental activism. Disparaging talk of 'greenies' is remarkably prevalent in practitioner conversation. 'Greenies' are not taken to be allies in a hostile world where there are relatively few conservation friends, but are regarded instead as the antithesis of reasonable argument and unhelpful to the fulfilment of mission goals.

Considered together, these investments in self-definition pointed to vulnerabilities in practitioner consciousness of themselves, but also signalled instincts to preserve the integrity of their value-base. A desire for occupational respect was implied in their actions.

5.2.2 Stating identity to internal audiences

Inside the organisation, practitioners consolidate their internalised notions of identity as a group in a variety of ways. Only two of these—complaint and calculated compliance—are directed consciously at the managerial audience; the remainder—socialisation of newcomers, and the rituals of shop-talk, storytelling, and work-space ornamentation—reinforce a sense of identity and solidarity within the practitioner community. None of these is organised collectively as an activity, but more so than appears to be the case for external projections of identity, all rely on generalised constructions of identity or presuppose the existence of a definable and defensible body of practitioner ideals, conventions and practices.

The ideological platform from which practitioners launch their complaint and associated statements of identity internally is the same as the value system they defend externally. Its pragmatism loads the community with ideological mod-

erates whose middle-ground eco-centrism is bounded on the one hand by idealists ('salts-of-the-earth' in Wilson's opinion, 'politically naive' in Erica's, and 'intense' in Hamish's); and on the other by colleagues who are generally considered unsuitable for the work (Rhys's 'oxygen thieves'). By and large, practitioners can live with differing shades of commitment to the cause within the community, so long as they are comfortable that conservation ideals are not compromised. But whereas they may tread carefully with an unsympathetic public, they take a much harder, less compromising line with managers and other DOC associates who are perceived to betray conservation. For this reason, they are quick to criticise or complain, and stauncher in defence of their integrity.

5.2.3 Vocabularies of complaint

Complaint and grumbling is a routine feature of everyday life at the front-line. Essentially, through criticism, practitioners are stating who *they* are by saying what they are *not*. Newcomers are soon likely to be socialised into this understanding and into the practice and objects of complaint themselves.

Criticisms are not random but have a normative function of their own. They represent what Turner (1986) terms a 'vocabulary' of complaint which is evidently an integral part of the practitioner discourse. It is symptomatic of a sub-cultural perspective which practitioners are attempting to keep apart from DOC's organisational culture. Whether practitioners are socialised into it or already in agreement, complaint functions to rally a sense of solidarity in the community.

Turner's (1986) definition of complaint has much to recommend explanations of practitioner dissent. Turner defines the behaviour as a 'device' for handling the dislocating tension between compliance with the norms of authority structures and the following of occupational conventions in actual practice. In DOC, 'bitching' is more than a palliative device; it is a gesture through which practitioners carry their own values into the domains of managerial discourse. For reasons which are intimately connected with their choices of strategic action, as I will show, practitioners intend this gesture to be primarily symbolic.

Interviews and observations of tea-room and work-site conversations revealed that practitioners object to a great many things but DOC is a principal target. My illustrations of their complaints below reveal that practitioners seldom specify who has offended. It is more common to hear them direct their reproach at generalised targets: 'they', being managers or DOC as a whole. Or, even more generally, as Richard declared, "I love the work; it's the job I hate." As I discuss at the end of this chapter, colleagues can also be targets, particularly those from whom practitioners are arbitrarily estranged in the organisation.

Looking behind the criticisms I recorded, it is possible to discern key meanings which revolve around the defence of vocation, occupational values and collegial identity. These meanings challenge managerial authority in DOC and dignify practitioner values, while confirming the right to do both.

Apprehension about relevance and worth inside DOC surfaces in complaints that the organisation does not value practitioner labour, skills, knowledge, and personal connections with the work highly enough. This is the concern about occupational credibility which underpins public projections of identity. Several codes exist for this grievance. Retaliatory go-slows follow the 'pay-peanuts-get-monkeys' logic, but this tactic—a form of (re)active resistance—is seldom proclaimed beyond close associates. Resentment at exploitation and poor pay is a more common code. This example of self-definition refers for its legitimacy to adverse circumstances, and the appeal for solidarity is quite apparent:

[We are] people who are prepared to take a bit of shit. Not only from outsiders but from the Government and DOC, because we believe in the job we're doing. This may be cynical, but I believe that our pay is lower and our conditions eroded because it's taken for granted that we love this job and we'll do it regardless. That's our common bond. [Wilson]

A fundamental statement of self-worth lies at the heart of grievances about poor or belittling treatment by the organisation. The protest signals, and reminds practitioners, that they and their work are indispensable to DOC. This meaning of complaint is explicit in Wilson's strenuous assertion:

At the end of the day, the people I work with are really driven, and that's what binds the Department together, you know. They just have faith in what they're doing. And without that faith and belief, the Department would go under!

Embedded in this rationalisation is the dignifying sentiment common—in Hughes's (1951) view—to all levels of occupational hierarchy that practitioners save managerial authority from its own mistakes.

Complaint also elevates the importance of practitioners by devaluing the forms and structures of authority which represent subordination. Many interviewees were cynical about managerial terminology, for instance. Donald dismissed it, acutely aware of its secularising treatment of his mission and its morality:

[I don't like] the whole way we seem to be twisting things... "We're a supplier to a purchaser." The Minister's the 'purchaser'... I think that confuses the focus of what we're doing. Our mandate isn't that simple. We're not providing conservation as a *product*. It's actually an inherent necessity for the continued well-being of the globe! It's a service to humanity, really.

Practitioners were very often cynical about their new roles and official titles, adopting a laboured tone when describing them to indicate how contrived they perceived them to be. Few were quite *this* cynical in their denigration:

The position I have now is 'Technical Services Officer, Biodiversity Section'. Something like that, isn't it? [This is] crap. It doesn't define what you're doing really. It's typical public service bureaucracy. It's managerial!

In deliberately misrepresenting his official title, Wilson was communicating his distaste for it and distancing himself from its misleading cues to his actual identity as an occupational specialist.

DOC's bureaucratic practices are also devalued as a means of reinforcing the way practitioners would do things:

The obstacles in working for DOC would have to be the amount of planning and paperwork... the amount of bureaucracy, and the lines of accountability, you know? Like, the thirdly [trimester] reporting, and other things that have just got

out of hand. And the constant changing of business planning software... everything's being *'improved'* all the time. [Vicki]

Staff meetings are more a requirement than a necessity... typical of the management philosophy imposed on us by the last restructuring. They're supposed to be warm fuzzy, lovey-dovey get-togethers where we all sperm in each other's pockets, but they are nothing more than a bloody nuisance! They do not help our work and they take up heaps of time. [Richard]

As Turner (1986) claims in relation to hospital nurses, who by his account have evidently made complaint an art-form, referring negatively to the *people* who symbolise authority restores some equilibrium to the status relationship:

More and more the Department's trying to attract managers who don't necessarily have a conservation background, so we're ending up with this new managerial way of looking at things. We're going to end up with managers who are very displaced and out of touch with the real environment [Vicki]

This criticism of the quality and suitability of managers severs managerial identity from the front-line values on which practitioners base definitions of themselves. The severance is justified by the implication of threat to those values. Hillary's complaint about DOC's failure to value front-line experience serves the same purpose. It is not aimed at managers directly but at their inability to recruit front-line staff of the right calibre:

My biggest gripe about how DOC's changed is that we've lost so much experience and haven't been able to replace it. Now we have more people who think they know it all, make decisions without consulting...get DOC (not themselves!) into trouble. I find that shocking and embarrassing at the same time. [Hillary]

This brief selection of complaints does not do justice to the range, intensity and colour of reproach in practitioner vocabularies. Yet, though some of it could be bitter, I found little that was indicative of genuine, deep-seated antipathy. In fact, it could be articulated in a good-natured way, even if the complaint was serious. At a field gathering of co-workers who knew him well, for instance, this Area practitioner used spectacularly pungent humour to complain about his manager's poor reactions to work he had done recently:

I was *sodomised* for doing that job—a job they'd been on at me to do for ages!
[Harry]

The humour in complaint does have a palliative meaning for practitioners, defusing the tensions which are created by the conflict between managerial and front-line values. Since humour is an integral part of the practitioner discourse, complaint fits seamlessly alongside other devices for establishing and affirming practitioner identity. Shortly, I will describe the most important of these: 'story-telling' and 'shop-talk', both of them worthy and trusted vehicles for complaint.

The easy recourse to reproach in practitioner conversations is certainly suggestive of ritual. Yet, fundamentally, it is a reaction to perceived or real questioning of competence, reliability and worth. More importantly, by its very nature, complaint implies critical awareness of the qualities and values held to be marginalised or under attack. Interview subjects left me in no doubt that what they valued most from managers was meaningful recognition of these qualities:

What image do we want managers to have of us? That's an easy one. It's basically that you're really competent... really good at your job. That's pretty much all. And a good employee. That's pretty much all I'd care about, really. [Jane]

By reacting through complaint, practitioners are upholding those values, demanding respect for them, and making claims (albeit in a symbolic manner) that as the proven keepers of those values, they could be trusted to have done better in the same circumstances.

5.2.3.1 'Them-and-us' as a statement of identity

The fact that the rhetoric of complaint tends to be generalised and habitual implies that a 'them-and-us' attitude has become entrenched in practitioner consciousness. The evidence that they define themselves by any such universal mind-set is inconclusive. While I heard rancorous commentary from a good number of research subjects about the pay and privilege differentials between managers and 'the rest of us', others believed that managers earned their rewards ('who would want *their* jobs?' was a typical sentiment).

It would be safer to say that loyalty to the mission is a more critical determinant of ‘them-and-us’ distinctions but by this criterion, defaulters could be managers and co-workers alike.

By this same criterion, managers could also be *included* in the ‘us’ team. Many interview subjects seemed content to do this, especially in the ‘happy’ Conser-vancies I visited. But the inclusion was conditional. Generally, only specific individuals or groups of managers were counted as part of practitioner ‘teams’; evidently, the management class as a whole had yet to establish its entitlement to membership. The critical determinant of inclusion was respect for practitioner conventions and competence:

[The management style I like is] friendly, non-aggressive, open. I don’t like overly hierarchically-oriented people who feel high up in the system... powerful... autocratic. And they have to listen to what you have to say, and they’ll reason about what you have to say. I don’t think they have to agree with me all the time. But I think they’ve given me a fair hearing if amongst all the other issues, they weigh up what you’ve said and help you make controversial decisions... support you that way. [Shelley]

The extension of occupational boundaries in some parts of the practitioner community to include representatives of managerial authority is a crucial contributor to the ambiguity of practitioner identity. The crusading imperatives of the mission encourage this ambiguity also, as I have explained. But ‘them-and-us’ enclaves exist also, where boundaries are drawn up more rigorously.

These are the signs of diversity and contradiction in the community to which I have alluded earlier. They are consistent with the relatively unstructured basis for a unifying sense of ‘community’ outlined in Part One of this chapter. On the other hand, practitioners do define themselves as a community in possession of an occupational culture through their habit of complaint, and by the crucial measures with which the mission equips them to determine who is entitled to membership of that community.

In the following sections, I discuss other ‘devices’ used by practitioners to consolidate their collegial identity and recognition of it. These explanations dem-

onstrate that sub-cultural notions of identity are alive-and-well in the community, and play an important role in the defence of occupational values.

5.2.4 Identity on the offensive

Unlike complaint, calculated compliance is a more pro-active strategy for projecting values and identity. Whereas complaint represents the besieging of the managerial camp, calculated compliance is premeditated infiltration. Roger furnished an interesting example of this. He and his colleagues used the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) concept so favoured by managers as a 'Trojan horse' to induct DOC into the reality of practitioner life-and-work at the front-line. Roger committed himself to the generally unrewarding task of contributing to these work prescriptions, knowing that once approved, managers would be more-or-less bound by them:

One of the things I was trying to demonstrate to DOC [through the SOP] was the scale of the work required. It's a much bigger workload than the Department actually realises. [But] producing an SOP to teach DOC is tricky... it's a very roundabout and not especially easy way to show DOC the resource levels needed.

Personal performance agreements, monthly operating reviews, and other forms of contract with managers are used as Trojan horses also. So, while they grumble about the ways bureaucracy imposes on the mission's work, practitioners are not above sleeping with the 'enemy' to advance the mission's interests.

Whether complaint and calculated compliance signifies detachment or engagement, the behaviour remains an individual choice in this community. There was no evidence of popular agreement to define identity by using these tactics, only popular agreement that they were being used.

In fact, it would be misleading to suggest that practitioners are fully conscious of stating their identity with these forms of behaviour, but they are keenly aware of offence. When they do act in these ways, they are adopting the role of conscience-keeper for a body of generalised ideals they know to be cherished by like-minded colleagues. Three investments are made in this awareness: the

socialisation of newcomers, the rituals of 'talking shop' and 'story-telling', and the use of work-space ornaments as symbolic 'markers' and 'anchors'. Each investment intensifies collegial solidarity by affirming collective identity.

5.2.5 Socialisation of newcomers

Socialisation of practitioner recruits into the occupation is an extension of the nurturing instinct which underwrites front-line work. The inclination to nurture the talents and commitment of promising newcomers is itself nourished when they prove themselves to be worthwhile investments. Most (but not all) experienced practitioners will then willingly instruct them in operational conventions and socialise them into the front-line culture.

Shelley's description of this process shows how she attended to the conservation interests and the 'souls' of two young recruits:

They're young, enthusiastic and got a really positive attitude. I like to get them out to get a feel for the place, and a broad understanding. I took them everywhere I wanted them to work, and told them how I would perceive doing the job. We do a lot based on trust. I tell them, we learn by our mistakes. I expect them to try and learn... to benefit themselves from the work. I like to see that they are thinking about their futures and how they can contribute [to conservation] in a wider way.

Wilson took a less complicated route to winning the hearts and minds of inexperienced co-workers joining his projects: he offered crates of beer as incentives and rewards.

Given the contrast in practitioners' outlooks on their circumstances in DOC, recruits are unlikely to be indoctrinated into any *one* deciphering of the organisation or the working environment. Their eventual mind-sets will be composites of many views, and coloured more by accident of association than by design. But because practitioners select *against* newcomers who are judged to be lacking the rudiments of the 'right stuff', they are selecting *for* character which is predisposed to socialisation into the behavioural norms and mores of the front-line community.

5.2.6 Telling it like it is

The rituals of shop-talk and story-telling are stable and more universal currencies in the practitioner community. Regardless of functional sub-grouping or political disposition, all practitioners indulge in them. Tony had encountered the habit of talking shop so frequently that he sounded exasperated by it:

It's just impossible to get away from it. There could be two reasons for it. They talk about what they all have in common, which is that they work for DOC and the passion associated with it. And they want to talk their frustrations out as well. They can do it that way, but I think that's a genuine desire maybe to, hopefully, improve things.

'Story-telling' is the recounting of work experiences—the more vivid or engaging, the better, apparently. Field practitioners have the richest store of stories to tell. To my surprise, I found in writing up my notes that I too had lapsed into this practice when interviewing colleagues. It was an instinctive and reassuring return to familiar values. Through the story-telling, I realised, we had visited field projects, updated one another, and made a vicarious connection with the wilderness which meant so much to us.

Besides reinforcing collegial bonds, story-telling proclaims practitioner identity. By having stories to tell, individuals signal their identity as practitioners and affirm their right to be included in the practitioner community. This assumes of course that their stories are credible; 'line-shooters' and 'bull-shitters' are tolerated only if they hold impressive front-line credentials as warrants to embellish.

Like shop-talk, the ritual communicates the distinctiveness of practitioner identity by discriminating against co-workers who have no practical experience to recount. The distinction is reinforced in mixed audiences by the notion of the field being 'out there', a place of labour into which generally only story-tellers have been initiated.

The currency of story-telling is strongly valued in practitioner society, but it can serve more practical purposes also. Rhys, Brent and Geoff all acknowledged that they made conscious use of anecdotes to communicate technical know-how

to new staff. In this capacity, stories are readily recognisable symbols of experience and authority.

5.2.6 'Markers' and 'anchors'

Story-telling has a close analogue in the universal keeping of 'zoob' (photo-) boards. In all offices I visited, the walls of tea-rooms and work-stations were adorned with photographs and clippings celebrating the pleasures and trials of practitioner life at the front-line. Posters were common-place also, their themes declaring the conservation interests of the individuals working beneath them. Biodiversity workplaces had the most interesting embellishments; their occupants surrounded themselves with all manner of biological artefacts in casually assembled collections (stuffed and dismembered animals, skins, skeletons, turds, plants, seeds, preserved specimens), leaving no doubt what type of work their curators favoured. Others used track markers, signs, equipment and other field curiosities in the same way. All of these comforting and declaratory ornaments act symbolically as identity 'anchors' and 'markers' for practitioners in the sense proposed by Ira Silva (1996).

5.2.7 Summary

As statements of identity, all of these forms of behaviour rely to varying degrees on implication to convey their meanings. Though all draw on and invoke a sense of solidarity in unifying interests and values, none is orchestrated on a collective basis, and considered together, they do not amount to an organised programme of identity projection. Instead, awareness of occupational identity is subjective and elastic, oddly so for a group which understands its value base and aspirations so well.

When practitioners are moved to declare their presence, the predominant mode of identity statement is reactionary. Adversity in- and outside DOC elicits responses in which the community's values and beliefs are defended. Certainly, the acceptance and prevalence of complaint as one such response indicates a perception among practitioners that they have frequent occasion to defend their interests. From the evidence obtained through this study, it can reasonably be

concluded that their reactions are based—consciously or otherwise—on firm beliefs that as front-line practitioners, they know best what and how things should be done in their technical jurisdictions. In their view, hands-on experience equips them with the appropriate moral and philosophical credentials to act in a competent and trustworthy manner.

There are several possible reasons why practitioners have not been persuaded by their uncompromising personal commitments to the mission (and the desire to have them respected) to move beyond individual reactions to organised and definitive declarations of identity. The boundaries to the occupation are blurred by the mission's crusading ethos—it simply does not suit mission objectives to erect discriminatory barriers to inclusion and conversion of the uninitiated. If this is the case, it may be too difficult to discern what boundaries other than values are being defended, and against whom. Managerial structures in DOC may be less threatening as a target because managers can be (and are) included in the mission 'team'.

Alternatively, practitioners may be quite content with the progress and circumstances of their mission inside the organisation.

In Part Three, it becomes clear that practitioners do not intend their reactions to adversity and threats to be claims for independence from DOC's authority structures. Nevertheless, they can be construed as claims for greater degrees of control over the character and quality of their work. Whether these claims argue for more *occupational* self-determination is examined also.

Part Three—PROFESSIONALISING CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PRACTITIONER COMMUNITY

5.3 Introduction

As Chapter Four has argued, DOC's front-line practitioners work in an organisational environment in which unfamiliar managerial ideologies and practices prevail. In Parts One and Two of this chapter, I have shown practitioners to be motivated by deep personal attachment to ideals and work philosophies which differ from the Bach Model doctrines I have described earlier. In quite specific ways, the organisational culture violates their sub-culture. Practitioners signify by their rhetoric of complaint and other devices of resistance that they see reason to be concerned.

Whether this concern stimulates a desire to *improve* their occupational status inside the organisation is examined in this brief traversal of professional consciousness in the group. It investigates what use practitioners make of the occupational attributes outlined in Chapter Three which favour professionalising action; and whether they choose to exploit them through a rhetoric of 'profession' in a bid to reclaim meaningful degrees of occupational autonomy.

5.3.1 Evidence of professionalising action

The evidence is that, as a heterogeneous group unified by the mission, practitioners are indifferent to their professionalising advantages and have not embarked on a coherent campaign to recover control of their work through professional claims-making and identity.

In interviews, this inertia was signalled in a number of ways. Very few interviewees had heard co-workers referring to themselves as professionals, so that the topic does not appear to be a routine part of practitioner discourse or of everyday conversation.

Answers to questions about professional identity were frequently hesitant, and expedient.¹¹ By identifying operational threats when asked to suggest what political issues confronted their occupational interests, practitioners demonstrated that *operational* horizons so dominate their consciousness that views of *occupational* horizons are indistinct or obscured completely.

Professional consciousness is not extinct in practitioner ranks. Individual awareness varies considerably, and in recent times, one functional sub-group has made tactical use of professional rhetoric to improve its rewards and status in the organisation. But despite sectional interest in professional identity, and despite the symbolic claims to self-determination implicit in the rhetoric of complaint, it is safe to say that there is no unifying urgency to pursue professional status for the knowledge and practice of conservation management.

Practitioner attitudes to the concept of professionalising ranged across a spectrum of views, so that, regrettably, diversity bedevils this account of the community as much as any other. Some were convinced that the occupation did not qualify as a profession because its functions were too diverse and too much of the work itself was not conducted in a professional manner.

Others were unsure of what 'profession' meant (and are therefore in illustrious company, as Chapter Three has shown). They wandered onto confused ground where they found it difficult to distinguish between the notions of acting professionally ('doing a professional job') and acting as a profession.

A small number held firm views that the work *is* a profession and that its practitioners are entitled to call themselves professionals. Malcolm believed, for example, that regular contact with associates he judged to be professionals justified his own claim to being one.

¹¹ Asking about professional status is rather like asking, 'Have you stopped beating your wife?' Respondents may feel compelled to claim professional status to avoid the appearance of being something less. As I have explained in Chapter Two, when drawing my conclusions about professional awareness, I laid aside answers which I felt were influenced by this quandary, or indeed which appeared to be offered 'on-the-fly' (that is, in the hope that any answer is better than none).

Tony used the terms ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ spontaneously to describe his work, without me having broached the subject first. He was one of just a few practitioners who was willing and able to mount a concerted argument that practitioners are entitled to call themselves ‘professionals’ on the basis of their work being a legitimate profession. His argument relied heavily on the group’s powerful vocational commitment to its work, a commitment, he claimed, which defined the group in the public sector. In his view, the skills and experience acquired and applied in the hands-on practice of conservation qualified alongside academic learning as ‘professional’ credentials.

Common to this assortment of views is the concept of a profession defined by the taxonomic criteria of *attribute* approaches. If interviewees did not invoke the classic professions of medicine and law as direct comparisons, they referred to features of their own work which resembled those possessed by their professional ideal-types. These associative connections with professions strayed more towards the notion of ‘acting professionally’ than towards ‘being a profession’.

Generally, practitioners play fast and loose with attribute-gathering. I asked several whether the absence of other marks of profession mattered (codes of conduct and codified ethical standards, for instance, or the lack of control over training and entry to the occupation). DOC’s own prescriptions for conduct, in-house training, and recruitment were appropriated by these respondents as suitable substitutes—an indication of the ambiguity in occupational identity discussed in Part Two of this chapter.

5.3.2 Strategic claims to professional identity

The only tangible evidence that practitioners have exploited the strategic potential of professional identity as a group emerges in the attempts made by community leaders on two occasions to establish professional staff associations. The first was modelled on the ranger associations of DOC’s parent agencies and, like its successor, was intended to foster collegial awareness and work excellence. Support for this venture collapsed after DOC’s comprehensive restructuring in 1989, ironically when badly battered practitioner morale needed a rallying point most.

The second was initiated in the Bach Model era. A key aspiration was to construct a political forum of the practitioners' own making where, for the first time in DOC's history, consensus on occupational (rather than operational) issues could evolve. Ultimately, by unifying the practitioner voice, the intention was to augment its authority in debates with DOC over restructuring or more routine management proposals. The motives were to keep conservation high in DOC's awareness, and to protect the integrity of the front-line skills- and knowledge-bases from the impacts of managerially expedient decisions [Douglas].

The association's goals and ambitions were outlined in a letter to the Director-General (Appendix 4) who proved to be entirely unsympathetic [Phillip]. The venture collapsed even more quickly than the first.¹² Asked why this might have happened, Erica referred to practitioners' legendary indifference to political and industrial activity:

It doesn't really *surprise* me that the association fell through. Because people in DOC do seem to be apathetic to things like that. There doesn't seem to be the energy or the *passion* for that sort of thing. Like, to be honest, I was amazed that they were willing to accept what the PSA [Union] negotiated for them through the [bargaining] process. I didn't think it represented any of their interests well.

It would seem reasonable to infer from Erica's commentary that practitioners reserve their passion for the mission.

5.3.3 Evidence of professional rhetoric and action

Of the many functional sub-groupings in the practitioner community, the statutory planners appear to hold the firmest convictions of being professionals:

[Our work's] a profession because to be able to do it, you have to have a certain degree of qualifications. There are recognised degree courses for it. You can't just come in cold and do it. There are opportunities for career development too. I guess the fact there is a professional institute [of planners] recognises that it's a

¹² Presently (2003), the association's surviving executive officers are attempting to join a new national multi-agency ranger association, a return to their historical roots perhaps.

profession. And it's very widespread. Especially since the Resource Management Act came in, it's become a profession in its own right. [Erica]

As a professional project, it was a very modest, though effective effort, designed to argue planners' pay scales 'up'. Planners claimed that their skills, knowledge and obligations were quasi-legal, and therefore deserving of more professional remuneration. Connections with professionals outside DOC were invoked to support this elevation in pay and status. If planners considered that these privileging actions might create resentment in other groups of highly specialised but less connected colleagues, or might compromise community notions of all being equals in a common enterprise, they did not allow these fears to disturb the bargain struck eventually with DOC (S. Sutton, 2002, pers. comm.).

5.3.4 Summary

It is drawing too long a bow to suggest that any of these various signs and understandings of 'profession' represent the early stirrings of professionalising consciousness in the group as a whole. The connection is an attractive one to make, particularly in the light of expressed desire to have front-line work respected and valued appropriately by DOC. But the overwhelming evidence is that professionalising temperament in the community is neither universal nor coherent. In fact, it is more dislocated and diffused than the community's sense of its own identity.

Clearly, whatever the explanation, the offence taken to managerial ideologies and practices has not been sufficient to move the group beyond complaint. As a consequence, complaint itself is merely symbolic defence of the practitioner sub-culture. Managerialism, then, has *not* acted as a trigger to professionalise.

Why this should be in a community so unified in its beliefs and so quick to judge managerialism offensive to those beliefs, is explained in the concluding part of this chapter. The failure to act has its origins in the value-base of the group itself. This intrinsic vulnerability recalls Toren's (1975) argument (referred to in Chapter Three) that despite the strength in their collegial arrange-

ments, even professions can lose the privilege of autonomy through features peculiar to themselves.

Part Four—WHAT DO PRACTITIONERS THINK THEY ARE DOING?

If they're whingeing, maybe that's *all* they need to do. Have a *dump* session. Have another one tomorrow. It takes the sting out. It's when they *stop* whingeing that I'd start to worry, if I was the owner of this organisation.

[Murray, self-confessed hard-hearted pragmatist]

5.4 Introduction

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that DOC practitioners have presented this study with an intriguing range of contradictions.

- Why, for instance, is their sense of collective identity so weak when they are unified so influentially by their commitment to conservation ideals and to achieving them through collegial collaboration?
- Why is the force of these commitments so apparently impotent when they are confronted with managerial ideologies and practices which move them to complaint so readily?
- Why do they not bend their impressive ideals of collaborative effort and achievement on operational horizons to purposeful collective action on their occupational horizons?
- Why is it that when something so important to their feelings of personal purpose and relevance in life is at stake, the benefits and sheer joy of operational discretion in the field are not sought in occupational autonomy which would surely enrich their rewards further?

To resolve these contradictions, it seems neither logical nor prudent to look past the evidence that this motivated workforce has failed to construct more coherent forms of collegiality and collective identity. Here it seems is the most compelling evidence that something is amiss. If this *is* a central consideration, then

is the absence of professionalising temperament the result of this failure, or merely a symptom of it? I believe it is both, not least because each is indicating very strongly that practitioners do not place much importance on these matters. Whatever the strength of their beliefs in the mission and their instincts to fulfil its goals collaboratively on their own terms, they have not felt the need to make further active investments.

So, is Murray correct in his assessment at the heading of this chapter that complaint serves as a purgative only? As I have interpreted complaint in Part Two of this chapter—as a largely symbolic gesture—I believe that there is truth in this. But complaint and its associated statements of identity signify that practitioners are sensitive to factors in the working environment which subordinate their ideals and jeopardise or actively frustrate their mission. Their two attempts to address these factors together through professional associations—especially the last—illustrate most convincingly that some practitioners at least aspire to greater degrees of influence over their own occupation's affairs. They have been prepared to act in concert to achieve this and have intended the associations to act as collegial rallying points for the group's identity, its political face. Managerial resistance to these expectations is an emphatic signal to the front-line that managers are not prepared to disperse their authority through such arrangements. The failure of practitioners to consolidate their identity through these and other devices indicates that other factors are arresting their inclination to persist.

There are many possible factors at play in individual temperaments, none likely to be disabling on its own: a sense of loyalty, obligation or gratitude to DOC, fear of losing the job, contentment with the status quo, dedication to the work, debilitating disenchantment, or as Murray himself said (and I paraphrase), “there are other things in life—live with DOC's imperfections, or leave.” Very few colleagues seem prepared to accept the option of leaving, and, as I was reminded during my research, the suggestion (*especially* from managers) that ‘if you don't like it, you should go somewhere else’ is guaranteed to raise practitioner hackles.

I consider that the interplay of two more generic factors can explain this failure of collective identity and the inertia associated with it. The first relates to the community's working circumstances and paralyses the will to act; the other is embedded in their own beliefs, and has proved fatal to strategic consciousness, so far.

5.4.1 Fragmentation

The practitioner community is afflicted with pervasive forms of fragmentation, the most deep-seated of which are institutionalised in DOC's organisational framework and managerial ideologies. Others arise inadvertently as a consequence of functional diversity in DOC, or result from the way practitioners' personal connections with the work condition their responses to segregation.

The institutional segregation of practitioners is multi-faceted, chronic and compounding in its effects. Taken together, it conspires against homogeneity in the group by isolating practitioners in small enclaves between which contact and familiarity is more the exception than the rule. Insulated from the harmonising effects of collegial interaction, local cultures and societies have evolved, their differing 'personalities' refrains on the common theme of the mission, but capable of parochialism nonetheless. This is doubtless where the diversity in occupational outlooks has taken root.

I was uncomfortably reminded of this cultural partitioning in my own community when arriving to interview colleagues in unfamiliar offices—even (I regret to say) in my home Conservancy. I had the distinct feeling of being a stranger in my own country. When I mentioned this to colleagues, they conceded that they had experienced similar feelings of estrangement.

Isolation shrinks perceptions of team parameters and membership. Although most practitioners feel strongly that they belong to a like-minded pan-DOC community, few appear to feel close working affiliation with colleagues beyond the periphery of daily acquaintance. In fact, away from home ground, their sense of belonging to collegial teams dissipates very rapidly.

Functional segregation is an inalterable reality of DOC life. Along with other interviewees, Murray, Don, and Michael all made the case against front-line work being a profession because it was too diverse. Apart from the interruptions of workaday interactions and casual socialising in the workplace, technical discourse and goals predominate on practitioners' horizons. As many commented, they simply have little idea what their co-workers in allied disciplines do on a daily basis. This may be true *within* highly specialised disciplines also.

Under circumstances of limited familiarity and trust, heightened *jurisdictional* sensitivities can exaggerate the effects of fragmentation. Typically this sensitivity manifests itself when practitioners are obligated by organisational policy to delegate tasks to other staff:

The general policy [of the Bach Model] is to devolve work down in the structure as much as possible. During the restructuring, a 'future vision' proposal said that Area offices would be able to do submissions on District and Regional Plans, and everything else. The implication was that *any* Joe Blow conservation officer could do our work, without any formal professional training, *as well as* the million other things those guys have to do at the Area level. And they're not terribly objective... too busy making friends with the local communities affected by the RMA. Expecting unskilled people to do a skilled job is exposing the Department to major PR risks... and *conservation* risks! [Michael]

Michael rationalises this devolution of work as a threat to DOC, but his fundamental concerns are for his loss of control over work quality and the implied trivialising of his skills—sentiments which are immediately recognisable in the anxieties of practitioners working with outsiders. In addition, he does not trust his colleagues enough to surrender elements of his specialised work to them.

Geographical segregation needs little explanation. It too is a fact of life in DOC's far-flung dominion. But its isolating effects are exacerbated by the Bach Model's preference for functional clarity and administrative autonomy. Impermeable barriers of this sort impede the migration of skills and comradeship in the community. In our encounters, practitioners alerted me more than once to the frustration of not being permitted to roam where the mission required, a restriction which they felt more acutely than the irritating necessity to obtain their manager's authority for such an integral element of the mission's work:

I certainly think it's important to have the wider perspectives. We used to have *regular* get-togethers in different Conservancies. But we were told that we were doing too much of that. We have to go through a whole rigmarole to have a workshop now. I actually feel quite *sad* that a lot of that's been knocked on the head since the last restructuring. It was really valuable for all the obvious reasons associated with getting together, but also for getting a grip on issues, and bouncing ideas off one another in another place completely out of your patch... thinking wider. [Hillary]

Hierarchical segregation is implicit in the Bach Model's arbitrary partitioning of conservation labour. It offends the egalitarian approach that practitioners prefer to follow in more collegial work alliances. Salary differentials between the tiers introduce value judgements about the worth of colleagues which not only irritate or embarrass co-workers [Karen], but reinforce the discriminatory notions of rank and authority implicit in the distinctions between generalists and specialists, 'delivery' and 'advice', or 'field' and 'office'. Malcolm remarked, for instance, that in the small ranger community of his Area, an undesirable gulf had opened for this reason between the more office-bound programme managers and the 'delivery' staff who did the field work. The latter preferred their own company during tea-breaks and when socialising. In everyday conversation, practitioners routinely refer to colleagues as '*down* at the Area office' or '*up* at Conservancy'. Richard, an accomplished Area operator, simply saw himself as working '*at the bottom of the food-chain*'.

The isolating effects of institutional fragmentation can distort views of colleagues. Generally, practitioners do not like to speak poorly of co-workers in neighbouring work units or disciplines, but at the front-line where poverty is a chronic condition, competition for scarce resources can move them to cynicism and suspicion. Two factors encourage this. The Bach Model's market ideals exploit structural partitioning in order to create the competitive arrangements necessary for efficiency. But equally, practitioners are acutely aware of the distance between what they feel they *must* achieve and how little they are given to work with. It is not surprising, then, that they make value judgements about the relative importance to the mission of individual disciplines. Recreation spending in DOC is a common but by no means universal target. Judgments of this

kind are hastened by consciousness of the disciplines which suffer through what practitioners regard as inappropriate prioritising by managers. All front-line operators can point to casualties of poverty and misallocation (their own projects high in their lists) but advocacy—so crucial to the mission—was thought by many interviewees to be the worst affected.¹³

Prejudices may be aroused by suspicion that co-workers in other disciplines are not as committed to conservation ideals as they should be. Hillary was reluctant to specify whom she had in mind, but she said:

There's a certain group that do have commitment, but then there's a certain group that don't. I don't think you can make blanket statements...but I've thought sometimes that some people we've had working with planning haven't really had that. I think they've given away too much some times... when we're supposed to be *fighting* for the environment. Out in the Areas, I suspect it's a mixed bag too, depending on what kind of work people do.

Suspicious about relevance, work quality and commitment can all arise through isolation from colleagues with whom practitioners would much prefer to be working under normal circumstances. This deprecating view looking 'up' illustrates how responses to suspicion can accentuate the fragmentation:

It is a difficult thing for me to understand, this Conservancy–Area thing... I can't quite understand why we can't work together *more!* There always seems to be a barrier between us... And, I don't know what they *do!* 'Technical Advisers' they're called now ...Well, how much technical *advising* do they do for *us?! None!* I often wonder what they're doing, but because we never really get mixing, I don't *know* what they're doing, so therefore I shut it out and just do my own thing. [Richard]

And this is a reciprocal view, looking 'down':

There's a common understanding of a common *goal* but whether it's put into practice, you know? I think everyone's *driven* to do the best they can. The Conservancy people have got a lot of dedication... and knowledge and ability. But we're

¹³ DOC has recently gone out of its way to remedy this situation, to the satisfaction of practitioners. It is commonly agreed that in a perfect world, where funding is not an issue, all forms of conservation work are legitimate and worthwhile.

totally dependent on the Area's interest and enthusiasm as much as anything for the success of the project. And that varies from Area to Area. [Wilson]

Suspicion and doubt has worked its way into the cracks induced between practitioners by managerialism, but it is not *uppermost* in their minds as they go about their daily work. Fragmentation of the community allows it to prosper more readily when projects or ideals are believed to be threatened in any way. The result is patch protection and jurisdictional sensitivity as project 'owners' react to defend the integrity of their work and the rewards they seek from it.

When the cracks are forced open by adversity or crises, suspicion and mistrust can be debilitating. Hillary was in no doubt that restructuring events *unified* her colleagues, increasing their levels of mutual support markedly, but these are threats to the practitioner body and its ideals as a whole. On the other hand, as the community's industrial advocates readily conceded, a legacy of bitterness and suspicion divides practitioner groups in employment contract negotiations. No matter how much the community as a whole snarls at DOC at these times, collective bargaining is crippled because practitioners in different functions, tiers and parts of the country do not trust each other's motives or reliability enough to take up concerted positions or actions.

Practitioners simply do not know and trust their own company well enough to be confident of constructing a valid collective identity. Their extremely limited mobility allows them few opportunities to mix, peer-review, share knowledge and skills, chew the fat, mythologise and expand communal horizons. These activities are fundamental to a robust understanding of collegial affiliation and trust. Without them, mutual commitment to the mission, and to its unifying ideals and norms, is not enough to resist the benighting effects of fragmentation on awareness of identity as an occupational group. These effects are compounded by the loss of occupational franchise and the imposition of managerially expedient roles, work practices, languages and standards. In its weakened state, their sense of collegial affiliation is incapable of acting as the platform from which to reclaim a meaningful measure of influence over occupational affairs.

5.4.2 The fatal virtue

If, as has been demonstrated so far, practitioners are so goal-directed, passionate about their cause, restless for greater respect from authority structures, and convinced of their entitlement to more meaningful influence over mission affairs, why have they not attempted to overcome the obstacles to these ambitions? Why do they seem content to confront their subordination to external authority and the pernicious effects of fragmentation, with little more than the symbolic gestures of complaint?

Ultimately, their inability to mobilise strategically cannot be explained as an artefact of institutionalised fragmentation or its disempowering impacts on their beliefs in solidarity. These external forces are not acting on them deterministically. Instead, it is their reactions to these stimuli, conditioned by their personal beliefs, which explain their inertia. Weakened collective identity is the symptom of this paralysis, even if it acts to impede mobilisation. It is their intuitive connections with the mission which undermine the readiness to act, either as individuals or in concert. They are driven to immerse themselves in their labour by deep personal affinity for the objects and ideals of conservation. Through this labour, they preserve their personal connections with the places and resources which inspire and nourish their sense of purpose and relevance. This is why hands-on work is so very highly valued over other forms of conservation labour. The rewards they seek are much more than the rich hedonism of engagement or the deep satisfaction of achievement. These are merely their measures of progress towards personal fulfilment.

Practitioners recognise that they are drawn to the occupation and kept there by a strength of personal conviction which is rarely to be found in other public servants. It is a rare virtue. Whether they are correct or not, the result is an essentially individual, inwardly focused pre-occupation with the work, whatever the altruistic motives overlaying it. In a perverse way, by encouraging isolation, fragmentation indulges the introversion. Projects become personal endeavours to which practitioners commit as much of their emotion as sweat. These are their statements of personal relevance and meaning. The secularising and commodifying practices of managerialism belittle these investments, as do their

underlying assumptions of objectivity and expediency. This why practitioners are cynical about the appropriateness of managerial ideology and machinery to the cause. It is also why Tom spoke of the grief he felt when he was obliged by the new role dictates of the Bach Model to part company with cherished field projects.

Offence is internalised when obstacles, threats or criticism jeopardise these investments, provoking reactions which are symbolic statements of personal outrage. Because complaint is therefore as much, if not more self-serving than mindful of broader interests, it is unlikely to function as the mobilising catalyst.

Murray referred to his practitioner colleagues as ‘alcoholics’, a label he intended to be pejorative,¹⁴ but one which captures the essence of the practitioner condition, if somewhat graphically. The work is a source of personal intoxication. The rewards obtained from immersion and achievement anaesthetise individuals to frustration and difficulty in the workplace, and to the effects of subordination and upheaval. Murray and I laughed but each of us knew that there was truth in the suggestion that practitioners would be reluctant to quit even if reduced to drinking meths in DOC’s bilges. Some do quit, of course, but they rarely go ‘off the bottle’. Derek was convinced, for instance, that he could be more effective for conservation outside DOC. Fergus had come to the point where he felt robbed of satisfaction by the unethical conduct of DOC, its managers and some of his close colleagues; but he too sought his rewards in ongoing conservation activity outside DOC.

The selfish nature of reward and the subjective relationships with the work are not inconsistent with the community’s ideals of collaborative effort and collegial interaction. Practitioners are prepared to share their projects with like-minded colleagues because the synergistic effects of co-operation so valued by Shelley in her dysfunctional Area intensify the rewards—practitioners can

¹⁴ Among my interviewees, Murray was unusual in claiming to have consciously withdrawn his emotional investments in the work to avoid being hurt by what he considers to be the hostile but inalterable realities of DOC. He is frustrated by colleagues who feel unable to do the same, and who complain about the agonies they suffer as a result. Even so, like others who may have made themselves less vulnerable in the same way, this may be a symbolic withdrawal. He remains in his job presumably because these realities do not yet threaten to extinguish the rewards he obtains from staying.

achieve more by working together. Interaction with like-minded and similarly driven colleagues reaffirms the legitimacy of these self-interested motives and their dividends. Efforts made to instruct and socialise recruits may help with reaffirmation in the long run, but as Geoff commented, the digression from work may not be entirely altruistic. In his opinion, practitioners make these investments for the immediate pay-back on the projects which nourish their own reward.

Considered in this light, the behavioural and attitudinal norms of the community could be taken to have germinated in the soil of individualism rather than the nobility of collective enterprise. By serving the goals and practice of the joint mission so appropriately, they serve individual reward. As a prized ideal, self-sufficiency is simultaneously the community's iconic symbol of mature and competent practice, and a statement of individual fulfilment.

Individualism in the community is prevented from straying into the pursuit of personal advantage and enrichment by the force of these norms. By compliance, practitioners are directed along the path to the more compelling pay-backs of personal fulfilment. They will not tolerate others departing from these norms because deviation puts that prized objective at risk. Influential as these norms are for this reason, like the ideal of co-operative interaction, their self-serving origins and benefits also render them unlikely catalysts for political action.

Finally—a last paradox—the virtue of personal dedication to the job extinguishes practitioners' inclinations for strategic action, even though greater influence over their own affairs must offer the prospect of a further dimension in reward. The architects of the professional associations seem to have grasped this, at least. But rocking the boat through political activity may result in marginalisation or severance, the probability heightened if practitioners cannot trust others to join in. Few seem prepared to put their privileged connections with the work at risk. Alternatively, they may feel no need to engage in political action because they find their operational activities rewarding enough, whatever their frustrations. The most immediate penalty of personal dedication, I believe, is the simple fact that they do not see the promise of comparable reward in the activities necessary to achieve strategic objectives. This is why, as

Erica observed, “there doesn’t seem to be the energy or the *passion* for that sort of thing.”

The virtue of irresistible vocational commitment to conservation is the fatal flaw in the front-line practitioner community to which I alluded at the beginning of this chapter. As a result of this flaw, the political will to defend the mission through collective action is disabled from within the community, and from within individuals themselves rather than in any intrinsic feature of the group as a collegial structure.

Individual pre-occupation with the duty to affirm personal relevance and meaning takes precedence ultimately over collegial obligations to the group as whole. In these circumstances, as I suspected when concluding that practitioners had not moved much beyond being a community of coincident ideals and purpose, it is their shared belief in the conservation mission which holds them together. Beyond the collegial obligations associated with achieving the mission, practitioners are generally free to hold whatever political opinions their individual circumstances in DOC justify, so long as the mission itself is not put at risk. This explains, I believe, the contradiction of a community unified in its motivations but differing in its political voices.

In the conclusion to this chapter, I explain how practitioners reconcile the tensions between their individual motivations, the imperatives of the conservation mission, and the conflicting demands of managerialism.

5.4.3 Conclusion—Living alongside it

Since so few practitioners are prepared to translate their various grumbles into resignation, they have resigned themselves instead to their circumstances. After all, life in DOC is busy, confident and peaceable—everyone gets on with the people they are not actively avoiding. Most of my interview subjects had complaints but led me to believe that they were content with their lot by-and-large. Even the most irascible could smile, compliment, and effervesce. Clearly, practitioners of all dispositions have negotiated individual agreements with DOC,

with complaint and severance thresholds of their own built into (but judiciously separated in) the terms.

In sum, these agreements amount to a 'bargain' with DOC's authority structures. My research did not attempt to discover whether DOC is aware of or sympathetic to this bargain but practitioners understand its terms reasonably well, whatever their attitudes to managerial authority. Occasionally, management decisions will bring these feelings sharply into line. A recent decision of managers to acquire a new computer system achieved this quite spectacularly, according to Douglas. Introduced with little prior consultation with its end-users, it crippled front-line performance for some time, igniting universal outrage among practitioners. But these events are the exceptions, so that practitioners are left to monitor the agreement on their individual stretches of front-line, referring as they do so to their generalised understandings of what the community itself expects from the bargain.

The bargain involves the exchange of quite specific pay-offs for deferral to the authority and machinery of managerialism. Most of these pay-offs are the obligatory exchanges of employer-employee relationships, and practitioners have little choice about having to live in such a relationship. But they can choose to accept or reject the manner and forms of their subjugation. Through the bargain, they have chosen to live alongside managerialism.

In return for deferral, practitioners enjoy the rare privilege of being paid to do what they love most; the State provides them with legal and statutory mandates which agree very closely with their own conservation ethos; they are granted the licence to operate without suffocating managerial supervision; they receive the resources necessary to do their work; they have opportunities to train; they are given a near-monopoly in their practice; they have the keys to the largest outdoors playground in the country, along with the freedom to play in it; and they are entitled to a share in the public acclaim of DOC's successes.

For its part, DOC receives practitioners' labour in return for low to modest payment, access to their extensive knowledge and skills bases, the unique products of their experience, and the loyalty due to an employer. As the television

documentary *Park Rangers* (2002) illustrates, DOC also borrows a reasonable measure of its own identity from theirs, since they are the organisation's public face.

The bargain frees practitioners to pursue the rewards they seek from immersion in their work. But the risks in subordination are not easy to accept, since managerialism is not a natural friend to their conservation ideals. Indeed, as has been described throughout this thesis, there are many potential points of friction in the relationship. By surrendering control of their work, for instance, practitioners risk restrictions on access to the work and places which inspire and nourish them. Managerial partitioning of the work denies them enriching collegial contact.

The most serious risk is to their self-respect, since their personally derived collegial beliefs and values are subjugated too. This why they require assurance from managers that their competence and ideals are respected. This is why their desire for self-determination is confined to the *operational* freedom which grants their values and beliefs the respect of full reign on their own terms, free from the intrusions of managerial micro-management, in circumstances where practitioners can excel at their own crafts. Respect is the crucial pay-off universally anticipated in the practitioner community.

When the bargain is kept, practitioners speak highly of DOC, identify with the organisation, absorb managerial language into their discourse, include managers in their teams, and overlook minor infractions. Brent illustrated the mutual trust which grows between practitioner and the organisation when the licence to operate is unencumbered and liberating:¹⁵

I'm dedicated to the Department because the Department's really, really looked after me. So I can't and I never ever *would* say anything bad about the Department because the Department's my life. So I've gotta make sure that I stay within the parameters of, you know, what the Department wants. So, I'm not negative about the Department.

¹⁵ Brent was an unusual research subject. In comparison with other interviewees (and in complete contrast to Murray), his enthusiasm for DOC was boundless.

When practitioners perceive that DOC has suspended or modified the pay-offs, they become restless and disgruntled. For the reasons traversed earlier, the community has built no 'out' clause of its own into the agreement, since it has constructed no coherent, politically motivated collegial structures through which to invoke or enforce one. Individual practitioners are in a weaker position still, by virtue of their fatal virtue. Their options are to complain, resist through go-slows, or 'go bush'—retreat into familiar territory¹⁶ where they can insulate themselves in the pursuit of personal reward among their own kind.

The agreement negotiated in their own minds renders the concepts of collective identity and organised political action redundant. So long as the bargain continues to win them space to work on their various frontiers and does not jeopardise their opportunity for personal fulfilment, they have negotiated a form of individual *de facto* autonomy. For this reason, they are content to remain a society of like-minded, but ultimately self-interested individuals.

¹⁶ ... or the bottle-store, as Murray would have it.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I bring this study to a close. First, I interpret the origins of professionalising temperament in the practitioner community. The lines of argument made in this thesis are drawn together to review how the personal values and beliefs of front-line practitioners—intrinsic features of the occupational group—have had a direct influence on the group's response to managerialism. These conclusions address the assumptions made at the commencement of research, and the contradictions in practitioner behaviour to which I have alluded in previous chapters.

Second, I review the contribution this study makes to the understanding of managerialism as an organisational pretext for professionalising action. This discussion complements the abundant evidence of managerialism's social effects outlined in the body of the thesis. My intention is to show how this research assists the vexed sociological question of whether subordinating conditions in complex bureaucratic organisations have professionalising or deprofessionalising implications for vocationally based occupations.

Third, I comment on the efficacy of interactionist methodology and models of profession as an analytical framework for interpreting the professionalising disposition of my colleagues.

6.1 Principles and pay-offs: strategic responses to managerialism

For the highly motivated front-line practitioners of New Zealand's newly constituted Department of Conservation, the experience of managerial authority as an alien form of social organisation in the workplace has acted as neither a pretext nor a context for professionalisation. A small number of politically minded practitioners has recognised the strategic value of professional recogni-

tion as a means of elevating group status and influence in the organisation, but the rallying calls of their nascent professional associations have gone unheeded by the group as a whole. Professional rhetoric and claims-making have been adopted historically by at least one specialist practitioner enclave (the statutory planners) but their claims to professional identity have served expedient, short-lived ends in negotiations with DOC over pay rather than occupational status. Otherwise, the group is not alert to the strategic meanings of 'profession'. Nor is it sensitive to the professionalising advantages conferred by the intrinsic and contextual features of their occupation identified in Chapter Four.

Instead, practitioners base their diverse understandings of 'profession' on simplifying lay, or 'folk' concepts, as Becker (1970) has described them. If anything, this recourse to the attribute-counting practices of taxonomic definition has been penalising. Comparisons with the perceived professional ideal-types such as law and medicine convince many practitioners in this dispersed and segregated group that claims to professional status for their occupation and society would not be credible.

In view of these findings, the general weight of assumption outlined at the beginning of this thesis (Chapter One) has proved to be misplaced. Practitioners do feel alienated by managerialism for many of the reasons anticipated in my definition of managerialism (Chapter Three) and in my account of the forms it takes in DOC (Chapter Four). Their visible reactions—complaint, dissociation and other forms of resistance—are symptoms of discomfort at the tensions between their own and organisational values. But, contrary to the remaining assumptions that DOC's front-line practitioners would draw upon their own collegial structures and conventions to mobilise collectively in defence of values evidently held very dear, they have not done so.

A logical explanation for this inertia is that the political inclinations of practitioners have simply been disabled by disempowering managerial authority and the arbitrary forms of segregation imposed on the group and its work. Indeed, in this study, and particularly in Part Four of Chapter Five, I have illustrated the many different planes on which fragmentation occurs, and have drawn attention to its corrosive effects on the collegial solidarity in which practitioners

make explicit and subtle investments. But this explanation is deterministic and symptomatic of models of profession which are not action-based. It makes practitioners into plastic actors moved on the organisational stage by larger forces. More importantly, it does little to explain how practitioners as sentient actors reconcile the contradiction between their powerful motivations to be effective for conservation and their failure to mount meaningful challenges to the institutional arrangements which impede or frustrate that ambition.

To resolve this contradiction, I have used interactionist frames of reference to examine the basis for *all* practitioner behaviour, their beliefs and values. This investigation has been extremely illuminating. As I have outlined in the preceding chapter, the reluctance of practitioners to act concertedly, in both senses of the word, has its origins in profoundly personal connections with the work they do and the resources they care for. These passionate connections bind individuals to the conservation mission as a socially meaningful way of life through seamless integration of work and personal ideals. For those who feel this way, conservation is a vocation against which the secularising and de-personalising doctrines of managerialism stand in opposition. Emotional and 'hands-on' immersion in the work consummates the person connection, and achievement 'on the ground' (especially through collaborative interaction with like-minded colleagues) is actively sought as its richest source of reaffirmation and reward. Such powerful personal motivations convert conservation labour into the pursuit of personal fulfilment—a duty to the self before it satisfies the other social obligations of which practitioners are crucially aware. It is this commitment to themselves indulged through unremitting dedication to front-line work which disables political action. This is their fatal virtue, and as my pragmatic co-worker said, it leads them to resemble helpless alcoholics.

Discovery of this connection and its irresistible rewards has allowed me to re-interpret the mixed and contradictory signals I was receiving from an occupational group of such diverse opinion and outlook. In shared personal commitments to the mission, practitioners have stable common ground on which they stand and withstand the potentially divisive effects of differing political views. The normative and collegial conventions in which they invest time and emotion mark this ground out. Behavioural and performance standards, networks,

socialising and recognition rituals, complaint, projections of identity—all are symbols of generalised understanding of the mission among practitioners, and of their shared personal loyalties to its ideals. Front-line sub-culture is grounded in these understandings too, as is recognition of who is entitled to be included in the front-line community as a ‘keeper’ of sub-cultural values. But because the underlying values and rewards of the mission are profoundly subjective, these collegial understandings are largely internalised. Consequently, in a group visibly fragmented by internal heterogeneity and the segregating impacts of managerialism, conceptions of community identity are weak and diffused. Projections of identity to internal and external audiences lack coherence as a result. Here, then, is the explanation for the paradoxical disjunction between powerful shared motivations and weak sense of collective identity.

Complaint in the community indicates that practitioners are sensitive to managerial violation of their cultural values. It signals that if given the freedom to do so, practitioners would do things their own way, following the influential imperatives of synergistic collaboration and collegial interaction which migrate from field work, the central ground of their ‘cultural commons’, into the norms of the larger community.

Yet, they do not seek this autonomy, or the richer rewards which might be won from overcoming fragmentation, because the community lacks collegial structures capable of acting as platforms for political action. Since they symbolise the coalition of the internalised self-interested values associated with personal fulfilment, behavioural norms, informal codes of conduct and other collegial structures serve the interests of that individual imperative primarily. Individuals invest in these structures because they benefit conservation achievement, intensifying the prospect of rewarding fulfilment. Conformity with these norms validates the mission and its selfish rewards. As a result of such individualistic origins, these structures are unreliable instruments of political action. Their strategic impotence is exacerbated by the isolating effects of institutional fragmentation and the distrust of colleagues which ensues.

In a perverse way, without more coherent collegial structures to refer to, isolation indulges the self-interest. Practitioners seek *de facto* autonomy as a substi-

tute. Rather than attempting to wrest *occupational* autonomy from DOC—a relatively less rewarding activity which may jeopardise their connections with the work—individuals have reached conditional accommodations with managerial authority which satisfy (for the most part) their personally enriching *operational* interests. These agreements exist in their own minds. They win individuals the space and opportunities to exercise technical autonomy at the workplace, relatively free from managerial control. Through complaint about managerial encroachments on these agreements and through other social actions which encourage a sense of solidarity, individuals recognise a collective practitioner ‘bargain’ with management. Or at least, that colleagues elsewhere are negotiating comparable bargains.

The bargain consists of a series of ‘pay-offs’ in which practitioners receive operating resources, mandates and opportunities for immersion in work in return for deferral to managerial authority. Deferral does not mean acceptance of or unconditional submission to managerial values by any means. To moderate the risks and discomfort of the bargain, practitioners seek the reassurance of meaningful respect from managers, and reciprocate it when it is received.

It is through discovery of the origins of this bargain, in which the goals of both personal and conservation missions are met, that I have been able to resolve the contradiction between powerful motivation and the lack of professionalising action.

6.2 Managerialism as a professionalising catalyst

The question of whether managerialism acts as a professionalising catalyst for this occupational group has been dealt with in this study as an issue of conflictual relations between two systems of organising human labour: the collegially mediated values of goal-directed occupations and the transcendent values of rule-directed governance typical of complex bureaucratic organisations. The first emphasises the importance of collegiality, knowledge and expert judgment, and the other embodies the logic of dispassionate control and rationalisation. As I have stressed in my review of themes in the sociology of profession (Chapter Three), these relations typify the organisational situations in which

expert, knowledge-based occupations find themselves divested of occupational self-determination. For altruistic, service-oriented occupations, especially those in managerialised public sectors, the loss of self-determination marginalises more conspicuously the core social values which sustain them as collegial communities. This is symptomatic of the situation in which DOC's front-line practitioners have been thrust by the aggressive New Right reforms in New Zealand's public administration.

My findings in relation to this occupational group show that despite sound justifications for regaining occupational self-determination, professionalising action cannot be taken for granted as an outcome of conflictual relations between vocation and managerialism. Instead, this study indicates that the fate of vocationally centred occupations subordinated to particularly rigorous managerial authority is more likely to be *deprofessionalising*.

These conclusions need to be treated cautiously because my research subjects may be exceptional in their profoundly personal connections to their work. Comparable public sector occupations may not be affected so critically by this fatal virtue. But, the strategic choices taken (or rather *not* taken) by DOC's practitioners conform with Weber's (1978) contention that, as a system of organisation based on *Wertrationalität* (action oriented to the realisation of a social value for its own sake), vocation is unequal to the struggle for control with bureaucratic systems grounded in *Zweckrationalität* (action oriented to material or self-interested ends).

Equally, the choice not to professionalise agrees with MacKay's (1990) findings that, in an Australian nursing community divided in its motivations to work, vocationally committed nurses were the least able and willing to engage in professionalising activities. It was not the weight of countervailing circumstance (in that case, the authority and objectivising values of professional medical associates) which extinguished their interest in strategic action. Instead, as is the case with DOC's front-line practitioners, powerful belief in personal commitment to the objects and objectives of work prompted nurses to consider what might be compromised by political actions. Distrust of colleagues who were not so vocationally oriented also undermined confidence in professionalising outcomes. As

I have shown in this study, highly motivated practitioners in DOC display the same sensitivities. Distrust of colleagues is a product of segregation but it has its roots in the same convictions. Similarly, disenchanted practitioners were rarely prepared to put their field work at risk when resisting managerial authority. Their caution protects their richest opportunities for personal reward. Sense of vocation has left workers in both occupations vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation, as DOC practitioners frequently reminded me during this research.

It seems likely, then, that as the dominant form of social organisation in DOC, managerialism will continue to subdue interest in coherent professional projects until practitioners feel that it threatens to sever their connections with core vocational values and privileged opportunities to consummate profoundly personal imperatives.

6.3 Interactionist theory and method as an explanatory framework

As I have signalled through the detail of this analysis, the choice of an action-based frame of reference for this study has paid handsome dividends. At a superficial level, interactionist analysis has allowed me to draw legitimately on elements of *attribute-* and *process-*based concepts of profession to interpret the courses of action chosen by my research subjects. Lay concepts of profession sit alongside the notions of ‘closure’ and ‘autonomy’ favoured by sociological analysis, to provide a more complete and accurate picture of the social behaviour I have observed.

Of the two models of ‘profession’—lay and sociological—the latter has been the more rewarding. Its assumption of conflictual relations between forms of social organisation, and its concepts of struggle for influence and self-determination, bear directly on the empirical world I have encountered in my immersion in front-line practitioner society. It is clear though that interactionism’s open-minded focus on the origins of social action will differentiate this account of a pre-professionalising occupation from analytical approaches encumbered by obligations to generalising theoretical models.

This study confirms interactionism's conviction that determinism is an inadequate theoretical standpoint from which to explain the colour and complexity of social situations. Through determinism's straitening lens, the conclusions drawn in this study are likely to have been simplistic and impotent. The failure of my colleagues to react politically to their new administrative circumstances would doubtless have been interpreted as a function of managerialism's greater social *power*, and their mechanistic acceptance of subordination to its authority.

Instead, by examining the subjective origins of practitioner behaviour, this study has been able to account systematically for perplexing features of practitioner behaviour, in ways which refer back to empirical observation rather than to speculation. By putting human faces into social analysis, this study reinterprets managerial authority, for example, as a set of social actors responding to cues of their own. This is how DOC's practitioners see them too, and are able ultimately to include them in their notional 'teams'. Explanation of this unexpected inclusion illustrates the potential of action-based analysis to examine meaningfully the disconfirming complexities and contradictions in social behaviour, which other analytical approaches paper over.

This research makes a tangible contribution to interactionist understandings of profession on several fronts. Responding to Freidson's (1994) suggestions (Chapter Three) that extrinsic and intrinsic features of occupations are neglected considerations in models of professionalisation, I have shown that each is a crucial object of analysis. I have referred to the importance of bureaucratic authority as an 'actor' on the occupational stage in my preceding discussion (Section 6.2). The conflict between managerialism—a particularly virulent form of bureaucratic authority—and vocationally motivated occupations is an important contemporary context to which model-makers of profession and professionalisation must be attentive.

More significantly, I believe, this study shows that the nature of work is a significantly important consideration. Vocationally based work and beliefs have a crucial influence on inclinations to professionalise. As I have discussed earlier in this conclusion, as objects of analysis, the origins of vocational values in beliefs about personal meaning and relevance have proved vital to explaining both the

choice not to take political action in response to managerialism, and the accommodations reached to retain control of the activities in which these values are articulated.

By examining the state of collegiality and sense of collective identity in the DOC practitioner group, I have also confirmed the importance of internal organisation in explanations of professionalising disposition. In the practitioner group, weak and diffused notions of 'community' are clues to the disordered and contingent state of collegial arrangements. Without coherent social structures and unifying constructions of identity to refer to, practitioners have no universally recognised reference points of their own around which to rally. Nor do they have a confident basis on which to trust each other in risky political excursions outside the mission.

Yet, while disorder and weak forms of self-definition contribute to their political inertia, they are not the principal causes of it. Looking *behind* collegial structures and identity to discern their origins in practitioner values has allowed me to discover that they are symptoms of political disablement from within rather than an artefact of managerially induced subjugation and segregation. In this example of a pre-professionalising occupation, then, interactionist frames of references have allowed analysis to disentangle extrinsic from intrinsic factors, and to dissect the latter further, demonstrating that the subjective values and beliefs of individual actors must be considered as powerful players on the professionalising stage. The compelling, but ultimately self-interested convictions of these practitioners have acted *through* weakened collegial understanding of occupational identity to subdue interests in responding to managerialism by any more than symbolic gestures of resistance and complaint.

Finally, if I might indulge very personal interests of my own—the 'visceral' imperatives which inspired this project—interactionist analysis has permitted me to construct a coherent 'model' of my own occupational community, at last. The understanding of professionalising temperament reached has hardly satisfied an intuitive interest in belonging to a united society of like-minded colleagues, but there is comfort in understanding them as the society of individuals they are, for the moment.

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Gidlow, R. 2003. **Senior lecturer**, Environment, Society and Design Division, Lincoln University. Comments made on penultimate thesis draft, April 2003.
- Hughey, K. 1994. **Manager (Protection Division)**, Canterbury Conservancy, Department of Conservation, Christchurch. Comment made during a divisional staff meeting when the issue of support for staff training at tertiary institutions was under discussion.
- Perkins, H. 2002. **Professor**, Environment, Society and Design Division, Lincoln University. Conversation in tea-room, Lincoln University. Confirmed by phone, April 2003.
- Piddington, K. 1989. **Inaugural Director-General of Conservation**. Address to the inaugural Executive of the Conservation Staff Association in Wellington on the day of his departure from DOC.
- Scott, D. 1997. Designated national **Public Service Association (PSA) co-ordinator for the Department of Conservation**, PSA, Wellington. Personal conversation during the last major restructuring of DOC.
- Squires, A. 2003. **Human Resources Officer**, Human Resources and Information Systems Division, Head Office, Department of Conservation, Wellington. Response to e-mail requesting information on staff turnover rates during the last ten years.
- Sutton, S. 2002. **National representative for PSA members of the Department of Conservation**. Response to a specific question seeking an informed overview, from outside the DOC planners' sub-grouping, of the planners' bid for a pay scale higher than that proposed for front-line practitioners.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH SUBJECTS, LOCATIONS & TITLES

Pseudonyms and generalised work descriptions have been used to protect confidentiality

| NAMES | SEX | LOCATION | JOB TITLES AND PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS |
|---------|-----|-------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Bob | M | Area | Field Centre Supervisor |
| Brent | M | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity/Threats |
| Derek | M | - | Formerly Conservancy Advisory Scientist |
| Don | M | Conservancy | Community Relations Officer, Recreation |
| Donald | M | Conservancy | Community Relations Officer, Concessions |
| Douglas | M | Conservancy | Business Services Supervisor, Information Management |
| Erica | F | Conservancy | Community Relations Officer, Planning |
| Fergus | M | - | Formerly Community Relations Officer |
| Geoff | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Officer, Biodiversity |
| Hamish | M | Area | Ranger, Biodiversity |
| Harry | M | Area | Field Centre Supervisor |
| Hillary | F | Conservancy | Community Relations Supervisor, Advocacy |
| Ian | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Officer, Historic |
| James | M | Area | Ranger, Biodiversity/Wild Animal Management |
| Jane | F | Area | Programme Manager, Wild Animal Management/Weeds/Fire |
| Janet | F | Conservancy | Technical Support Officer, Threats |
| Karen | F | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity |
| Liz | F | Area | Ranger, Biodiversity/Freshwater |
| Louise | F | Conservancy | Technical Support Officer, Biodiversity/Threats |
| Malcolm | M | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity/Assets |
| Mary | F | Conservancy | Business Services Officer, Personal Assistant |
| Michael | M | Conservancy | Community Relations Officer, Planning |
| Miles | M | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity |
| Murray | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Supervisor, Biodiversity |
| Phillip | M | Conservancy | Community Relations Officer |
| Rhonda | F | Conservancy | Conservancy Advisory Scientist |
| Rhys | M | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity |
| Richard | M | Area | Ranger, Delivery |
| Roger | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Supervisor, Biodiversity |
| Shelley | F | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity |
| Tom | M | BRU | Senior Species Protection Officer |
| Tony | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Supervisor, Biodiversity |
| Vic | M | Conservancy | Programme Manager, Biodiversity/Threats/Fire |
| Vicki | F | Area | Programme Manager, Biodiversity/Assets |
| Wilson | M | Conservancy | Technical Support Officer, Biodiversity |

APPENDIX 2

CONSERVATION ACT 1987 **FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION**

[Excerpt]

6. Functions of the Department—The functions of the Department are to administer this Act and the enactments specified in the First Schedule to this Act, and, subject to this Act and those enactments and to the directions (if any) of the Minister,—

(a) To manage for conservation purposes, all land, and all other natural and historic resources whose owner agrees with the Minister that they should be managed by the Department:

[(ab) To preserve as far as practicable all indigenous freshwater fisheries, and protect recreational freshwater fisheries and freshwater fish habitats:]

(b) To advocate the conservation of natural and historic resources generally:

(c) To promote the benefits to present and future generations of—

(i) The conservation of natural and historic resources generally and the natural and historic resources of New Zealand in particular;

(ii) The conservation of the natural and historic resources of New Zealand's sub-antarctic islands and, consistently with all relevant international agreements, of the Ross Dependency and Antarctic generally; and

(iii) International co-operation on matters relating to conservation;

(d) To prepare, provide, disseminate, promote, and publicise educational and promotional material relating to conservation:

(e) To the extent that the use of any natural and historic resource for recreation or tourism is not inconsistent with its conservation, to foster use of natural and historic resources for recreation, and to allow their use for tourism:

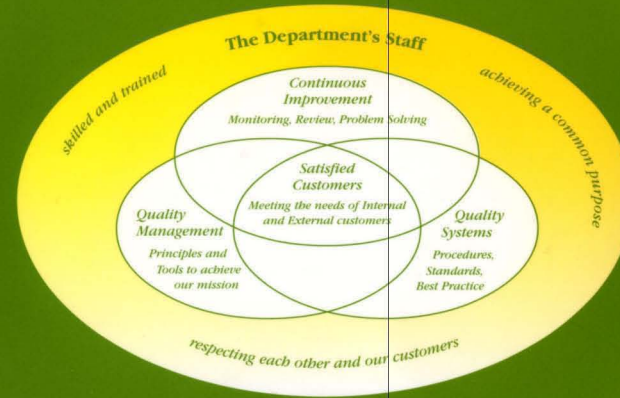
(f) To advise the Minister on matters relating to any of those functions or to conservation generally:

(g) Every other function conferred on it by any other enactment.

The Framework for Quality



Quality Management Principles



We are all committed to achieving the department's mission by meeting the needs of customers through:

Using quality systems which:

- have standards and procedures
- are based on best known practices
- identify who should do what

Continuously improving the way we work:

- by documenting process, collecting data to measure performance, monitoring and review, problem solving to find improvement
- by internal audit
- supported by managers

Quality management, by:

- working with a customer focus
- having skilled staff and encouraging initiative at all levels
- working to quality principles, sound plans and good processes

APPENDIX 4

GOALS OF THE NEW ZEALAND CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

[Letter to the Director-General of Conservation from the Executive of the New Zealand Conservation Institute Incorporated]

Department of Conservation
Private Bag 4715
Christchurch

31 August 1999

Director-General
Department of Conservation
P O Box 10-420
Wellington

Dear Hugh,

In late July 1999, the platform was laid in Christchurch for a new professional association of conservation staff, intended to take the place of the previous Conservation Staff Association (CSA). The working name of the new organisation is the New Zealand Conservation Institute Incorporated (NZCI). Departure from the old name is intended to reflect an established maturity of vision, the changed political environment within DOC, and the need to avoid confusion of acronyms with the PSA.

The Canterbury branch of the association has been formed and its officers elected by a fully paid-up membership. The first priority of the branch executive is to register the organisation as an incorporated society. The earlier CSA constitution has been adopted in amended form, to take account of the Department's new structure.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of New Zealand Conservation Institute's existence, its objectives and its aspirations. We also seek your assistance on a number of matters.

Small beginnings

Re-establishment of a professional conservation staff association has been discussed informally by staff in DOC work centres throughout New Zealand for at least the last three years. No formal mechanism has existed in DOC that allows frontline and administrative practitioners to form collective views on conservation issues in ways which transcend our fragmented institutional horizons and day-to-day working relationships.

The third major reform of the Department's administrative functions in 1997 made the absence of such a mechanism very much more apparent: staff could not communicate effectively with each other to make collective appraisals of reform impacts, benefits and penalties for conservation at the sharp end.

The initiative taken by Canterbury staff to establish a professional forum for conservation practitioners is intended to plant the seed for a national organisation within DOC. Other centres will be invited to establish their own branches, and from these a national executive will be elected.

In time (and subject to approval by members), the New Zealand Conservation Institute may extend its horizons to embrace conservation practitioners from organisations outside DOC.

New Zealand Conservation Institute's objectives

The broad goals of the New Zealand Conservation Institute are articulated in its constitution document, a copy of which is attached for your information. They do not differ from the original CSA goals.

Canterbury members have compiled a short list of specific objectives which they consider to be consistent with these goals. These, of course, remain to be endorsed and expanded by members of other branches.

People Plan

In the People Plan Atawhai Ruamano, the Department possesses a remarkable tool for improving work quality and staff relationships. Despite good progress in implementing its provisions, however, DOC is confronted with staff at the frontline who remain cynical about the plan, and indeed, about DOC itself. The New Zealand Conservation Institute considers that it can play a key role in resolving some of these tensions, principally by exploring means to encourage staff ownership of the plan and its objectives.

Collegiality

Although there is a common sense of mission, it is very dispersed. As a result, the Department lacks a conspicuous sense of collegiality. The New Zealand Conservation Institute considers it a priority to foster a firmer sense of community and professional identity among DOC staff, through a number of initiatives:

- developing professional standards for conservation management
- developing internal and external networking opportunities
- creating forums for creative comment on conservation issues
- seeking sponsorship for annual scholarships and excellence awards
- helping to facilitate job exchanges internally and internationally
- developing an internal programme of seminars and workshops
- providing discount and group purchase opportunities for field equipment
- conducting annual assessments of practitioner 'health'

Advocacy

Many DOC staff feel disempowered by the organisational structure. This is not a healthy condition for them personally, for their work colleagues, or for DOC. The New Zealand Conservation Institute offers them the opportunity to speak collectively on issues which they consider are affecting their productivity or the quality of their work.

Because they will own the processes of forming a collective view on issues, commentary and consultation is likely to be more productive. For instance, concerns about the dismantling of regional libraries are very real, but many staff did not contribute to the library review process because they lacked confidence in it.

The New Zealand Conservation Institute acknowledges that owned processes of constructing a collective voice are valuable because staff obtain a more coherent view of how colleagues think.

Industrial relations

The New Zealand Conservation Institute is *not* intended to replace the PSA or any other industrial relations organisation as a bargaining agent for CEC or IEC staff in DOC. In 1998, the emergence of a new organisation was discussed with the PSA, whose staff were informed explicitly that no trespass in their domain was intended. The New Zealand Conservation Institute Canterbury has been careful to deflect any such expectations; we would certainly review our commitment to a national organisation which did not adopt the same view.

Assistance

The New Zealand Conservation Institute requests three forms of assistance from DOC.

First, we seek your approval to make use of the Department's Intranet system. Immediate use of e-mail would be appreciated. If the system has the capacity, we would like to publish an electronic newsletter for members, but this, and a New Zealand Conservation Institute web site, are planned as later developments.

Second, until a national executive can negotiate a more formal agreement with you, we request that branch committee members be given some latitude to conduct the New Zealand Conservation Institute work in normal work time, much as PSA delegates are entitled to do. We are happy to negotiate an equitable interim arrangement with you.

Third, we seek an immediate stay on surrender of the old CSA funds to Treasury, until their disposal can be discussed with a New Zealand Conservation Institute national executive. In the meantime, the Canterbury branch requests release of a portion of the funds so that we can obtain a second legal opinion on their proper status and disposal.

Previous Directors-General gave the CSA their blessing. Ken Piddington regarded the establishment of a vibrant staff association as absolutely essential to the functioning of the Department and management of its responsibilities. He called it the 'air conditioning' system which DOC's structure had overlooked. We are confident that the benefits

of a new association will be apparent to you too, even if our views diverge from time to time. We look forward to a profitable working relationship with you.

Yours faithfully

Naomi Hannah-Brown
Chairperson
New Zealand Conservation Institute, Canterbury